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Faculty of Education
Novel and Prose
Second year general

18th Century and the Rise of the English Novel

Contents

18th Century and the Rise of the English Novel

The novel today is considered one of the most important art forms in the English language. This is because it affects grand aspects of the language and is now considered an integral part of the art. However, the rise of the English novel occurred primarily in the 18th century; this does not mean that there was no form of a novel before this time. It only means that there was an increased release of novels and novelists during this period.

The English novel is an integral part of English literature (Learn about the best novels written in English). It has evolved to date in varied modifications and genres. The novel is a prosaic work of art that deals with the imagination to explore the diverse experiences of humans through interwoven events of a select people and setting.

Also, it is a genre of fiction that has been a medium of entertainment, information, or a blend of both. In this light, any fictive art piece that is long enough to be adapted as a book can be said to have achieved "novelhood."

Since the inception of the novel, it has grown to be adapted in forms of romance, thriller,

A Highlight of the 18th Century

The rise of the English novel occurred primarily in the 18th century; this does not mean that there was no form of novels before this time. It only means that there was an increased release of novels and novelists during this period. The 18th century was a period that lasted from 1685 – 1815.

Most often, the term is used to refer to the 1700s. This is the century between January 1, 1700, and December 31, 1799. This period witnessed a great revolution that shook the society structure of its time. The elements of enlightened thinking were at the fore of this

revolution. This was experienced in the French, American, and Haitian revolutions.

On a larger scale, slave trading and human trafficking were at their peak. These revolutions were pivotal, so much so that they began to challenge the structure that threatened to asphyxiate its emergence from the monarchical system to the aristocratic privileges, especially the systems that nurtured to flame the slave trade.

In retrospect, a more profound sense of appreciation can be ascribed to this revolution that was seen as a threat but somehow waded through all the hurdles in its way. Without this revolution, a lot of privileges we partake in presently would not have been a thing to imagine, think, talk more of experience. Thanks to the revolution of the 18th century, we have and experience life with its modern perks.

This century was called the ‘century of Light’ or the ‘Century of Reason.’ By this, you can tell that several idiosyncrasies were changed from being accepted as the norm, ranging from European politics, philosophy, communications, and science experience a

total upheaval throughout the termed “long 18th century” (1688-1815).

This Age of Reason, also called the Enlightenment bore cutting-edge schools of thought. From thinkers in Britain to France and even throughout Europe. These thinkers began to question the traditional normalcy they were born into and had adopted through their lives.

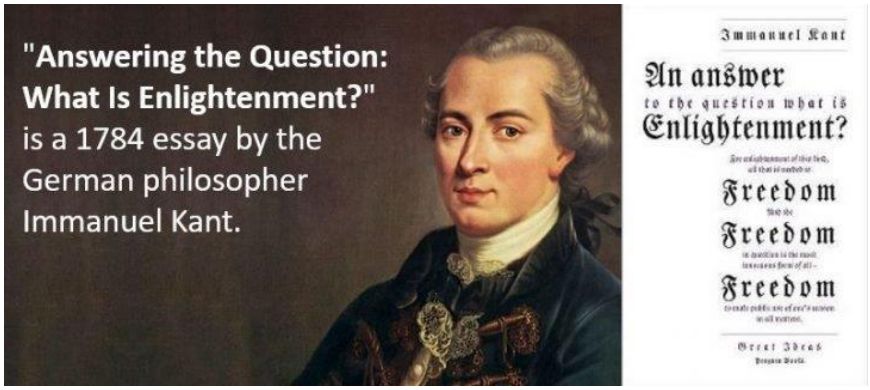
These thinkers tasted the efficacy of rational thinking, logic and knew that their lives and reality as a whole were never going to be the same. They discovered that their lives as humans and others’ lives, in all its vicissitude, can be enhanced through rational thinking.

In an essay called, ‘What Is Enlightenment?’ (1784), Immanuel Kant, the German philosopher summarized the era’s dominance succinctly, as the: ‘Dare to know! Have courage to use your own reason!’ era. Not only Immanuel Kant’s essay came to thrive, but also an influx of other essays. This era saw the evolution of literature.

Also, it gave life to numerous essays, inventions, books, laws, scientific discoveries, revolutions, and wars. The major revolutions,

the American and French Revolutions, were influenced by the 18th century.

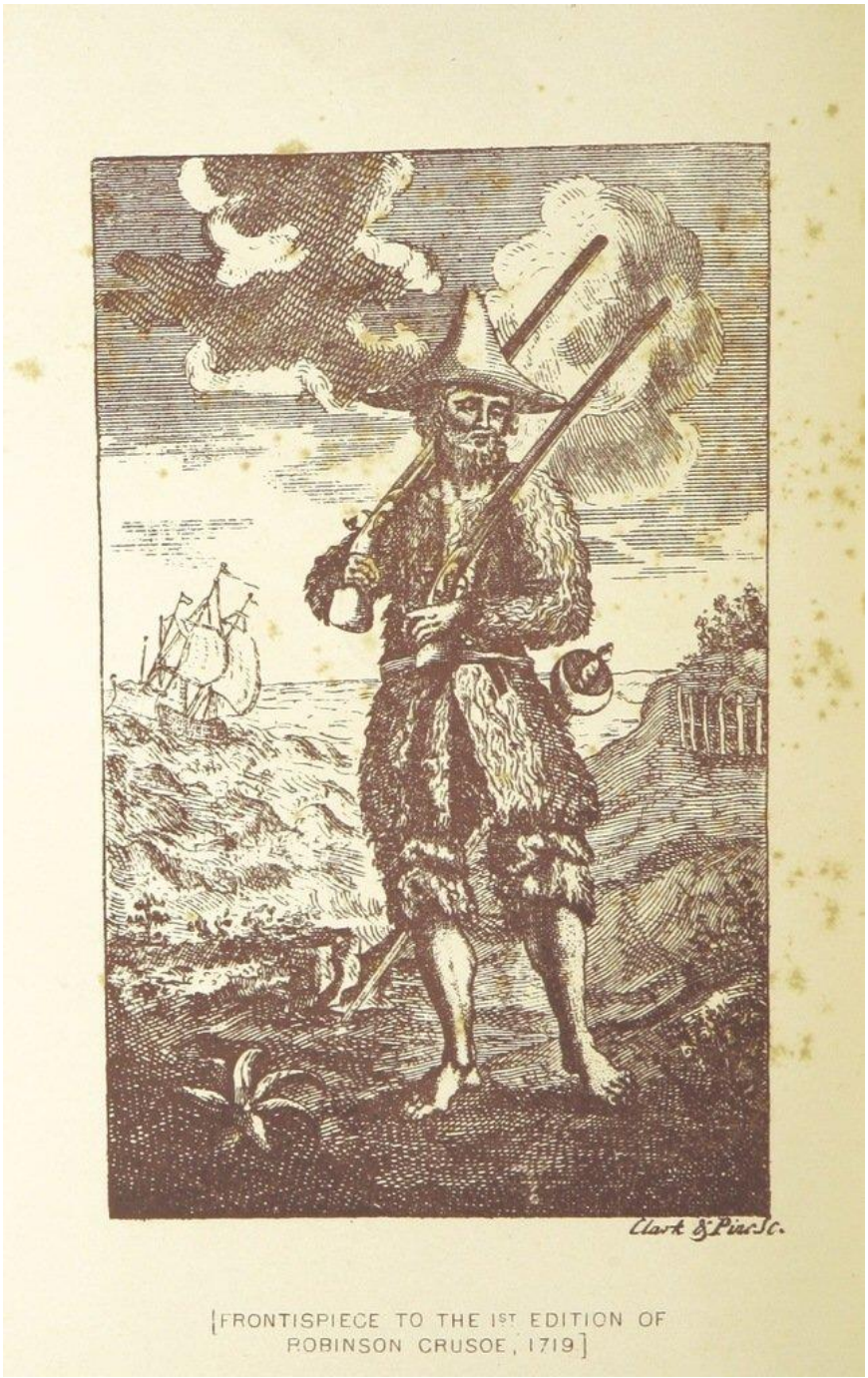
Just like childbirth, a mother goes through all the birth pangs in lieu of the joy she gets to carry through life. The 18th century is symbolic of this because all the rationale behind the chaos finally gave birth to the 19th-century, called The Romantic Era or Romanticism.



History of the English novel

The 18th century marked the period where novels were distributed on a large scale, and a certain level of demand arose among English readers. This demand is also due to people's desire for reading about everyday events, events which went on to shape the lives and actions of fictional characters. Some of the earliest novels include Robinson Crusoe and Tom Jones which were

respectively written by [Daniel Defoe](#) and [Henry Fielding](#).



