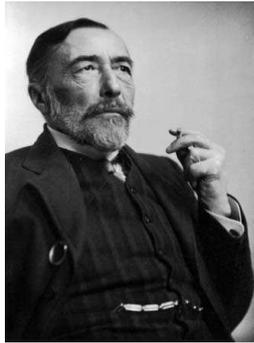


Novelists in the 20th Century

While many of the novelists of the early part of the 20th Century showed continuity with the Victorian literary traditions, more radically modern writing began to emerge especially in the works of James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and D.H. Lawrence. The novel remained the major source of important English Literature in the new century.



Joseph Conrad
1857-1924



H. G. Wells
1866-1946



E. M. Forster
1879-1970



James Joyce
1882-1941



Virginia Woolf
1882-1941



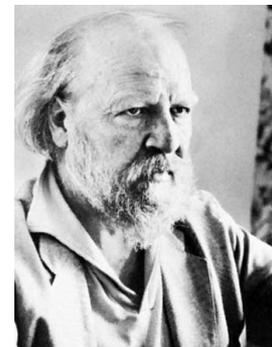
D.H. Lawrence
1885-1930



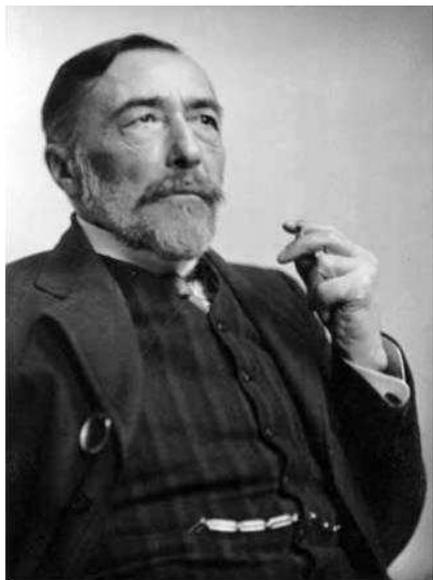
George Orwell
1903-1950



Graham Greene
1904-1991



William Golding
1911-1993



Joseph Conrad (1857 – 1924)

Born in the Ukraine, his real name was Josef Konrad Korzeniowski, and his parents were Polish aristocrats. When he was four years old, Poland was invaded by Russia. His father, Apollo, was regarded as politically dangerous, and the family was sent in exile to Northern Russia. For the next seven years they lived in this remote and miserable part of Russia where his mother died and his father became seriously ill. When Conrad was 11 years old he and his father were allowed to go back to Poland, but his father died as soon as they got there.

The young boy went to live with his uncle, Thadeus. In 1874, aged 17, he left Poland to work on a French ship as a member of the crew. Four years later he joined an English ship – though he knew only six words in English. He spent the next ten years sailing around the world, studying English, and studying for his naval exams. By the time he was 30 he had gained a certificate allowing him to be Captain of a ship – and he had become a British citizen. He had become a lover of all things British – the language, the politics and the freedom.

In 1889 he made a return visit to Poland to visit his Uncle Thadeus, and then he got a job sailing into the heart of Africa – up the river Congo – with some European hunters who were after ivory. This nightmare journey would later form the basis of his masterly novel “Heart of Darkness”. After this journey he became seriously ill with malaria. He became very depressed. Several times he tried to kill himself. His depression got worse when in 1894 his Uncle Thadeus died. Conrad decided to give up the sea and to turn instead to writing.

He met and married Jessie George, a secretary. He was 39 and she was 23. In 1898 their first son, Borys, was born. A second son followed. His writing career was mostly successful (though his novel “Nostromo” – now considered a great work – was originally attacked by the critics). His major successes included “Lord Jim” (1900), “Heart of Darkness” and “Typhoon” (both in 1902). Throughout his writing life he suffered from illness, depression and frequent financial problems.

In 1924 he was offered a knighthood by the British King, King George V. This was to honour his place as a major British writer. However, Conrad refused to accept this honour and died shortly afterwards.

