

A General History of English Culture, mainly Literature

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Prehistoric England

For hundreds of thousands of years, during the last **Ice Age**, all the land now forming the island of Britain lay far below the vast polar ice cap. At the end of the ice age, as the ice melted, the resulting huge lake and rivers cut a deep ravine through the land bridge linking Britain with the continent and as the sea levels rose the **Channel** was formed. During the Ice Age, the ice withdrew occasionally, humans entered at those times but then withdrew as the ice returned. After 50,000 BC the island of Britain was inhabited for many thousands of years by nomadic hunter-gatherers. Around **3,000 BC** the first **Neolithic** (New Stone Age) people arrived, coming from Spain or Northern Africa. They brought an advanced culture, living in **settlements** with domestic animals, growing crops, using pottery and refined stone tools.

The first remaining monuments from this period are the great [barrows](#) in which whole families were buried, and the **hengese**, circles of wood or stone that served as gathering points for the inhabitants, presumably for religious ceremonies. The most famous is [Stonehenge](#), which began as a wooden henge before 3,000 BC, then in 2,500 BC it was rebuilt using **blue stones** brought from a place in Wales 380 kms away; no one knows what special meaning was attached to them. The labor involved was unimaginable, each stone weighing about 5 tons. But work stopped, and in 2,300 BC the blue stones were relocated in a circle dominated by far larger stones, weighing up to 45 tons, brought from 30 kms away, with stones laid on top of them to form linked **lintels**.

After 2,400 BC people came bringing a new culture, the "**Beaker**" **people**, Indo-Europeans who introduced **barley**. They buried their dead in individual graves. Their technology was more advanced and they produced the first **bronze** tools, marking the beginning of the **Bronze Age**. It was they who constructed the outer circle of stones at Stonehenge. From 1,300 BC, the population shifted off the chalk uplands to the Thames valley and the south-east. Life seems to have become more violent; villages arose, offering mutual protection, and hill-forts were constructed on hill-tops, which were then expanded until the Roman period. Some of them remained as important centers long after the Roman period. The largest is [Maiden Castle](#), in Dorset.

Around 700 BC, Celts began to enter Britain from Europe, where their culture and language covered a large area. They had mastered the technology of iron-smelting, marking the arrival of the **Iron Age**. The links with Europe encouraged continuing trade across the Channel but after 500 BC this declined, allowing the British and Irish Celts to develop their own culture and specific dialects. Celtic society was essentially tribal, the generations of a single family forming a clan with a single chief. Shortly before the Roman period, new **Belgic tribes** of Celts arrived from just across the Channel, from what is now called Belgium after them, and settled in south eastern Britain and along the coast, keeping the names of their original tribes. Among the Celts, religious ceremonies and the memory of tribal history were entrusted to Druids, but they had no writing system.

The Roman occupation

Gaul had been the source of tribal groups that invaded Italy; at the same time, east of Gaul across the **Rhine river**, the **Germanic** tribes were slowly preparing to move westward and southward, an even greater threat to Rome. Therefore from 58 - 51 BC the Roman army led by **Julius Caesar** fought the **Gallic War** across what is now France. As a

result of their victory over the Gallic rebel leader **Vercingetorix** at **Alesia** in 52, the whole of Gaul came under Roman control and was turned into a Province of the Roman Empire. The Roman presence was so dominant that the entire population lost their Celtic language and by the end of the empire (around AD 460) spoke only Latin. This then evolved into the Provençal and French languages. In **55 BC** and then again a few years later, Julius Caesar crossed to Britain (the Greeks and Romans called the British **Pretani**, so the Romans gave the name **Britannia** to the whole island). He was interested in its fertility, its mineral wealth, and its leather but also he was preoccupied by the support being given to the Gauls. It was only later, however, that Britain was made a **province** of Rome. From **AD 43** until about **404**, the central region of Britain was a province of the **Roman Empire**, with a strong **military** presence ensuring Roman domination over the native population.

The Romans established their control by means of over 100 military camps (**castra**) that soon turned into small towns, and also by the creation of some 20 larger town with 5,000 inhabitants. The city they built at the lowest point where the River Thames could be crossed on foot, **Londinium** (London), grew into the largest Roman city north of the Alps. **London Bridge** was first built by the Romans. English town names have often kept the Roman **-castra** ending (Chester, Lancaster, Winchester, Manchester). **Southern Wales** was also part of the Roman-controlled area, but the **Picts** living in the northern area they called **Caledonia** (Scotland) was too wild for them. The emperor **Hadrian** built a wall from sea to sea to mark the limit of Roman control, between what are now the cities of Carlisle and Newcastle. [Hadrian's Wall](#) is still a popular tourist attraction.

Roman culture included a **money economy**, **literacy** (reading and writing), a standardized **legal system**, buildings of **stone** or **brick** bound by mortar, and such amenities as **public baths** and **hypocausts** to heat the floors of the rooms. A hot spring gave rise to the city still called [Bath](#). Most important, since the Romans always feared uprisings, they constructed well-paved [roads](#) running almost straight across the country; those roads underlie the modern major roads of England. **Six** of the roads met at **London**, which had some 20,000 inhabitants. In the rural areas, intensive farming was organized through "**villas**," compounds containing elaborate housing for the rich owner-manager as well as accommodation for many slaves and storage rooms for the produce destined to be exported. Yet most of the British people continued to speak Celtic, and to live in traditional ways.

Anglo-Saxon England

In the early years of the fifth century, the Roman legions were withdrawn to defend Rome against the Germanic tribes that had been moving into Italy for several centuries. In **410** the capture of Rome by the **Visigoths** led by Alaric heralded the beginning of the collapse of Roman control over western Europe. The towns of Roman Britain soon ceased to function; the use of Latin ceased. Traditional Celtic ways continued unchanged.

Before the Romans left Britain, they had been employing **Saxon** mercenaries from north Germany (part of which is still known as Saxony). In the century following the Roman withdrawal, more Saxons and other groups from north **Germany** and the Netherlands, speaking various **West Germanic** dialects settled in the eastern and southern parts of Britain. They subjugated or eliminated the Celts, who remained dominant in the north and west, and in Ireland. The Germanic people were not Christian, but had the traditional religion of northern Europe, with multiple **gods** led by **Thor** and **Woden**. It is not clear if this process should be seen as an invasion or as a gradual arrival. One **mystery** is why

the new arrivals did not learn the local Celtic language. There is no other example from this age of migration where the language of a small number of outsiders took over from the native language so totally. Virtually no word of Celtic origin was adopted. Some suggest that an epidemic might have decimated the Celtic population of eastern Britain so that the arriving **Angles, Saxons, Jutes**, etc found no one living there..

One of the Germanic group was known as "**Angles**" from the name of their spears, just as "Saxon" derives from the short sword they used. The Angles were to give their name to **England** (Angle-land). Soon after the Roman withdrawal, groups from Ireland, known as "**Scots**," began to settle in the western parts of what is now **Scotland**. Much of the region was originally controlled by the mysterious **Picts** who later disappeared completely. **Ireland** started to become Christian through contacts with Wales during the later Roman period (Christianity became the official imperial religion around 380) but the main name associated with the foundation of Irish Christianity is that of **Patrick**, who brought Christianity to much of northern Ireland in the later 5th century.

In **597**, a team of Christian missionaries sent from Rome, led by a priest called Augustine, arrived in the place now called **Canterbury**, in Kent. They began to bring **Christianity** and Latin (Roman) culture to the rulers of the various kingdoms. Augustine became the first Archbishop of Canterbury, the mother church of English Christianity. The [copy of the Gospels](#) that he brought with him can still be seen. Other missionaries from western Scotland brought Christianity to northern England at the same time. With this new religion came the language, literature, and legal traditions of Rome and, above all, the art of **writing**. The Germanic language and culture of Angles and Saxons now united with the language and culture of southern Europe.

The old oral tradition of memories and stories was replaced by written records. Germanic society was centered in the hall of the farms (in German Hof, the French name for which gave the English name of the royal court) where lords and thanes lived together. There the scop was the professional singer and teller of tales. Now a shift happened, as the old oral poetry was transformed in the libraries of Christian monasteries into written "literature." The famous story of Caedmon's hymn told by Bede (c.673 - 735) is symbolic of the transformation of oral, pagan or heroic Germanic poetry into written, Christian poetry.

In the monastery at Whitby lived a brother singularly gifted by God's grace. So skilful was he in composing religious and devotional songs that, when any passage of the Bible was explained to him by interpreters, he could quickly turn it into delightful and moving poetry in his own English tongue. These verses of his have stirred the hearts of many to despise the world and aspire to heavenly things. Others after him have tried to compose religious poems in English, but none could compare with him; for he did not acquire the art of poetry from men or through any human teacher, but received it as a free gift from God. For this reason he could never compose any frivolous or profane verses; only such as had a religious theme fell from his lips.

He had followed a secular occupation until well advanced in years, without learning anything about poetry. Indeed it sometimes happened at a feast that all the guests in turn would be invited to sing and entertain the company; then, when he saw the harp coming his way, he would get up from the table and go home.

On one such occasion he left the house in which the entertainment was being held and went out to the stable, where it was his duty that night to look after the beasts. There, when the time came, he settled down to sleep. Suddenly in a dream he saw a

man standing beside him who called him by name. "Caedmon," he said, "sing me a song." "I don't know how to sing," he replied, "It is because I cannot sing that I left the feast and came here." The man who addressed him then said: "But you shall sing to me." "What should I sing about?" "Sing about the Creation of all things," the other answered. And Caedmon immediately began to sing verses in praise of God the Creator that he had never heard before:

Nu sculon herigean heofonrices Weard
Meotodes meahte and his modgethanc
weorc Wuldor-Faeder swa he wundra gehwaes
ece Drihten or onstealde.
He aere sceop ielda bearnum
heofon to hrofe halig Scyppend
tha middangeard moncynnes Weard
ece Drihten aefter teode
firum foldan Frea aelmihtig

Now must we praise heaven-kingdom's Guard,
the Measurer's might and his mind-thoughts,
the work of the Glory-Father when he of wonders each,
eternal Lord, the origin established.
He first created for men's children
heaven as a roof, the holy Creator;
then middle-earth, mankind's Guard,
the eternal Lord, after made
for men the earth, the Master almighty.

When the scholar-monk Bede (c.673 - 735) recorded this story in the great Ecclesiastical History of the English People that he completed in 731, he was writing in Latin, and he gave the words of Caedmon's hymn in Latin. A few years later, some copies of the History were made with the text of the hymn in its original language. Today that language is called Old English; it was part of the West Germanic family of languages that developed into modern German, and Dutch, as well as English.

Bede's ***Ecclesiastical History*** and his many other works were made possible by the foresight of **Benedict Biscop**, the founder of the monasteries at Wearmouth, who brought back dozens of books from his visits to Italy and established a library that was to serve as the link between Rome and the chaotic post-Roman world. The artistry displayed in some of the great illuminated texts of the Gospels is breathtaking, as seen in the [Lindisfarne Gospels](#).

Old English Elegy

Old English **elegy** seems to spring from heroic society's experience of history as **glory and loss**. It may perhaps best be seen as a poetic expression of human fragility, of the pain of the loss of what deserved not to be lost. It is also strongly marked by an experience of human solitude, the speaker being isolated from normal social existence. There is a way of viewing life in this world as a combination of glory and doom that does not look beyond the tomb, but leads the reader of the poem back to the poem, since what had to die is yet

memorialized and thus perpetuated in the elegiac text itself. That the poetics of temporality and transience should be so strongly present at so early a stage of English poetry is striking.

The poems which are generally termed elegies are all found in one manuscript. The [Exeter Book](#) was given to the library of the Cathedral at Exeter (Devon) by Leofric, the first bishop, who died in 1072. It is still there. It was probably written about a century before this. It contains over thirty Old English poems, as well as almost a hundred short riddles. Some of the poems it contains are religious, such as *Christ*, *The Judgement Day*, or saints' lives, but it also includes some the oldest heroic fragments, like *Widsith* and *Deor*. The most famous elegies are *The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer*, *The Ruin*.

The greatest Old English heroic poem, [Beowulf](#), contained in another manuscript, is also full of **elegaic passages** stressing the future disasters that will overwhelm the now successful 'nations' led by Hygelac and Beowulf. *Beowulf* tells of three separate battles fought by Beowulf (Bear's son) against supernatural enemies of human society: Grendel, Grendel's Mother, and (fifty years later) a treasure-guarding dragon. In this last battle, Beowulf is abandoned by all but one of his cowardly thanes, and dies of his wounds after killing the dragon.

Beowulf (summary with extracts)

The poem has three main climaxes, each of them a fight between Beowulf and a monster. It begins by introducing the Danes of Zealand, also called the Scyldings; several generations quickly pass, and Hrothgar is introduced. He has had much military success, so "It came to his mind that he would command men to construct a hall, a great mead-building that the children of men should hear of for ever, and therein he would give to young and old all that God had given him." This hall was to be "the largest of hall-dwellings. He gave it the name of Heorot (hart)."

But from the start, this poem is inhabited by echoes of stories that we do not know: "The hall stood tall, high and wide-gabled: it would wait for the fierce flames of vengeful fire; the time was not yet at hand for sword-hate between son-in-law and father-in-law to awaken after murderous rage." A note of foreboding, of "doom," is thus left hovering over the hall beyond the end of the poem. We realize that Hrothgar married his daughter to Ingeld, king of the Heatho-bards after Ingeld's father had been killed by the Danes, hoping that this would make peace; but as the mentality of revenge was omnipresent in his society, finally Ingeld attacked the Danes, and Heorot was destroyed.

That is not the present story, though:

Then the fierce spirit painfully endured hardship for a time,
he who dwelt in the darkness,
for every day he heard loud mirth in the hall;
there was the sound of the harp, the clear song of the scop....
Thus these warriors lived in joy, blessed,
until one began to do evil deeds, a hellish enemy.
The grim spirit was called Grendel, known as a rover of the borders,
one who held the moors, fen and fastness.
Unhappy creature, he lived for a time in the home of the monsters' race,
after God had condemned them as kin of Cain...
Then after night, Grendel came to survey the tall house

-- how, after their beer-drinking, the Ring-Danes had disposed themselves in it. Then he found therein a band of nobles asleep after the feast: they felt no sorrow, no misery of men. The creature of evil, grim and fierce, was quickly ready, savage and cruel, and seized from their rest thirty thanes. From there he turned to go back to his home, proud of his plunder, sought his dwelling with that store of slaughter.

The mannered style, the repetitions and the digressions, the narratorial comments, all restrain the onward movement of the tale. The result is a deeper interplay between actual event and narratorial commentary. Grendel establishes a reign of terror so that for twelve winters Heorot lies unused and empty, society is paralysed. Hrothgar seems unable to act, certainly he cannot fight against Grendel. A thane of Hygelac hears of this, and quickly crosses the sea with a company of men; fifteen in all they sail across to the lands of Hrothgar. They are formally welcomed, and only then do we learn that this is Beowulf ! Several pages pass in welcoming speeches and a celebration, before he and his companions settle down in Heorot to see what will happen. Beowulf takes off his armour, and lays aside his sword, proudly determined to fight with Grendel on equal terms.

Then from the moor under the mist-hills Grendel came walking, wearing God's anger. The foul ravager thought to catch some one of mankind there in the high hall. Under the clouds he moved until he could see most clearly the wine- hall, treasure-house of men, shining with gold. That was not the first time that he had sought Hrothgar's home. Never before or since in his life-days did he find harder luck, hardier hall-thanes. The creature deprived of joy came walking to the hall. Quickly the door gave way, fastened with fire-forged bands, when he touched it with his hands. Driven by evil desire, swollen with rage, he tore it open, the hall's mouth.

Grendel is hungry, he devours one of Beowulf's men, but then Beowulf seizes his hand, and finally tears off Grendel's entire arm. His name does not mean Son-of-Bear for nothing.

The next morning they follow the blood as far as the Lake of the Water- monsters into which he has disappeared. The result is, naturally, great rejoicing, and a celebration is held in Heorot. During this the scop sings, as we saw above; but the fragment of story that is quoted is hardly suitable for a banquet. It evokes part of the popular tales about Finn the Frisian, and tells of how a quarrel at a banquet while Danes were visiting Finn led to great slaughter; this in turn led to further revenge killings: "Then was the hall reddened from foes' bodies, and thus Finn was slain, the king in his company, and the queen taken." At the end of the party, the benches are removed and the hall becomes a community bedroom. The next section of the poem is introduced:

It came to be seen, wide-known to men, that after the bitter battle an avenger still lived for an evil space: Grendel's mother, woman, monster-wife, was mindful of her misery, she who had to dwell in the terrible water, the cold currents, after Cain became sword-slayer of his only brother, his own father's son.

She comes, grabs a Dane, and runs off with him and the arm of Grendel that was hanging in the hall. Beowulf is not sleeping in Heorot, so nobody can stop her. The next morning, Beowulf offers to destroy her, so they set off in quest of her lair:

Suddenly he found mountain trees leaning out over hoary stone,
a joyless wood; water lay beneath, bloody and troubled...

They saw on the water many a snake-shape, strong sea-serpents exploring the mere,
and water-monsters lying on the slopes of the shore such as those that in the morning
often attend a perilous journey on the paths of the sea, serpents and wild beasts.

Beowulf dives into the water to fight the water-spirit that Grendel's mother clearly is. This combat is fantastic, it occurs inside a house deep beneath the lake, a familiar motif in folk-literature. For hours they fight, but she is invulnerable to ordinary swords. At last Beowulf sees "a victory- blessed blade, an old sword made by the giants, strong of its edges, glory of warriors; it was the best of weapons, except that it was larger than any other man might bear to war-sport, good and adorned." With this he kills her "and at once the blaze brightened, light shone within, just as from the sky heaven's candle shines clear". In the house Beowulf finds Grendel's dead body; he cuts off the head.

Meanwhile his friends have given up all hope, and sit staring at the water while the Danes go back home. Suddenly Beowulf appears, with Grendel's head. There is more rejoicing in Heorot, and Hrothgar makes a long speech on the theme of glory, or fame, and the dangers of pride:

Keep yourself against that wickedness, best of men, and choose better -- eternal gains.

Have no care for pride, great warrior. Now for a time there is glory in your might;
yet soon it shall be that sickness or sword will diminish your strength, or fire's fangs,
or flood's surge, or sword's swing, or spear's fight, or appalling age;
brightness of eyes will fail and grow dark; then it shall be that death will overcome you,
warrior.

The note of elegy is clear. The night that follows is untroubled, and the Geats are able to return home. Beowulf goes to report to his king, Hygelac, on all that he has seen, including the doubtful friendship between Danes and Heatho-bards, and offers to his king the gifts he has received.

The poem leaps ahead and begins a new story when Beowulf has himself been king of the Geats for fifty years. A new enemy is introduced quite casually: "in the dark night a certain one, a dragon, began to hold sway, which on the high heath kept watch over a hoard, a steep stone-barrow. Beneath lay a path unknown to men". A criminal on the run came in by chance and stole a golden cup. This caused the sleeping dragon to awake and begin to terrorize the neighborhood. There is a digression describing how the treasure came to be put there by a lone survivor who evokes his situation:

"War-death has taken each man of my people, evil dreadful and deadly,
each of those who has given up this life, the hall-joys of men.
I have none who wears sword or cleans the plated cup, rich drinking vessel...
even the coat of mail, which withstood the bite of swords after the crashing of shields,
decays like its warrior... There is no harp-delight, no mirth of the singing wood,
no good hawk flies through the hall, no swift horse stamps in the castle court.
Baleful death has sent away many races of men."

The treasure this man entrusted to the ground was found by the smooth hateful dragon who flies at night wrapped in flame and it is this dragon that is now terrorizing Beowulf's kingdom. Brought to the place, Beowulf sits and reflects:

"His mind was mournful, restless and ripe for death; very close was the fate which should come to the old man, seek his soul's hoard, divide life from his body; not for long was the life of the noble one wound in his flesh". There is a strong sense of foreboding, Beowulf speaks a long review of his adventures before setting out alone to fight the dragon.

The scene is a typical heroic conflict. Beowulf, fully armed, stands alone before the gate to the tomb and shouts a challenge. The dragon comes coiling out and Beowulf strikes a blow, but his sword fails him, the dragon is only wounded. The fire of the dragon's breath overpowers Beowulf, while his thanes "crept to the wood, protected their lives." Only one, Wiglaf, comes out to help his king. There is a description of the origin of his weapons, and of his thoughts, before he reaches Beowulf's side. Again Beowulf strikes with his sword, and this time it breaks. The dragon seizes Beowulf by the neck, but Wiglaf is able to drive his sword into it, and Beowulf has time to use his dagger to finish off the beast. Beowulf sends Wiglaf into the barrow, to bring out the treasures so he can see them before he dies. This is done, and Beowulf dies after a curiously Christian speech:

"I speak with my words thanks to the Lord of All for these treasures,
to the King of Glory, eternal Prince, for what I gaze on here,
that I might get such for my people before my death-day."

When the other thanes come creeping out of the woods, Wiglaf foretells the end of their nation: "Now there shall cease for your race the receiving of treasure and the giving of swords, all enjoyment of pleasant homes, comfort..." and he goes on to evoke long histories of conflict and revenge-in-store from the Frisians and the Swedes, all of whom will come running now that Beowulf is gone; "many a spear, cold in the morning, shall be grasped with fingers, raised by hands; no sound of harp shall waken the warriors, but the dark raven, low over the doomed, shall tell many tales, say to the eagle how he fared at the feast when with the wolf he spoiled the slain bodies." The dragon's body is pushed over the cliff, while Beowulf, with the treasure, is carried to Hronesness. There the body is burned on a great pyre (cf. Homer's Iliad), the ashes are covered with a mound, and the final poetic memorial is given:

Then the brave in battle rode round the mound, children of nobles, twelve in all,
would bewail their sorrow and mourn their king, recite dirges and speak of the man.
They praised his great deeds and his acts of courage, judged well of his prowess.
So it is fitting that man honor his liege lord with words,
love him in heart when he must be led forth from the body.
Thus the people of the Geats, his hearth-companions, lamented the death of their lord.
They said that he was of world-kings
the mildest of men and the gentlest,
kindest to his people, and most eager for fame.

(cwaedon thaet he waere wyruldcyninga
mannum mildust ond mondwaerust,
leodum lidost ond lofgeornost.)