[FRONTISPIECE TO THE 1ST EDITION OF ROBINSON CRUSOE, 1719]

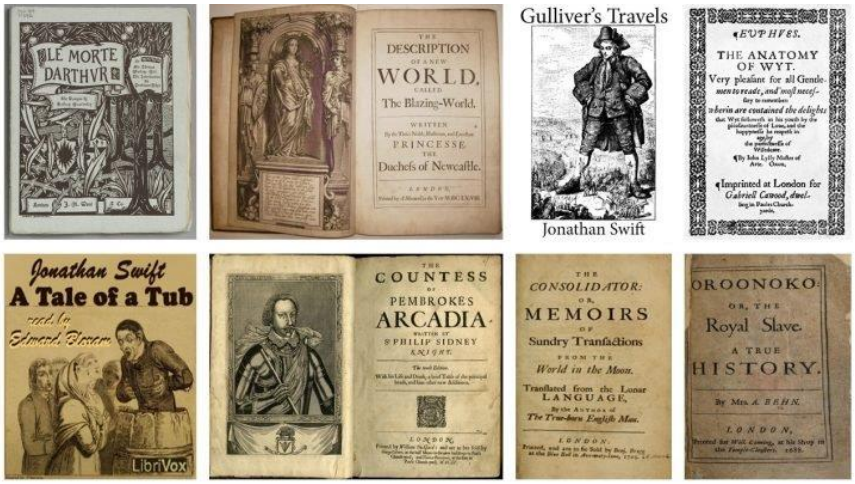
Robinson Crusoe by Daniel Defoe was first published on 25 April 1719. The first edition credited the work's protagonist

Robinson Crusoe as its author and therefore many readers thought that the book was the biography of a real person.

It happened that this century was replete with literature in all its forms – poetry, drama, satire, and novels especially. This period saw the development of the modern novel as a major literary genre. Many novelists who revolutionized the sphere of this literature genre can be dated back to this century. Novelists like:

1. Thomas Malory, Le Morte d'Arthur also known as Le Morte Darthur
2. William Baldwin, who authored Beware the Cat
3. Margaret Cavendish – The Description of a New World, also called The Blazing-World
4. John Lyly, Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit (1578), and Euphues and his England (1580)
5. Jonathan Swift – Gulliver's Travels
6. Philip Sidney -The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia (a.k.a. Arcadia) (1581)
7. Jonathan Swift – A Tale of a Tub published in 1704

8. William Caxton's translation of Geoffroy de la Tour Landry – The Book of the Knight of the Tower, originally in French and was published in 1483
9. Daniel Defoe -The Consolidator in 1705
10. John Bunyan's – The Pilgrim's Progress from This World, to That Which Is to Come, published in 1678
11. Aphra Behn's – Oroonoko or the Royal Slave was published in 1688.
12. Anonymous, Vertue Rewarded 1693



Some of the most influential novels of the 18th century

These are some of the earliest novels, including Robinson Crusoe and Tom Jones, written by Daniel Defoe and Henry Fielding,

respectively. Also, the theater as an art form was not available to every member of the population.

The novel was popular because it could reach a larger audience, even those who could not afford a ticket into a theater. It is also important to note that during this period, drama had begun to decline in England. The growth of the novel can also be attributed to the need of individuals to create something new, something different.

The social and intellectual circle longed for something completely new yet individualized. The people wanted stories that mirrored their own lives, stories that had a recognizable nature, and this need birthed the novel.

Furthermore, the rise of the middle class in the 18th century have a direct effect on the rise of novels. David Daiches, a historian said, the novel "was in a large measure the product of the middle class, appealing to middle-class ideals and sensibilities, a patterning of imagined events set against a clearly realized social background and taking its view of what was significant in human behavior from agreed public attitudes."

Another factor responsible is the popularity of newspapers in the 17th century, and the growth of periodicals. For example, the novel, Pamela by Samuel Richardson was originally intended as a series of letters, but instead, it was made into a novel. The newspapers helped the reading culture among the lower class.

The democratic movement that gripped England after the Glorious Revolution of 1689 could also be regarded as one factor that gave rise to the novel in the 18th century. This is because the democratic system emphasized commoners' stories, who were the subjects in many of the novels written during this period. Also, the novels by Richardson, Sterne, Smollet, and Fielding center around commoners' lives, rather than that of the ruling class.

Conclusively, the rise of realism in the 18th century also affected the growth of the novel. Factors such as reason, intellect, and satirical spirit were all adopted into the novel form and were principal subjects in the realist movement.

The rise of the English novel was affected by a number of factors; one of the most

significant is the medieval romance, and the courtly tales of Italy and France. Translations from classical Greek materials also gave to the rise of the English novel.

The Rise of the Middle Class

One thing that stood out for the audience of the 18th-century was how these authors were the regular everyday people. Since the theater as an art form was not available to every member of the population, the novel became succor.

The people who made up the novels' audience were the middle class and those considered to be at the lowest rung of society's strata. The combination of these classes of people was en masse larger than the upper echelon. This made these novels reach a larger audience, even those who could not afford a ticket into a theater.

It is also important to note that during this period, drama had begun to decline in England. There was a tilt that no longer sated the theatrical audience but seemed to wet the parched thirst of the rapid novel audience.

The growth of the English novel can also be attributed to individuals' need to create something new, something different. The social and intellectual circle longed for something completely new yet individualized. Also, the people wanted stories that mirrored their own lives, stories which had a recognizable nature to theirs, and this need birthed the novel.

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The emergence of the middle class

occurred in the 18th century due to the Industrial Revolution. Many people became rich by the industry and other professions such as lawyers or administrative officials also developed as the society's demand.

Of all the books that took precedence in the 18th century, *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe, published in 1719, was one phenomenal event.

Robinson Crusoe's tale is a story narrated in the first person, which makes it very personal and authentic. It is told as a flashback of events experienced by a young Englishman who was very adventurous and set to sail against his parents' wishes.

Daniel Defoe's novel is strongly inspired by contemporary travel narratives and tales of real-life stories of a person or people who were cast adrift or ashore, like the Alexander Selkirk story.

On Crusoe's travels, he is found shipwrecked at different times. One intriguing thing about him was that he never gave up on his quests. Instead, they somehow spurred him on to set sail again. This resolve to set out again one day puts him in danger. This dangerous

journey to obtain the slaves stuck in Africa puts Crusoe in a precarious situation.

After the shipwreck on an island after South America's coast, Crusoe is the only surviving human, apart from the dog and two cats who were the animal survivors. Although grateful to have survived, he rescues some provisions from the ship before it sunk completely. This was one thing that stood out for a lot of readers. How amidst the life-threatening event that just took place in his life, Crusoe was proactive about his survival at the moment.

Unlike what most humans expected to do – brood, wallow in self-pity or give up entirely. For all that it is worth, this was an island that seemed lifeless with no infrastructure for human existence on there. All his survival instincts strengthened through previous voyages came to the fore on this island.

Crusoe's journal almost seemed like a character on its own as he referred to it a lot. Not only did the journal serve as an escape for Robinson Crusoe, but it also was a mirror used by readers to understand him better and read his thoughts.

This personal journal is adapted into Crusoe's daily routine. He describes his daily activities, fears, concerns, challenges acquiring food, and his revival with Christianity. This journal was something to look forward to as a reader. Two years later, on the same island, Robinson Crusoe's life as a sole sojourner has metamorphosed into core beliefs no one thought possible.

One would have imagined that by the strong sense of survival he exhibited, he will be coming up with discoveries that should be leading him closer to home. Instead, Crusoe was seen accepting his present state. He challenged the societal norms of the world he used to live in and the inherent vices compared to the peaceful island void of those vices. This was a novel that remains a classic to date.

Factors That Aided the Rise of the English Novel

The etymology of the word '*novel*' comes from the French word '*nouvelle*,' which in Italian is *novella*, that means "*new*." Due to the novelty of what this term represented, the word '*Novel*' was coined to refer to it. It is an

elongated form of fictional narrative written in a prose format.

Until the 18th century, the word referred only to shorter fictional forms used to depict love and life in its rawest forms than romance, which was mostly about stories with adventure, laughter, and joy.

The birth of the novel in the 18th century garnered features of old romance and became one of the most preferred literary genres. This dominant genre in English literature became one of the bedrock of budding imaginative writing.

The rise of the novel has been daunting – with being about 250 years old in English, the fight for its survival has been prominent. After the challenges faced by the novel to make its mark, it later became a primary source of entertainment in the 19th century.

As stated earlier, Robinson Crusoe is one novel that spun the evolution of the English novel to a greater dimension. In line with this, other novels sprouted more confidently, exploring creativity, genres, and themes. Here we will take a look at some of the factors that further grew the spread of the English novel. Some of these factors are:

1. Novelty

Firstly, apart from the novel being a break from the norm, its novelty attracted a lot of traction. People's curiosity was peaked; not only that, it delivered a satisfaction of a craving that was hitherto non-existential.

2. The Print Press

A second factor responsible is the Print Press. The teeming popularity of newspapers in the 18th century and the growth of periodicals and bulletins gave people something tangible to look forward to. These reads held reforms that were rational even though not yet implemented. By this, there was something new to learn, a cause to propagate, or some pioneer movement to look forward to.

Press with drying newspapers – The growing popularity of the print press in

the 18th century played a role in the rise of the English novel.

One of the repercussions of the Print Press is the novel *Pamela* by Samuel Richardson, which was created to be a collection of letters. Still, somehow maturated into the novel, it became eventually.

The print press also reduced the price of ink, paper, bookbinding, etc. All these became more affordable as book production became more commercialized. This continuous increase in literacy rates brought about a demand for more written text.

Through this, the growth of the reading audience allowed authors to write more novels, and readers better able to read them. This factor significantly led to the English novel's rise and by this posterity thanks its bequeather. The newspapers and the varied print media helped the reading culture among the lower class and prepared the soil for the seeds of what the novel brought to the existing society then.