His early novels “Almayer’s Folly”(1895) and “An Outcast of the Islands” show Conrad struggling with the difficulties of the English language and the technique of novel writing. They are interesting, but not particularly good. His first success came with “The Nigger of the Narcissus”(1897). The sea provides the setting for most of his works. His love of the sea is best seen in “Mirror of the Sea”. His greatest works are said to be “Lord Jim” and “Heart of Darkness”

Lord Jim (1900)

The story

The story is told by a sea-captain called Marlow (the same man who narrates the story of “The Heart of Darkness”) It is the story of a young Englishman, Jim, who is the Chief Mate of the ship “Patna”. The ship is taking many hundreds of Muslim pilgrims to Mecca. Suddenly the ship’s boilers break free and it seems that the ship is sinking. Jim is guilty of one single act of dishonour. In a moment

of panic, he and the rest of the crew, believing the ship cannot be saved, abandon ship, leaving their passengers on board. Jim has acted in the horror of the moment, and has missed the chance to be a hero.

But the “Patna” does not sink, and is towed safely to port by another ship. The rest of the crew manage to put all the blame on Jim. He is found guilty and no longer allowed to work at sea. Jim takes on a false identity and tries to hide his shame and dishonour by traveling the world.

Eventually Marlow helps Jim get a job in a remote part of Indonesia, where his past can remain hidden. Here, Jim helps protect the people from bandits and wins respect and admiration for his strength of character. He falls in love with a local woman called Jewel. He is loved by the people and is given the name “Tuan Jim”, which means “Lord Jim”.



The actor Peter O'Toole as Jim in the 1965 film version of "Lord Jim". This was the second film version of Conrad's novel: the first was a silent film in 1925.

A few years later the town is attacked by a bandit, "Gentleman" Brown. Brown and his gang are defeated but the local chieftain's son, Dain Waris, is killed in the fight.

The story ends with Jim himself being killed. He is shot in the heart by Dain Waris's father – to avenge the death of his son. Jim has always wanted to be a hero, and always wanted to make amends for his early dishonour. He has now redeemed himself – but at the cost of wasting his life.

The structure of the novel

Most of the novel is narrated by Marlow. He is telling the story to a group of listeners. But within Marlow's narration, other characters tell their parts of the story. The end of the novel comes in the form of a letter from Marlow. This complex structure means the novel is told from several different view points and is told out of the chronological time sequence.

The novel is notable for its lyrical and descriptive writing. As always, in Conrad's work, the sea dominates the images and atmosphere. There are two separate stories in this novel: Jim on the ship “Patna” and Jim on the Island of “Patusan”. There is a balance between the two separate stories.

- The names “Patna” and Patusan are similar, and they hold similar communities.
- Both are isolated by the sea: the “Patna” sailing on the sea; Patusan, an island surrounded by sea.
- Jim is a “leader” on both - on the “Patna”, he is the chief mate; in Patusan, he becomes a leader in the community.
- Both communities suffer a crisis.
- Jim deals with the Patna crisis in a cowardly way. He deals with the Patusan crisis in a brave and noble way.



The "Roi des Belges", the riverboat Conrad commanded on the Upper Congo in 1889

The Heart of Darkness (1902)

The story

Marlow gets a job with a Belgian trading company and sails up the River Congo. He is told to meet the company's representative, Kurtz, an ivory hunter. Kurtz is an intelligent man, but his years in the jungle have made him cruel and power-crazy.

On the journey up the river Marlow learns that the Company treats the natives with cruelty and in an inhumane manner. Marlow begins to ask himself if the Europeans are doing the right thing in treating the natives as inferior. The natives attack the boat, trying to stop them getting to Kurtz at the Inner Station. Marlow hears a rumour that Kurtz is dead and that he should turn back.

He carries on, and when he reaches the Inner Station he meets a Russian trader who tells him that Kurtz behaves very cruelly toward the natives. Kurtz is greatly feared and the natives treat him as a kind of cruel, powerful

god. If the natives disobey, Kurtz kills them and puts their severed heads on poles around the Station as a warning to the others.

Kurtz is carried out to meet them. He is still alive, but is ill. They learn that Kurtz himself ordered the natives to attack Marlow's boat. He did not want Marlow to reach the Inner Station. He does not want the Company back in Belgium to interfere with his private kingdom. He tells Marlow that the only way to civilize the natives is to kill them all.