The **Old-English elegies** have been especially popular in the 20th century, because their suggestive evocations of what seem to be (but is not) intense **individual experience** are in some ways close to the dramatic monologues which [Robert Browning](#) developed in the 19th century and which represent one major form of modern lyric poetry. **Ezra Pound**

ventured to write his own version of [The Seafarer](#), freer than a strict translation since he knew little Old English. *The Seafarer* depicts a situation of mysterious isolation, the speaker is seemingly adrift in a boat. Much the same motif is found in *The Wanderer*, in which the general moral application of the poem is clearer, and the rhetorical development more varied. Some critics consider that the **Christian** passages at the beginning and end were added later but this is not very likely. The central figure has lost his social role and finds no replacement; misfortune drives him to meditate on the **fragility** of all human relations. He contemplates the ruins of abandoned Roman buildings and tries to imagine what life in them was like. He asks a series of questions echoing the classical **ubi sunt** theme -- "where have they all gone?" that stresses the **transience** of all earthly life.

The Wanderer

1. He who is alone often survives to find mercy, pity from God,
2. though he long must stir with his arms the frost-cold sea,
3. troubled in heart obliged to tread paths of exile over watery ways.
4. Full-fixed is that man's fate.
5. So spoke the traveller, recalling hard times,
6. fierce battle-slaughter, the deaths of dear kinsfolk.
7. Before day broke, many times I have had to tell out alone my cares;
8. there is no-one alive now to whom I dare reveal my secret thoughts.

(>>>>)

26. There is nothing left but the path of exile, no sign of twisted gold armlets;
27. in his heart-case frozen thoughts, no earthly joys.
28. He can only remember former hall-warriors, the taking of treasure,
29. the eager feasts of youthful days with the lost gold-friend.
30. All those delights are gone now.
31. Any who have long been obliged to forgo the guiding of a lord they love,
32. will know: when the poor lonely fellow lies sleeping sadly
33. it will seem at times that he is once again there kissing and holding his liege,
34. expressing thanks, laying hands and head on his knees as in former times
35. when gifts were being shared out.
36. But then he wakes, and has no lord,
37. but only the tawny waves and the gulls bathing with wings outstretched,
38. under frost and snowfall, mingled with hail.
39. Then his heart aches more, longing for the lord he once loved;
40. sorrows renew with the sudden memory of long lost kinsmen:
41. he thinks to hail them gladly, gazes eagerly at that company of warriors
42. whose shadows fade, gliding away over the waters.
43. No familiar voices come echoing from those passing shades,
44. and cares deepen as he sets out again, time after time, over the web of the waves.

(>>>>)

54. A wise warrior should think of the dreadful days
55. when all this world's wealth will lie waste;
56. just as we see in many places wind-blown walls covered with layers of frost,
57. storm-beaten and drear. The old wine-halls totter, their former lords lie bereft of joy,
58. for all the heroes have fallen who formerly sat against the wall;
59. some went in war, carried away, this one borne by a bird over the deep,
60. and this devoured by a wolf and Death, while another sadly hid in an earthen grave.
61. Mankind's Maker laid waste all those buildings,
62. the old work of giants stood there useless, no echo now of their former guards' songs.

63. So the wise man ponders deeply upon these ruins, and this dark life,
 64. recalls the slaughters of the past, and speaks:
65. Hwaer cwom mearg? Hwaer cwom mago? Hwaer cwom maththumgyfa?
 66. Hwaer cwom symbla gesetu? Hwaer sindon seledreamas?
 67. Eala beorht bune! Eala byrnwiga!
 68. Eala theodnes thrym! Hu seo thrag gewat,
 69. genap under nihthelm, swa heo no waere.
70. Where did the horse go? Where the bold youth? Where is the treasure-giver?
 71. Where is the feast-place? Where the hall's bliss?
 72. Alas, bright cup! Alas, man of arms!
 73. Alas, the lord's might! How those days have gone,
 74. dark under night, as if they never had been.
 75. Now the snake-adorned wall stands there marvellously high,
 76. towering over signs of what was, dear companions.
 77. Spears have taken the lords away, blood-thirsty weapons of Fate almighty.
 78. Storms beat at the walls, and snow heralds winter,
 79. falling thick it binds the earth as darkness falls
 80. while northern hailstones harshly proclaim hatred for men.
 81. Earth's kingdoms are wretched, for Fate intervenes to change the world.
 82. Wealth is fleeting, friends, all men, and women too are fleeting.
 83. Every home shall soon lie bare.
 84. So spoke the man whose heart was wise, sitting apart at the council-meeting.
 85. The good man does not break his word,
 86. and one should never speak before one knows what will truly bring relief,
 87. such is a leader with his courage.
 88. And all will be well for the one who seeks favor and comfort from the Father above,
 89. with whom alone all stability dwells.

From Old English to Middle English

Old English came to England as the **West Germanic** languages of Angles and Saxons. After about **790**, more and more **Danes** and Norwegian "**Vikings**" settled in northern and eastern England, as well as Scotland and Ireland. **Alfred**, leader of mostly Saxon **Wessex** in the south, succeeded in bringing these new arrivals into the **Church** and united them with English-speaking society around **880**. Meanwhile, other Norwegian settlers had found a new home in western France. Coming from the North, these became known as **Normans** (North men) and the region in France where they lived received their name, **Normandy**. In **1066**, **William of Normandy** claimed the throne of England after the death of **Edward the Confessor** and won it in the **Battle of Hastings** against Harold. This whole saga is the subject of the [Bayeux Tapestry](#).

William took control of England, and gave its land to his companions without regard for the rights and legal titles of the Anglo-Saxons. Very quickly, the entire **ruling class** of England (in state and Church) was of **Norman** origin, spoke **French**, and had strong roots in France. For almost 150 years, the **English** language was spoken but **not written**. The government of England was done using **French** while **Latin** was the language of the Church and of legal records. During this time, the English language grew simpler in grammar and slowly began to absorb many new words from French and Latin. Today that new language is called "**Middle English**."

In France and in the French-speaking English court, **literature** developed. The old heroic poems were soon overshadowed by “**romances**” in which stories of **knights’** heroic deeds of “**chivalry**” gave equal importance to their “**courtesy**.” Romances set in the court of **King Arthur** with its **Round Table** developed, first in verse thanks to **Chretien de Troyes**, then in prose. The great love story of **Tristan and Iseult** was expanded into a huge prose romance clearly designed to entertain rich people with much spare time. **Love** thus became as important a theme as heroism, and more interesting because it led to intense self-analysis and reflection on the **tension** between **passion** and one's social **obligations**. This new experience of “**romantic love**” (**courtly love**) first developed in the poems written by the **troubadors** in southern France (**Provence**).

13th century English society saw some vital developments. Early in the century King John lost the trust of the barons (most powerful lords) by his poor rule. In 1215, they and the merchants of London joined to force the king to sign an agreement guaranteeing their rights and freedom, **Magna Carta**. This document became a powerful symbol of the limitations of the English monarch in later centuries and has been celebrated in the United States as the origin of the ideals of **equality and justice**. By limiting and defining the power of the king, as well as by bringing together landowners and city merchants, it played a major role in the development of the English system of government. This was in contrast to the day in **1170** when King **Henry II** was so sure of his power that he sent knights to murder the **Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Becket**, who had challenged what he felt were his rights. He was wrong, as it happened and the Church brought him to his knees.

John might have tried a come-back but died the next year. His son Henry III was only 9 and grew up under the control of the nobles. When he became fully king he began to spend much money financing the Pope's wars and enjoying himself. In 1258, the earl of Leicester, **Simon de Montfort**, led a revolt. The nobles elected a council, called **parliament** (discussion meeting) which took control of the nation's finances, derived from taxes paid by the merchants. In 1265, the king and his allied nobles defeated Simon de Montfort and killed him. Henry died in 1272.

The new king, Edward I, saw that most of his father's income came not from dues paid by the nobility but from **taxes**, paid by people involved in business in the cities. Legally, taxes could only be demanded if those taxed agreed, there was no traditional legal obligation for them to give the king money. The earlier Council was composed of lords. In 1275, Edward summoned a parliament that would include representatives of the “commons” -- “gentry” (land-owning knights from the rural areas) and city merchants. This became the **House of Commons** and its mixed composition made it unique in Europe. From the start, it was agreed that all **laws** (statutes) and **taxes** had to be agreed by the two houses of parliament (lords and commons), that the king could not make or change laws or levy taxes otherwise.

During the 12th and 13th centuries, **cities** expanded; a free class of rich merchants began to develop there, **universities** were founded in **Paris, Bologna, Oxford** and **Cambridge**, much changed. Great “**Gothic**” cathedrals were built across Europe. Philosophers learned Greek from the Arabs and translated the works of **Aristotle** into Latin. The logic and interest in distinguishing between categories they learned from him gave birth to the systematic theology known as “**Scholasticism**.” By the later 13th century, the members of the high classes in England were speaking **English** as their first language, although most could also speak and read **French**. In the late 13th and early 14th centuries

in Italy, **Dante Alighieri** (1265-1321) showed that his native Italian was as capable as Latin of expressing deep emotions and thoughts, in the *Divine Comedy*, especially.

The 14th century

From about 1350, two other Italians were continuing his task: **Petrarch** and **Boccaccio**. **Dante** took the love lyrics that had first been composed by the troubadours of southern France (Provence) and applied their conventions in writing about the lady he was devoted to, **Beatrice**, in his *Vita Nuova*. **Petrarch** is commonly known as the “**Father of Christian Humanism**,” the founder of the **Italian Renaissance**. As a poet writing (like Dante) in Italian, he composed his *Canzoniere* to celebrate a woman named **Laura**. Like Beatrice, Laura died in her youth and the devotion of both poets is idealistic, even mystical. In addition to writing long **narrative poems** that Chaucer adapted in his *Troilus and Criseyde* and the “Knight’s Tale,” Boccaccio gave renaissance Europe a collection of stories about the fall of great men, *De Casibus*, that established the almost senseless fall of a great man from prosperity to ruin as the essence of **tragedy**.

The 14th century was a turbulent century for [England and France](#). In 1327 King Edward II was forced by Parliament to abdicate for failing to rule effectively. He was murdered in prison soon after. His young son became Edward III who in 1338 launched a military campaign against France, the start of what is known as the **Hundred Years' War**. The claim was that the king of England was the legal king of France. The main reason for the war was in fact a need to provide the nobility of England with opportunities for plunder and ransom. In 1346, the English army, armed with longbows, defeated the French at **Crechy**, killing many of the leading noblemen.

In 1347-8 the whole of Europe fell victim to the **Black Death**, which killed between 30 and 50% of the population, leaving some villages completely empty. It is only amazing that society continued to function during such a terrible plague.

Edward III's eldest son, the **Black Prince**, was a ferocious fighter who had won major battles at Bordeaux and Poitiers in 1355-6 but he died suddenly in 1376, and Edward III died in 1377. The new king was the son of the Black Prince, **Richard II**, but he was only 10. He ruled with great difficulty, opposed fiercely by his uncle **Thomas, duke of Gloucester**. Richard's only glorious moment came when he confronted the rebel army of peasants during the **Peasants' Revolt** of 1381, aged only 14. Richard wanted peace with France, so he married a French princess in 1396, though she was only 8. Thomas of Gloucester, hostile to peace, prepared to depose Richard so Richard ordered his murder. Also involved in this plot was Richard's cousin, Henry, son of John of Gaunt, who was sent into exile. On hearing of the death of his father, fearing to lose all his property, Henry raised an army, invaded England and **deposed Richard**. He was murdered in prison soon after. Henry IV had to confront a number of revolts led by other lords. His son **Henry V** returned to France and won a famous battle at **Agincourt** in 1415. He too wed a French princess and it was agreed their son should be king of both England and France. But Henry died when that son was only 6 months old and the ensuing struggle for power led to the **Wars of the Roses**. Meanwhile, **Joan of Arc** helped give new courage to the French and England was driven out of France.

Geoffrey Chaucer (134? – 1400)

Chaucer was born in London in 1343 or so, died in 1400. His family was a merchant family but he grew up in the royal court and spent his life in the king's service. He knew Latin, French and Italian. Having twice been sent to Italy, he was able to bring back books by the 3 great Italian writers and translated (adapted) some of what he found in them. He also translated Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy from Latin.

His adaptation of Boccaccio's Filocolo as Troilus and Criseyde is a work on another scale altogether, 8239 lines of rhyme-royal (seven-line stanzas rhyming ababbcc) in five books, the first major work of English literature and sometimes called the first English novel on account of its concern with the characters' psychology.

The story comes from Boccaccio's Il Filostrato, and it is most intriguing that Chaucer nowhere mentions the name Boccaccio. Instead, in Troilus, he claims to be simply translating a work by a certain Lollius, wrongly assumed in the Middle Ages to have written about Troy, whereas he is in fact radically altering Boccaccio's story to make it deeper and more poetic.

When he began to write Troilus and Criseyde, Chaucer was already fully aware of the need to make the English language into a poetic diction that would be as powerful in expressing emotion and reflexion as the other literary languages he knew. He was familiar with the writings of Ovid, Cicero, Virgil, Macrobius, Boethius, and Alain de Lisle in Latin, with Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio in Italian, with the Romance of the Rose and other French works, as well as with the native English romances. He had travelled, too, his mind was European. The opening lines of Troilus and Criseyde show why John Dryden called Chaucer the "father of English poetry" (in the Preface to his Fables Ancient and Modern of 1700):

The double sorwe of Troilus to tellen,
That was the king Priamus sone of Troye,
In lovinge, how his aventures fellen
Fro woe to wele, and after out of joie,
My purpos is, er that I parte fro ye.
Thesiphone, thou help me for t'endite
These woful vers, that wepen as I write.

To thee clepe I, thou goddess of torment,
Thou cruel Furie, sorwing ever in peyne,
Help me, that am the sorwful instrument,
That helpeth loveres, as I can, to pleyne.
For wel sit it, the sothe for to seyne,
A woful wight to han a drery feere,
And to a sorwful tale, a sory chere.

Chaucer was following in the footsteps of Dante in his attempt to form vernacular English into a poetic language able to stand beside the language of Virgil and the classics.

Troilus and Criseyde is set inside Troy during the Trojan War. In Book 1 of Chaucer's version, one of Priam's sons, Troilus, appears as a young warrior scornful of love, until he glimpses Criseyde in a temple. Love's arrow having wounded him, Troilus suddenly finds himself deeply in love with her. He withdraws to complain alone, but a friend of his, Pandare, overhears him and he admits he is in love with Criseyde. Pandare offers to help Troilus meet her.

Much time elapses as they slowly establish a relationship, until at last Pandare skillfully arranges for them to spend a night together. This represents the first movement, 'from woe to wele' a rise to happiness. Suddenly Criseyde learns that her father, a prophet who has fled to the Greeks, is arranging for her to leave Troy and join him. The lovers are separated by blind destiny. Once in the Greek camp, Criseyde soon turns for protection to a Greek Diomede and although she and Troilus exchange letters, soon she seems to forget him. One day Troilus finds a brooch he gave her fixed in a cloak he has torn from Diomede during the fighting, and knows that she has betrayed him. He tries to kill Diomede, but cannot. Suddenly the book seems to be over, since the love-tale is at an end:

Go, little book, go, little myn tragedye,
Ther God thy makere yet, er that he dye,
So sende might to make in some comedye!
But little book, no making thou n'envie,
But subgit be to alle poesy;
And kiss the steppes, whereas thou seest pace
Virgile, Ovide, Omer, Lucan, Stace.

The remaining stanzas seem to suggest Christian and moralizing readings of the story at odds with the main narratorial tone. Finally comes an invitation to "moral Gower, philosophical Strode" (Chaucer's friends) to correct the work if necessary, and a final prayer translated from Dante's Divine Comedy.

The Canterbury Tales

Once that was completed, he began to compose the Canterbury Tales, presented as a collection of very disparate stories of varying kinds related within the framework of a pilgrimage to Canterbury. A similar external "frame" is found in Boccaccio's Decameron but it is not sure that Chaucer knew that work directly. However, Chaucer never completed the Canterbury Tales, which remained unfinished at his death.

Chaucer offers in the Tales a great variety of literary forms, narratives of different kinds as well as other texts. The pilgrimage framework enriches each tale by setting it in relationship with others, but it would be a mistake to identify the narratorial voice of each tale too strongly with the individual pilgrim who is supposed to be telling it.

After the General Prologue, the Tales follow. The following is a brief outline of some of the most often studied tales.

The work begins with a General Prologue in which the narrator (Chaucer?) arrives at the Tabard Inn in Southwark to set out on a pilgrimage to the shrine of St Thomas Becket at Canterbury, and meets other pilgrims there, whom he describes. In the second part of the General Prologue the inn-keeper proposes that each of the pilgrims tell stories along the road to Canterbury, two each on the way there, two more on the return journey, and that the best story earn the winner a free supper.

The start of the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales in modernized spelling:

1: When that April with his showers soft
2: The drought of March has pierced to the root,
3: And bathed every vein in such liquor
4: Of which vertue engendred is the flower;
5: When Zephyrus eek with his sweet breath
6: Inspired hath in every holt and heath
7: The tender crops, and the young sun
8: Hath in the Ram his half course run,
9: And small fowls make melody,
10: That sleep all the night with open eye
11: (So pricks them Nature in their corages);
12: Then long folk to go on pilgrimages,
13: And palmers for to seek strange strands,
14: To far-off hallows, couth in sundry lands;
15: And specially from every shires end
16: Of England to Canterbury they wend,
17: The holy blissful Martyr for to seek,
18: That them has holpen when that they were sick.

The Knight's Tale: a romance, a condensed version of Boccaccio's *Teseida*, set in ancient Athens. It tells of the love of two cousins, Palamon and Arcite, for the beautiful Emelye; the climax is a mock-battle, a tournament, the winner of which will win her; the gods Mars and Venus have both promised success to one of them. Arcite (servant of Mars) wins, but he dies of wounds after his horse has been frightened by a fury, and in the end Palamon (servant of Venus) marries Emelye. The tale explores the themes of determinism and freedom in ways reminiscent of the use of Boethius for the same purpose in *Troilus and Criseyde*.

The Miller's Prologue and Tale: a *fabliau* (coarse comic tale), about the cuckolding of John the Carpenter by an Oxford student, Nicholas, boarding with him and his wife Alison; Absolon, a young man from the local church, also tries to woo her, but is tricked into kissing her behind instead of her lips. Nicholas has deceived John into believing that Noah's Flood is about to come again, so John is asleep in a tub hanging high in the roof, ready to float to safety. Meanwhile Alison and Nicholas are in bed together. The climax of the tale is one of the finest comic moments in literature, when Absolon burns Nicholas's behind with a hot iron, Nicholas calls for water, John hears, thinks the flood has come, cuts the rope holding his tub, and crashes to the floor, breaking an arm. Only Alison escapes unscathed. The narrator offers no morality.

The Reeve's Prologue and Tale: a *fabliau* about the cuckolding of a miller told by the Reeve (who is a carpenter, and very angry with the Miller for his tale); two Cambridge students punish a dishonest miller by having sex with his wife and daughter while asleep all in one room. Again, the end involves violence, as the miller discovers what has happened but is struck on the head by his wife because his bald pate is all she can see in the dark.

The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale: in her Prologue, the Wife of Bath tells the story of her five marriages, while contesting the anti-feminist attitudes found in books that she quotes; indirectly, she becomes the proof of the truth of those books. Her Tale is a Breton Lay about a knight who rapes a girl, is obliged as punishment to find out what women most desire, learns from an old hag that the answer is "mastery over their husbands" and then has to marry her. She is a "loathly lady" but suddenly becomes beautiful when he gives

her mastery over him after receiving a long lesson on the nature of true nobility. The tale is related to the ideas the Wife of Bath expresses in the Prologue, it is also a kind of "wish-fulfillment" for a woman no longer quite young. (see below, for Gower's version of the same story)

The Clerk's Prologue and Tale: a pathetic tale of popular origin, adapted by Chaucer from a French version of Petrarch's Latin translation of a tale in Boccaccio's Decameron. The unlikely and terrible story of the uncomplaining Griselda who is made to suffer appalling pain and humiliation by her husband Walter. Griselda is of very humble origin; Walter chooses her like God choosing Israel. Suddenly he turns against her, takes away her children, sends her back home, and years later demands that she help welcome the new bride he has decided to marry. Without resisting, she obeys, and at last finds her rights and children restored to her by Walter who says he was just testing her! The narrator cannot decide if she is a model wife for anti-feminists or an image of humanity in the hands of an arbitrary destiny.

The Pardoner's Introduction, Prologue, and Tale: in the Prologue, the Pardoner reveals his own nature as a covetous deceiver; his Tale is a sermon, showing his skill, but he concludes by inviting the pilgrims to give him money and they get angry. In the Tale, a great showpiece of moral rhetoric quite unfitted for such a rogue, he tells an exemplum against greed about three wild young men who set out to kill Death; a mysterious old man they meet tells them they will find him under a tree, but they find there gold instead. One goes to buy wine, and is killed by his two friends on his return; they drink the wine, that he has poisoned, and also die.

The Monk's Prologue and Tale: a series of seventeen "tragedies" of varying length, in the Fall of Princes tradition. The stories come from various sources, including the Bible and Boccaccio, and tell of "the deeds of Fortune" in the unhappy ends of famous people, including some near-contemporaries. At last the Knight stops the series, which claims to illustrate the power of Fortune, but becomes a list of pathetic case-histories.

The Nun's Priest's Prologue, Tale, and Epilogue: a beast-fable told in a variety of styles, mock-heroic and pedantic mainly. In place of the brevity of the ordinary fable (cf Aesop) there are constant digressions and interminable speeches. The main characters are Chauntecleer and his lady Pertelote, a cock and a hen in a farmyard; Chauntecleer dreams of a fox (he has never seen one) and this leads to a debate on the meaning of dreams. A fox then appears, flatters Chauntecleer, then grabs him but the cock suggests he insult the people chasing him and escapes when the fox opens his mouth to speak. The moral of the tale for the reader is left unclear.

The Parson's Prologue and Tale: clearly designed to be the last tale in the collection, this is no "tale" but a long moral treatise translated from two Latin works on Penitence and on the Seven Deadly Sins.