3. The Glorious Revolution

In addition, the democratic movement that gripped England after the Glorious

Revolution of 1689 could also be regarded as one of the factors that gave rise to the novel in the 18th century.

The Glorious Revolution of November 1688 or Revolution of 1688, is the term mostly used for the events that surrounded the deposition of James II and VII, king of England, Scotland, and Ireland, and the replacement by his daughter Mary II and her Dutch husband, William III of Orange. John Hampden first used this name in late 1689.

The Glorious Revolution is a factor that aided the growth of the English novel because the democratic system emphasized the stories of commoners, who were the subjects in many of the novels written during this period. This brought it so close to home and spiked the emotions of the people.

The novels of Richardson, Sterne, Smollet, and Fielding center around the life of commoners, rather than that of the ruling class, and very well became a constant among the people.

Source (Andy Xavier)

The Glorious Revolution, took place from 1688 to 1689 in England. It involved the overthrow of the Catholic king James II, who was replaced by his Protestant daughter Mary and her Dutch husband, William of Orange. The establishment of the democratic system helped the rise of the English novel.

4. The Middle Class

Next, the rise of the middle class. The rise of the middle class as a factor that aided the rise of the English novel can be seen through the growth of the lower class. The middle class was made up of numerous merchants and

manufacturers who amassed great fortunes and were able to enlarge their political influence and consequentially increase their social influence. This made a lot of trades more lucrative and dignified.

These further gave rise to the middle class. Also, the middle class of the 18th century became quite liberated in their thoughts and began to challenge certain laws that existed.

All these changes and supposed chaos gave thought-leaders more to write about. Through these, writers were encouraged to put out information out there, be it biased or unbiased. As a result, the common man whose opinions were regarded highly easily became one of prominence in the society, where he was a part of the upper strata or not.

Now that everyone at this level could read and their status quo was vehemently being challenged, the middle class never remained the same.

5. Literacy

Then there was an increase in education. The only way novels became a thing was if people could read them and talk about them. This is

not to say people of that age never showed any literacy. There is a difference between just saying things out loud, talking about them, and being able to read or write about them.

Very evident is the Canterbury Tales, which was not only penned down but was mostly spread through folklore. Although a written book could appear to be longer and with a more complex plot, the oral stories tend to be shorter because it was passed on through word of mouth and can not be put down to be read or listened to later.

On the other hand, the novel could be put down to be read later without losing the storyline. Those who could not read made sure they learned how to, and so did generations after them. This was no longer a luxury a select few could afford. It became a necessity – a way of life, and no one was to be left out.

6. Leisure

To buttress, a factor that aided the growth of the English novel came from the leisure a lot of folks then started to experience. The industrialization that gave rise to the middle

class's economic and financial status also afforded them options.

More time meant more leisure cum rest. Life became a lot easier for them. There was an increase in the number of people who had a little or more time to rest and experience some leisure. The middle class could now afford certain luxuries like candles and oil lamps which could be used to read at night after the day's work.

Conclusively, the rise of realism in the 18th century also affected the growth of the novel. Factors such as reason, intellect, and satirical spirit were all adopted into the novel form and were principal subjects in the realist movement.

Characteristic of the English Novel

1. The eighteenth-century English novel's main characteristics are the relatable characters from different walks of life, different social strata, settings, and complexity of plots that illustrate how complex life in itself can be. They are usually centered around real-life issues.
2. Unlike the romance novels, the English novels of the 18th century

depicted a lot of reason, logical projection of thoughts, and facts. Whatever that propagated idealism was not welcomed or patronized.

Just as the people began to question the societal norms, it became evident in their writing. Some novels seek to enlighten, others inform, a generous amount seems to entertain, and there were also those English novels which were a blend of them – just like 'infotainment.'

3. The English novels illustrated the rise of the middle class. Therefore, its theme, subject matter, style, characters, and setting took these into consideration. Unlike romance, the characters were not kings, queens, knights, or nobles. Instead, they are created using characters that are the typical everyday middle-class people of many different professions. It was no wonder that readers found the strengths, weaknesses, and travails of these characters quite relatable.

The setting and plot of novels also reflect this new focus of realism. The setting became the conventional realistic world we live in, rather than an imaginative kingdom or place. This

was a magical aspect of the English novel – every reader at different times, in different places, experiencing a certain reality felt like they mattered. Their voice was being heard, and that they were not alone in their plight. This was how much the readers could see their own times and places in English novels.

The middle class further experienced some power that was never experienced before. This was wielded by the power of the pen that was discovered at that time. Whatever that was put on paper was brought to light and could be easily tackled or did cower willingly out of their list of issues just because it was brought to the open. The latter was mostly the case.

4. Although the English novel tried to present its ideas logically, one thing that stood out for it was its choice of words and writing style. It was unique in its simplicity; nothing grandiose or exaggerated, just a play on words to better express one's logical reasoning regarding the topic in question.

Elements of literature or literary elements are the components of a literary work. A literary work is a branch of literature that involves the

use of words to create an idea, a picture, or a story in a meaningful pattern. Literary elements are there to help in the discussion and understanding of literary works. Language…

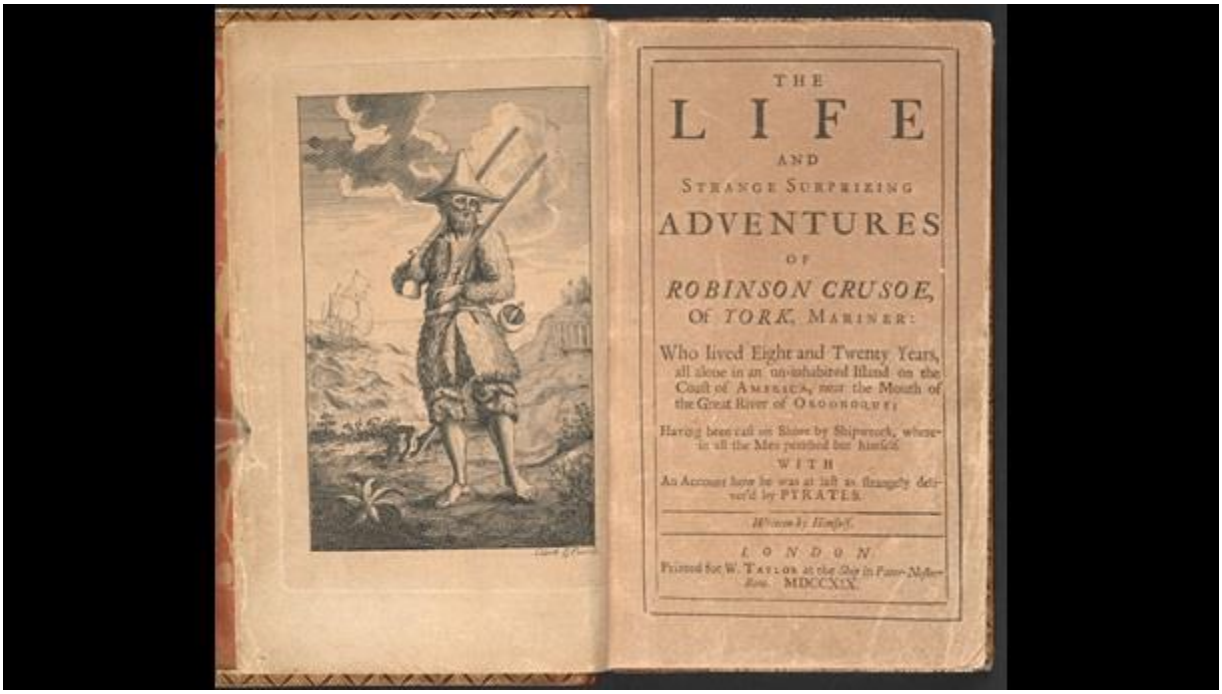
the words of Victorian Poet, Matthew Arnold, ‘The Crown of Literature is indeed poetry’….

Everyone has a literary hero. But who are the best novelists of all time? While all lists have their criteria, specific authors stand out amongst the crowd. Novelists don’t get the same level of fame and recognition as, say, musicians or film directors. Some novelists, however, have works that have had a profound impact on…

The publication of *Robinson Crusoe* in 1719 was an extraordinary event in the history of literature. There had been prose narratives before this book, but never so sustained a fictional account of one individual’s experiences. This man’s story was singular and new. What

distinguished *Robinson Crusoe* were elements that now seem essential to the novel as a genre. It told of an ordinary individual, even if his ordeals were extraordinary. It placed great emphasis on his inner life, though understood mostly in spiritual terms. And, above all, in the very manner of its narration, it asked the reader to believe in its ‘probability’. In the first decades of the English novel, this was the most common word for what made a narrative believable. In the case of *Robinson Crusoe*, it involved the narrator’s unwavering commitment to minute, objective description and circumstantial detail, Daniel Defoe’s brilliantly unliterary prose doing justice to the facts of one particular person’s experience.