Kurtz dies, and his last words are "The horror! The horror!". No one is exactly sure what he means by these words. On the journey back home Marlow is taken ill with malaria. When he gets back to Belgium he visits Kurtz's fiancée, who had remained in Belgium waiting for Kurtz to return and marry her. She does not know anything of the reality of life in the Congo, and she believes Kurtz was a virtuous, brave hero working hard to civilize the natives. Marlow decides not to tell her the truth. He tells her that the last words Kurtz spoke were her name.

The Framework of the novel

This short novel, (a short novel is sometimes called a 'novella') is another "story within a story". The narrator, Charlie Marlow, is telling a group of men about his early life working in the Belgian Congo. (Note: this is the same technique used by Samuel Taylor Coleridge in his 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner', in which the Mariner starts his story by telling a listener about an ill-fated voyage.)

Personal experience in the novella

Conrad is using some of his own experiences as a sea captain. He sailed up the Congo river with a group of ivory hunters just eight years before writing this story. It seems that Conrad himself saw so many cruel acts against the African natives that he actually gave up his job and became a writer instead.

The character of Marlow

The character of Marlow is complicated. He is a kind of travel guide who explains to the reader the moral behaviour, the attitudes and thoughts of the other people in the story. He also explains the whole attitude towards Africa, colonialism and treatment of the uncivilized natives. Marlow's experiences (like Conrad's own experiences) leave him mentally and physically damaged by this journey to the Congo.

The theme of Empire and control

At the end of the 19th and start of the 20th Century several European countries had created colonies in different countries round the world. The British had so many colonies in its control that it was said: “the sun never sets on the British Empire”. Conrad is one of the first writers in English literature to suggest that Europeans controlling the lives of other nations may be a bad thing. This novel suggests that European men having power and control over African nations causes great problems. These are problems of morality, corruption, absolute power leading to cruelty, and men behaving in a way that is not human and civilized.

Is the cruelty caused by the system or the individuals?

Conrad asks an important (and very modern) question: who is to blame when bad things happen? Is it the whole system of Imperialism? (The Company) Or is it the individual people who are in charge of the system? (Kurtz and Marlow)

The theme of darkness

The theme of darkness first appears in the title of the novel and is seen all the way through the book.

- Darkness describes the cruel, non-European behaviour of the African natives
- Lightness describes the more civilised European customs and behaviour
- But is this a true picture of darkness and lightness?
- There is darkness in the hearts of some of the people in the novel
- The “civilized” characters like Kurtz and the “uncivilized” characters like the African natives are not, perhaps, as clearly dark and light as they first appear.
- What first appears “dark” and what first seems to be “light” is not always the truth. For example, London and Belgium are described as dark and gloomy places – and perhaps the real “heart of darkness” is in these cities and not in the African jungle.

The usual thinking of the time was that the “darkness” of Africa was being helped by the “lightness” of European culture and civilization. Conrad is suggesting this may not be completely true.

The readers of the time didn’t understand this criticism. They believed it was the story of a single man behaving badly and damaging a system that was, basically, a good one. The story takes place in a Belgian colony, not a British one. This helped the British reader to believe this kind of immoral behaviour did not happen where the British were in power.

In many ways, Joseph Conrad’s writings would have more meaning and power on readers from later generations.



The photograph is from the most famous film adaptation of “Heart of Darkness” : Francis Ford Coppola’s 1979 movie “Apocalypse Now”. The film moves the story from the Belgian Congo to Vietnam and Cambodia during the Vietnam War. In “Apocalypse Now” the actor Martin Sheen plays a US Army officer charged with “terminating” the command of Colonel Walter E. Kurtz, played by Marlon Brando.

Joseph Conrad and Modernism

Joseph Conrad's novels brought "modernism", or a modern and new outlook, to British writing and to British Society in the early 20th Century. Conrad was in a special position to achieve this. He was not British (he was born in the Ukraine of a Polish aristocratic family) and therefore he was able to look at British Society with an outside eye. He was a working sailor and ship's captain who had personal experience of Africa and the countries of the British Empire. He became a British citizen because of his love of the good things about Great Britain – but he was always able to see clearly the things that were wrong.

His "modernism" falls into two categories. The first is his modern approach to his writing style. English was not his first language, and he studied English Literature from the "outside" – not influenced by current fashions. Therefore he was able to write in a new style – a "modern" style.

The second category of his "modernism" is that he brought an International or a European viewpoint to British ideas of power, politics and Empire.