At the end of the Parson's Tale, in the Retraction, the "maker of this book" asks Christ to forgive him: "and namely my translations and enditings of worldly vanities, the which I revoke in my retractions: as is the book of Troilus; the book also of Fame; the book of the xxv ladies; the book of the Duchesse; the book of St Valentine's Day of the Parliament of Birds; the tales of Canterbury, thilke that sowed into sin...".

Yet this Retraction serves to publicize Chaucer's works and had no effect on their later publication and distribution.

The Canterbury Tales has always been among the most popular works of the English literary heritage. When Caxton introduced printing into England, it was the first major secular work that he printed, in 1478, with a second corrected edition following in 1484. This was in turn reprinted three times, before William Thynne published Chaucer's Collected Works in 1532.

In the Reformation period, Chaucer's reputation as a precursor of the Reform movement was helped by the addition of a pro-Reformation Plowman's Tale in a 1542 edition. In 1561, even Lydgate's Siege of Thebes was added. The edition by Thomas Speght in 1598 was the first to offer a glossary; his text was revised in 1602 and this version was reprinted several times over the next hundred years, although Chaucer was not really to the taste of the Augustan readers. The first scholarly edition of the Canterbury Tales was published by Thomas Tyrwhitt in 1775.

In the last year of his life (1700) John Dryden wrote a major appreciation of Chaucer, based mainly on his knowledge of the General Prologue and certain tales which he had adapted into his own age's style:

In the first place, as he is the father of English poetry, I hold him in the same degree of veneration as the Grecians held Homer, or the Romans Virgil. He is a perpetual fountain of good sense; learned in all sciences; and, therefore, speaks properly on all subjects. As he knew what to say, so he knows also when to leave off; a continence which is practiced by few writers, and scarcely by any of the ancients, excepting Virgil and Horace... Chaucer followed Nature everywhere, but was never so bold to go beyond her.... He must have been a man of a most wonderful comprehensive nature, because, as it has been truly observed of him, he has taken into the compass of his Canterbury Tales the various manners and humors (as we now call them) of the whole English nation in his age. Not a single character has escaped him.... there is such a variety of game springing up before me that I am distracted in my choice, and know not which to follow. 'Tis sufficient to say, according to the proverb, that here is God's plenty.

Far more than Boccaccio, Chaucer gave life to the people of his "frame," the pilgrims he introduces in the "General Prologue." The skill with which he portrays people of differing social levels, both secular and religious, has made this the most popular part of the Canterbury Tales. The pilgrims' portraits are often inspired by conventional ideas about the kind of people in various activities found in Chaucer's time. The doctor loves gold, the friar likes money and young girls, but dislikes poor people, the monk enjoys the expensive sport of hunting, while the miller steals corn. By contrast, the clerk (student), parson, the plowman, and in a sense the knight seem almost over-idealized. At the same time, each pilgrim is described with traits that mark them out as individuals.

The Renaissance

After Chaucer, literature continued to be written but there is little that can be read with much pleasure today. In the royal court, courtiers liked to write poetry to display their verbal and emotional skills. All over Europe, Petrarch's *Canzoniere* led to an explosion of love poetry, mostly in the form of "**complaints**" in which a man expresses frustration with his "cruel lady." He loves a woman who does not return his love, or who refuses to remain faithful. "Unrequited love" became the oddly popular subject of thousands of poems, often written in the 14-line **sonnet** form that Petrarch and his Italian imitators made so popular.

In England, the mid-15th century was a time of great social conflict as different branches of the royal family, mostly divided between the dukes of York and Lancaster, fought for the throne in the **Wars of the Roses**. In **1485**, **Henry Tudor** defeated Richard III (the last Plantagenet ruler) and became **Henry VII**. A few years before this, in the mid-**1470s**, **William Caxton** brought printing to London. **Gutenberg** had first introduced printing to Europe in the 1450s, printing the Latin Bible. The books that Caxton printed and sold were almost entirely medieval romances and included the works of Chaucer.

The 16th century

The “**Northern Renaissance**” came to England with a visit by the Dutchman **Erasmus** just before 1500 and led to a new stress being put on **education** in the Latin classics as the best preparation for the leading citizens in the increasingly prosperous towns; “**grammar schools**” were founded for that purpose. Erasmus’s closest friend in England was **Thomas More**, who wrote his **Utopia** for him. Thomas More rose to be Lord Chancellor but he opposed the king when he wanted to separate the English Church from the universal Catholic Church under the Pope, so he was **executed** as a traitor. He is a Catholic **saint**.

Utopia

In 1515 More was sent as a royal ambassador to Flanders (the Netherlands), where he met Peter Gilles, a humanist who was town clerk of Antwerp and a friend of Erasmus. During the months there, he composed the main part of *Utopia*, the description in Latin of an imaginary land of **Nowhere** (in Latin nusquam, in Greek **utopia**) which is now Part II of the completed work. On his return to England he added Part I, a Platonic dialogue introducing some of the work’s main themes. The whole work was published in Louvain in 1516, thanks to Erasmus, and although More had been eager to have it published he expressed great regret a few months later. He perhaps realized that most readers would not be aware of the work’s origins in his own private life, and read it in too simple a way.

More’s *Utopia* is the single most influential Latin work of the Renaissance, and one of the seminal works of modern literature. It was already widely known in Humanist circles before it was translated into English in 1551, about the same time as it was translated into French, German, Italian and Spanish. Like Plato’s *Republic*, it offers the picture of a fictional “other place” in order to provoke reflection on the current state of the reader’s own society. It was written at a time when More was thinking deeply about his own future, and especially about the possibility of being an agent of change for the better in English society. One side of him felt that there were many aspects of contemporary English life that were not acceptable, that had to change; another side told him that he was being an over-optimistic dreamer because human nature was incapable of true goodness. *Utopia* arose out of this inner debate.

More than Plato, however, it was the satiric Greek writings of Lucian of Samosata (125 - 200) that inspired More to write, as they had prompted Erasmus to compose his *Praise of Folly* and as they later gave rise to Jonson’s *Volpone*. Lucian was the Greek writer most widely read and enjoyed in the Renaissance; Erasmus and More both translated many of his works. His sense of irony and his love of challenging intellectual games that were at the same time serious and comic were very close to the spirit of men like Erasmus and More. Lucian’s *True Story*, in which a naively foolish narrator named Lucian relates a

journey to the Moon, clearly underlies Hythloday's narrative. This work inspired many other 'imaginary journeys,' including *Gulliver's Travels*, where readers can never be sure of the author's own opinion, and have to think for themselves.

The other major inspiration for the form of *Utopia* was the account of voyages of discovery to the New World written by **Amerigo Vespucci** and published all over Europe from 1507. The story of his four journeys between 1497 and 1504 made a tremendous impact and earned him the lasting memorial of giving his name to America, a continent that Columbus and Cabot had discovered before him. More had read Vespucci's work, and he makes his main narrator, Raphael Hythloday, a sailor who accompanied Vespucci on the last three of his journeys, and who remained in Brazil when he returned from the fourth; from there he set out on a journey over the Pacific that gave him the chance to visit Utopia.

"U-topia" means "no-place" and More was conscious of the pun with "eu-topia" meaning "good-place". Utopia is nowhere, because it is fictional, but also because it is applicable in every place as a challenge to the way life is being lived there; at the same time, it is nowhere, because no one would ever want or be able to live as the Utopians do. More's Utopia is presented as a good place, but it is not without its limits and problems. The way the word "Utopianism" is used today might seem to imply that More's work is of the idealizing kind, proposing a model of an alternative, perfect society; this is not correct. In many ways, More's Utopia is a terribly inhuman society. In literary history More's work has inspired such famous social satires as Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and Orwell's 1984. Much modern science fiction is either eu-topian or "dystopian" (from "dys-topia" meaning a bad place) but no writer has offered so deeply challenging a text as More.

The **narrator of the first Book** is More himself, or at least a character (persona) called More (in Latin *Morus*); he tells how, in Antwerp, Peter Gilles introduces him to the Portuguese sailor-philosopher Hythloday (hythlos in Greek means "nonsense"). He speaks of Hythloday's stories of the Utopians (and others) as an example of "customs from which our own cities, nations, races, and kingdoms might take example in order to correct their errors." Suddenly, though, he begins to report a discussion that arose there between Hythloday, Peter Gilles, and himself about the possibility of Raphael's usefully serving some king as an advisor on account of the wisdom he has acquired through his experiences.

The first half of Book I, after this introduction, consists of Raphael Hythloday's account of a discussion he was involved in one day during a visit to Cardinal Morton when he was Lord Chancellor. A lawyer commends the English habit of hanging thieves, sometimes 20 at a time. Raphael ventures the opinion that such punishment is unjust since many are forced to steal in order to feed themselves and their families. When the lawyer claims that they could earn money by working, Raphael points out that many crippled soldiers cannot work. The debate extends to the recent spread of enclosures, which has deprived many farm-workers of a job, while those who used to be fed by rich land-owners have been dismissed on account of high grain-prices:

"To make this hideous poverty worse, it exists side by side with wanton luxury. Not only the servants of noblemen, but tradespeople, farmers, and people of every social rank are given to ostentatious extravagance of dress and too much wasteful indulgence in eating. Look at the restaurants, the brothels, and those other places just as bad, the inns, wine-shops and beer-houses. Look at all the crooked games of chance like dice, cards, backgammon, tennis, bowling, and quoits, in which money slips away so fast. Don't all these lead straight to robbery.... If you do not find a cure

for these evils, it is futile to boast of your severity in punishing theft. Your policy may look superficially like justice, but in reality it is neither just nor practical. If you allow young people to be badly brought up, their characters will be gradually corrupted from childhood; and if then you punish them as grown-ups for committing crimes to which their early training has inclined them, what else is this, I ask, but first making them thieves and then punishing them for it?"

Cardinal Morton asks Raphael to suggest an alternative. Again he condemns the death penalty, then reminds the Cardinal that the Romans used to send criminals to work camps; he goes on to suggest that thieves might become slaves not allowed to possess money. The audience is ready to laugh at this foreigner's odd ideas, until the Cardinal expresses his general agreement, when suddenly everyone is full of praise. A fool turns the debate into an anti-monastic joke, by suggesting that the poor should be fed by the rich monasteries, an idea that makes the Friar very angry. It has to be remembered that England had no prisons in the modern sense until the 19th century, and the problem of social welfare when there is mass unemployment remains largely unsolved even today.

For Raphael, this story is the proof that he has no future as a courtier; for the reader, it is a preparation for the skills needed to read Book 2 correctly. In both books the text claims to record things said by Hythloday; in both he is arguing an extreme, idealistic opinion, and in both the figure of More opposes a differing, more pragmatic opinion.

It would be wrong, though, to assume that the More who speaks in the text of Utopia always expresses the opinions of Thomas More the author. Hythloday himself has two sides: he is a fanatical idealist, using the example of Utopia to support his demands for radical social change, and he is also bitterly disillusioned with European society, so that in his fury against the folly of the courtiers at Cardinal Morton's table, he does not even notice the positive example of the uncorrupted statesman offered in Cardinal Morton himself. While Hythloday is a purist, putting his finger on many examples of political immorality in the second half of Book I, More argues in favour of compromise. Hythloday says there is no place for honest men in politics (in court), to which More replies:

"That's how things go in society, and in the councils of princes. If you cannot pluck up bad ideas by the root, if you cannot cure long-standing evils as completely as you would like, you must not therefore abandon society. Don't give up the ship in a storm because you cannot direct the winds. And don't arrogantly force strange ideas on people who you know have set their minds on a different course from yours. You must strive to influence policy indirectly, handle the situation tactfully, and thus what you cannot turn to good, you may at least make less bad. For it is impossible to make all institutions good unless you make all men good, and that I don't expect to see for a long time yet."

This debate can be seen as an expression of Thomas More's own struggle at this time, in his decision as to the future. For the next 15 years or so, More certainly compromised and acted as a skilled politician, in his rise to the highest lay position in English society as Lord Chancellor. The last months, though, saw him standing firm on a principle that he could not abandon. Utopia's More and Hythloday stand, then, in ironic relationship to one another. Each of them is at the same time right and wrong, wins and loses. Biographically, Hythloday and Morus are both More.

Book II is the description of the communistic way of life on the island of Utopia that Raphael hopes will support his radical social opinions expressed at the end of Book I:

"As long as you have private property, and as long as money is the measure of all things, it is really not possible for a nation to be governed justly or happily. For justice cannot exist where all the best things in life are held by the worst citizens; nor can anyone be happy where property is limited to a few, since those few are always uneasy and the many are utterly wretched.... Thus I am wholly convinced that unless private property is entirely done away with, there can be no fair or just distribution of goods, nor can mankind be happily governed."

This is one of the main starting-points for the fantasy of Utopia. Writing at the time when modern capitalism was just beginning to take shape in Europe, Thomas More tried to imagine a society in which all the mechanisms of capital were abolished. At the beginning of the century in which people began actively to move off the land and into the cities, he imagined a society in which no such choice was possible, since in Utopia all are obliged to take their turn in the fields. Just as conspicuous consumption and luxurious life-styles were spreading, he made Utopia a country in which all people live at an equal level of austerity.

There is no place for individual desires or private will in Utopia, since the private good is completely subject to the common good. In many ways, as critics have often remarked, Utopia is an extension into society of some of the ideals that existed in the monasteries, and it is no coincidence that Hythloday ends his story with a speech denouncing pride. Only in Utopia, every form of individuality is seen as pride.

Book II, much more widely read than Book I, begins with a description of Utopia that makes it clear how similar it is in many ways to England in its size and disposition. Amaurot, the capital, is set on a river similar to the Thames, for example. Book II begins with general descriptions of Utopian society, the social hierarchy, the relationship between town and country, and the daily timetable. It is very easy to pick holes in the details of the descriptions. We are told, for example, that when the founder of Utopia, Utopus, first conquered it, it was not an island until he caused a channel fifteen miles wide to be dug to separate it from the continent. We may wonder what was done with the huge quantities of earth and rock removed! There is competition between the householders living in different streets, to produce the best gardens, yet the gardens are always open to anyone who cares to go in and take anything. More (or Hythloday) is clearly not painting a very precise picture but it is striking to note how many aspects of life in Utopia resemble More's own family life.

The main difficulty in reading Utopia today comes from the way in which Utopian society is so similar to some of the most repressive and totalitarian systems that recent history has produced. There may be readers who do not care that everyone must wear identical clothing, and must move houses every ten years, or that intimate family meals are strongly discouraged, meals being taken by 30 families together in neighborhood dining halls. More difficult to accept are customs such as the internal passport system:

"Anyone who wants to visit friends in another city, or simply to see the country, can easily obtain permission from his superiors, unless for some special occasion he is needed at home. They travel together in groups, taking a letter from the prince granting leave to travel and fixing a day of return... Anyone who takes upon himself to leave his district without permission, and is caught without the prince's letter, is treated with contempt, brought back as a runaway, and severely punished. If he is bold enough to try it a second time, he is made a slave."

It is the Utopians' attitude towards these slaves that arouses most critics' anger:

"Slaves do the slaughtering and cleaning in the slaughter-houses: citizens are not allowed to do such work. The Utopians feel that slaughtering our fellow-creatures gradually destroys the sense of compassion, which is the finest sentiment of which our human nature is capable... In the dining-halls, slaves do all the particularly dirty and heavy work."

Utopia is in the fortunate position of producing far more food than it needs; it keeps two years' supply in stock, and sells the rest abroad. In exchange Utopia purchases iron ore, gold and silver. It never experiences a foreign-exchange deficit, and has accumulated vast quantities of gold. This is used to hire mercenary soldiers from abroad when Utopia is at war, or to buy off the invading army, or to bribe parts of it to attack the rest. Only how to store their fortune? Gold is employed to make fetters for criminals, turning it into a sign of disgrace instead of dignity, for the worst criminals wear crowns and chains of gold, the signs of the highest power and honor in Europe. Jewels and precious stones are the playthings of children, who naturally give them up on becoming adult. Added vividness comes from a description of the visit to Utopia of foreign envoys, who arrive dressed in gold chains and are naturally taken for the slaves of their servants. Cultural values and conventional attitudes are thus challenged by difference.

Next comes a long section on the moral philosophy practiced in Utopia, and their delight in learning which Hythloday was able to encourage by the classical books that he brought. Thanks to his books, too, the Utopians were able to re-invent for themselves the art of printing.

In the sections on the care of the sick, and on marriage customs, there are ideas which show clearly that More is not simply describing a perfect model for his own human society. People in Utopia who are incurably sick and in great pain are encouraged by the state to put an end to their lives by a form of sanctioned suicide (euthanasia). If two people, after marriage, find that they have made a mistake and want to marry other partners, divorce and remarriage is permitted. Divorce is also permitted in the case of adultery by one of the parties.

"Women do not marry till they are eighteen, nor men till they are twenty-two. Premarital sex by either men or women, if discovered and proved, is severely punished and those guilty are forbidden to marry during their whole lives, unless the Prince by his pardon lightens the sentence... the reason is that they suppose few people would join in married love, with confinement to a single partner and all the petty annoyances that married life involves, unless they were strictly restrained from a life of promiscuity. In choosing marriage partners, they solemnly and seriously follow a custom which seemed to us foolish and absurd in the extreme. Whether she is a widow or a virgin, the bride-to-be is shown naked to the groom by a responsible and respectable matron; and similarly some respectable man presents the groom naked to his future bride. We laughed at this custom and called it absurd; but they were just as amazed at the folly of other nations.... They leave all the rest of her body covered with clothes and estimate the attractiveness of a woman from a mere handbreadth of her person, the face, which is all they can see."

Finally, Hythloday notes that adultery (sexual relations between a married person and some other partner) is punished by the strictest form of slavery, while a second conviction

is punished by death. Death is also the punishment for rebellion by slaves.

Turning to international relations, Hythloday tells that Utopia never makes any treaties with other lands:

"In that part of the world, treaties and alliances between kings are not generally observed with much good faith. . . . In Europe, of course, the dignity of treaties is everywhere kept sacred and inviolable, especially in these regions where the Christian religion prevails. This is partly because the kings are all so just and virtuous, partly also because of the reverence and fear that everyone feels towards the ruling Popes. Just as the Popes them-selves never promise anything which they do not most conscientiously perform, so they command all other chiefs of state to abide by their promises in every way. If someone quibbles over it, they compel him to obey by means of pastoral censure and sharp reproof. The Popes rightly declare that it would be particularly disgraceful if people who are specifically called 'the faithful' did not adhere faithfully to their solemn word. But in that New World nobody trusts treaties. The greater the formalities, the more numerous and solemn the oaths, the sooner the treaty will be broken...."

It is worth comparing these lines with the ideas of Machiavelli. In Utopia, the irony of this passage is particularly interesting; is Hythloday being sarcastic? Or is he being particularly unrealistic? Is he saying what he thinks, or is his author manipulating his words? In the next chapter, about the Utopians' strategies in warfare, we find the same Machiavellian spirit at work: "If they overcome the enemy by skill and cunning, they rejoice mightily." The Utopians offer high rewards for the killing of their enemies' king, or his capture. This sows discord and distrust. Yet if they have to fight, they are very brave.

The section on religion has interested many critics, since More imagines a non-Christian civic religion of great nobility and purity:

"Most believe in a single power, unknown, eternal, infinite, inexplicable, far beyond the grasp of the human mind, and diffused throughout the universe, not physically, but in influence. Him they call 'Father' and to him alone they attribute the origin, increase, change, and end of all visible things.' The name given to this supreme being is Mithra, a name taken from Persian religion."

From Hythloday and his companions, the Utopians heard about Christ for the first time, and were deeply impressed, especially by the community of goods practiced in the monasteries. Some of them were baptized, but there was no priest to give the other sacraments. Tolerance is important; a Utopian who began to preach that non-Christians would go to hell was quickly imprisoned and exiled.

Individual freedom of religion was first established by Utopus himself, but within limits: "The only exception he made was a positive and strict law he made against any person who should sink so far below the dignity of human nature as to think that the soul perishes with the body, or that the universe is ruled by mere chance, rather than divine providence." In More's Europe, these two ideas were subjects of intense debate; they were considered to be revealed truths that had to be believed by all Christians, yet thinkers could offer no convincing rational proof of them.

In conclusion, Hythloday compares the equality found in Utopia with the gross inequalities of European society, in a particularly powerful speech:

"What kind of justice is it when a nobleman or a goldsmith or moneylender, or someone else who earns his living by doing either nothing at all or something completely useless to society, gets to live a life of luxury and grandeur? While a laborer, a carter, a carpenter, or a farmer works so hard and so constantly that even a beast of burden would perish under the load; yet this work of theirs is so necessary that no country could survive a year without it. But they earn so meager a living and lead such miserable lives that a beast of burden would really be better off. Beasts do not have to work every minute, and their food is not much worse; in fact they like it better. Besides, they do not have to worry about their future. Working men not only have to sweat and suffer without present reward, but agonize over the prospect of a penniless old age. Their daily wage is inadequate even for their present needs, so there is no possible chance of their saving toward the future."

Hythloday explains the general refusal of people to share what they have with others as a result of Pride. The figure of More concludes with some comments on the tale he has just heard:

"It seemed to me that not a few of the customs and laws he had described were quite absurd... but my chief objection was to the basis of their whole system, that is, their communal living and their moneyless economy. This one thing alone takes away all the nobility, magnificence, splendor, and majesty which (in the popular view) are considered the true ornaments of any nation.... I cannot agree with everything he said. Yet I confess there are many things in the Commonwealth of Utopia which I wish our own country would imitate, though I don't really expect it will."

“

The English Reformation

Henry VII died in 1509 and his son, **Henry VIII**, initiated the **Reformation** in England by separating the English Church from the control of Rome (in order to be free to **divorce** his Spanish wife because she seemed unable to give him a son) and abolishing all the [monasteries](#) in order to steal their land and wealth. A more idealistic kind of **Protestantism** arose across Europe, led by **Luther**, **Zwingli**, **Calvin** in Germany and Switzerland. Between 1548 when Henry died and 1558, England was first drawn towards Protestantism by those ruling in the name of the child **Edward VI** (Henry's only son despite his **six marriages**) but when he died aged 17, in 1553, his older half-sister **Mary** tried to bring back Catholicism. By this time, western Europe was **divided** politically and culturally between the **Catholic South** and the **Protestant North**. While the discovery of the **New World** by **Christopher Columbus** in **1492** and its subsequent exploitation brought **Spain** and Portugal immense wealth, the merchant cities of north Germany and the Baltic were in fact far more dynamic. The English merchants felt no affinity for the conservative Catholicism of the south and were delighted when "bloody" Mary died in **1558**, after marrying the king of Spain, and her Protestant half-sister **Elizabeth** became the last Tudor monarch.