First edition of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, 1719



View images from this item (11)
This is the first edition of the famous castaway tale, *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*.
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For Defoe, steeped in the works of devout Protestant autobiographers such as John Bunyan, narration meant religious self-inspection. Crusoe tells us that ‘my Story is a whole Collection of Wonders’ – that word ‘Wonders’ capturing both the narrator’s own amazement at his fortunes, and his dawning recognition of the influence of God’s care and guidance in his life. He is placed on the desert island, with only a Bible and the natural world to instruct him and ample time to look into his heart to understand the errors of his sinful past. Most of Defoe’s subsequent novels – *Moll Flanders*, *Colonel Jack* and *Roxana* among them – are memoirs of remorseful rogues who have learnt religion

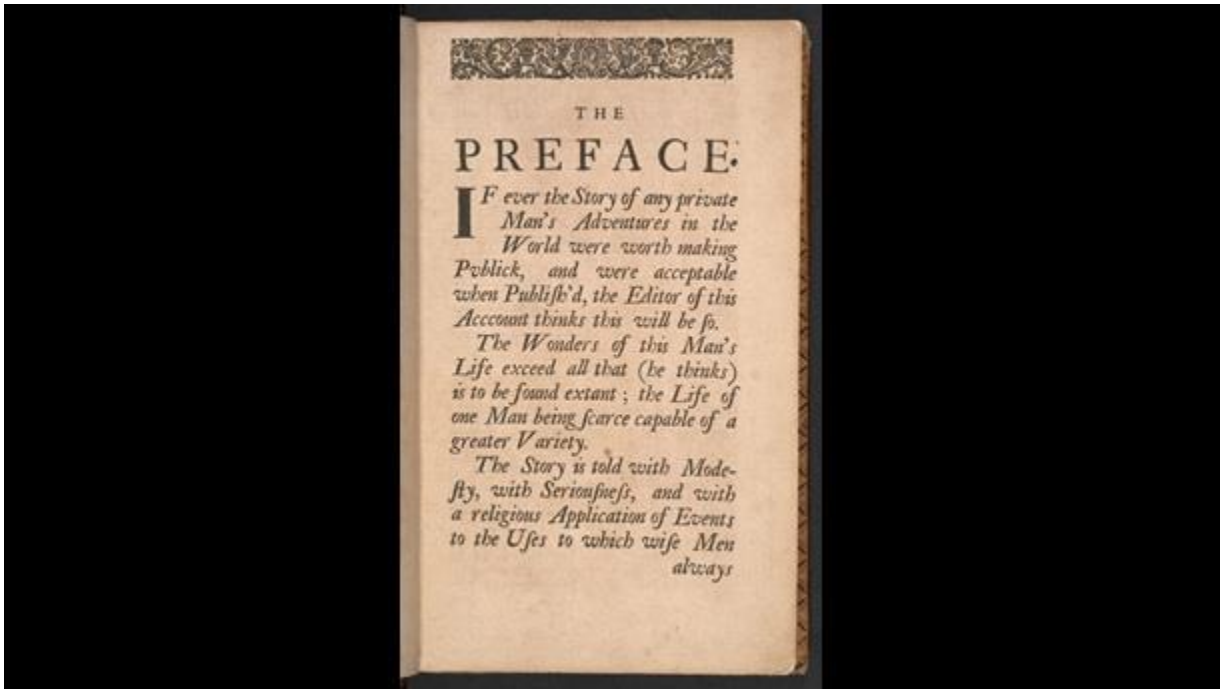
from experience and introspection. All of his novels presented themselves on their title pages as if they were autobiographies. None bore Defoe's name as their author. Indeed, there is evidence that one of them, *The Journal of the Plague Year*, was widely received as a true account of the experience of the Great Plague of 1665.

The word 'novel'

So the novel begins as if it were a 'true' story. Yet Defoe's fiction was not noticed by contemporary literary critics, and not included in discussions of the best literature of the age. From the number of editions that were published we know that his fiction was popular, but it was not regarded as properly literary. Many of his novels were lumped together in the public imagination with the published accounts of criminal lives that were popular in the period. Readers were not yet aware that a new genre was with them. The preface to *Robinson Crusoe* has many words for the narrative – 'Story', 'Adventures', 'Account', 'Life', 'History', 'Fact' – but none of them is that word 'novel'. It is significant that readers did not yet use this word to describe this new genre. The noun existed, but it referred to what we might call a short story or novella: a genre of brief tales, often of forbidden romantic entanglements, usually published in collections. Many of the leading writers of these were women, of whom Delarivière Manley and Eliza Haywood were

the most famous. Defoe's last novel *Roxana*, the fictional memoir of a Restoration courtesan, owes something to this briefly dominant sub-genre of prose fiction, featuring as it does the scandalous affairs of courtly men and women.

First edition of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, 1719


THE
PREFACE.
IF ever the Story of any private Man's Adventures in the World were worth making Publick, and were acceptable when Publish'd, the Editor of this Account thinks this will be so.
The Wonders of this Man's Life exceed all that (he thinks) is to be found extant; the Life of one Man being scarce capable of a greater Variety.
The Story is told with Modesty, with Seriousness, and with a religious Application of Events to the Uses to which wise Men always

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The first page of the preface explains that '[t]he story is told with modesty, with seriousness, and with a religious application of events'.
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Pamela

We owe the phrase 'the rise of the novel' to the critic Ian Watt, who used it as the title of a

hugely influential book, first published in 1957. The crucial event was the publication of Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* in 1740. This novel, which told of the heroic efforts of a 15-year-old servant girl to resist the attempts of her 'master', Mr B, to seduce her, was an immediate best-seller. A work of great moral intensity, it powerfully made the claim for the novel to be taken seriously, morally speaking. Some of its detractors mocked its literary pretensions, not least because Richardson himself was a relatively uneducated, self-made businessman. He had begun as a printer's apprentice and had risen to establish his own successful printing business. He turned to novel writing only in his fifties.

Pamela by Samuel Richardson

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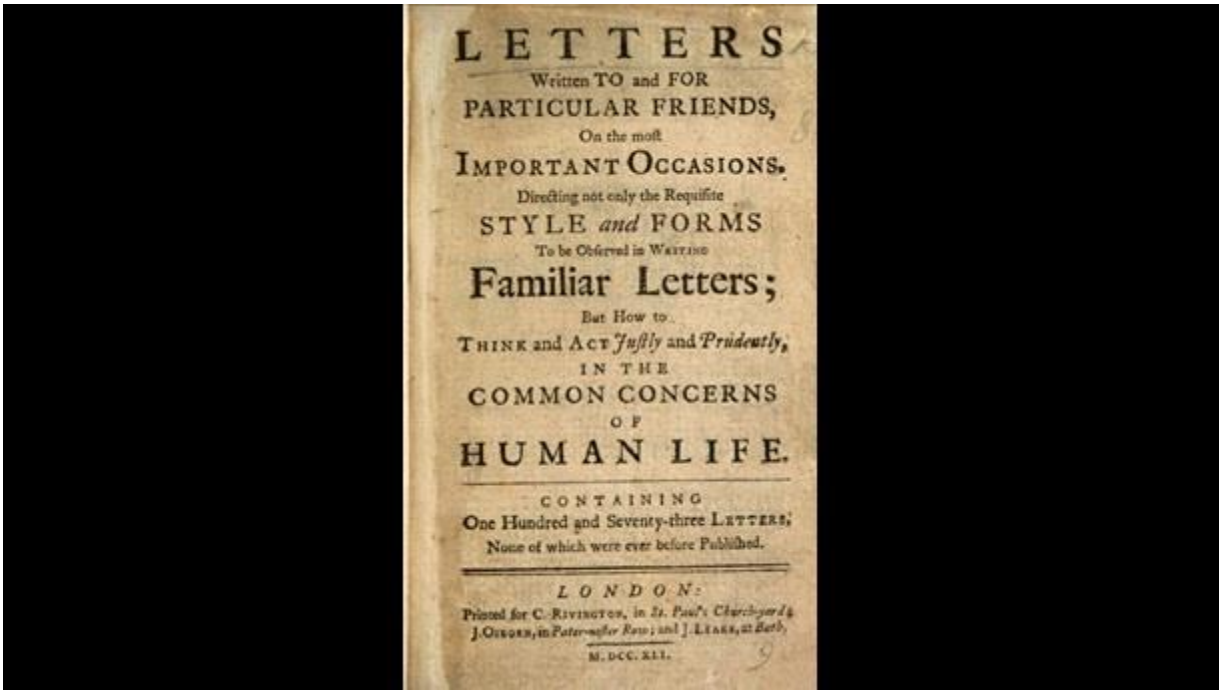
First published in 1740, the epistolary novel *Pamela* is viewed as the first work to move the previously sensational or romantic genre of the novel into the respectable mainstream.

Pamela was as proudly humble in its origins as its author. The novel is written in letters, almost all of them penned by its heroine. In Richardson's earliest version she is colloquial and unrefined, catching her experience with a stylistic immediacy that his first readers found irresistible. (In later editions, Richardson polished her language, thereby rendering her less vivid and believable.) The reader lives through her perplexities and apprehensions, knowing no more than she does. The letters are essential to the novel's plot. Pamela has to hide and smuggle them. Mr B intercepts them. As we are reading her account of her ordeals, so is he. And her letters begin to work on him. The novel demonstrates its moral power by converting its own would-be villain.