Modernism in his Writing style

His early novels struggled with the difficulties of the English language and the technique of novel writing. By the time he wrote "**Lord Jim**" (1900) he had created a new, different, and "modern" form of the novel.

Most of "Lord Jim" is narrated by a character called Marlow. He is telling the story to a group of listeners. But within Marlow's narration, other characters tell their parts of the story. The end of the novel comes in the form of a letter from Marlow. This complex structure means the novel is told from several different view points and is told out of the chronological time sequence.

Similarly, "**The Heart of Darkness**" (a short novel is sometimes called a 'novella') is another "story within a story". The narrator, Charlie Marlow, is telling a group of men about his early life working in the Belgian Congo. (This is the same technique used by Samuel Taylor Coleridge in his 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner', in which the Mariner starts his story by telling a listener about an ill-fated voyage – but Conrad is using it in a novel, not in a poem.)

Modernism in his Themes and Motifs

1. Using personal experiences in his writings

Conrad writes about his own experiences as a sea captain. On his journeys up the Congo river he saw very many cruel acts against the African natives. These affected him deeply. The character of Marlow in both "Lord Jim" and "Heart of Darkness" is complicated. He is a kind of travel guide who explains to the reader the moral behaviour, the attitudes and thoughts of the other people in the story. He also explains the whole attitude towards Africa, colonialism and treatment of the uncivilized natives. Marlow's experiences (like Conrad's own experiences) leave him mentally and physically damaged by this journey to the Congo.

2. A modern view of European countries creating Empires

At the end of the 19th and start of the 20th Century several European countries had created colonies in different countries round the world. The British had so many colonies in its control that it was said: "the sun never sets on the British Empire". Conrad is one of the first writers in English literature to suggest that Europeans controlling the lives of other nations may be a bad thing. Conrad's novels suggest that Europeans having power and control over African nations causes problems. These are problems of morality, corruption, absolute power leading to cruelty, and men behaving in a way that is not human and civilized.

3. A modern view on responsibility

Conrad asks an important (and very modern) question: who is to blame when bad things happen? Is it the whole system of Imperialism? Or is it the individual people who are in charge of the system? In “The Heart of Darkness” the system is represented by “The Company” and the individual people are Kurtz and Marlow. (Much later in the century this “modern” approach would ask the question about Nazi Germany – was Hitler to blame, or was it the individual Germans who carried out Hitler’s demands?.)

4. The theme of darkness

The theme of darkness first appears in the title of the novel (“Heart of Darkness”) and is seen all the way through the book.

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In many ways, Joseph Conrad’s writings would have more meaning and power on readers from later generations. He was a “modern” writer, with “modern” views before his time.



H. G. Wells (1866-1946)

Herbert George Wells was born in London. His family was not wealthy, and he was intended for a job as a shop assistant, but fortunately he won a scholarship to a science school. His teacher was Thomas Huxley, a famous scientist who taught him about Darwin's Theory of Evolution, which states that animals evolve in response to changes in their environment.

Wells was fascinated by what this idea could mean for the future of mankind, and it was something he was to explore in several of his future novels. After leaving college he worked as an accountant, and began to write some articles for newspapers. He published his first novel "The Time Machine" when he was 29 years old. This was successful enough to enable him to become a full-time writer.

In the course of long career he wrote more than 80 stories and novels. They ranged in subject from science fiction to novels with political and social content, and an "Outline of History", an extremely popular history book. He believed strongly in the potential of science and technology to improve the standard of living for mankind, and to provide the answers to many world problems such as poverty and hunger. However, in the course of his long life he witnessed two world wars and the invention of aerial warfare and bombs capable of great destruction. He began to feel that human beings are too cruel and selfish to use technology for good rather than evil.

His works include:

- The Island of Doctor Moreau (1896)
- The Invisible Man (1897)
- The Shape of Things to Come (1933)

His most important works are:

The Time Machine (1895)

This is about a time traveller who journeys to the future and witnesses the dying moments of the planet Earth, where humans have evolved into two species—the useless Eloi and the practical Morlocks.

The War of the Worlds (1898)

"The War of the Worlds" is in two parts: "The Coming of the Martians" and "The Earth under the Martians." The novel is narrated by a writer struggling to rescue his wife, while the Martians attack. The narrator's brother travels with two women to the coast in the hope of escaping England. The Martians are finally defeated, but only because of common human germs.