The Elizabethan Era

Elizabeth was only 25 when she became Queen, she reigned until **1603** and left the memory of the "**Elizabethan Era**" as a time of national prosperity, full of a new patriotism. Many felt that God had a special plan for Protestant England. The greatest crisis came in

1588 when Catholic Spain sent a large fleet, the "[Armada](#)," to conquer England. Thanks to the skill of the English sailors, and a sudden violent storm, the Armada was defeated.

Edmund Spenser

Born in London, Edmund Spenser (1552? - 1599) was educated at the newly-founded Merchant Taylors School (a school opened in 1562 for the children of tradesmen) under its famous master Mulcaster. He then went to Pembroke Hall, Cambridge. He obtained a place in Leicester's household (1579), and perhaps had some contact with Philip Sidney there, before being named secretary to the newly-appointed lord deputy (governor) of Ireland, Lord Grey of Wilton, in 1580. From then until his death he only returned to London three times: once for over a year in 1589, just after he had bought Kilcolman Castle; again in 1596; he died during a final visit in 1599, after his Irish home had been destroyed by rebels in 1598. He was buried in Westminster Abbey, at the expense of the earl of Essex.

He married once just before leaving for Ireland; in 1594 he married Elizabeth Boyle, who seems to be the subject of the sonnets *Amoretti* and the bride of *Epithalamion*. Otherwise, little is known of Spenser's private life, apart from what his poems claim to tell us of him. He seems to have begun writing during his Cambridge days, translating some sonnets and "visions" by Petrarch and the French poet Du Bellay. His first major work was *The Shepheardes Calendar*, published in 1579. During the 1589 London visit, which may have been prompted by a visit made to him in Ireland that year by Sir Walter Raleigh, he published the first three books of *The Faerie Queene* which he had been writing for a number of years. Disappointed at not being given a job in London, he returned to Ireland. In 1595, *Amoretti* and *Epithalamion* (marriage song) were published together. In 1596 he seems to have returned to London deliberately to publish the next three books of *The Faerie Queene*, staying at the house of the earl of Essex. In 1609, a folio edition of *The Faerie Queene* was published, containing a fragment of Book VII, the so-called *Mutabilitie Cantos*, written in the same meter as the epic.

Italian epic poetry

Spenser's *Faerie Queene* is rooted in the European Renaissance struggle to produce a modern epic poem worthy to stand beside the works of Homer and Virgil. A survey of this should precede discussion of Spenser's own work.

Mention has been made of the new attitude toward the poetry of Classical times. In the 16th century, "emulation" (striving to do as well as or better than the best others can do) was an acceptable form of aspiration. The highest form of poetry, since Aristotle, had been recognized as the epic and it was humiliating not to be able to point to any contemporary works equal to those of Homer or Virgil. Throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, poets in every part of Europe strove (in vain) to produce such a work.

For Spenser and his contemporaries, the most impressive modern epic was the *Orlando Furioso* (*Roland Insane*) (1532) by Ludovico Ariosto (1474-1535) which had been inspired by an earlier poem by the fifteenth century poet Boiardo, *Orlando Innamorato* (*Roland in love*) published in 1495. The court of the Este family at Ferrara in the later 15th century was deeply interested in the 12th century French romances about Brittany, as well as the heroic stories found in the *Chansons de Geste*. Matteo Maria Boiardo (1441-94) combined the two in his unfinished poem about Roland in love.

A summary of Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato*:

Angelica, the pagan daughter of the king of Cathay, arrives at Charlemagne's court intending to carry off christian knights to serve her father; several, including Orlando, try to woo her. Angelica drinks from a magic fountain and falls in love with Rinaldo, who drinks from the opposite fountain, which makes him detest her so much that he runs away until they arrive at her home. There Orlando comes to rescue her from a dangerous siege, carrying her off to France where Charlemagne is fighting Agramant, king of the Moors. Angelica and Rinaldo again drink from magic fountains, in the reverse order, so that he now loves her, and she detests him. Orlando fights Rinaldo until Charlemagne stops them, entrusting Angelica to Namor, duke of Bavaria.

Ludovico Ariosto (1474-1535) undertook to continue this strange story for the Este family, who claimed to be descended from Rogero, one of the heroes of French heroic verse. Ariosto's poem is one of the greatest works of European literature, and has always been greatly admired, although serious-minded critics have at times found it rather too entertaining for their taste. Its opening lines inspired not only Spenser, but also Milton:

I sing of knights and ladies, of love and arms,
of courtly chivalry, of courageous deeds,
all from the time the Moors crossed the sea
from Africa and wrought havoc in France.
I shall tell of the anger, the fiery rage
of young Agramant their king, whose boast it was
he would avenge himself on Charles, Emperor of Rome,
for King Trojan's death.
I shall tell of Orlando, too, setting down
what has never before been recounted in prose or rhyme
(...)

A summary of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*:

As the poem begins, Orlando hears that Angelica has escaped from Namor, and neglects the call of his duty to Charlemagne to follow her. Meanwhile Rogero has fallen in love with Bradamante, Rinaldo's sister who is a warrior, and their adventures are interwoven with those of Orlando and Angelica. Angelica finds a wounded Moorish foot-soldier, Medoro, and falls in love with him while caring for his wounds. They marry and pass an idyllic honeymoon alone in the woods. Orlando happens to hear of this and becomes mad; he runs naked through the country, destroying everything. At last Astolfo makes a journey to the moon with St John, riding on the hippogriff, and finds there the land of lost things; he recovers Orlando's lost wits, and brings him back to his senses in time to kill Agramant in a final battle.

Ariosto tells the tale with humour and considerable irony. Spenser failed to follow him in this, but took the external romance material of love and knightly prowess, and greatly increased the moral and allegorical levels of meaning. Ariosto's work was so popular that it was published in 154 editions before 1600 and inspired a number of other Italian poets to write long verse romances on similar topics.

The Faerie Queene

When he published the first three books of *The Faerie Queene* in 1589, Spenser prefaced them with a letter addressed to Sir Walter Raleigh in which he outlined what he claimed to be his "whole intention". The letter even includes a narrative account of his plan for the final, 12th book. This letter, confused and confusing, was not included in the 1596 edition of the completed six books, and it ought not to be taken as a reliable guide to what we find in the existing text. Yet the 1596 edition's title page still proclaims that the poem contains 12 books "fashioning 12 moral virtues" which echoes the words of the letter to Raleigh:

The general end therefore of all the book is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline. (...) To some I know this method will seem displeasent, which had rather have good discipline delivered plainly in way of precepts, or sermoned at large, as they use, than thus cloudily enwrapped in allegorical devices.

The claim that this poem is a "courtesy book" designed to instruct the noble reader should not be taken too narrowly. The poem is first and foremost one of the greatest works of imaginative literature in English. Spenser makes an apology in his letter for the use of "an historical fiction", realizing that an opinion was growing up in certain protestant circles against every form of literary imagination. His own genius lies in the recreation of images, and this is a fruitful way of approaching the poem.

The Faerie Queene is full of images taken from classical poetry, from the Bible, and from the medieval romance tradition; in many ways, Spenser recomposes the images, making them yield new meanings through the use of various kinds of allegory, religious, moral and historical. As moral allegory, the kind that Spenser learned from Tasso, events such as journeys and battles can be interpreted in terms of the quests and struggles in individual human existence. As historical allegory events in the poem refer indirectly to contemporary society or recent political events in Spenser's world. There are also moments when we encounter simple personification, as in characters named "Ignorance" or "Despair." Yet all the events can and must be read first as part of the poem's on-going fictional narrative. The virtue that forms part of the title of each Book of the work has in some cases caused more trouble than it should in interpreting the contents!

The work in its surviving form, if we exclude the *Mutability Cantos*, consists of six Books, each containing 12 cantos, and each with an introductory prologue of a few stanzas. Following the example of Ariosto and almost all the other Italians, Spenser writes in epic stanzas. The "Spenserian stanza" used in the *Faerie Queene* was his own creation, and represents a tremendous poetical achievement. There are nine lines rhyming ababbcbcc, all but the last having 10 syllables, the last 12. The use of only three rhymes in each stanza parallels the pattern of rhyme royal (*Troilus and Criseyde*) and ottava rima (*Wyatt*) stanzas. Equally important is the variety employed in the use of end-stopping and enjambment, by which Spenser maintains the rhythm of his narrative:

Lo I the man, whose Muse whilome did mask,	(previously)
As time her taught, in lowly Shepherdes weeds,	(clothes)
Am now enforst a far unfitter task,	
For trumpets stern to change mine Oaten reeds,	
And sing of Knights and Ladies gentle deeds;	(noble)

Whose praises having slept in silence long,
Me, all too mean, the sacred Muse areeds
To blazon broad amongst her learned throng:
Fierce wars and faithful loves shall moralize my song.

(instructs)

When he published the sometimes satirical Shepheardes Calendar, Spenser had remained nameless. Now, publishing his epic, he turns like Virgil to a nobler task.

The first Book begins:

A Gentle Knight was pricking on the plain,
Y-clad in mighty arms and silver shield,
Wherein old dints of deep wounds did remain,
The cruel marks of many a bloody field;
Yet arms till that time did he never wield:
His angry steed did chide his foaming bit,
As much disdainng to the curb to yield:
Full jolly knight he seemed, and fair did sit,
As one for knightly jousts and fierce encounters fit.

This First Book tells in a quite new way the traditional story of Saint George, the patron saint of England; Redcrosse (so called from his coat of arms, that of England) is no mere martial hero. His story epitomizes the Holiness which in the Calvinistic view of Spenser's protestantism was the essential quality of every true Christian. Part of Redcrosse's problems come from his difficulty in distinguishing between Una and Duessa; Una is clearly a representation of the "true" Church, veiled and often helpless compared with her corrupt and deceptive rival.

The adventures of Redcrosse depict the history of the salvation of an individual soul; at first content to imitate others (using old armour), the hero does not realize his own limitations. He is able to see through the superficial deceptions of the House of Pride, all the temptations of worldly society, but is easily made prisoner by Orgoglio. The giant's name also means "pride" but in this case it is theological pride, the sin of thinking that a person can live a good life entirely by their own strength. From Orgoglio's prison, Redcrosse is rescued by Arthur who represents God's special providence for England, and so for all humanity.

Redcrosse recognizes that he is utterly weak and helpless, and it is at this point that he finds himself tempted by Despair. Una, acting as the Grace offered in the true Christian Church, saves him from this and brings him to the House of Holiness where he is restored to health and strength. Now he is able to live by a strength given by faith, not simply by his own human nature. Even so, during the fight with the dragon which is part of the original St George legend but also recalls one of the fundamental images of the Christian victory in the Apocalypse, Redcrosse is in frequent need of supernatural refreshment.

During the three days of the fight, the well of life and the tree of life restore the exhausted hero; these indicate that in the Church there are the "Means of Grace" or sacraments by which the individual Christian is day after day renewed in his fight against Satan. Thus Redcrosse gains a victory and is able to gain the hand of Una; but the marriage is delayed, both for the demands of the poem's structure, and because the wedding in question cannot take place until the Last Judgement.

None of the other five books has the unity or the self-contained power of the first; yet it is wrong to isolate Book I for the intention of Spenser goes beyond it and the other five books certainly expand and challenge its almost too tidy vision of human existence.

William Shakespeare (1564 – 1616)

Theater before Shakespeare

In the Middle Ages, drama was mainly church-centered, Mystery Plays performed by citizens in the streets. Then came the Morality Plays, before grammar school students began to act versions of Comedies by Plautus and Terence, then of Tragedies by Seneca and Euripides in college halls or great lords' houses. Then Shakespeare developed a form of tragedy inspired by the Boethian idea of Fortune's ever-turning wheel, expressed before him in the *Mirror for Magistrates* etc, and found in Chaucer, the themes of the Fall of Princes.

William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare (1564 - 1616) was baptized, according to the parish register of Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon, on April 26, 1564. His birthday has been traditionally celebrated on April 23, St George's Day, although there is no documentary basis for this. Seven brothers and sisters were baptized in the same church, of whom three died in childhood. The youngest, Edmund Shakespeare, born in 1580, became an actor in London and was buried in Southwark Cathedral in 1607.

Stratford was an important market centre, with a population of nearly two thousand inhabitants. Shakespeare's father was John Shakespeare, his mother Mary was a member of the Arden family on whose estates John Shakespeare's father had worked. John Shakespeare was living in Stratford by 1552, with a business making gloves and curing leather; he also dealt in wool. His house in Henley Street, Stratford, can still be seen; it is known as the Birthplace, since William Shakespeare is thought to have been born there. In 1568 John Shakespeare was high bailiff (mayor) of the town, but he seems to have had hard times in the late 1580s and early 1590s. He died in 1601.

There was a grammar school in Stratford, the King's New School, where William probably studied free of charge for a number of years, mostly mastering Latin grammar, literature and history. The school-room can still be seen.

Late in 1582, in his 19th year, William was given permission to marry a local girl, Anne Hathaway, then aged 26, without the usual three weeks' delay, by a special bishop's bond. On May 26, 1583, their first daughter Susanna was baptized. On February 2, 1585 his twins Hamnet (his only son, who died in 1596) and Judith were baptized, receiving the names of close friends of the family.

Nothing is known of how Shakespeare came to London and into the theater. He may have been tutor to a Catholic family in the north of England for a time. He had probably become an actor in London by 1589, if not before. From summer 1592 until spring 1594, a high number of plague deaths kept the London theaters closed. During this time of forced

inactivity, Shakespeare published his two long poems, *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, both dedicated to Henry Wriothesley, the 3rd Earl of Southampton (see page 228). After this the only poems written by Shakespeare are *The Sonnets*.

At Christmas 1594 a newly constituted company of actors performed twice before the Queen, for which they received 20 pounds, the receipt being signed by William Shakespeare, William Kempe (the company's famous clown), and Richard Burbage. The Theatre was constructed in 1576 by James Burbage, Richard's father and in 1594 Richard Burbage became the leading actor of the Lord Chamberlain's Men which performed at The Theatre until 1597.

In 1598 we know that Shakespeare acted in Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour*, and in 1603 in his *Sejanus*, but on the whole he was not famous as an actor. He is said to have played the role of Hamlet's father's ghost.

The company was first called the 'Lord Chamberlain's Men' in 1597, when George, Lord Hunsdon received that title. At first they were known as 'Lord Hunsdon's men'. At the end of 1596, they presented all six of the Christmas plays at court and they, together with Henslowe's Admiral's Men, were the leading actors of the London theatrical scene, especially after a play presented by Pembroke's Men at the Swan early in 1597, *The Isle of Dogs*, brought about the arrest of Ben Jonson and the suppression of that company.

When the lease on the land where the Theatre stood expired in April 1597, two months after the death of James Burbage, the Chamberlain's Men could not renew it. So on 28 December, 1598, they secretly tore down the building and carried the main beams across the Thames to use in building the Globe. At this time, when money must have been a problem, the main actors including Shakespeare made themselves into a company, each one of the shareholders being part-owner. Shakespeare's share gave him ten percent of any profits they made.

Nothing is known of Shakespeare's family life; there is no sign that his wife or daughters came to live with him in London, where he stayed in houses close to the Theatre, then to the Globe. By 1597, Shakespeare had made enough money to buy the second largest house in Stratford, the Great House in New Place; this house was torn down by its 18th century owner, who hated tourists! He also bought farm land and another smaller house later; from 1597 his family seems to have been living in New Place, and he also made investments locally.

One major change in the actors Shakespeare was writing his plays for occurred in 1599-1600 when the clown Will Kempe left the company, perhaps after some kind of row about his old-fashioned style of clowning; in his place came Robert Armin, who seems to have been a more refined comedian with a fine singing voice.

When King James became king in 1603, he quickly made Shakespeare's company into The King's Men. When James entered London for his coronation in 1604, Shakespeare and eight other members of the company were in the procession, wearing the king's livery. By 1609, the King's Men were using the hall of the old Blackfriars monastery, an independent area to the west of the City, as their main playhouse; it gave greater intimacy to plays designed, perhaps, for a more select audience. Certainly entry cost more. Also in 1609, Shakespeare's 154 *Sonnets* were published in a quarto volume by Thomas Thorpe.

It seems that Shakespeare retired from London to live in Stratford in about 1611, after

writing *The Tempest* and parts of *Henry VIII*. In January 1615 (or 1616?) he made his will, leaving most of his land to his favourite daughter Susanna, who had married John Hall of Stratford in 1607 and had one daughter, Elizabeth. His other daughter, Judith, only married in 1616. She received only a little in the will, since Shakespeare tried to transmit all his land as a complete estate to his grandsons; after he died Judith had three sons, but all died young and the family line ceased, since Elizabeth Hall had no children.

The only mention of Shakespeare's wife in the will, "I give unto my wife my second best bed with the furniture," has been much discussed. It may be that his widow had automatic rights during her lifetime to a third of her dead husband's estate. After Judith married, some changes were made to the will on 25 March 1616, and here Shakespeare's signature is very shaky. Less than a month later he died, on April 23, 1616, and was buried on April 25 inside the parish church, near the altar, in a place of honor because he was one of the churchwardens of the parish. Directly over the coffin a stone was laid with the words:

Good frend for Jesus sake forbear
To digg the dust enclosed heare.
Blese be the man that spares these stones
And curst be he that moves my bones

This request seems to have been respected, the stone is still in place. A few years later a fine monument was set up on the wall of the church near the grave, offering the first portrait of Shakespeare that we have. His hand is holding a quill pen, showing that he is being celebrated as a writer. The Dutchman who made the statue, Gheerart Janssen, had a shop in Southwark near the Globe, so he perhaps knew Shakespeare personally.

In 1623 his colleagues of the King's Men, John Heminges and Henry Condell, with others, brought out a complete edition of Shakespeare's plays in folio size, the so-called First Folio containing 36 plays (not *Pericles* or the poems). Further editions in folio form followed in 1632, 1664, 1685. In his lifetime 19 of the plays had been published separately, in small quarto volumes, some twelve of them offered as official versions ("good quartos"), the others published without permission and in some cases representing a very different version from that found in the Folios ("bad quartos"). The plays in the First Folio seem to have been very carefully prepared for printing from the best possible copies available at that time; the big question, about which there is much debate, is how much the plays had been revised by Shakespeare or others over the years.

1) Early Chronicle Histories 1590-3

King John (perhaps before 1590)

The First "Tetralogy":

1 Henry VI

2 Henry VI

3 Henry VI

Richard III (tragedy)

2) Early Classical works 1590-4

Titus Andronicus (tragedy)

Venus and Adonis (poem published 1593)

The Rape of Lucrece (poem published 1594)

3) Early Italian Comedies 1590-5

The Taming of the Shrew
The Comedy of Errors
Love's Labours Lost
Two Gentlemen of Verona

4) Early Romances 1594-6

Romeo and Juliet (tragedy)
A Midsummer Night's Dream
The Merchant of Venice
The Sonnets (poems)

5) The Second "Tetralogy" 1596-8

Richard II (tragedy)
Henry IV Part I
Henry IV Part II
Henry V

6) Comedies 1598-1604

Much Ado About Nothing
As You Like It
Twelfth Night
The Merry Wives of Windsor

Followed by the "problem comedies":

All's Well That Ends Well (1602-4)
Measure For Measure (1604)

7) Tragedies 1600-8

Julius Caesar (1600)
Hamlet (1601)
Troilus and Cressida (1602)
Othello (1604)
King Lear (1605)
Macbeth (1606)
Antony and Cleopatra (1606)
Coriolanus (1607)
Timon of Athens (1608)

8) The Late Romances 1608-11

Pericles
Cymbeline
The Winter's Tale

The Tempest

Shakespeare's Sonnets

Nothing is known of the origin of these sonnets; no one can say whether they are autobiographical in any direct sense. Many were surely written in the mid-1590s, at the same time as plays like *Romeo and Juliet*, which includes several sonnets. The sonnets were not published until 1609, however, and again it is not clear if Shakespeare wanted them published. It is not even certain that they are in the order he wanted but no other edition was published in his lifetime.

Many have been startled to realize that most of Shakespeare's sonnets are addressed by a **male speaker** (a poet) to a younger **nobleman**. The word "love" is used quite naturally and it is not sure that in Shakespeare's culture this would have been found strange. The later sonnets are addressed to a woman, the poet's mistress, but their tone is harsh, far removed from the Petrarchan style of love complaint.

Sonnet 73.

That time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.
In me thou seest the twilight of such day
As after sunset fadeth in the west;
Which by and by black night doth take away,
Death's second self that seals up all in rest.
In me thou seest the glowing of such fire,
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
As the deathbed whereon it must expire,
Consumed with that which it was nourished by.
This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,
To love that well, which thou must leave ere long.

The Earlier 17th Century

When Queen Elizabeth died in 1603, her distant cousin **King James VI of Scotland** was called south to inherit the throne. His family name was **Stuart**. His son **Charles** duly followed him when he died in **1625**. Both kings believed that as monarchs they had **absolute God-given rights**. They tried to ignore the old English constitutional law that obliged the king to rule "**in Parliament**". According to several centuries of tradition, no king could impose **taxes**, make new **laws**, or raise an **army** without the consent of Parliament, which included an **elected House of Commons** as well as the **House of Lords**. As a result, the Stuarts lost the affection of their subjects and the royal court became an extravagant private spectacle. In 1603, the king's service still offered many possible jobs for ambitious young men like **John Donne**, but within a few years that changed and modern, business-oriented ideas of society began to take over among the citizens of London.

John Donne (1572 – 1631)

Born in **1572** in London, John Donne lost his father when he was 4 and his **mother** was obliged to remarry at once. She was the **granddaughter** of **Sir Thomas More's sister** and two of her brothers were **Catholic priests**. After the Pope declared in 1570 that Elizabeth was not the legitimate queen of England, Catholics were suspected of being potential traitors, priests were seen as agents of an enemy power. Donne grew up in this Catholic milieu, where people struggled to remain **faithful to the Church** while showing themselves to be **loyal subjects of the queen**. After the Armada in 1588, this became even more difficult.