***Letters Written to and for Particular Friends* by Samuel Richardson, 1741**


LETTERS
Written TO and FOR
PARTICULAR FRIENDS,
On the most
IMPORTANT OCCASIONS.
Directing not only the Requisite
STYLE and FORMS
To be Observed in Writing
Familiar Letters;
But How to
THINK and ACT Justly and Prudently,
IN THE
COMMON CONCERNS
OF
HUMAN LIFE.
CONTAINING
One Hundred and Seventy-three LETTERS;
None of which were ever before Published.
LONDON:
Printed for C. RIVINGTON, in St. Paul's Churchyard; &
J. OSBORN, in Paternoster Row; and J. LEAKE, at Bath.
M. DCC. XLI.

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This letter-writing manual by Samuel Richardson was an inspiration for *Pamela*. It also demonstrates Richardson's ability to use the appropriate verbal register for characters from a variety of different backgrounds.
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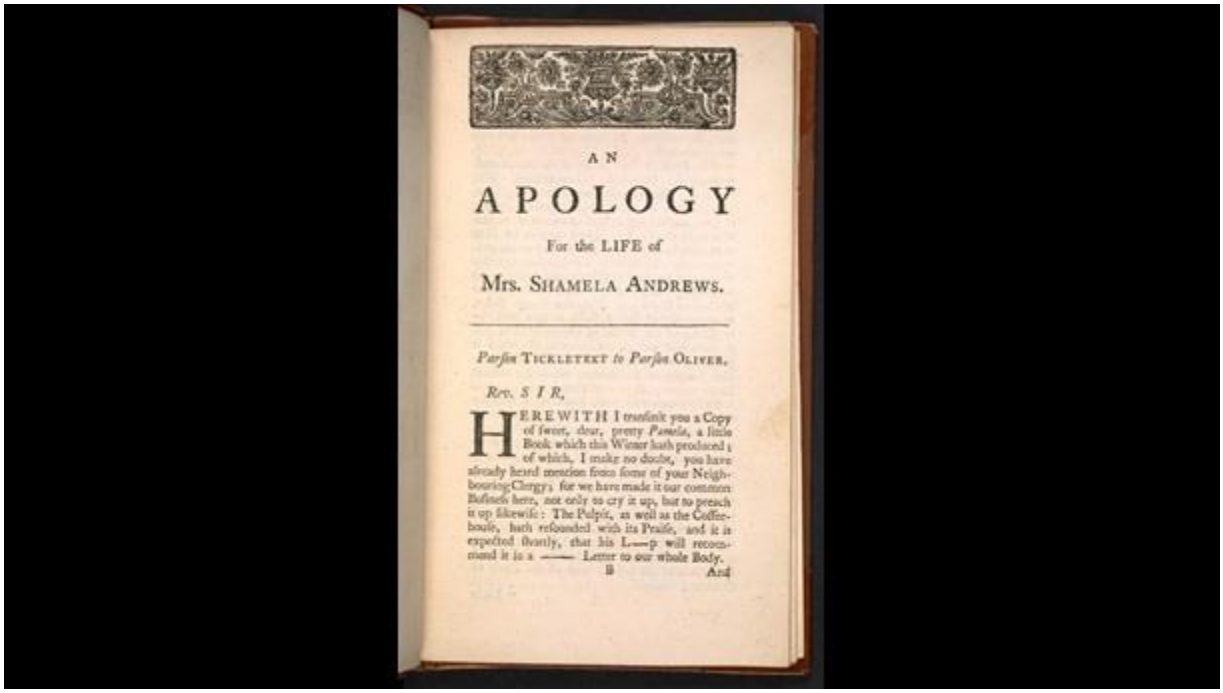
Shamela

Richardson's success provoked the earliest fictional experiments of his most accomplished contemporary, Henry Fielding. Fielding's career as a writer of politically satirical drama had been thwarted by a new law requiring the state licensing of all new plays. So he turned to fiction. His response to *Pamela* was *Shamela*, published anonymously in 1741. This transformed Richardson's heroine into a worldly and entirely cynical narrator, who knows well the value of her fake 'vartue' and contrives to

push her wealthy, foolish master into marrying her in order to obtain it. It also parodies Richardson's narrative technique of 'writing to the moment', capturing experience even as it happens.

An Apology for the Life of Mrs Shamela Andrews



AN

APOLOGY

For the LIFE of

Mrs. SHAMELA ANDREWS.

Parſon TICKLETEXT *to Parſon* OLIVER.

Rev. SIR,

HEREWITH I tranſmit you a Copy of ſweet, dear, pretty *Pamela*, a little Book which this Winter hath produced; of which, I make no doubt, you have already heard mention from ſome of your Neighbouring Clergy; for we have made it our common Buſineſs here, not only to cry it up, but to preach it up likewiſe: The Pulpit, as well as the Coffee-houſe, hath reſounded with its Praiſe, and it is expected ſhortly, that his L—p will recommend it in a —— Letter to our whole Body.

B And

View images from this item (19)
The first page of the first edition of *Shamela*, Fielding's parody of *Pamela*.
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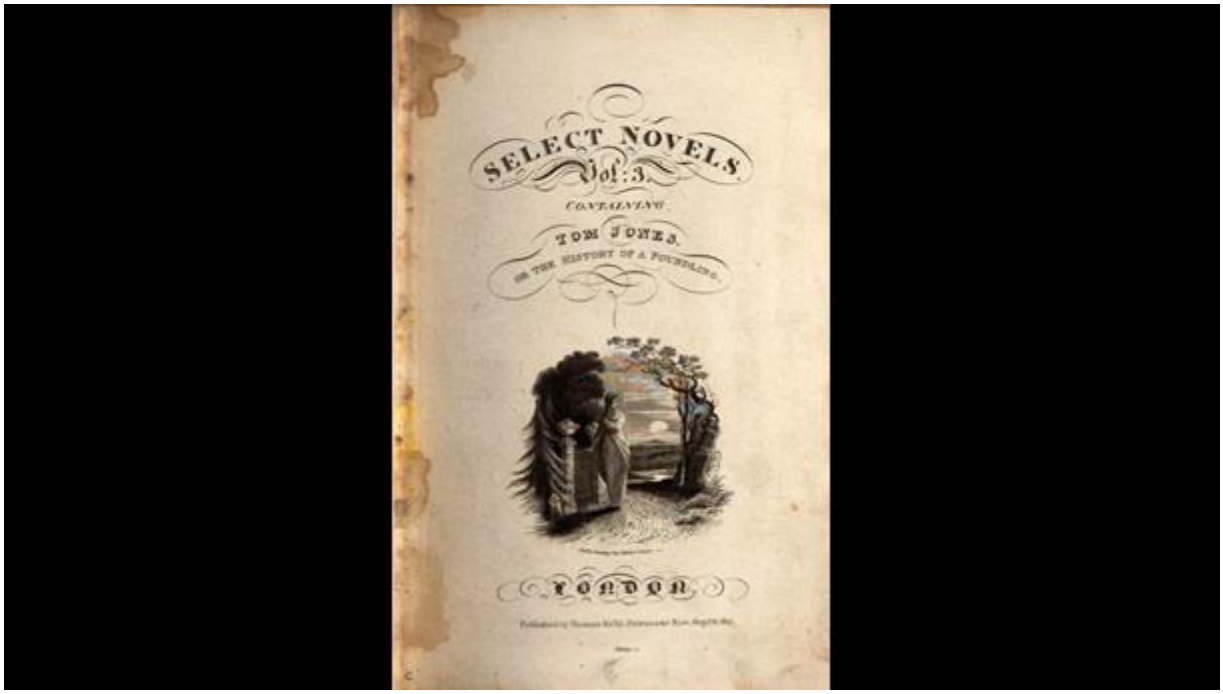
Joseph Andrews and *Tom Jones*: Journeying through contemporary society

Fielding would go on to compose his first full-length novel *Joseph Andrews* as a more subtle riposte to Richardson. Fielding is conscious that he is engaged in a new

‘Species of Writing’, even if he does not have a name for it. Joseph, the book’s hero, is also a servant (the supposed brother of Pamela, in fact) who must learn a little worldly wisdom in the course of his misadventures. Fielding makes much of the clash between his highly literary style and his supposedly ‘low’ subject matter. His second full-length novel, *Tom Jones*, is a kind of mock-epic, whose vulgar events provoke him to much allusion and quotation. The novel is also elaborately and elegantly plotted, another reason why it would be much admired by Victorian novelists. Both *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones* feature protagonists who travel the roads of England, encountering characters from every class. This idea of a novel as a journey through contemporary society was highly influential, imitated by, amongst others, Tobias Smollett in works such as *Roderick Random* and *Humphry Clinker*.

The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling



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First published in 1749, *Tom Jones* was an instant success and went on to inspire writers such as Dickens with its realistic approach to characterisation.
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Clarissa

Richardson's second novel, *Clarissa*, was also written in letters, but this time he featured several different fictional correspondents. Again it is a tale of attempted seduction. The virtuous Clarissa is wooed, beguiled, deceived and assailed by the rakish Lovelace, a highly sophisticated libertine. We are given both the correspondence between Clarissa and her friend Anna Howe, and that between Lovelace and his fellow rake Belford. We can see the difference between what Clarissa supposes and what Lovelace plans, and we

can also be drawn into the villain's schemes and obsessions. To Richardson's horror, some of his most devoted readers seemed themselves to be seduced by Lovelace. In later editions he rewrote the novel to make Lovelace more obviously villainous.