The novel has been variously interpreted as a commentary on evolutionary theory, British Imperialism, and Victorian fears and prejudices about scientific progress.

(The novel is notorious for an American radio broadcast on October 30 1938, when Orson Welles and the Mercury Theatre Company adapted it as a play for Halloween. Certain listeners, tuning in late, took it as a real news broadcast, and it caused some minor panic, with calls to the police and people desperately trying to drive out of New York City to escape the Martians!)



Henrique Alvim Correa's illustration of a Martian Fighting Machine battling a warship from a 1906 edition of the book

E.M.Forster **1879-1970**



Edward Morgan Forster was a novelist, short story writer, and essayist. He graduated from Cambridge University and soon became linked to the Bloomsbury Group, whose members were writers and artists in revolt against old-fashioned ideas. As a young man he travelled in Italy and Greece, and later paid two long visits to India. During his lifetime he published five novels—all of them written before he was 45—and all of them successful. They were ironic and well-plotted novels examining class difference and hypocrisy in early 20th-century British society.

There was a sixth novel, “Maurice”, written in 1913 but not published until after Forster’s death. It remained unpublished because, at the time of writing, its homosexual theme was considered far too shocking. “Where Angels Fear to Tread” and “A Room with a View” are his “Italian” novels dealing with narrow-minded, middle-class English tourists abroad. It is frequently observed that characters in Forster's novels die suddenly. This is true of “Where Angels Fear to Tread”, “Howards End” and, most particularly, “The Longest Journey”.

Where Angels Fear to Tread (1905)

Is the story of Lilia, a young English widow who falls in love with an Italian man. Her disapproving middle-class relatives send Philip Herriton to bring her back from Italy. (This novel closely and deliberately echoes the same story in Henry James’s “The Ambassadors”)

The Longest Journey (1907)

Tells of a handicapped, lame and struggling writer, Rickie Elliott, from Cambridge who gets a job as a schoolmaster, and marries an unattractive woman, Agnes Pembroke. The novel includes a number of country scenes in the country hills with Rickie's wild half-brother, Stephen Wonham. (This novel deliberately echoes scenes from the novels of Thomas Hardy.)

A Room With a View (1908)

is his lightest and most optimistic novel, telling the story of young Lucy Honeychurch's trip to Italy with her cousin, and the choice she must make between the free-thinking George Emerson and the repressed aesthete, Cecil Vyse.

Howard’s End (1910)

deals with the clash between three middle-class families: the Schlegels, artistic and Bohemian; the Wilcoxes, rich capitalists, interested only in money; and the poor Basts, from the lower middle-class.

A Passage to India (1924)

Forster achieved his greatest success with this novel which is a vivid account of India under British rule and the clash between Hindus and Muslims and the problem of the Hindu caste system. The snobbery of personal relationships and colonialism is told in the story of the Englishwoman, Adela Quested, and her relationship with the Indian Doctor Aziz, and the question of what did or did not happen between them in the Marabar Caves.

Maurice (1971)

is a homosexual love story, published posthumously. Maurice struggles with his feelings, illegal at that time, and undergoes attempts to “cure” him of being gay. He falls in love with a young, lower-class gamekeeper called Alec Scudder - the class difference adds yet another layer of difficulty to the relationship. Forster gave the story a happy ending, which was another reason why it could not be published in his lifetime. (The idea that a gay relationship could be a happy and successful one was totally unacceptable in fiction until the 1970s.) It is one of the earliest known novels on this subject, and caused controversy because Forster’s own sexuality had remained secret until publication of this novel.

James Joyce 1882-1941

James Joyce was an Irish writer, widely considered to be one of the most influential writers of the 20th century. He is best known for his landmark novel “Ulysses” (1922) and its highly controversial successor “Finnegan’s Wake” (1939), as well as the short story collection “Dubliners” (1914) and the semi-autobiographical novel “Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man” (1916)

His psychological and fictional universe is firmly rooted in his native Dublin, the city which provides the settings and much of the subject matter for all his works.

Themes

- Life in the city of Dublin
- His stormy relationship with the Irish Roman Catholic Church
- The inner conflicts of his frequently occurring “alter ego” – a character he calls Stephen Dedalus.
- A minute attentiveness to a personal locale.