Donne's father had been a highly respected citizen, his first step-father was a well-known medical doctor. He grew up eager to become a powerful and respected citizen too, but he soon realized that being a Catholic was by now a very serious obstacle. Since his family had no land, no wealth, he turned to the **Inns of Court** (law school) in London where rich young men and poor but ambitious young men mingled and useful connections could be made. Like many of his fellow-students, Donne enjoyed plays, entertainments, and he cultivated his verbal talents by composing poems as a way of making others notice him.

Donne was born within a year of **Ben Jonson**, and both wrote poetry that turns away from the mannered, rather old-fashioned styles of the Elizabethan age. Donne was precocious, and his sensual, Ovidian Elegies and epigrams as well as other poems were almost certainly written in the 1590s, not long after Shakespeare's sonnets. Yet they sound very different. Donne follows and develops the use of "**conceits**" that was admired all over Europe, especially in Italy. The "conceit" is an artificial **image** that demands thought, that is unexpected and causes the reader to pause for reflection before provoking an admiring response when its aptness is recognized. Donne's complicated use of such images inspired the Restoration writer and critic **John Dryden** (1631 - 1700) to write in his essay *Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire* (1693): "**he affects the metaphysics** . . . and perplexes the minds of the fair sex with nice speculations of philosophy, when he should engage their hearts, and entertain them with the softness of love." Later, **Samuel Johnson** (1709 - 1784) developed Dryden's ideas in his life of Abraham Cowley (1618 - 1667) in *Lives of the Poets* (1779):

The metaphysical poets were men of learning, and to show their learning was their whole endeavour; but, unluckily resolving to show it in rhyme, instead of writing poetry they only wrote verses, and very often such verses as stood the trial of the finger better than of the ear; for the modulation was so imperfect that they were only found to be verses by counting the syllables. (. . .) Their thoughts are often new, but seldom natural; they are not obvious, but neither are they just; and the reader, far from wondering that he missed them, wonders more frequently by what perverseness of industry they were ever found. But wit, abstracted from its effects upon the hearer, may be more rigorously and philosophically considered as a kind of discordia concors; a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike. Of wit, thus defined, they have more than enough. The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together, nature and art are ransacked for illustrations, comparisons, and allusions; their learning instructs, and their subtlety surprises; but the reader commonly thinks his improvement dearly bought, and, though he sometimes admires, is seldom pleased.

These quotations are the source of the idea that there was a "school" (group) of "Metaphysical Poets" led by Donne. It is a mistaken idea, but certainly several poets of the earlier 17th century used rather "**baroque**" images to introduce a new energy into their poetry. They were much admired by **Ezra Pound** and **T. S. Eliot** in the 1920s, as they formulated their vision of **Modernism**, in which poetry should be difficult.

Donne probably wrote his poems for a closed circle of sophisticated, high-class young men. It is impossible to know when any given poem was written. Some of his poems are conventionally libertine, declaring that faithfulness in love is wrong. Some are anti-feminist, insisting that women are always unfaithful. Others are wooing poems, urging the female to accept a sexual relationship. A few are intensely positive in their affirmation of ecstatic mutual love. There is no way of telling how "sincere" or "personal" any poem was. They were **not published** in printed form until **1633**, after Donne's death in **1631**, yet it is clear that he valued them and had prepared a collection for future publication.

By 1600, Donne had got a very promising job in the household of a very powerful lord, Sir Thomas Egerton. But early in 1601 he secretly married **Anne More**, the young niece of Lady Egerton, who was living in the house. He was socially inferior, she was only 17 while he was nearing 30. He lost his job and the trust of his employer, though he kept the affection of some of his friends who helped him financially. Later Donne became a famous **churchman and preacher**, and was **Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral** in London from 1621 until he died in 1631. He wrote religious poems which betray considerable emotional strain and express doubts about his salvation, doubts which the poem strives to overcome.

The Sun Rising

1. Busy old fool, unruly Sun,
2. Why dost thou thus
3. Through windows, and through curtains call on us?
4. Must to thy motions lovers seasons run?
5. Saucy pedantic wretch, go chide
6. Late schoolboys, and sour prentices,
7. Go tell Court-huntsmen, that the King will ride,
8. Call country ants to harvest offices;
9. Love, all alike, no season knows, nor clime,
10. Nor hours, days, months, which are the rags of time.

11. Thy beams, so reverend, and strong
12. Why shouldst thou think?
13. I could eclipse and cloud them-with a wink,
14. But that I would not lose her sight so long:
15. If her eyes have not blinded thine,
16. Look, and tomorrow late, tell me,
17. Whether both the India's of spice and Mine
18. Be where thou leftst them, or lie here with me.
19. Ask for those Kings whom thou saw'st yesterday,
20. And thou shalt hear, All here in one bed lay.

21. She is all States, and all Princes, I,
22. Nothing else is.
23. Princes do but play us; compar'd to this,

24. All honor's mimic, all wealth alchemy.
25. Thou sun art half as happy as we,
26. In that the world's contracted thus;
27. Thine age askes ease, and since thy duties be
28. To warm the world, that's done in warming us.
29. Shine here to us, and thou art everywhere;
30. This bed thy center is, these walls, thy sphere.

A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning

1. As virtuous men pass mildly away,
2. And whisper to their souls to go,
3. Whilst some of their sad friends do say,
4. The breath goes now, and some say, No;

5. So let us melt, and make no noise,
6. No tear-floods, nor sigh-tempests move,
7. 'Twere profanation of our joys
8. To tell the laity our love.

9. Moving of th'earth brings harms and fears,
10. Men reckon what it did and meant;
11. But trepidation of the spheres,
12. Though greater far, is innocent.

13. Dull sublunary lovers' love
14. (Whose soul is sense) cannot admit
15. Absence, because it doth remove T
16. hose things which elemented it.

17. But we, by a love so much refined
18. That our selves know not what it is,
19. Inter-assured of the mind,
20. Care less, eyes, lips, and hands to miss.

21. Our two souls therefore, which are one,
22. Though I must go, endure not yet
23. A breach, but an expansion,
24. Like gold to airy thinness beat.

25. If they be two, they are so
26. As stiff twin compasses are two;
27. Thy soul, the fixed foot, makes no show
28. To move, but doth, if th'other do.

29. And though it in the centre sit,
30. Yet when the other far doth roam,
31. It leans and hearkens after it,
32. And grows erect, as that comes home.

33. Such wilt thou be to me, who must

34. Like th'other foot, obliquely run;
35. Thy firmness makes my circle just,
36. And makes me end where I begun.

Batter My Heart, Three-Person'd God

1. Batter my heart, three-person'd God, for you
2. As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;
3. That I may rise and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend
4. Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new.
5. I, like an usurp'd town to'another due,
6. Labor to'admit you, but oh, to no end;
7. Reason, your viceroy in me, me should defend,
8. But is captiv'd, and proves weak or untrue.
9. Yet dearly I love you, and would be lov'd fain,
10. But am betroth'd unto your enemy;
11. Divorce me, untie or break that knot again,
12. Take me to you, imprison me, for I,
13. Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,
14. Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.

The starting point of John Donne's **Meditation 17** in his *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* (1624), written after he had recovered from a serious illness, is the experience of hearing the church bell ring to announce that someone in the neighborhood is dying. The sick man wonders for a moment if the bell is not ringing for him. From there Donne passes to a characteristically unexpected image of Heaven as a library:

Perchance he for whom this bell tolls may be so ill as that he knows not it tolls for him; and perchance I may think myself so much better than I am, as that they who are about me and see my state may have caused it to toll for me, and I know not that!

The church is catholic, universal, so are all her actions; all that she does belongs to all. When she baptizes a child, that action concerns me, for that child is thereby connected to that Head which is my Head too, and ingrafted into that body whereof I am a member. And when she buries a man, that action concerns me: all mankind is of one Author and is one volume; when one man dies, one chapter is, not torn out of the book, but translated into a better language; and every chapter must be so translated. God employs several translators; some pieces are translated by age, some by sickness, some by war, some by justice; but God's hand is in every translation, and his hand shall bind up all our scattered leaves again for that library where every book shall lie open to one another. (...) 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 bell tolls, it tolls for thee. (...)

George Herbert (1593 - 1633)

Twenty years younger than John Donne, Herbert spent much of his life at the university of Cambridge. His mother and elder brother were closer to John Donne than he was. A devout Christian, Herbert did not become a priest until 1630, but from 1626 he was responsible for a parish in Huntingdonshire. It was not far from **Little Gidding**, where Nicholas Ferrar and his brothers with their families had recently established a new kind of pious community, not unlike a monastery, with regular prayers, community service, and study. The community enjoyed the support of the king, who visited it (he was a pious and moral-living man). In April 1630, Herbert became rector (parish priest) of Bemerton, a small rural village near Salisbury. He was ordained priest in September 1630 and served humbly the simple people of that remote village until he died of tuberculosis in 1633. Herbert often visited Little Gidding and was extremely close to its founder. Just before he died, he sent the manuscript of his poems to Nicholas Ferrar, asking him to decide whether to publish them or burn them. On receiving the manuscript containing Herbert's poems, Ferrar read them with deep emotion and immediately had them published. They formed a small book entitled *The Temple*. He is often considered to be the first truly "Anglican" poet; some of his poems were later turned into hymns.

The Pulley

When God at first made man,
Having a glass of blessings standing by,
"Let us," said he, "pour on him all we can;
Let the world's riches, which dispersed lie,
Contract into a span."

So strength first made a way;
Then beauty flow'd, then wisdom, honour, pleasure;
When almost all was out, God made a stay,
Perceiving that alone of all his treasure,
Rest in the bottom lay.

"For if I should," said he,
"Bestow this jewel also on my creature,
He would adore my gifts instead of me,
And rest in Nature, not the God of Nature:
So both should losers be.

"Yet let him keep the rest,
But keep them with repining restlessness;
Let him be rich and weary, that at least,
If goodness lead him not, yet weariness
May toss him to my breast."

Love (3)

Love bade me welcome: yet my soul drew back,
Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-ey'd Love, observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning,

If I lack'd anything.

A guest, I answer'd, worthy to be here:

Love said, You shall be he.

I the unkind, ungrateful? Ah my dear,

I cannot look on thee.

Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,

Who made the eyes but I?

Truth Lord, but I have marr'd them: let my shame

Go where it doth deserve.

And know you not, says Love, who bore the blame?

My dear, then I will serve.

You must sit down, says Love, and taste my meat:

So I did sit and eat.

The later 17th Century

Civil War, Interregnum, Restoration, Glorious Revolution

King Charles, after becoming king in 1625, soon provoked great anger in his subjects. In England he tried to rule without Parliament, raising money by other means than regular taxes. In Scotland, he tried to impose a more Catholic form of worship that was unacceptable to the strictly Protestant (Presbyterian) Scots. When the **Scots** rose in **rebellion** in **1638**, he needed an army and was forced to summon Parliament. Parliament demanded a radical change in his way of ruling; they decided that the army should be controlled by them, and not be subject to the king. In **1642**, **civil war** broke out between **Parliamentarians** and **Royalists (Cavaliers and Roundheads)**. Much of the dispute was religious; The Parliamentarian army came under the command of **Oliver Cromwell**, a devout Protestant from East Anglia and a military genius. Soon the Royalists were defeated (there were only a few real battles) and the king was imprisoned. Parliament **abolished the monarchy, and the House of Lords**, changed the system of church government to the **Calvinist, "presbyterian"** form, rejecting the Catholic system of bishops and priests. Because many people still supported the king, and threatened rebellion to reinstate him, a group of radicals decided he should be executed and staged a summary trial. **King Charles I was executed** in Whitehall in January 1649, the first modern revolution.

The period during which there was no king in England came to be known later as the **Interregnum**. The new system of government, known as the **Commonwealth** (translating the Latin **Res publica**, republic) saw intense debate about the best form of government, usually religious and based on texts from the Bible, but no agreement was reached and **Oliver Cromwell** as **Lord Protector** ruled with even more absolute powers than the old king had, since he did not need to call Parliament. He died suddenly in 1658, with nothing settled for the future, and a group of leading citizens decided that there would have to be a return to the old systems with king, lord, and bishops. Charles' son returned from exile in France as **Charles II** and in 1660 England experienced the "**Restoration.**"

Charles II was a very sensitive politician and he became a popular monarch, especially by refusing to leave London during the **Great Plague** of 1665 (the last great outbreak of the plague) and by helping to fight the **Great Fire** which destroyed 80% of London in 1666. He had many children, but none by his wife, so when he died in 1685 his brother

James became king. Since 1660, the citizens of London especially had been increasingly alarmed by the **Catholic** sympathies of the court; the years of exile in France were no doubt partly to blame, and the support the Catholic Church gave to the most **absolute** forms of monarchy when England had learned to value open debate and had fought the Civil War to protect the **rights of Parliament**. Where Charles was obviously pro-Catholic but remained outside the Church, although his wife was Catholic, his brother James was a practising Catholic and when he became king it was clear that he wished to challenge the 1660 settlement, by which the Church of England was the one national church.

By **1688**, the public opposition to James was so intense that his nerve suddenly broke and he fled from England without abdicating. This is known as the **Glorious (bloodless) Revoution**. His sister **Mary** was a Protestant, wed to the ruler of the Netherlands, **William of Orange**, and finally the two were invited to become joint rulers of Great Britain. In 1689 the **Bill of Rights** gave legal form to the future succession and declared clearly that the monarch could be deposed legally by Parliament if the **contract** between monarch and nation were clearly broken. This marks the beginning of modern Britain's "**constitutional monarchy**." James's subsequent arrival in **northern Ireland** in an attempt to regain the crown in 1689, and the support he received there from the native, **Catholic** population, prompted William of Orange to reassert **Protestant** domination there in a violent repression in 1690 after the **Battle of the Boyne**. The memory of those events underlies the recent **Troubles** in Northern Ireland.

John Milton

Milton was born in London in 1608 and died in 1674. Milton's first major poem, "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity" (often called "The Nativity Ode") was composed for Christmas 1629, when he had just turned twenty-one. For Milton, it seems to have marked his birth as a mature poet. He was at Cambridge then and probably wrote the parallel poems "**L'Allegro**" and "**Il Penseroso**" while still at Cambridge, in 1631. In all these poems, he is writing poetry about the possible ways in which poetry (or what we know as "literature") may be written and received in society. The poems are full of contrasts between sounds and silence, outwardness and inwardness, pleasure and thoughtfulness, day and night. In each poem, Milton can be felt posing the question of his future career, but without finding any clear reply. While he was waiting for his future course to become clear, he left Cambridge in 1632 and went to live at his father's country house at Horton in Buckinghamshire. There he continued to read intensively for another six years.

In 1637 Milton wrote the elegy **Lycidas** in memory of Edward King who had also been a student at Cambridge and who died when the ship he was going to Ireland on struck a rock and sank. This poem was published in a collection of tributes to King in 1638. It is not sure that King and Milton were close friends; the poem mentions that King wrote poetry and was preparing to become a minister (pastor) in the church. Much of the poem seems to dwell on the possibility of combining **poetry** and public **service** of God, which was Milton's great concern. From 1637 to 1639 Milton travelled in Europe, meeting other noted humanists such as **Galileo**. Hearing of the approaching conflicts of the Civil War, he returned home. From that moment the only poems he wrote for many years were a few sonnets, and occasional poems in Latin or Italian. All his energies went into writing **polemical pamphlets**.

After the execution of Charles I, Milton published tracts in favour of a republican form of society and became the **Latin secretary** to the new Council of State. His skills in writing

Latin made him invaluable for correspondence with the rulers of Europe who wanted to know how a king could be executed. Many of his writings were so powerfully radical that they were condemned and burnt in France. In the mid-1640s, Milton realized that his sight was growing weak, in part at least because of his endless reading. By 1652 he was completely **blind**. The Commonwealth's collapse meant the failure of the social and religious dream he had worked for. He was arrested at the Restoration, but the poet **Andrew Marvell** was able to secure his release. The rest of his life was devoted to the composition of the three great works: ***Paradise Lost*** (1667 & 1674), ***Paradise Regained***, and ***Samson Agonistes*** (1671). In 1673 there appeared a second edition of his Poems.

Paradise Lost

The first lines of Paradise Lost

Of Mans First Disobedience, and the Fruit
Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal tast
Brought Death into the World, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat,
Sing Heav'nly Muse, that on the secret top
Of Oreb, 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 flow'd
Fast by the Oracle of God; I thence
Invoke thy aid to my adventrous Song,
That with no middle flight intends to soar
Above th' Aonian Mount, while it pursues
Things unattempted yet in Prose or Rhime.
And chiefly Thou O Spirit, that dost prefer
Before all Temples th' upright heart and pure,
Instruct me, for Thou know'st; Thou from the first
Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread
Dove-like satst brooding on the vast Abyss
And mad'st it pregnant: What in me is dark
Illumine, what is low raise and support;
That to the highth of this great Argument
I may assert th' Eternal Providence,
And justifie the wayes of God to men.

Say first, for Heav'n hides nothing from thy view
Nor the deep Tract of Hell, say first what cause
Mov'd our Grand Parents in that happy State,
Favour'd of Heav'n so highly, to fall off
From their Creator, and transgress his Will
For one restraint, Lords of the World besides?
Who first seduc'd them to that fowl revolt?
Th' infernal Serpent; he it was, whose guile
Stird up with Envy and Revenge, deceiv'd
The Mother of Mankind, what time his Pride
Had cast him out from Heav'n, with all his Host

Of Rebel Angels, by whose aid aspiring
To set himself in Glory above his Peers,
He trusted to have equal'd the most High,
If he oppos'd; and with ambitious aim
Against the Throne and Monarchy of God
Rais'd impious War in Heav'n and Battel proud
With vain attempt.

Books 1 and 2 are centered on Satan. The poem begins, as tradition requires, in medias res with Satan and his fellows lying on the floor of Hell. Satan's first speech, to Beelzebub, indicates his fixed nature as rebel against God. How to continue the fight? The hall of Pandemonium rises and they gather in assembly round Satan, their manipulative dictator. In **Book 2**, after a debate on continuing resistance to God, in which Satan strikes poses of rebel hero, he sets out to find the newly-created world. At the gates of Hell he finds the figures Sin and Death; Sin says that Death is her son and that Satan is his father. Satan journeys through Chaos and arrives at the world.

Books 3 and 4 form a strong contrast. Book 3 is set in Heaven; the Father tells the Son what will happen to Adam and Eve as a result of Satan's journey. The Son freely offers to give his own life for the redemption of their sin. Meanwhile Satan is trying to find where Adam and Eve are living. In **Book 4** Satan slips into Paradise disguised as a bird. The angels detect his presence and arrest him while he is trying to tempt the sleeping Eve, now reduced to the shape of a toad.

Book 5 introduces Adam and Eve in their perfect but slightly precarious harmony. God sends the archangel Raphael to warn them of the approaching danger. While Eve cuts fruit for their meal, Raphael starts to describe to Adam in suitably adapted heroic style how Satan rebelled, created an opposition party and easily fooled a host of angels by his seeming sincerity. In Book 6, Raphael's tale continues: there is open warfare in epic mode; the hosts of God's angels are led by Michael and Gabriel. The first day's battle is inconclusive; on the second day, Satan's army invents heavy artillery but the guns are buried by God's angels under uprooted mountains. On the third day, the Son himself comes out to battle as Messiah and by his unique power drives the rebels straight through the wall of heaven.

The two halves of the poem hinge around the division between **books 6 and 7**, the fall of Satan in Book 6 being followed in **Book 7** by Raphael's story (from Genesis) of the six days of creation by the Son who then returns to Heaven. They reach the point in the story where Adam is already created. In **Book 8**, Adam shows his human nature by taking over the story-telling from Raphael and plying him with questions about the mechanics of the cosmos. Raphael discourages too much scientific curiosity. The creation of Eve to be Adam's "fit companion" is described by Adam, who tells how they fell in love at a moment when Eve was in danger of falling in love with her own reflection in a pond. Raphael warns Adam and Eve again of the danger Satan represents, then withdraws.

The climax of the story comes in **Books 9 and 10**. Satan takes the shape of the serpent, tempts Eve while she is working away from Adam, she eats. Hearing what has happened, Adam is horrified. He recalls God's "you shall surely die" and decides he would rather die with her than live alone again. He eats and they are both overcome by liberated sexual passion of a degenerate kind that leads to discord. In **Book 10** the Son comes to judge them and give them clothes. Sin and Death create a highway linking earth and Hell while Satan returns to Pandemonium to tell of his success. All the inhabitants of Hell are turned into serpents eating ashes. The cosmos itself is corrupted as a result of humanity's Fall, although God in heaven promises the final victory of good. Adam and Eve consider suicide but Adam begins to use his reason, finds grounds for hope, and they turn towards God in prayer.

The final two books, **Books 11 and 12**, are oriented towards the future. The Son prays to the Father for Adam and Eve; his prayers are accepted. Adam and Eve must leave Paradise and live out in the harsh world. Michael is sent to tell them of their exile. Michael tells Adam of the future consequences of the Fall, as portrayed in the early chapters of Genesis, with the murder of Abel, the corruptions that follow, until God decides to send the flood to destroy humanity. Adam is appalled. **Book 12** turns from disaster to hope, with the call of Abraham and his obedience to God. Michael tells Adam all the history of Israel, constantly wavering between obedience and sin, until one woman, Mary, says yes to God and the Son is born. The life and death of Jesus are reported, and the continuing work of salvation in the Christian Church with the same alternations of disaster and hope until finally the Last Day brings the Return and final victory of the Son. Adam is comforted. Eve, who has been asleep, dreams similar things and together they set out to begin human society's history:

The 18th century

Augustan Satire

In **Restoration London**, the court was not very important. **Wealthy citizens** now began to meet in **coffee houses**, where they did **business** and exchanged reports of the latest **news**. The wealthy were now involved in the search for profit, although with their new wealth they tended to buy country estates and titles. The "**wit**" with which young men like Donne had tried to impress powerful courtiers a century before was now applied in daily conversation to impress one's colleagues. The dominant tone was **satire** because almost every aspect of traditional society had become fragile and uncertain, while there was much **corruption**.

The name "**Augustan Age**" given to the early 18th century reflects the sense of new beginnings and increased prosperity that marked the first years of the **Roman Empire**, (Augustus was the first Roman emperor) although England very precisely had no Augustus ruling it with dictatorial powers. Instead it had a new **Horace** (great Augustan poet of satire) in **Alexander Pope**. His writing reflects the intense tensions that were at work in him and the society of his time, between **tradition** and **innovation**. In Parliament these tensions were shown in the division between "**Tories**" and "**Whigs**" as political "**parties**" began to evolve.