Clarissa is a massively long novel, and it is also challenging to modern readers because of the artificiality of its use of letters. How could its protagonists have had time to write so much? Yet it is a work of great psychological complexity and tragic ambitions. It inspired authors across Europe (Laclos' *Liaisons dangereuses* and Rousseau's *Julie; ou a nouvelle Héliöse* were both written in emulation of it), and convinced many readers that the novel was not a minor genre but could indeed be great literature. Even Fielding admired it. Novelists who came after Richardson were able to feel that their chosen genre had achieved respectability, perhaps even literary dignity.

Tristram Shandy

In some ways the most 'literary' novel of the 18th century was the next big commercial success: Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, the first two volumes of which were published in York in 1759, then in London in 1760. Sterne, an obscure Yorkshire vicar until his book became a popular sensation, was the only novelist of the century to have had a university education, and *Tristram*

Shandy was duly packed with learned jokes and parodies of other books. These were combined with bawdy jokes, sentimental set pieces and elements of extraordinary narrative experiment. The novel veers unpredictably backwards and forwards in time, and uses an array of witty visual devices, all to tell the story of the utterly eccentric Shandy family. Some critics were disapproving, but readers loved it. Sterne came to London and relished his role as a celebrity author. *Tristram Shandy* used a great deal of autobiographical material, and encouraged readers to identify the author with his fictional narrator. By being composed and published in five separate instalments over the course of some seven years, it was able to respond to its own reception. Uncharitable reviewers of the first two volumes were duly mocked in the next two.

First edition of *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, signed by Laurence Sterne

View images from this item (36)
This rare set contains first editions of all nine volumes of *Tristram Shandy*, signed in three places by Sterne himself.
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Booksellers

All of the novels that we now think of as the greatest of the 18th century were also best-sellers. In the eyes of some contemporaries, the sin of the Novel was that it was a commercial product. Novels were among the new literary goods on which a new group of entrepreneurs, 18th-century booksellers, depended. These men (and a tiny number of women) combined the roles of publishers, retailers and sometimes printers too. Novels helped to make the fortunes of several, men like Andrew Millar, who published Fielding, or Robert Dodsley, who published Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*. Below this exalted

rank were less celebrated booksellers who made a living producing and marketing whatever ephemeral, usually anonymous, novels could latch on to the latest fictional fashion. They catered for an expanding genteel readership with money to spend on cultural pleasures.

Portrait of Samuel Richardson by Mason Chamberlin, c. 1754

View images from this item (1)
This portrait of the author Samuel Richardson was painted by Mason Chamberlin in or before 1754. Richardson was a printer and bookseller by trade.

Circulating libraries

The novel encouraged new kinds of literary consumption, and then profited from them. The growth of circulating libraries in Britain is contemporary with the growth of the novel from the mid 18th century. In return for a subscription, readers would be able to borrow a certain number of volumes at one time. The surviving catalogues and advertisements for some of these libraries confirm that much of their available stock consisted of novels. By the late 18th century, even small provincial towns had circulating libraries. These were crucial, for a novel was still a luxury purchase. They also encouraged the idea that some kinds of books were not to be lodged forever on a shelf, but consumed voraciously.

Book reviews

Also accompanying and fuelling the rise of the novel was the development of book reviews in specialist magazines. The *Monthly Review*, which began appearing in 1749, was the first such publication and it was soon joined by others. Though its reviews were not limited to novels, these were among its (highly profitable) staple fare. Meanwhile, the very irresistibility of the rise of the novel ensured that moralists warned of its dangers. Contemporary moralists – some of whom were themselves novelists – invariably depicted the typical novel reader as an easily

misguided young woman, who was deluded or over-stimulated by all the novels she read. However, such moralists were also mocked. Sheridan's comedy of contemporary manners *The Rivals*, first performed in 1775, features a heroine, Lydia Languish, who, with her maid's help, has to hide her novels from her guardian, Mrs Malaprop. The audience was clearly expected to recognise and laugh at the foolish authority figure who disapproves of novels. When Sir Anthony Absolute, whose son is courting Lydia, describes the circulating library as 'the evergreen tree of diabolical knowledge' he is deliciously absurd. And he is doomed to be thwarted.

Manuscript copies of poems from *Evelina* and contemporary reviews of the novel

Source (British Library)

Characters

Robinson Crusoe

Characters Robinson Crusoe

While he is no flashy hero or grand epic adventurer, Robinson Crusoe displays character traits that have won him the approval of generations of readers. His

perseverance in spending months making a canoe, and in practicing pottery making until he gets it right, is praiseworthy. Additionally, his resourcefulness in building a home, dairy, grape arbor, country house, and goat stable from practically nothing is clearly remarkable. The Swiss philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau applauded Crusoe's do-it-yourself independence, and in his book on education, *Emile,* he recommends that children be taught to imitate Crusoe's hands-on approach to life. Crusoe's business instincts are just as considerable as his survival instincts: he manages to make a fortune in Brazil despite a twenty-eight-year absence and even leaves his island with a nice collection of gold. Moreover, Crusoe is never interested in portraying himself as a hero in his own narration. He does not boast of his courage in quelling the mutiny, and he is always ready to admit unheroic feelings of fear or panic, as when he finds the footprint on the beach. Crusoe prefers to depict himself as an ordinary sensible man, never as an exceptional hero.

But Crusoe's admirable qualities must be weighed against the flaws in his character. Crusoe seems incapable of deep feelings, as shown by his cold account of leaving his family—he worries about the religious consequences of disobeying his father, but never displays any emotion about leaving. Though he is generous toward people, as when he gives gifts to his sisters and the captain,

Crusoe reveals very little tender or sincere affection in his dealings with them. When Crusoe tells us that he has gotten married and that his wife has died all within the same sentence, his indifference to her seems almost cruel. Moreover, as an individual personality, Crusoe is rather dull. His precise and deadpan style of narration works well for recounting the process of canoe building, but it tends to drain the excitement from events that should be thrilling. Action-packed scenes like the conquest of the cannibals become quite humdrum when Crusoe narrates them, giving us a detailed inventory of the cannibals in list form, for example. His insistence on dating events makes sense to a point, but it ultimately ends up seeming obsessive and irrelevant when he tells us the date on which he grinds his tools but neglects to tell us the date of a very important event like meeting Friday. Perhaps his impulse to record facts carefully is not a survival skill, but an irritating sign of his neurosis.

Finally, while not boasting of heroism, Crusoe is nonetheless very interested in possessions, power, and prestige. When he first calls himself king of the island it seems jocund, but when he describes the Spaniard as his subject we must take his royal delusion seriously, since it seems he really does consider himself king. His teaching Friday to call him “Master,” even before teaching him the words for “yes” or “no,” seems obnoxious even under the racist

standards of the day, as if Crusoe needs to hear the ego-boosting word spoken as soon as possible. Overall, Crusoe's virtues tend to be private: his industry, resourcefulness, and solitary courage make him an exemplary individual. But his vices are social, and his urge to subjugate others is highly objectionable. In bringing both sides together into one complex character, Defoe gives us a fascinating glimpse into the successes, failures, and contradictions of modern man.

Characters

Friday

Characters Friday

Probably the first nonwhite character to be given a realistic, individualized, and humane portrayal in the English novel, Friday has a huge literary and cultural importance. If Crusoe represents the first colonial mind in fiction, then Friday represents not just a Caribbean tribesman, but all the natives of America, Asia, and Africa who would later be oppressed in the age of European imperialism. At the moment when Crusoe teaches Friday to call him "Master" Friday becomes an enduring political symbol of racial injustice in a modern world critical of imperialist expansion. Recent rewritings of the Crusoe story, like J. M. Coetzee's *Foe* and Michel Tournier's *Friday,* emphasize the sad consequences of Crusoe's failure to understand

Friday and suggest how the tale might be told very differently from the native's perspective.

Aside from his importance to our culture, Friday is a key figure within the context of the novel. In many ways he is the most vibrant character in *Robinson Crusoe,* much more charismatic and colorful than his master. Indeed, Defoe at times underscores the contrast between Crusoe's and Friday's personalities, as when Friday, in his joyful reunion with his father, exhibits far more emotion toward his family than Crusoe. Whereas Crusoe never mentions missing his family or dreams about the happiness of seeing them again, Friday jumps and sings for joy when he meets his father, and this emotional display makes us see what is missing from Crusoe's stodgy heart. Friday's expression of loyalty in asking Crusoe to kill him rather than leave him is more heartfelt than anything Crusoe ever says or does. Friday's sincere questions to Crusoe about the devil, which Crusoe answers only indirectly and hesitantly, leave us wondering whether Crusoe's

knowledge of Christianity is superficial and sketchy in contrast to Friday's full understanding of his own god Benamuckee. In short, Friday's exuberance and emotional directness often point out the wooden conventionality of Crusoe's personality. Despite Friday's subjugation, however, Crusoe appreciates Friday much more than he would a mere servant. Crusoe does not seem to value intimacy with humans much, but he does say that he loves Friday, which is a remarkable disclosure. It is the only time Crusoe makes such an admission in the novel, since he never expresses love for his parents, brothers, sisters, or even his wife. The mere fact that an Englishman confesses more love for an illiterate Caribbean ex-cannibal than for his own family suggests the appeal of Friday's personality. Crusoe may bring Friday Christianity and clothing, but Friday brings Crusoe emotional warmth and a vitality of spirit that Crusoe's own European heart lacks.