Literary Style and Narrative Technique

Many claim that Joyce is the most important author of the 20th Century. He invented a new kind of story-telling and experimented with language to create a kind of writing unlike anything seen before. He uses the stream-of-consciousness technique to tell the story through the thoughts and feelings of the main character (nearly always a sensitive young man who rejects religion and decides to become a great writer.)

Major works:

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (1916)

This early novel tells of Stephen Dedalus’s personal development as an artist. It is a biographical novel in many ways based upon Joyce himself. It contains some hints of the literary techniques Joyce would frequently employ in later works

- the use of interior monologue
- references to a character's psychic reality rather than his external surroundings
- the stream-of-consciousness technique.

Ulysses (1922)

This is his masterpiece, written whilst he was living in Italy and Switzerland. Once again, the central character on his work is the struggling young writer. The events in this book take place on just one single day in Dublin, but Joyce describes the thoughts of his characters so completely that many people claimed he had summed up the whole of human life in one book. “Ulysses” had a huge influence on many writers of the 20th Century.

The year 1922 was a key year in the history of English-language literary modernism, with the appearance of both “Ulysses” and T.S.Eliot’s poem, “The Waste Land”. In Ulysses, Joyce employs

- Stream of consciousness,
- parody,
- jokes, and
- virtually every other literary technique to present his characters.



The action takes place on a single day, June 16th 1904. It takes the characters and incidents of the ancient Greek poem, Homer's "Odyssey", and sets it in modern Dublin. Homer's characters of Odysseus (Ulysses), Penelope and Telemachus have become Leopold Bloom, his wife, Molly Bloom, and the writer Stephen Dedalus (*). The book explores various areas of Dublin life, dwelling on its squalor and monotony, but always with affection.

(* In Greek mythology, when Daedalus and his son Icarus were imprisoned in a high tower, Daedalus planned their escape by making wings, with feathers held together by wax. In spite of being warned not to fly too high, Icarus flew too near the sun. The wax melted, and he fell into the sea and was drowned. James Joyce clearly sees the writer as someone who soars into the sky, but takes a great risk if he soars too high.)

Narrative technique in "Ulysses":

The book consists of 18 chapters, each covering roughly one hour of the day, beginning around about 8 a.m. and ending sometime after 2 a.m. the following morning. Each of the 18 chapters of the novel employs its own literary style. Each chapter also refers to a specific episode in Homer's Odyssey and has a specific colour, art or science and bodily organ associated with it. Other important aspects of this novel are the

- use of classical mythology as a framework for the book
- an almost obsessive use of external details in a book where
- most of the important action is happening inside the minds and thoughts of the characters.

(It is, however, one of the most difficult books to read! There is a standing literary joke that every serious student of literature has started to read "Ulysses", but no one has actually finished it)

Finnegan's Wake (1939)

In James Joyce's last work his method of stream of consciousness, literary allusions and free dream associations was pushed to the limit. This novel abandons all conventions of plot and character construction and is written in a peculiar and obscure language, based mainly on complex multi-level puns. This approach is similar to, but far more extensive than that used by Lewis Carroll in his "nonsense poem", "Jabberwocky".

If "Ulysses" is a day in the life of a city, then "Finnegan's Wake" is a night in the world of illogical dreams. Much of the wordplay in the book stems from the use of multilingual puns which draw on a wide range of languages.

This novel is based on the view of history proposed by the philosopher Gianbattista Vico and the metaphysician, Giordano Bruno. Their philosophy says all life and history is a cycle. Civilisation rose from chaos, passes through various phases, and then collapses back to chaos and starts all over again.

The first words of "Finnegan's Wake" begin half-way through a sentence, and therefore the sentence is incomplete and cannot be understood. The last words of the book end half-way through a sentence, and similarly do not make sense. But the end of the book is actually the missing words from the beginning of the book, showing how life is an unending and incomplete cycle.

James Joyce said the ideal reader would, on completing the book, turn back to page one and start again, and so on in an endless cycle of reading. Joyce's works are still subject to controversy. Are they great works? Are they frauds? Whatever the answer, they have been enormously influential.