One element of conflict was the difference between "**town**" and "**country**." The older **nobility** owned land in the "shires" and lived as **gentry** without needing much money; the newly **rich and dynamic class** lived in the towns and cities. Their money was invested to make more money. The values of the **Tory countryside** were **conservative**, nostalgic for the past, **royalist and Anglican**. The **Whigs** represented the radical new ways of **urban capitalism**, many were "**non-conformist**" (**Presbyterian**), not nostalgic but rather upstart and forward-looking.

The disappearance of the **court** as a focus of power and the rising importance of the **House of Commons**, led to a massive increase in the power of "**public opinion**" and this in turn was reflected by increasing public debate of every issue and policy. The growth of the influence of the **press** went hand in hand with a realization that journalism was not always responsible, that the "news" reported was not always true. Many of the Augustan concerns sprang from a sense that truth was becoming the victim of modern finance. Their desire was therefore to **educate** people through their writings to think clearly and wisely,

so that they could distinguish the folly and falsehood of modern society from what was of real value.

The **Augustans** were people of sharp intelligence who had been deeply influenced by the developments in **philosophy** of the previous 100 years, beginning with **Galileo, Montaigne and Descartes**. In England, **Francis Bacon** was followed by **Thomas Hobbes** (author of *Leviathan*) and the extremes of Hobbes's materialism provoked the work of **John Locke** and **George Berkeley**. This latter, born in Ireland, was close to the Augustans. At the same time, **science** (known as **natural philosophy**) was developing, with **Isaac Newton** the crowning glory. His *Principia Mathematica* was published in 1687, the *Opticks* in 1704, and his message of the **universal harmony** sustaining the universe underlies the **optimism** of the 18th century's **Rationalism** and **Enlightenment**.

Alexander Pope (1688-1744)

Pope's family was Catholic and as a result were obliged to live outside of London after the events of 1688. He had a tutor but mostly studied alone. He spent much of his adult life in Twickenham, up the Thames from London. In his childhood he contracted a disease which left him stunted, deformed and hunch-backed, although his head grew to the normal size and his face was of striking beauty. The double handicap of Catholicism and physical deformity meant that he was cruelly treated in many ways and he came to value immensely the people who gave him their friendship. His closest companion in youth was **Jonathan Swift**, who then went to Ireland and later wrote "**Gulliver's Travels**."

Pope's talents as a poet were accompanied by a sharp desire to **chastise folly**. He made his money by **translating Homer** into classically dignified "heroic couplets" (the most popular kind of verse since Denham and Dryden); he made his enemies in many ways, and wrote poems to vindicate himself. The tone of his poems is always calm, reasonable, detached, but the satire is sharp and sometimes extreme.

In his youth, Pope established his reputation with his *Essay on Criticism* (1711) and *The Rape of the Lock* (a mock heroic poem on a stolen lock of hair). After the Homer translations were done, the *Illiad* in 1720, the *Odyssey* in 1726, he edited Shakespeare. In later years, following Horace, he wrote a number of epistles; *An Essay on Man* (1733-4) is a philosophical poem in four epistles, which were published separately. The first three were anonymous, and critics habitually hostile to Pope acclaimed them, only to be made to look foolish when the last was published with the poet's name.

From Epistle 2 of *The Essay On Man*

Know, then, thyself, presume not God to scan;
The proper study of mankind is man.
Placed on this isthmus of a middle state,
A being darkly wise, and rudely great:
With too much knowledge for the sceptic side,
With too much weakness for the stoic's pride,
He hangs between; in doubt to act, or rest;
In doubt to deem himself a god, or beast;
In doubt his mind or body to prefer;
Born but to die, and reasoning but to err;
Alike in ignorance, his reason such,

Whether he thinks too little, or too much:
Chaos of thought and passion, all confused;
Still by himself abused, or disabused;
Created half to rise, and half to fall;
Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all;
Sole judge of truth, in endless error hurled:
The glory, jest, and riddle of the world!

The four *Moral Essays* (1731-5) include an *Epistle Of the knowledge and Characters of Men* and the *Epistle on Women*. At the same time he published a number of splendid, free translations of the *Satires* of Horace, transposing them to contemporary London. The *Dunciad* is perhaps his fiercest satire, a mock-epic that expanded until its final form was published in 1743.

Sensibility before Romanticism

Pope and the other Augustans sometimes seem utterly intellectual and **skeptical**; yet their sense of **irony**, their awareness of the **contradictions** that co-exist within the apparent harmonies of classicism, underlie the birth of the **novel** and its development at least as far as Jane Austen. At the same time, Pope was strongly interested in **landscape gardening**, the exploitation of the natural within the artificial, and in this he was not alone. The Augustan age was marked by a growing interest in the “**picturesque**” that was slowly to develop into a taste for the “**Gothic**” which begins to be visible in the mid-18th century’s taste for **medieval ruins**. Before Romanticism, among the earliest novels we find a number of “**Gothic novels**” set in the middle ages or in medieval buildings.

Nature in itself had been part of renaissance literature mainly in **pastoral poetry**. The first poem to celebrate nature from a new, often Newtonian, perspective was **James Thomson’s *The Seasons*** (1726-30). Here we begin to find a new sense of the “**sublime**” in the evocation of storms. At the same time as Pope was writing in a satirical, often acid tone about the corruptions of urban society, Thomson (who was born and educated in Scotland) was offering readers a completely **un-ironic** picture of the appearance of the natural countryside through the different seasons, seen reflecting Newton’s **harmony**. Yet his diction is as artificial as that of Pope and later romantics turned against him. *The Seasons* remained immensely popular and long continued to be published.

In art, the **English painters of the 18th century** produced a vast number of portraits, corresponding to the wealth of the upper classes. **Sir Joshua Reynolds** and **John Gainsborough** were the most famous portrait painters. The caricatures of **William Hogarth** were also originally paintings, before being copied as cheap engravings.

Thomas Gray (1716-1771) lived a very quiet life. As a young man he was at Eton with **Horace Walpole**, who later became one of the first admirers of “the Gothic” and the author of *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), the first **Gothic novel**. Gray moved to Cambridge in 1742 and began to write poetry. His small number of works include the *Elegy* printed below (1751), by far the most popular and for almost 2 centuries one of the most popular poems in English. He then wrote *The Progress of Poesy* and *The Bard*, both much more intense and “**romantic**” with a greater sense of the **numinous** and the **sublime**. He travelled in the Lake District and Scotland in search of sublime landscapes and traditional poetry.

Thomas Gray : Elegy written in a Country Churchyard

1. The Curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
2. The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
3. The plowman homeward plods his weary way,
4. And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

5. Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,
6. And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
7. Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
8. And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds;

9. Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tow'r
10. The moping owl does to the moon complain
11. Of such as, wand'ring near her secret bow'r,
12. Molest her ancient solitary reign.

13. Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,
14. Where heaves the turf in many a mould'ring heap,
15. Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,
16. The rude Forefathers of the hamlet sleep.

17. The breezy call of incense-breathing Morn,
18. The swallow twitt'ring from the straw-built shed,
19. The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
20. No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.

21. For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,
22. Or busy housewife ply her evening care:
23. No children run to lisp their sire's return,
24. Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share.

25. Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,
26. Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke:
27. How jocund did they drive their team afield!
28. How bow'd the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!

29. Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
30. Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;
31. Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile
32. The short and simple annals of the poor.

33. The boast of heraldry, the pomp of pow'r,
34. And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
35. Awaits alike th' inevitable hour:
36. The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

37. Nor you, ye Proud, impute to These the fault,
38. If Memory o'er their Tomb no Trophies raise,
39. Where through the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault
40. The pealing anthem swells the note of praise.

41. Can storied urn or animated bust
42. Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
43. Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust,
44. Or Flatt'ry soothe the dull cold ear of death?

45. Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
46. Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;
47. Hands, that the rod of empire might have sway'd,
48. Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre.

49. But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page
50. Rich with the spoils of time did ne'er unroll;
51. Chill Penury repress'd their noble rage,
52. And froze the genial current of the soul.

53. Full many a gem of purest ray serene
54. The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear:
55. Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
56. And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

(.....)

The first novels

(Those **bolded** remain popular today)

Samuel Richardson (1689-1761) 1740 **Pamela**; 1748 **Clarissa** : The History of a Young Lady; 1749 Sir Charles Grandison
 Henry Fielding (1707-1754) 1742 Joseph Andrews; 1743 Jonathan Wild the Great; 1749 **Tom Jones**; 1751 Amelia
 Tobias Smollett (1721-1771) 1748 Roderick Random; 1751 Peregrine Pickle; 1771 The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker;
 Laurence Sterne (1713-1768) 1760 **The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy**; 1768 Sentimental Journey
 Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774) 1766 **The Vicar of Wakefield**
 Henry Mackenzie (1745-1831) 1771 The Man of Feeling
 Horace Walpole (1717-1797) 1765 The Castle of Otranto
 Frances Burney (1752-1840) 1778 Evelina; 1782 Cecilia; 1796 Camilla
 Ann Radcliffe (1764-1823) 1794 **The Mysteries of Udolpho**; 1797 The Italian
 "Monk" Lewis (1775-1818) 1796 The Monk
 William Godwin (1756-1836) 1794 Caleb Williams
 William Beckford (1760-1844) 1786 The Caliph Vathek

Revolution and Romanticism

The 18th century was marked by **competition and warfare** between **England** and **France**, and England won. As a result, Britain gained control of the parts of **Canada** and **India** where France had previously held power. It is almost not worth noting that in 1714 **Queen Anne** died, the **last of the Stuart** family. Laws had already been passed that

ensured that the next ruler would be from Germany. The ruling family of **Hanover** was Protestant and related by marriage to the Stuarts. The new king, **George I**, could not speak English but it did not really matter; he had no power. Instead, he asked the **Whigs** to form a government (the Tories had some sympathy for the Stuarts in exile) and **Robert Walpole** became the first real "**Prime Minister**," a position he held for 20 years. When the war with France ended in 1763, Britain was already becoming an **industrial** power and the new **colonies**, including the **West Indies**, where **plantations** were worked by **slaves** shipped from West Africa, were a major market. The **press** grew, **daily newspapers** began to be published, and they encouraged political debate. Free speech was encouraged by the victory of **John Wilkes** against government attempts at censorship.

The British colonies in **North America** expanded from 200,000 colonists in 1700 to 2.5 million in 1770. They were not represented in Parliament, yet they were expected to pay taxes. They protested: **no taxation without representation!** In **1773**, people in **Boston** threw imported **tea** into the port rather than pay tax on it, and the "**Boston Tea-party**" marks one beginning of the **War of Independence**, which lasted from **1775** until the total defeat of the British was recognized in **1783**. The war was fought in the name of **democracy** and **freedom**; it was supported in England by "**radicals**" who wanted the same ideals to be put into practice in Britain. The main radical writers were **Edmund Burke** and **Tom Paine**. Drafted by **Thomas Jefferson** in **1776**, the **Declaration of Independence** expresses the ideals of the newly emerging **United States**, while the **Constitution** is the supreme law of the United States of America. It was adopted in its original form on September 17, **1787**, by the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and later ratified by conventions in each state.

Industrial revolution

The great **social changes in 18th-century Britain** began with the **enclosure** (privatisation) of land and the resulting **expulsion of the landless villagers** who had traditionally farmed the "common land" that was now taken by the rich gentry. The upper class were rich because they were also the leaders of trade and manufacturing. There was a huge difference between rich and poor. The large numbers of landless poor moved toward the **cities** just as **factories** were being invented to replace the home-based "**cottage industries**." At this time **coal** was replacing wood as fuel, **iron and steel** were becoming basic materials, and the **steam engine** was perfected, making a pumping motion turn **fly-wheels** to drive **machines**. The "**Industrial Revolution**" transformed English society, as great cities sprang up, full of wretched housing which quickly became "**slums**." The proletariat (as they were later called) provided the workforce for a **manufacturing** industry that quickly found markets at home and abroad, as the earning class grew in size. The main products were **cloth** in wool and cotton, **knives and swords** made of steel.

Several influences came together at the same time to revolutionise Britain's industry: money, labour, a greater demand for **goods**, new power, and better **transport**. By the end of the eighteenth century, some families had made huge private **fortunes**. Growing **merchant banks** helped put this money to use. By the early eighteenth century simple **machines** had already been invented for basic jobs. They could make large quantities of simple goods quickly and cheaply so that "mass production" became possible for the first time. Each machine carried out one simple process, which introduced the idea of "**division of labour**" among workers. This was to become an important part of the industrial revolution.

Increased **iron** production made it possible to manufacture new machinery for other industries. No one saw this more clearly than **John Wilkinson**, a man with a total belief in

iron. He built the largest ironworks in the country. He built the world's first iron bridge, over the River Severn, in 1779. He saw the first iron boats made. He built an iron chapel for the new Methodist religious sect, and was himself buried in an iron coffin. Wilkinson was also quick to see the value of new inventions. When **James Watt** made a greatly improved **steam engine** in 1769, Wilkinson improved it further by making parts of the engine more accurately with his special skills in ironworking. But in 1781 Watt produced an engine with a **turning motion**, made of iron and **steel**. It was a vital development because people were now no longer dependent on natural power.

One invention led to another, and increased production in one area led to increased production in others. Other basic materials of the industrial revolution were **cotton** and **woollen cloth**, which were popular abroad. In the middle of the century other countries were buying British uniforms, equipment and weapons for their armies. To meet this increased demand, better methods of production had to be found, and new machinery was invented which replaced handwork.

Soon Britain was not only exporting cloth to Europe. It was also importing raw cotton from its **colonies** and exporting finished cotton cloth to sell to those same colonies. The social effects of the industrial revolution were enormous. Workers tried to join together to protect themselves against powerful employers. They wanted **fair wages** and reasonable conditions in which to work. But the government quickly banned these "combinations", as the workers' societies were known. Riots occurred, led by the unemployed who had been replaced in factories by machines. In 1799 some of these rioters, known as Luddites, started to break up the machinery which had put them out of work. The government supported the factory owners, and made the breaking of machinery punishable by death. The government was afraid of a revolution like the one in France.

Society and religion

Britain avoided revolution partly because of a new religious movement. The new movement which met the needs of the growing industrial working class was led by a remarkable man called **John Wesley**. He was an Anglican priest who travelled around the country preaching and teaching. For fifty-three years John Wesley travelled 224,000 miles on horseback, preaching at every village he came to. Sometimes he preached in three different villages in one day. Very soon others joined in his work. John Wesley visited the new villages and industrial towns which had no parish church. John Wesley's "**Methodism**" was above all a personal and emotional form of religion. It was organised in small groups, or "chapels", all over the country. At a time when the Church of England itself showed little interest in the social and spiritual needs of the growing population, Methodism was able to give ordinary people a sense of purpose and dignity. The Church was nervous of this powerful new movement which it could not control, and in the end Wesley was forced to leave the Church of England and start a new Methodist Church.

He carefully avoided politics, and taught people to be hardworking and honest. As a result of his teaching, people accepted many of the injustices of the times without complaint. Some became wealthy through working hard and saving their money. As an old man, Wesley sadly noted how hard work led to wealth, and wealth to pride and that this threatened to destroy his work. "Although the form of religion remains," he wrote, "the spirit is swiftly vanishing away." However, Wesley probably saved Britain from revolution. He certainly brought many people back to Christianity. The Methodists were not alone.

Other Christians also joined what became known as "the evangelical revival", which was a return to a simple faith based on the Bible. Some, especially the **Quakers**, became well known for social concern. One of the best known was Elizabeth Fry, who made public the terrible conditions in the **prisons**, and started to work for reform. It was also a small group of Christians who were the first to act against the evils of the **slave trade**, from which

Britain was making huge sums of money. Slaves did not expect to live long. Almost 20 per cent died on the voyage. Most of the others died young from cruel treatment in the West Indies.

The first success against slavery came when a judge ruled that "**no man could be a slave in Britain**", and freed a slave who had landed in Bristol. This victory gave a new and unexpected meaning to the words of the national song, "Britons never shall be slaves." In fact, just as Britain had taken a lead in slavery and the slave trade, it also took the lead internationally in ending them. The slave trade was abolished by law in **1807**. But it took until 1833 for slavery itself to be abolished in all British colonies.

Others, also mainly Christians, tried to limit the cruelty of employers who forced **children** to work long hours. In 1802, as a result of their efforts, Parliament passed the first Factory Act, limiting child labour to twelve hours each day. In 1819 a new law forbade the employment of children under the age of nine. Neither of these two Acts were obeyed everywhere, but they were the early examples of government action to protect the weak against the powerful.

Early "Romantic" novels

Maria Edgeworth (1767-1849) 1801 *Belinda*; 1800 *Castle Rackrent*; 1809 *The Absentee*; 1817 *Ormond*

Thomas Love Peacock (1785-1866) 1816 *Headlong Hall*; 1818 *Nightmare Abbey*; 1831 *Crotchet Castle*

Jane Austen (1775-1817) *Sense and Sensibility* (written 1795-1797 published 1811); *Pride and Prejudice* (1796-7:1813); *Northanger Abbey* (1798:1818); *Mansfield Park* (1812:1814); *Emma* (1814:1816); *Persuasion* (1815:1818)

Jane Austen (from Wikipedia) (16 December 1775 – 18 July 1817) was an English novelist whose works of romantic fiction, set among the landed gentry, earned her a place as one of the most widely read writers in English literature. Her realism, biting irony and social commentary have gained her historical importance among scholars and critics.

Austen lived her entire life as part of a close-knit family located on the lower fringes of the English landed gentry.[2] She was educated primarily by her father and older brothers as well as through her own reading. The steadfast support of her family was critical to her development as a professional writer.[3] Her artistic apprenticeship lasted from her teenage years into her thirties. During this period, she experimented with various literary forms, including the epistolary novel which she then abandoned, and wrote and extensively revised three major novels and began a fourth.[B] From 1811 until 1816, with the release of *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Mansfield Park* (1814) and *Emma* (1816), she achieved success as a published writer. She wrote two additional novels, *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion*, both published posthumously in 1818, and began a third, which was eventually titled *Sanditon*, but died before completing it.

Austen's works critique the novels of sensibility of the second half of the 18th century and are part of the transition to 19th-century realism. Her plots, though fundamentally comic, highlight the dependence of women on marriage to secure social standing and economic security. Her works, though usually popular, were first published anonymously and brought her little personal fame and only a few positive reviews during her lifetime, but the publication in 1869 of her nephew's *A Memoir of Jane Austen* introduced her to a wider public, and by the 1940s she had become widely accepted in academia as a great English writer.

The French Revolution

In **France**, too, there was also increasing social unrest and instability caused by differences of wealth but somehow, unlike in Britain, no compromise was found. In Britain, the **House of Commons** represented the interests of both the small landowners (**gentry**) and the new "**middle class**" of industrialists and merchants. In France there was no such **representative assembly**; all power was kept by aristocratic and royal elites to which even the wealthy had little access. As a result, the **French Revolution** erupted, fuelled by discontent among both lower and middle classes.

The symbolic date of **July 14, 1789**, marks the day on which the citizens of Paris broke the gates of the **Bastille prison**. It was a small tower in eastern Paris in which members of the nobility could imprison anyone they wished for an indefinite period. There was no appeal, no right to a trial, no system of *habeas corpus*, a right which had been guaranteed in England since Magna Carta in 1215. The early months of the French Revolution were full of hope and enthusiasm, as the slogan "**Liberty, Equality, Fraternity**" echoed with memories of the democratic vision of the American Revolution, which had itself looked back to the English Civil War. A republic was proclaimed in September 1792 and King Louis XVI was executed the next year. Popular sentiments radicalized the Revolution significantly, culminating in the brutal **Terror** from 1793 until 1794. After the fall of **Robespierre** and the Jacobins, the Directory assumed control of the French state in 1795 and held power until 1799, when it was replaced by the Consulate under **Napoleon Bonaparte** (1769 –1821).

The French Revolution was seen as a grave threat by many in England, conscious of how fragile the social balances were. Some welcomed it enthusiastically as a prophetic event heralding a radically new world. Among them was **William Blake (1757 - 1827)**, one of the greatest of English poets and a visionary, as well as **a painter and printmaker**. Largely unrecognized during his lifetime, Blake's work is today considered seminal and significant in the history of both poetry and the visual arts.

William Blake:

Jerusalem

And did those feet in ancient time
Walk upon England's mountains green?
And was the holy Lamb of God
On England's pleasant pastures seen?

And did the Countenance Divine
Shine forth upon those clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here
Among these dark satanic mills?

Bring me my bow of burning gold!
Bring me my arrows of desire!
Bring me my spear! O clouds, unfold!
Bring me my chariot of fire!

I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.

The Sick Rose (Songs of Experience)

O rose, thou art sick!
The invisible worm,
That flies in the night,
In the howling storm,

Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy,
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy.

The Lamb (Songs of Innocence)

Little lamb, who made thee?
Does thou know who made thee,
Gave thee life, and bid thee feed
By the stream and o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing, woolly, bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice?
Little lamb, who made thee?
Does thou know who made thee?

Little lamb, I'll tell thee;
Little lamb, I'll tell thee:
He is called by thy name,
For He calls Himself a Lamb.
He is meek, and He is mild,
He became a little child.
I a child, and thou a lamb,
We are called by His name.
Little lamb, God bless thee!
Little lamb, God bless thee!

The Tiger (Songs of Experience)

Tiger, tiger, burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies

Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder and what art
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And, when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand and what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears,
And watered heaven with their tears,
Did He smile His work to see?
Did He who made the lamb make thee?

Tiger, tiger, burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

William Wordsworth (1770 - 1850)

Born in 1770, Wordsworth lost both parents in childhood. He grew up in the **Lake District**, attended Cambridge University, and in 1790-2 spent much of his time in revolutionary France. At this time he was filled with revolutionary enthusiasm but soon the early **idealism** of the revolutionaries was abolished and the **Terror**, in which thousands of innocent people were guillotined, put an end to Wordsworth's political radicalism. In 1795, Wordsworth and his sister **Dorothy** went to live near **Samuel Taylor Coleridge**, in Somerset. The two poets developed a close relationship and in **1789** they published ***Lyrical Ballads***, a collection of poems mostly by Wordsworth but in which the works of the two were not distinguished. The first poem below is from this volume, which marks the beginning of "**Romanticism**" in England. In **1799**, the three moved back to the Lake District where they lived in **Dove Cottage, Grasmere**. Wordsworth wrote much that was included in a new edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (1800) which also included a **Preface** written by Wordsworth using many ideas of Coleridge, the more philosophical of the two. Later, Coleridge and Wordsworth disagreed strongly and Coleridge criticized Wordsworth in his ***Biographia Literaria*** (1817). Wordsworth's major work was almost all published in the *Poems in Two Volumes* (1807) although the final version of his great autobiographical poem *The Prelude* was only published after he died in 1850.