The Portuguese Captain

Characters The Portuguese Captain

The Portuguese captain is presented more fully than any other European in the novel besides Crusoe, more vividly portrayed than Crusoe's widow friend or his family members. He appears in the narrative at two very important junctures in Crusoe's life. First, it is the Portuguese captain who picks up Crusoe after the escape from the Moors and takes him to

Brazil, where Crusoe establishes himself as a plantation owner. Twenty-eight years later, it is again the Portuguese captain who informs Crusoe that his Brazilian investments are secure, and who arranges the sale of the plantation and the forwarding of the proceeds to Crusoe. In both cases, the Portuguese captain is the agent of Crusoe's extreme good fortune. In this sense, he represents the benefits of social connections. If the captain had not been located in Lisbon, Crusoe never would have cashed in on his Brazilian holdings. This assistance from social contacts contradicts the theme of solitary enterprise that the novel seems to endorse. Despite Crusoe's hard individual labor on the island, it is actually *another human being*—and not his own resourcefulness—that makes Crusoe wealthy in the end. Yet it is doubtful whether this insight occurs to Crusoe, despite his obvious gratitude toward the captain.

Moreover, the Portuguese captain is associated with a wide array of virtues. He is honest, informing Crusoe of the money he has borrowed against Crusoe's investments, and repaying a part of it immediately even though it is financially difficult for him to do so. He is loyal, honoring his duties toward Crusoe even after twenty-eight years. Finally, he is extremely generous, paying Crusoe more than market value for the animal skins and slave boy after picking Crusoe up at sea, and giving Crusoe handsome gifts when leaving Brazil. All

these virtues make the captain a paragon of human excellence, and they make us wonder why Defoe includes such a character in the novel. In some ways, the captain's goodness makes him the moral counterpart of Friday, since the European seaman and the Caribbean cannibal mirror each other in benevolence and devotion to Crusoe. The captain's goodness thus makes it impossible for us to make oversimplified oppositions between a morally bankrupt Europe on the one hand, and innocent noble savages on the other.

The Ambivalence of Mastery

Crusoe's success in mastering his situation, overcoming his obstacles, and controlling his environment shows the condition of mastery in a positive light, at least at the beginning of the novel. Crusoe lands in an inhospitable environment and makes it his home. His taming and domestication of wild goats and parrots with Crusoe as their master illustrates his newfound control. Moreover, Crusoe's mastery over nature makes him a master of his fate and of himself. Early in the novel, he frequently blames himself for disobeying his father's advice or blames the destiny that drove him to sea. But in the later part of the novel, Crusoe stops viewing himself as a passive victim and strikes a new note of self-determination. In building a home for himself on the island, he finds that he is master of his

life—he suffers a hard fate and still finds prosperity.

But this theme of mastery becomes more complex and less positive after Friday's arrival, when the idea of mastery comes to apply more to unfair relationships between humans. In Chapter XXIII, Crusoe teaches Friday the word "[m]aster" even before teaching him "yes" and "no," and indeed he lets him "know that was to be [Crusoe's] name." Crusoe never entertains the idea of considering Friday a friend or equal—for some reason, superiority comes instinctively to him. We further question Crusoe's right to be called "[m]aster" when he later refers to himself as "king" over the natives and Europeans, who are his "subjects." In short, while Crusoe seems praiseworthy in mastering his fate, the praiseworthiness of his mastery over his fellow humans is more doubtful. Defoe explores the link between the two in his depiction of the colonial mind.

The Necessity of Repentance

Crusoe's experiences constitute not simply an adventure story in which thrilling things happen, but also a moral tale illustrating the right and wrong ways to live one's life. This moral and religious dimension of the tale is indicated in the Preface, which states that Crusoe's story is being published to instruct others in God's wisdom, and one vital part of this wisdom is the importance of repenting one's sins. While it is important to be grateful for God's miracles, as Crusoe is when his grain sprouts, it is not enough simply to express gratitude or even to pray to God, as Crusoe does several times with few results. Crusoe needs repentance most, as he learns from the fiery angelic figure that comes to him during a feverish hallucination and says, "Seeing all these things have not brought thee to repentance, now thou shalt die." Crusoe believes that his major sin is his rebellious behavior toward his father, which he refers to as his "original sin," akin to Adam and Eve's first disobedience of God. This biblical reference also suggests that Crusoe's exile from civilization represents Adam and Eve's expulsion from Eden.

For Crusoe, repentance consists of acknowledging his wretchedness and his absolute dependence on the Lord. This admission marks a turning point in Crusoe's spiritual consciousness, and is almost a born-again experience for him. After repentance, he complains much less about his sad fate and

views the island more positively. Later, when Crusoe is rescued and his fortune restored, he compares himself to Job, who also regained divine favor. Ironically, this view of the necessity of repentance ends up justifying sin: Crusoe may never have learned to repent if he had never sinfully disobeyed his father in the first place. Thus, as powerful as the theme of repentance is in the novel, it is nevertheless complex and ambiguous.

The Importance of Self-Awareness

Crusoe's arrival on the island does not make him revert to a brute existence controlled by animal instincts, and, unlike animals, he remains conscious of himself at all times. Indeed, his island existence actually deepens his self-awareness as he withdraws from the external social world and turns inward. The idea that the individual must keep a careful reckoning of the state of his own soul is a key point in the Presbyterian doctrine that Defoe took seriously all his life. We see that in his normal day-to-day activities, Crusoe keeps accounts of himself enthusiastically and in various ways. For example, it is significant that Crusoe's makeshift calendar does not simply mark the passing of days, but instead more egocentrically marks the days he has spent on the island: it is about him, a sort of self-conscious or autobiographical calendar with him at its center. Similarly, Crusoe obsessively keeps a journal to record his daily activities, even when they amount to nothing more than

finding a few pieces of wood on the beach or waiting inside while it rains. Crusoe feels the importance of staying aware of his situation at all times. We can also sense Crusoe's impulse toward self-awareness in the fact that he teaches his parrot to say the words, "Poor Robin Crusoe. . . . Where have you been?" This sort of self-examining thought is natural for anyone alone on a desert island, but it is given a strange intensity when we recall that Crusoe has spent months teaching the bird to say it back to him. Crusoe teaches nature itself to voice his own self-awareness.

Motifs are recurring structures, contrasts, or literary devices that can help to develop and inform the text's major themes.

Counting and Measuring

Crusoe is a careful note-taker whenever numbers and quantities are involved. He does not simply tell us that his hedge encloses a large space, but informs us with a surveyor's precision that the space is "150 yards in length, and 100 yards in breadth." He tells us not simply that he spends a long time making his canoe in Chapter XVI, but that it takes precisely twenty days to fell the tree and fourteen to remove the branches. It is not just an immense tree, but is "five foot ten inches in diameter at the lower part . . . and four foot eleven inches diameter at the end of twenty-two foot." Furthermore, time is measured with similar exactitude, as Crusoe's journal shows. We may often wonder why Crusoe feels it useful to

record that it did not rain on December 26, but for him the necessity of counting out each day is never questioned. All these examples of counting and measuring underscore Crusoe's practical, businesslike character and his hands-on approach to life. But Defoe sometimes hints at the futility of Crusoe's measuring—as when the carefully measured canoe cannot reach water or when his obsessively kept calendar is thrown off by a day of oversleeping. Defoe may be subtly poking fun at the urge to quantify, showing us that, in the end, everything Crusoe counts never really adds up to much and does not save him from isolation.

Eating

One of Crusoe's first concerns after his shipwreck is his food supply. Even while he is still wet from the sea in Chapter V, he frets about not having "anything to eat or drink to comfort me." He soon provides himself with food, and indeed each new edible item marks a new stage in his mastery of the island, so that his food supply becomes a symbol of his survival. His securing of goat meat staves off immediate starvation, and his discovery of grain is viewed as a miracle, like manna from heaven. His cultivation of raisins, almost a luxury food for Crusoe, marks a new comfortable period in his island existence. In a way, these images of eating convey Crusoe's ability to integrate the island into his life, just as food is integrated into the body to let the organism grow and prosper. But no sooner

does Crusoe master the art of eating than he begins to fear being eaten himself. The cannibals transform Crusoe from the consumer into a potential object to be consumed. Life for Crusoe always illustrates this *eat or be eaten* philosophy, since even back in Europe he is threatened by man-eating wolves. Eating is an image of existence itself, just as being eaten signifies death for Crusoe.

Ordeals at Sea

Crusoe's encounters with water in the novel are often associated not simply with hardship, but with a kind of symbolic ordeal, or test of character. First, the storm off the coast of Yarmouth frightens Crusoe's friend away from a life at sea, but does not deter Crusoe. Then, in his first trading voyage, he proves himself a capable merchant, and in his second one, he shows he is able to survive enslavement. His escape from his Moorish master and his successful encounter with the Africans both occur at sea. Most significantly, Crusoe survives his shipwreck after a lengthy immersion in water. But the sea remains a source of danger and fear even later, when the cannibals arrive in canoes. The Spanish shipwreck reminds Crusoe of the destructive power of water and of his own good fortune in surviving it. All the life-testing water imagery in the novel has subtle associations with the rite of baptism, by which Christians prove their faith and enter a new life saved by Christ.