I wandered lonely as a cloud

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,

A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed--and gazed--but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

John Keats (1795 – 1821)

The English Romantic poet John Keats was born on October 31, 1795, in London. The oldest of four children, he lost both his parents at a young age. When Keats was fifteen, his guardian withdrew him from school, to be apprentice with an apothecary-surgeon and study **medicine** in a London hospital. In 1816 Keats became a licensed apothecary, but he never practiced his profession, deciding instead to write poetry.

Around this time, Keats met **Leigh Hunt**, an influential editor of the *Examiner*, who published his sonnets "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" and "O Solitude." Hunt also introduced Keats to a circle of literary men, including the poets **Percy Bysshe Shelley** and **William Wordsworth**. The group's influence enabled Keats to see his first volume, *Poems by John Keats*, published in **1817**. Shelley, who was fond of Keats, had advised him to develop a more substantial body of work before publishing it. Keats, who was not as fond of Shelley, did not follow his advice. *Endymion*, a four-thousand-line erotic/allegorical romance based on the Greek myth of the same name, appeared the following year.

Keats spent the summer of 1818 on a walking tour in Northern England and Scotland, returning home to care for his brother, Tom, who suffered from tuberculosis. While nursing his brother, Keats met and fell in love with a woman named Fanny Brawne. Writing some of his finest poetry between 1818 and 1819, Keats mainly worked on "**Hyperion**," a Miltonic blank-verse epic of the Greek creation myth. He stopped writing "Hyperion" upon the death of his brother, after completing only a small portion, but in late 1819 he returned to the piece and rewrote it as "The Fall of Hyperion" (unpublished until 1856). That same autumn Keats contracted **tuberculosis**, and by the following February he felt that death was already upon him, referring to the present as his "posthumous existence."

In July 1820, he published his third and best volume of poetry, ***Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and Other Poems***. The three title poems, dealing with mythical and

legendary themes of ancient, medieval, and Renaissance times, are rich in imagery and phrasing. The volume also contains the unfinished "Hyperion," and three poems considered among the finest in the English language, "**Ode on a Grecian Urn**," "**Ode on Melancholy**," and "**Ode to a Nightingale**." The book received enthusiastic praise from Hunt, Shelley, Charles Lamb, and others, but by that time he had reached an advanced stage of his disease and was too ill to be encouraged. Under his doctor's orders to seek a warm climate for the winter, Keats went to Rome with his friend, the painter Joseph Severn. He died there on February 23, 1821, at the age of twenty-five, and was buried in the Protestant cemetery.

On first looking into Chapman's Homer.

Much have I traveled in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne;
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He star'd at the Pacific—and all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

Romantic novels

(Those writers **bolded** remain popular today)

Maria Edgeworth (1767-1849) 1801 *Belinda*; 1800 *Castle Rackrent*; 1809 *The Absentee*; 1817 *Ormond*

Thomas Love Peacock (1785-1866) 1816 *Headlong Hall*; 1818 *Nightmare Abbey*; 1831 *Crotchet Castle*

Jane Austen (1775-1817) *Sense and Sensibility* (written 1795-1797 published 1811); *Pride and Prejudice* (1796-7:1813); *Northanger Abbey* (1798:1818); *Mansfield Park* (1812:1814); *Emma* (1814:1816); *Persuasion* (1815:1818)

Walter Scott (1771-1832): 1814 *Waverley*; 1815 *Guy Mannering*; 1816 *The Antiquary*; 1816 *The Black Dwarf*, *Old Mortality*; 1818 *Heart of Midlothian*; 1818 *Rob Roy*; 1819 *The Bride of Lammermore*, *The Legend of Montrose*; 1820 *Ivanhoe*; 1820 *The Monastery*; 1820 *The Abbot*; 1821 *Kennilworth*; 1822 *The Pirate*; 1822 *The Fortunes of Nigel*; 1822 *Peverill of the Peak*; 1823 *Quentin Durward*; 1824 *St Ronan's Well*; 1824 *Redgauntlet*; 1825 *The Betrothed*, *The Talisman*; 1826 *Woodstock*; 1827 *Chronicles of the Canongate*; 1828 *The Fair Maid of Perth*; 1829 *Anne of Geierstein*; 1832 *Count Robert of Paris*, *Castle*

Dangerous.

Mary Shelley (1797-1851): 1818 *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus*;

Napoleon

The French Revolution had created fear all over Europe. The British government was so afraid that revolution would spread to Britain that it imprisoned radical leaders. As an island, Britain was in less danger, and as a result was slower than other European states to make war on the French Republic. But in 1793 Britain went to war after France had invaded the Low Countries (today, Belgium and Holland). One by one the European countries were defeated by Napoleon, and forced to ally themselves with him. Most of Europe fell under Napoleon's control.

Britain decided to fight France at sea because it had a stronger navy, and because its own survival depended on control of its trade routes. British policy was to damage French trade by preventing French ships, including their navy, from moving freely in and out of French seaports. The commander of the British fleet, Admiral Horatio Nelson, won brilliant victories over the French navy, near the coast of Egypt, at Copenhagen, and finally near Spain, at Trafalgar in 1805, where he destroyed the French—Spanish fleet. Nelson was himself killed at Trafalgar, but became one of Britain's greatest national heroes. His words to the fleet before the battle of Trafalgar, "England expects that every man will do his duty," have remained a reminder of patriotic duty in time of national danger.

In the same year as Trafalgar, in 1805, a British army landed in Portugal to fight the French. This army, with its Portuguese and Spanish allies, was eventually commanded by Wellington, a man who had fought in India. Like Nelson he quickly proved to be a great commander. After several victories against the French in Spain he invaded France. Napoleon, weakened by his disastrous 1812 invasion of Russia, during which nearly 500,000 soldiers died in the Retreat from Moscow, surrendered in 1814 and was exiled to the Italian island of Elba. But the following year he escaped and quickly (in 100 days) assembled an army in France. Wellington, with the timely help of the Prussian army, finally defeated Napoleon at Waterloo in Belgium in June 1815. He was exiled to the remote south-Atlantic island of St. Helena, where he died. He is buried in the church of Les Invalides, in Paris.

The early 19th century

The population of Britain in 1815 was 13 million; by 1871 it had doubled. By 1914 it was over 40 million. In 1815, with Napoleon exiled for ever in St. Helena and France impoverished in every way, Britain too was in crisis, with 300,000 soldiers and sailors discharged and looking for work. Imported corn was cheap but the landowners imposed a protectionist policy, the Corn Law, so the price of bread rose, Everything else followed while wages remained low. These with no work, no money and no homes were forced into dreadful workhouses where families were divided; everywhere crime rates soared, there were occasional large riots. Masses moved into the industrial cities -- Birmingham, Sheffield, Anchester, Glasgow and Leeds soon doubled in size. In 1820, London counted 1.25 million people. The governing classes feared revolutionary uprisings. The Tories wanted simply to use force to control the poor. The Whigs advocated social transformation, "Reform." The first focus for reform was the House of Commons and the electoral system. The Tories thought Parliament should represent the owners of property;

the radicals, inspired by the American and French revolutions, said it should represent the people as a whole. The Whigs were sympathetic to the radical approach and in 1832 a Reform Bill was passed. This changed the electoral system, increasing the number of urban constituencies electing MPs as well as widening the qualification for being a voter. It was a symbolic beginning of an ongoing development that took over 100 years.

In 1824 it became legal for worker to organize unions, designed both to negotiate better wages and to prevent unfair competition. In 1834, 6 farm workers in Tolpuddle (Dorset) were imprisoned for forming such a union. They became known as the "Tolpuddle Martyrs" and widespread demonstrations forced the government to free them and accept the right of workers to form labor unions.

In 1829, Sir Robert Peel established a police force in London to deal with crime; London's police are still known as "Bobbies" after his name. In 1838, workers joined with radicals to demand far more radical reform through a People's Charter. Many of these Chartists' idealistic demands were ultimately met, but only much later: the universal right to vote (for women, too), secret voting in elections, payment for MPs . . . The workers' movement was helped by the introduction in 1840 of a national postal system, allowing anyone to mail a letter anywhere for one penny. Payment was indicated by a stamp stuck to the letter. The Penny Black was the world's first postage stamp. The same Sir Robert Peel then abolished the old Corn Law, which had made food so expensive. The farming gentry were angry, the rich industrialists were happy since workers had less reason to demand higher wages once food was cheaper.

A symbolic event happened in 1834, when the Palace of Westminster caught fire. The entire complex, home to the two houses of Parliament since the middle ages, was destroyed. Only Westminster Hall survived. The old House of Commons had originally been St. Stephen's Chapel and the seating in today's House of Commons still follows the way the medieval seats in a chapel face one another. New, modern Houses of Parliament had to be built and they were designed by Pugin in the style of the Gothic Revival. In painting, John Constable and William Turner made landscapes immensely popular. Later in the century, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood transformed British art.

The Victorian Era

The results of the late 18th-century and early 19th-century Industrial Revolution, largely based on the perfection of the steam engine and improved methods of iron- and steel-production, led to ever larger industrial cities in central and northern England. After the defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo in 1815, Europe knew a century of virtual peace. The growth of the "professional" middle class, the improved standard-of-living of the working class, and the spread of basic education to almost everyone meant that reading now became an almost universal habit. Victoria became queen in 1837, on the death of her uncle, William IV, when she was only 18 and she only died in 1901. During her reign, Britain expanded its colonies into the British Empire, and consolidated its influence over huge areas of the world. The construction of the railway across England at the start of her reign brought even remote areas within easy reach of London.

Railways

The first full scale working railway steam locomotive was built in 1804 by Richard Trevithick, an English engineer born in Cornwall. This used high pressure steam to drive

the engine. On 21 February 1804 the world's first railway journey took place as Trevithick's unnamed steam locomotive hauled a train along the tramway of the Penydarren ironworks, in South Wales. In 1814 George Stephenson, inspired by the early locomotives of Trevithick and others, persuaded the manager of the Killingworth colliery where he worked to allow him to build a steam-powered machine. He built the Blücher, one of the first successful locomotives. Stephenson played a pivotal role in the development and widespread adoption of the steam locomotive. His designs considerably improved on the work of the earlier pioneers. In 1825 he built the *Locomotion* for the Stockton and Darlington Railway, north east England, which was the first public steam railway in the world.

The success of the Stockton and Darlington encouraged the rich investors of the rapidly industrialising North West of England to embark upon a project to link the rich cotton manufacturing town of Manchester with the thriving port of Liverpool. The Liverpool and Manchester Railway was the first modern railway, in that both the goods and passenger traffic was operated by scheduled or timetabled locomotive hauled trains. A widely reported competition was held in 1829, to find the most suitable steam engine to haul the trains. A number of locomotives were entered, the winner was Stephenson's Rocket.

The promoters were mainly interested in goods traffic, but after the line opened on 15 September 1830, they found to their amazement that passenger traffic was just as remunerative. The success of the Liverpool and Manchester railway influenced the development of railways elsewhere in Britain and abroad. The Liverpool and Manchester line was still a short one (56 km), linking two towns within an English county. The world's first trunk line can be said to be the Grand Junction Railway, opening in 1837, and linking a mid point on the Liverpool and Manchester Railway with Birmingham, by way of Crewe, Stafford, and Wolverhampton.

By the 1850s, many steam-powered railways had reached the fringes of built-up London. But the new lines were not permitted to demolish enough property to penetrate the City or the West End, so passengers had to disembark at Paddington, Euston, Kings Cross, Fenchurch Street, Charing Cross, Waterloo or Victoria and then make their own way via hackney carriage or on foot into the centre, thereby massively increasing congestion in the city. A railway was planned to run under the ground to connect several of these separate railway terminals, and this became the world's first "Metro." The Metropolitan Railway and the Metropolitan District Railway were the first two underground railways to be built in London. These two companies formed the basis of what would later become known as the London Underground network by creating the Circle Line. The underground railway eventually opened to the public on 10 January 1863. In its first few months of operation, an average of 26,500 passengers used the line every day.

Queen Victoria's husband (the Prince Consort) was a German prince, Albert, with progressive ideas. He encouraged the organizers of a "Great Exhibition of the Industries of All Nations" that was held in 1851 in a specially constructed Crystal Palace, a great hall of iron and glass, in London. Because of the cheap travel offered by railways, thousands came to visit it from all over Britain, 100,000 or more in one day. It was the first world trade fair, and especially it gave visitors a glimpse of the cultures of the various countries forming the British Empire. The railway system around London gave rise to the suburbs from which people could "commute" to work each day by train. London spread immensely. One major problem remained -- hygiene. Most drinking water came from shallow wells that were easily polluted by the sewage from primitive toilets; as a result, thousands of people regularly died of typhoid and cholera, including Prince Albert in 1861. Finally the

connection was recognized; piped water and modern systems of sewage disposal were established.

Ruskin and Morris

As standards of living improved, people began to be aware of the ugliness that industrialization had provoked. They felt that they had been dehumanized. Even the furniture and textiles produced in factories seemed lacking in style. The Gothic revival from earlier in the century paved the way for a new vision of an architecture and an attitude to work that would be both humane and harmonious. The past, from being a 'dark ages' became a source of inspiration and even nostalgia. Venice, particularly the remains of medieval, Gothic Venice, was one of the fundamental sources of inspiration for John Ruskin (1819-1900), who visited it eleven times. Ruskin was an art critic and social thinker, also remembered as a poet and artist. And he was the main inspiration for the founders of British Socialism and the Labor Party, as well as of most aspects of the Victorian Gothic Revival in architecture and the almost worldwide Arts and Crafts Movement that derived from it.

He praised the Gothic style for what he saw as its reverence for nature and natural forms; the free, unfettered expression of artisans constructing and decorating buildings; and for the organic relationship he posited between worker and guild, worker and community, worker and natural environment, and between worker and God. Ruskin believed the division of labour to be the main cause of the unhappiness of the poor. Ruskin argued that the rich had never been so generous in the past, but the poor's hatred of the rich was at its greatest point. This was because the poor were now unsatisfied by monotonous work that used them as a tool, instead of a person. His main writings are *The Stones of Venice* and *Unto This Last*.

Where Ruskin wrote, William Morris (1834 – 1896) acted. He was a textile designer, artist, writer, socialist associated with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and the English Arts and Crafts Movement. Morris wrote and published poetry, fiction, and translations of ancient and medieval texts throughout his life. He was an important figure in the emergence of socialism in Britain, founding the Socialist League in 1884, but breaking with the movement over goals and methods by the end of that decade. He devoted much of the rest of his life to the Kelmscott Press, which he founded in 1891, dedicated to transforming the printed book into a thing of beauty similar to the medieval manuscript.

Both of these extraordinary men, and those around them in the Pre-Raphaelites, the Guild of St George, the Christian Socialists, found the source of their vision in a quality of life, of humanity and beauty, that they recognized in the middle ages and felt was lacking in their own time. Ruskin wrote in *Unto This Last* (1860), "There is no wealth but life, life, including all its powers of love, of joy, of admiration. That country is richest which nourishes the greatest number of noble and happy human beings; that man is richest who, having perfected the functions of his own life to the utmost, has also the widest helpful influence, both personal, and by means of his possessions, over the lives of others." Ruskin's youthful experience of the beauty of the arts of the middle ages was enough to open his eyes to the ugliness and ecological dangers of industrialization. One of his most famous essays is entitled *On the Nature of Gothic—The Function of the Workman in Art*. He and Morris found in the medieval, the Gothic, a direct, Eutopian inspiration for their social, artistic and human vision in the so different, industrialized 19th century.

Politics

Electoral reform continued, with secret voting being introduced in 1872, and by 1884 most men over 21 were entitled to vote. The Whigs had by now changed their name into the Liberal Party, while the Tories were officially known as the Conservative Party; both parties developed into nationwide social organizations with local branches in every town organizing events among their supporters. The number of MPs increased to over 650 and slowly the House of Lords lost its power. The working class was still weak, but the growth of Co-operative stores (where the shoppers were the share-holders / owners, receiving dividends from profits) prepared the way for other advances. The workers in each particular skilled labour joined the national trade union representing their particular job; in 1868 the Trades Union Congress was inaugurated, and soon began to work for the election of representatives of the working class as MPs. In the 1870s, wages were lowered in many factories and this provoked the unions to turn to strikes as the ultimate means of action. The British working class did not on the whole try to impose change by force or revolution; instead, it always looked for democratic ways of gaining influence in Parliament, to effect social change by legal methods in a relative consensus.

Across the world, imperialistic Britain was involved in a variety of conflicts. In China, the two (very shameful) Opium Wars (1840-1843 and 1856-1860) were intended to break Chinese resistance to the smuggling of opium from India, itself a measure intended to punish China for its unequal trading policies and force it to open its markets. China was totally defeated in both wars, and was forced to grant the western powers unequal treaties. By contrast, a war in Afghanistan designed to prevent Russia from moving its sphere of influence south toward India was a disaster for Britain. In 1854, fearing that Russia would take control of Turkey, Britain launched the Crimean War which was widely covered by the British newspapers. The corruption of the officers, the sufferings of the soldiers and the courage of Florence Nightingale and her fellow nurses in the military hospitals were all covered in great detail for the first time. In India, the Indian Mutiny of 1857 was a revolt by Indian soldiers in the British army was used by local rulers as an attempt to force the British out of India; the British response was extremely violent and the cruelty of the British prepared the way for the Indian independence movement of the 20th century.

Meanwhile, with the growth of the population people from Britain were encouraged to emigrate and start a new life in the Dominions, in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, where the settlers were soon given self-government, the Queen remaining the titular head of state. South Africa enjoyed similar status although it had a far larger native population as well as a very substantial number of Dutch settlers (Boers).

Apart from England, which was flourishing, the people in the other parts of the United Kingdom were far less happy. In Wales, industry grew around the coal-mining area to the south around Cardiff and Swansea and the workers there expressed their identity by joining the Baptist and other Non-conformist chapels rather than the state church, and developing a radical political stance. The rural population remained backward and retained the use of the Welsh language. In Scotland the people living in the Highlands, where there had been much violence in the 18th century, were forced off their land by new landowners wishing to raise either sheep or deer (for hunting by the elite).

The worst was in Ireland, where the Protestants (descendants either of English settlers from centuries back or of Scottish settlers introduced in the 18th century) felt a need for English protection against the native Irish Catholics. As part of the United Kingdom, the Irish elected MPs to Westminster and since 1829 the freedom-seeking nationalists elected Catholics when possible. But many were extremely poor, having been deprived of their

land in the 18th century when Catholics were not recognized as landowners. The staple diet of the poor was potatoes but in 1845, 1846, and 1847 a disease destroyed the potato harvest, leaving millions with nothing to eat. There was enough corn in Ireland, but the poor had no money and the ruling elite did nothing to help relieve the famine. The authorities in England also remained inactive. In those 3 years 1.5 million people died of starvation and at least a million emigrated either to the mainland or to the United States (many dying on the long journey). In the following decades Ireland continued to lose population, some 5 million settling in the United States in that period. Before the Famine there had been 8 million people, even today there are less 5 million.

Along with industrialization went the development of modern science. The single most significant name must be that of Charles Darwin, whose 1859 work *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* introduced the notions of evolution of life's diversity and of natural selection by the "survival of the fittest." His other most noted title, *The Descent of Man* (1871) dealt with the development of human culture among other topics. The work of geologists had already established the immense age of the earth and thus of the universe; Darwin's theory of evolution was quickly accepted by the general public. Accepting natural selection as the main mechanism of evolution took longer and the debate over the role of chance in evolution remains open.

Between 1875 and 1914 the condition of the poor in most of Britain greatly improved as prices fell by 40 per cent and real wages doubled. Life at home was made more comfortable. Most homes now had gas both for heating and lighting. As a result of falling prices and increased wages, poor families could eat better food, including meat, fresh milk (brought from the countryside by train) and vegetables. This greatly improved the old diet of white bread and beer.

In 1870 and 1891 two Education Acts were passed. As a result of these, all children had to go to school up to the age of thirteen, where they were taught reading, writing and arithmetic. The later 19th century saw the foundation of new ("red-brick") universities with a focus on science and technology. With growing prosperity, spectator sports (soccer, rugby and cricket) became popular among the working class. The literature of the 19th century grows out of the poetry and novels of the Romantic period but is marked by a growing seriousness of moral purpose. The culture of the Victorian period is too cast a topic to be covered here. By the end of the century, England was already being challenged by the new industrial might of Prussia-led Germany.

Victorian novels

(Those writers **bolded** remain popular today)

William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863): 1847 *Vanity Fair*; 1852 *Henry Esmond*; 1848 *Pendennis*

Charles Dickens (1812-1870): 1835 *Sketches by Boz*; 1836 *Pickwick Papers*; 1837 *Oliver Twist*; 1838 *Nicholas Nickleby*; 1840 *Barnaby Rudge*, *The Old Curiosity Shop*; 1843 *Martin Chuzzlewit*, *A Christmas Carol*; 1844 *The Chimes*; 1845 *The Cricket on the Hearth*; 1846 *The Battle of Life*; 1847 *The Haunted Man*, *Dombey and Son*; 1849 *David Copperfield*; 1852 *Bleak House*; 1854 *Hard Times*; 1857 *Little Dorrit*; 1859 *A Tale of Two Cities*; 1861 *The Uncommercial Traveller*; 1860 *Great Expectations*; 1864 *Our Mutual Friend*; 1870 *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (unfinished).

Anthony Trollope (1815-1882)-wrote 60 novels- 1855 The Warden; 1857 Barchester Towers; 1861 Framley Parsonage; 1864 The Small House at Allington; 1867 The Last Chronicles of Barset; 1869 Phineas Phinn....

Charlotte Bronte (1816-1855) 1847 Jane Eyre; 1849 Shirley; 1853 Villette

Emily Bronte (1818-1848) Wuthering Heights.

Mary Ann Evans - **George Eliot** (1819-1881): 1857 Mr Gilfill's Love Story; 1859 Adam Bede; 1860 The Mill on the Floss; 1861 Silas Marner; 1863 Romola; 1866 Felix Holt; 1871 Middlemarch; 1876 Daniel Deronda.

Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881); 1844 Coningsby; 1845 Sybil; 1847 Tancred.

Mrs. Gaskell (1810-1865): 1853 Cranford; 1855 North and South; 1863 Sylvia's Lovers; 1865 Cousin Phillis.

Lewis Carroll (1832-1898) Alice's Adventures in Wonderland; Alice Through the Looking Glass; The Hunting of the Snark.

Wilkie Collins (1824-1889) The Dead Secret, 1860 The Woman in White; 1868 The Moonstone;

Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) 1871 Desperate Remedies; 1872 Under the Greenwood Tree; 1873 A pair of Blue Eyes; 1874 Far from the Madding Crowd; 1878 The Return of the Native; 1880 The Trumpet Major; 1886 The Mayor of Casterbridge; 1891 Tess of the D'Urbervilles; 1896 Jude the Obscure; 1897 The Well-Beloved;

George Meredith (1829-1909) 1859 The Ordeal of Richard Feverel; 1861 Evan Harrington; The Adventures of Harry Richmond; 1865 Rhoda Fleing; 1867 Vittoria; 1879 The Egoist; 1885 Diana of the Crossways; 1891 One of our Conquerors; 1895 Lord Ormont and his Aminta; The Amazing Marriage.

Henry James (1843-1916) born in New York. 1875 A Passionate Pilgrim; 1876 Roderick Hudson; 1881 Washington Square, The Portrait of a Lady; 1877 The American; 1878 The Europeans; 1879 Daisy Miller; 1886 The Bostonians; The Princess Casamassima; 1897 The Spoils of Poynton; 1898 What Maisie Knew; 1898 The Turn of the Screw; 1902 The Wings of the Dove; 1903 The Ambassadors; 1904 The Golden Bowl;

Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-89)

After becoming a **Catholic** at Oxford in 1866, under the influence of **John Henry Newman**, Hopkins decided to become a Jesuit in 1868. He had already written some poems but felt that writing poetry was not suitable for someone intending to become a priest. In 1876 he returned to poetry-writing and many of his best poems were written in **1877** while he was preparing to be ordained a priest. He found life in the poor areas of Liverpool in 1880 a great challenge. In 1884 he was sent to **Dublin** as professor of Greek and Latin at University College. He fell into deep depression, and wrote some very dark sonnets. This passed and he was able to write some more positive poems before dying suddenly of typhoid. In his lifetime he published almost nothing. His friend, the poet **Robert Bridges**, preserved his papers and it was only in **1918** that he finally published a

collection of Hopkins' poems. He had not been sure that the English public could accept such "oddity"!

God's Grandeur

THE world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs--
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

The Windhover: To Christ our Lord

I CAUGHT this morning morning's minion, king-
dom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon, in his riding
Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and striding
High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing
In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing,
As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend: the hurl and gliding
Rebuffed the big wind. My heart in hiding
Stirred for a bird,--the achieve of; the mastery of the thing!

Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume, here
Buckle! AND the fire that breaks from thee then, a billion
Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier!

No wonder of it: shéer plód makes plough down sillion
Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,
Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermillion.

Thomas Hardy (1840-1928)

Hardy was born in Dorchester, in the county of Dorset, and that region, which he called "Wessex" dominates his fiction. He first published a series of novels that were increasingly attacked by critics for their pessimism. After *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891) and *Jude the Obscure* (1895) he stopped writing fiction and for the rest of his life published only poetry. The death of his wife in 1912 provoked some very powerful poetry, as he struggled to come to terms with the end of their very difficult relationship. In his lifetime, his poetry was not widely admired but the plain style and rhythmic subtlety he cultivated have been very important models for the British poets of the generations following T. S. Eliot.

The Darkling Thrush

1 I leant upon a coppice gate
2 When Frost was spectre-gray,
3 And Winter's dregs made desolate
4 The weakening eye of day.
5 The tangled bine-stems scored the sky
6 Like strings of broken lyres,
7 And all mankind that haunted nigh
8 Had sought their household fires.

9 The land's sharp features seemed to be
10 The Century's corpse outleant,
11 His crypt the cloudy canopy,
12 The wind his death-lament.
13 The ancient pulse of germ and birth
14 Was shrunken hard and dry,
15 And every spirit upon earth
16 Seemed fervourless as I.

17 At once a voice arose among
18 The bleak twigs overhead
19 In a full-hearted evensong
20 Of joy illimited;
21 An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,
22 In blast-beruffled plume,
23 Had chosen thus to fling his soul
24 Upon the growing gloom.

25 So little cause for carolings
26 Of such ecstatic sound
27 Was written on terrestrial things
28 Afar or nigh around,
29 That I could think there trembled through
30 His happy good-night air
31 Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew
32 And I was unaware.

Some Twentieth-Century Novels

Rudyard Kipling (1865 – 1936) *The Jungle Book* (1894); *Kim* (1901).

H. G. Wells (1866 – 1946) *The Time Machine* (1895); *The Invisible Man* (1897); *The War of the Worlds* (1898); *The First Men in the Moon* (1901); *The Shape of Things to Come* (1933)

E. M. Forster (1879 – 1970) *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905); *A Room with a View* (1907); *Howard's End* (1910); *A Passage to India* (1924),

Virginia Woolf (1882 – 1941) *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925); *To the Lighthouse* (1927); *Orlando* (1928); *The Waves* (1931).

D. H. Lawrence (1885 – 1930) *Sons and Lovers* (1913); *The Rainbow* (1915); *Women in*

Love (1920); The Plumed Serpent (1926); Lady Chatterly's Lover (1928).
James Joyce (1892 – 1941) Dubliners (1914); A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (1916); Ulysses (1922); Finnegans Wake (1939).

The 20th Century

The 20th century was a period of **constant warfare**, latent or actual. It began with the **Boer War** between the British and the farmers of Dutch origin for control of major parts of South Africa (1899-1902).

The First World War (1914-1918) was a terrible experience, with hundreds of thousands of British soldiers, mostly from the working class neighborhoods of the industrial cities, dying wretchedly in the mud of Flanders (northern France and southern Belgium). In all 750, 000 British soldiers died, 2.5 million were seriously wounded. An equally large number of French and German soldiers died.

Germany nearly defeated the Allies, Britain and France, in the first few weeks of war in 1914. It had better trained soldiers, better equipment and a clear plan of attack. The French army and the small British force were fortunate to hold back the German army at the River Marne, deep inside France. Four years of bitter fighting followed, both armies living and fighting in the trenches, which they had dug to protect their men. Apart from the Crimean War, this was Britain's first European war for a century, and the country was quite unprepared for the terrible destructive power of modern weapons. In addition, poison gas was used with terrible effect. At Passchendaele, the following year, the British army advanced five miles at the cost of another 400,000 dead and wounded. Modern artillery and machine guns had completely changed the nature of war. The invention of the tank and its use on the battlefield to break through the enemy trenches in 1917 could have changed the course of the war.

In the Middle East the British fought against Turkish troops in Iraq and in Palestine, and at Gallipoli, on the Dardanelles. There, too, there were many casualties, but many of them were caused by sickness and heat. It was not until 1917 that the British were really able to drive back the Turks. Somehow the government had to persuade the people that in spite of such disastrous results the war was still worth fighting. The nation was told that it was defending the weak (Belgium) against the strong (Germany), and that it was fighting for democracy and freedom. German submarines managed to sink 40 per cent of Britain's merchant fleet and at one point brought Britain to within six weeks of starvation. When Russia, following the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, made peace with Germany, the German generals hoped for victory against the Allies. But German submarine attacks on neutral shipping drew America into the war against Germany. The arrival of American troops in France ended Germany's hopes, and it surrendered in November 1918.

Wilfred Owen (1893-1918)

"My subject is War, and the pity of War. The Poetry is in the pity."

Wilfred Owen, one of approximately 9,000,000 million fatalities in World War I, was killed in action on the Sambre Canal just seven days before the Armistice on November 4, 1918. He was caught in a German machine gun blast and killed. He was twenty-five years old.

Teaching in continental Europe in 1915, Owen visited a hospital and became acquainted with many of the war's wounded. Deeply affected by these visits, the 22 year-

old young Owen decided to enlist in the British Army. Owen described his decision to enlist in September, 1915: "I came out in order to help these boys--directly by leading them as well as an officer can; indirectly, by watching their sufferings that I may speak of them as well as a pleader can. I have done the first." Owen was injured in March 1917 and sent home; he was fit for duty in August, 1918, and returned to the front where he was killed shortly afterwards. The bells were ringing on November 11, 1918, in Shrewsbury, England, to celebrate the Armistice when the doorbell rang at his parent's home, bringing them the telegram informing them their son was dead.

Anthem for Doomed Youth

What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?
-Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
Can patter out their hasty orisons.
No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells;
Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs,-
The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;
And bugles calling for them from sad shires.

What candles may be held to speed them all?
Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes
Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes.
The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;
Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,
And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.

Futility

Move him into the sun -- -
Gently its touch awoke him once,
At home, whispering of fields unsown.
Always it woke him, even in France,
Until this morning and this snow.
If anything might rouse him now
The kind old sun will know.

Think how it wakes the seeds -- -
Woke, once, the clays of a cold star.
Are limbs so dear-achieved, are sides
Full-nerved, -- - still warm, -- - too hard to stir?
Was it for this the clay grew tall?
-- O what made fatuous sunbeams toil
To break earth's sleep at all?

T. S. Eliot (1888-1965)

Born in St. Louis, Missouri, Eliot felt ill at ease in the United States. In 1914 he first met

Ezra Pound, who advised him to live in England. In 1915, he published 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' which then formed the basis for his first volume of poetry in 1917. In that year he also began to work for Lloyds Bank.

From: The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock

Let us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherized upon a table;
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,
The muttering retreats
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:
Streets that follow like a tedious argument
Of insidious intent
To lead you to an overwhelming question . . .
Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"
Let us go and make our visit.

In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,
Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,
Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,
And seeing that it was a soft October night,
Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.

And indeed there will be time
For the yellow smoke that slides along the street,
Rubbing its back upon the window-panes;
There will be time, there will be time
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;
There will be time to murder and create,
And time for all the works and days of hands
That lift and drop a question on your plate;
Time for you and time for me,
And time yet for a hundred indecisions,
And for a hundred visions and revisions,
Before the taking of a toast and tea.

In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.

In 1922 his great poem, 'The Waste Land' (much revised by Ezra Pound) was published in the first issue of Eliot's literary quarterly *The Criterion*.

The opening lines of 'The Waste Land'

April is the cruellest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.
Winter kept us warm, covering
Earth in forgetful snow, feeding
A little life with dried tubers.
Summer surprised us, coming over the Starnbergersee
With a shower of rain; we stopped in the colonnade,
And went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten,
And drank coffee, and talked for an hour.
Bin gar keine Russin, stamm' aus Litauen, echt deutsch.
And when we were children, staying at the archduke's,
My cousin's, he took me out on a sled,
And I was frightened. He said, Marie,
Marie, hold on tight. And down we went.
In the mountains, there you feel free.
I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter.

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
And the dry stone no sound of water. Only
There is shadow under this red rock,
(Come in under the shadow of this red rock),
And I will show you something different from either
Your shadow at morning striding behind you
Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;
I will show you fear in a handful of dust.

In 1925 he left the bank and started to work as a director of the literary publisher Faber and Faber. In 1927 he became a British subject and a member of the Church of England. He considered that this was the logical fulfilment of his spiritual pilgrimage, but many of his admirers, especially in the United States, felt that he had betrayed them by adopting a religious faith (Christianity) for which they felt no affection. Eliot's greatest explicitly Christian poetry includes 'Ash Wednesday' and culminates in the poems of *Four Quartets* (1935-42). Eliot also wrote a number of poetic dramas, of which the most powerful may be *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935). His critical writings were equally important; he coined the term "dissociation of sensibility" in 1921 to express the way in which he felt the modern age to be different from earlier ages, until the 17th century. He also coined the term "objective correlative" and launched the modern admiration for the Metaphysical Poets.

Social Welfare

As it entered the 20th century, British society continued the developments begun in the 19th. Social welfare provisions were introduced by the "New Liberal" government eager to earn working-class support: free school meals came in 1907, an old age pension scheme in 1908; state-run employment exchanges for people seeking information about available jobs opened in 1909; in 1911 national insurance payments were introduced, to provide

funding for payments to those who were sick or unemployed. In 1911 the House of Lords (dominated by Conservatives) caused a crisis when it tried to block a Liberal government bill to increase taxation of the rich. The king himself intervened, the government passed the Parliament Act, and the House of Lords found itself deprived of almost all its power. Also in 1911, MPs began to receive a salary instead of it being assumed that they would have private means. In 1906 29 Labor Party MPs had been elected, working-class men who had no money. In 1918 the right to vote at elections was given to all men aged 21, and (at last!) to some women. The number of voters was doubled by this. In 1924, the Labour Party (founded by the TUC in 1900) won the majority in Parliament and formed its first government. The vote was given to women in part because during the war they had replaced men in every kind of occupation, and proved that their supposed "weakness" and "inferiority" were nonsense.

Ireland

The Irish had for long campaigned for self-government. The Protestant Irish nationalist Charles Parnell had founded an Irish Party campaigning for home rule and in the 1885 elections 86 of its members were elected to Westminster. The Liberals were sympathetic but the Conservatives refused to accept the idea. The main problem lay in the northern regions, the only part where Protestants were in the majority. They realized that most of the Irish population was Catholic and threatened to start a civil war if Ireland was given its own government. When war came in 1914, the Irish were asked to wait for peace to come, and serve as British soldiers. At Easter 1916, a group of fiery young radical Irish nationalists staged a small armed uprising, taking control of the main post office in Dublin. The British put this down with great violence, then executed all the leaders, alienating many moderate Irish. Elections were held in 1918, where Irish Republicans were elected everywhere except in the north (Ulster). Those elected did not go to London, but formed an Irish parliament in Dublin. They established a separate army, the Irish Republican Army, whose members started a guerrilla campaign against the British. In 1921, London agreed to independence ('home rule') for the southern part, with Ulster still part of the United Kingdom. The British king would still be titular head of state. Radical republicans fought against this. In 1937, the southern portion (Eire) was declared an independent republic. In 1969, the situation in Ulster degenerated, social resentments turned into violence and a small civil war developed between militia of the two opposing sides, with the British army caught in the middle. The situation only reached apparent reconciliation in 2007.

The Second World War

The period prior to the Second World War saw Germany systematically re-arming after being humiliated and brought to economic disaster by the conditions of the Treaty of Versailles. In 1935-6 Italy waged a colonial war against Ethiopia, and from 1936 - 9 Spain was torn apart by a civil war in which Republicans (liberals, socialists and communists) fought against the Nationalists (royalists, Catholics, fascists). The "Axis" (Germany and Italy) supported the Nationalists while many idealists from across Europe fought on the Republican side. The Nationalists won, and General Franco became dictator of Spain until his death in 1975. In many ways this was a rehearsal for the Second World War, with the introduction of a new form of warfare in which civilian populations were bombed from the air, illustrated by the 1937 raid on the Basque town of Guernica made famous by the

painting by Picasso.

The rise of the National Socialists (Nazis) in Germany under the leadership of Adolf Hitler led to the outbreak of war in 1939, when the German army invaded Poland. Britain had been fiercely pacifist after the horrors of the First World War, so was not prepared. Germany quickly took control of most of western Europe. In 1940, England under the leadership of Winston Churchill, was expecting an invasion after the intense bombing and aerial battles in May (the Battle of Britain). Instead, Germany attacked the Soviet Union, with which it had signed a non-aggression treaty. That cost them the war. After the United States entered the conflict in December 1941 (with the attack by Japan on Pearl Harbor) preparations began for the Normandy landings of June 1944. Fighting in Europe stopped in May 1945, after a race to take control of Germany led to the Russians having control of the eastern regions, the British and Americans with the Free French having occupied the western portion. For the rest of the 20th century, the world was dominated by the Cold War. The Korean War was the last intense conflict in which the British army was involved. The end of the Cold War with the break-up of the Soviet Union and the reunification of Germany, together with the establishment of the European Union, mark the beginning of a new stage in European relations.

The Welfare State

After the end of the Second World War in 1945, a Labour government was elected in 1946 and it introduced the Welfare State, with the National Health Service providing free health care for all. National Assistance ensured payments for the old, the unemployed etc. Also the Labour Party undertook a radical policy of nationalization -- the Bank of England, power and transport were all brought under state control.

The end of the Empire

The post-war period saw the end of the British Empire. India gained independence in 1947, with the new state of Pakistan being created for Moslems who felt unsafe in Hindu-dominated India. Britain abandoned Palestine and the state of Israel was established. Then one by one independence was granted to the other colonies. Instead, these were invited to join a free-trade association known as the Commonwealth.

Immigration to Britain

In the 1950s and 1960s, many young people from the West Indies, former African colonies, as well as India and Pakistan, were encouraged to come to Britain to provide cheap labour in the industrial cities. Commonwealth immigration, made up largely of economic migrants, rose from 3,000 per year in 1953 to 46,800 in 1956 and 136,400 in 1961. Then British industry declined rapidly, and many social problems developed when Britain found itself a radically changed country, with a significant number of its unemployed population having different cultures, languages and faiths. The challenge of living in a multi-cultural country is now widely recognized. In the 1970s, an average of 72,000 immigrants were settling in the UK every year from the Commonwealth; this decreased in the 1980s and early 1990s to around 54,000 per year, only to rise again to around 97,000 by 1999. The total number of Commonwealth immigrants since 1962 is estimated at around 2.5 million. Since 2000 the majority of new citizens have come from Africa (32%) and Asia (40%), the largest three groups being people from Pakistan, India and Somalia. Around half of the British Caribbean community originate from Jamaica. In 2001 the Black Caribbean community numbered 565,876 and the total Black population

was 1.2 million or 2.2% of the population. 2004 estimates show that the British Asian community is 2,799,700. Over 40,000 Koreans live in Britain.

The new politics

Few of the problems of the 1980s were entirely new. However, many people blamed them on the new Conservative government, and in particular, Britain's first woman Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher. Thatcher had been elected in 1979 because she promised a new beginning for Britain. This basic change in British politics caused a major crisis for the Labour Party. Margaret Thatcher had come to power calling on the nation for hard work, patriotism and self-help. She was not, however, a typical Conservative, for she wanted free trade at home and abroad, individual enterprise and less government economic protection or interference. She wanted more "law and order" but was a good deal less willing to undertake the social reform for which later nineteenth-century Liberals were noted. By the beginning of 1982 the Conservative government had become deeply unpopular in the country. However, by her firm leadership during the Falklands War Thatcher captured the imagination of the nation, and was confidently able to call an election in 1983. As expected, Thatcher was returned to power with a clear majority of 144 seats in the 650-seat Parliament. It was the greatest Conservative victory for forty years.

Thatcher had promised to stop Britain's decline, but by 1983 she had not succeeded. Industrial production since 1979 had fallen by 10 per cent, and manufacturing production by 17 per cent. By 1983, for the first time since the industrial revolution, Britain had become a net importer of manufactured goods. There was a clear economic shift towards service industries. Unemployment had risen from 1.25 million in 1979 to over 3 million. Thatcher could claim she had begun to return nationalised industries to the private sector, that she had gone even further than she had promised. By 1987 telecommunications, gas, British Airways, British Aerospace and British Shipbuilders had all been put into private ownership. The most serious accusation against the Thatcher government by the middle of the 1980s was that it had created a more unequal society, a society of "two nations", one wealthy, and the other poor. According to these critics, the divide cut across the nation in a number of ways. The number of very poor, who received only a very small amount of government help, increased from twelve million in 1979 to over sixteen million by 1983. In the meantime, reductions in income tax favoured the higher income earners.

The division was also geographical, between prosperous suburban areas, and neglected inner city areas of decay. More importantly, people saw a divide between the north and south of the country. Ninety-four per cent of the jobs lost since 1979 had been north of a line running from the Wash, on the east coast, to the Bristol channel in the west. The black community also felt separated from richer Britain. Most blacks lived in the poor inner city areas, not the richer suburbs, and unemployment among blacks by 1986 was twice as high as among the white population. In spite of these problems, Thatcher's Conservative Party was still more popular than any other single party in 1987. There were other reasons why the Conservative Party, with only 43 per cent of the national vote, The 1987 election brought some comfort, however, to two underrepresented groups. In 1983 only nineteen (3 per cent) of the 650 members of Parliament had been women, almost the lowest proportion in western Europe. In 1987 this figure more than doubled to forty-one women MPs (6.5 per cent), a figure which suggested that the political parties realised that without more women representatives they might lose votes. Blacks and Asians, too, gained four seats, the largest number they had ever had in Parliament, although like women they remained seriously underrepresented.

The future?

Britain has more living symbols of its past than many countries. It still has a royal family and a small nobility. Its capital, cities and countryside boast many ancient buildings, castles, cathedrals, and the "stately homes" of the nobility. Every year there are historical ceremonies, for example the State Opening of Parliament, the Lord Mayor's Show, or the meeting of the Knights of the Garter at Windsor each St George's Day. It is easy to think these symbols are a true representation of the past. Britain's real history, however, is about the whole people of Britain, and what has shaped them as a society. This means, for example, that the recent story of black and Asian immigration to Britain is as much a part of Britain's "heritage" as its stately homes. Indeed more so, since the immigrant community's contribution to national life lies mainly in the future.

When looking at Britain today, it is important to remember the great benefits from the past. No other country has so long a history of political order, going back almost without interruption to the Norman Conquest. Few other countries have enjoyed such long periods of economic and social wellbeing. It is also important, however, to remember the less successful aspects of the past. For example, why did the political views of the seventeenth-century Levellers or nineteenth-century Chartists, which today seem so reasonable, take so long to be accepted? Why did the women's struggle to play a fuller part in national life occur so late, and why was it then so difficult and painful? Why is there still a feeling of division between the north and south of Britain? Is Britain, which in many ways has been a leader in parliamentary democracy, losing that position of leadership today, and if so, why?

The questions are almost endless, and the answers are neither obvious nor easy. Yet it is the continued discussion and reinterpretation of the past which makes a study of Britain's history of value to its present and its future.