Symbols are objects, characters, figures, or colors used to represent abstract ideas or concepts.

The Footprint

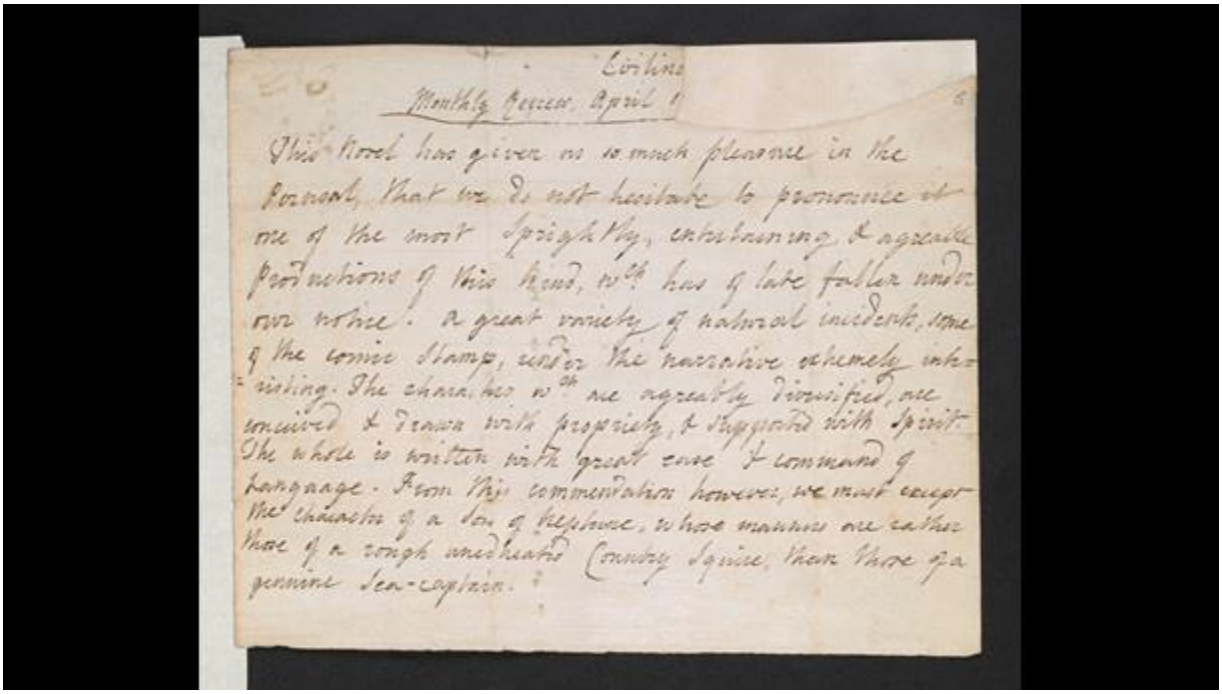
Crusoe's shocking discovery of a single footprint on the sand in Chapter XVIII is one of the most famous moments in the novel, and it symbolizes our hero's conflicted feelings about human companionship. Crusoe has earlier confessed how much he misses companionship, yet the evidence of a man on his island sends him into a panic. Immediately he interprets the footprint negatively, as the print of the devil or of an aggressor. He never for a moment entertains hope that it could belong to an angel or another European who could rescue or befriend him. This instinctively negative and fearful attitude toward others makes us consider the possibility that Crusoe may not want to return to human society after all, and that the isolation he is experiencing may actually be his ideal state.

The Cross

Concerned that he will "lose [his] reckoning of time" in Chapter VII, Crusoe marks the passing of days "with [his] knife upon a large post, in capital letters, and making it into a great cross . . . set[s] it up on the shore where [he] first landed. . . ." The large size and capital letters show us how important

this cross is to Crusoe as a timekeeping device and thus also as a way of relating himself to the larger social world where dates and calendars still matter. But the cross is also a symbol of his own new existence on the island, just as the Christian cross is a symbol of the Christian's new life in Christ after baptism, an immersion in water like Crusoe's shipwreck experience. Yet Crusoe's large cross seems somewhat blasphemous in making no reference to Christ. Instead, it is a memorial to Crusoe himself, underscoring how completely he has become the center of his own life.

Source (Sparknotes)



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Frances Burney carefully copied out reviews of her first novel. This one, from the *Monthly Review* of April 1778, says her work is ‘sprightly, entertaining, & agreeable’.
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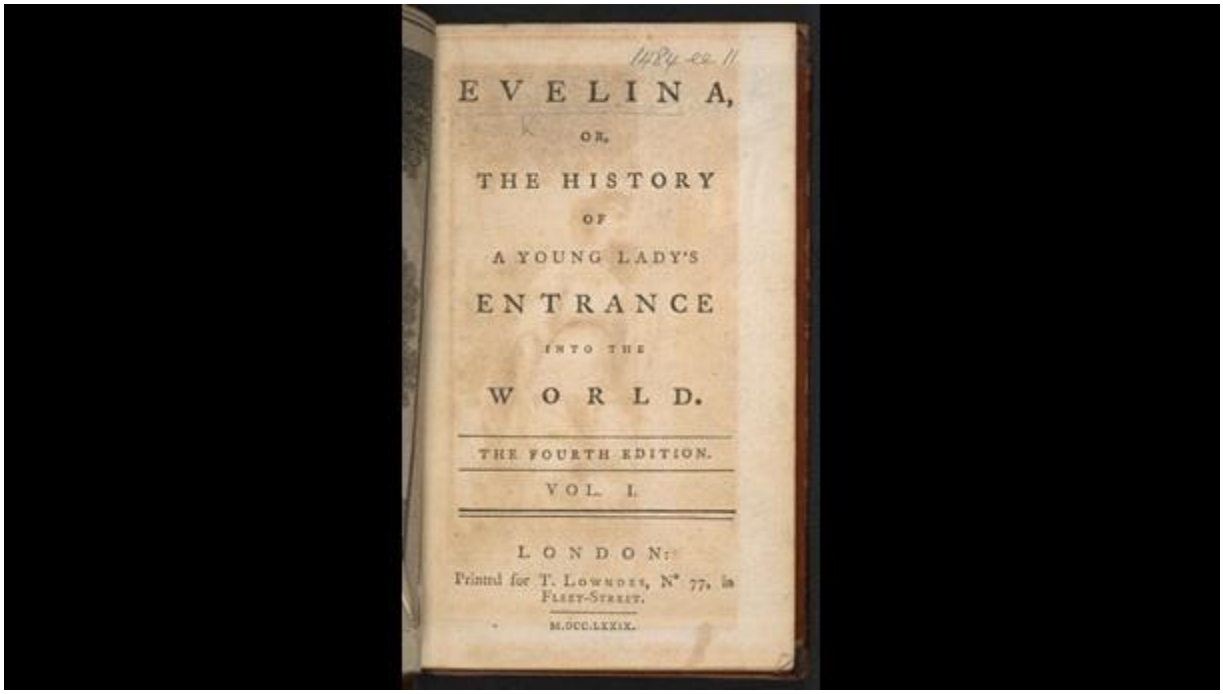
In fact, by the 1770s the novel was increasingly respectable. Frances Burney ached with anxiety about the likely response of her father when he discovered that she was the author of the novel *Evelina*, published to some acclaim in 1778. In fact, she need not have worried: he was delighted to have a daughter who had written such morally a impeccable, as well as entertainingly satirical, book. Burney’s novel was one of many that adopted the epistolary form that Richardson had pioneered. Its

narrative of a naïve young woman's 'entrance into the world' was all the fresher for being told in her own, variously perplexed or excited, letters. Burney, whose subsequent, less sprightly novels *Cecilia* and *Camilla*, were much admired by contemporaries, also showed that women were not just the supposed consumers of this now dominant genre. They could be successful writers of novels too. The young Jane Austen read her avidly and followed her example.

Evelina by Frances Burney, fourth edition with frontispieces by John Mortimer


EVELINA,
OR,
THE HISTORY
OF
A YOUNG LADY'S
ENTRANCE
INTO THE
WORLD.
THE FOURTH EDITION.
VOL. I.
LONDON:
Printed for T. Lowndes, N° 77, in Fleet-Street.
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In her preface to *Evelina*, Burney confronts the fact that novels are 'disdained' as 'inferior'. She defends the worthy authors – like herself – who are writing in this genre.

Written by**John Mullan**
John Mullan is Lord Northcliffe Professor of Modern English Literature at University College London. John is a specialist in 18th-century literature and is at present writing the volume of the *Oxford English Literary History* that will cover the period from 1709 to 1784. He also has research interests in the 19th century, and in 2012 published his book *What Matters in Jane Austen?*

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  - Laurence Sterne's manuscript draft of the first part of *A Sentimental Journey*

- Laurence Sterne's manuscript draft of the first part of *A Sentimental Journey*
- *Evelina* by Frances Burney, fourth edition with frontispieces by John Mortimer
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- Letter from Frances Burney to her sister Esther about her mastectomy without anaesthetic, 1812
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