James Joyce's statue
in Dublin

Virginia Woolf 1882-1941



was a novelist and essay writer, and is considered to be one of the leading modernist writers of the twentieth century. Between the two World Wars she was a significant figure in London's literary society and a member of the famous group of writers called the Bloomsbury Group. (Bloomsbury is an area of London near the British Museum and famous for its literary connections.)

She was born into a literary family and at the age of 30 married Leonard Woolf, a writer and political and social reformer. She published her first novel "The Voyage Out" in 1915, though by this time she was suffering from occasional mental illness. In 1917 she and her husband founded their own publishing company, the Hogarth Press, and published new and experimental work, such as the poems of T.S.Eliot.

She began experimenting with "stream-of-consciousness" methods and became very active in the feminist movement, frequently writing of the problems facing women in a male-dominated world.

Her most famous works include the novels

Mrs Dalloway (1925)
To the Lighthouse (1927)
Orlando (1928)
The Waves (1931)
Between the Acts (1941)

and the book-length essay "A Room of One's Own" (1929) which is famous for the line: "a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction."

Mrs Dalloway (1925)

Her first big success, this novel tells of the efforts of Clarissa Dalloway, a middle-aged society woman, to organize a party, even as her life is paralleled with that of Septimus Warren Smith, a working-class veteran who has returned from the First World War bearing deep psychological scars.

To the Lighthouse (1927)

is set on two days ten years apart. The plot tells of the Ramsay family's anticipation of and reflection upon a visit to a lighthouse and the connected family tensions. One of the main themes of the novel is the struggles faced by the painter Lily Briscoe while she tries to create art in the midst of the family drama. The novel is also a meditation upon the lives of a nation's inhabitants in the midst of war, and of the people left behind.

Orlando (1928)

In this novel she writes about a character who lived through several centuries and changed from male to female and back again several times.

The Waves (1931)

presents a group of six friends whose thoughts, which are closer to recitatives than to interior monologues proper, create a wave-like atmosphere that is more akin to a prose poem than to a plot-centered novel.

Between the Acts (1941)

Her last work sums up Virginia Woolf's main literary concerns: the transformation of life through art, sexual ambivalence, and her thoughts on the effects of the passing of time on life itself - all set in a highly imaginative and symbolic narrative encompassing almost all of English history.

Literary reputation

She has been hailed as one of the greatest novelists of the twentieth century and one of the foremost Modernists. She is also considered one of the greatest innovators in the English language and arguably the major lyrical novelist in the English language. However, her reputation declined sharply after World War II, but her eminence was re-established with the surge of Feminist writing in the 1970s.

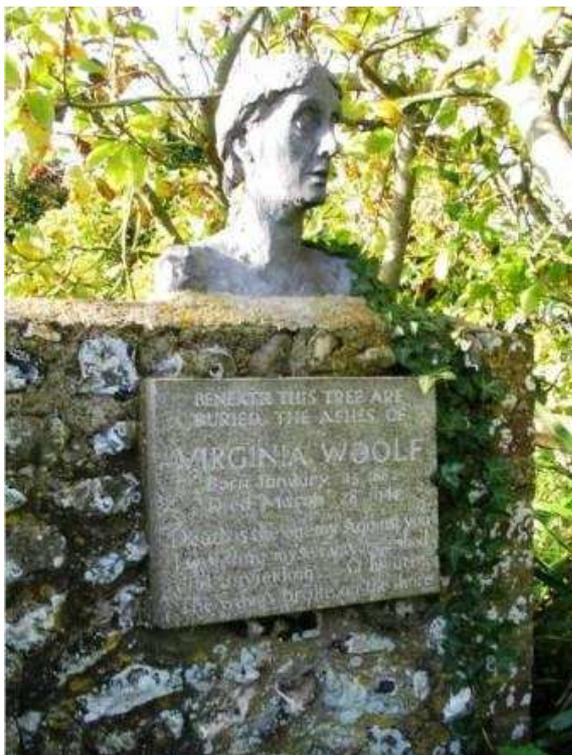
Towards the end of the 20th Century her work has been criticized for being typical of the narrow world of the upper-middle class English intellectuals. Some claim her works are lacking in universality and depth, and do not carry an emotional or moral relevance to the ordinary reader. Her works are too heavily concerned with the aesthetes of the 1920s.

She has also been criticized by some as an anti-Semite, despite her marriage to a part Jewish man – her husband, Leonard Woolf.

Narrative techniques & style

In her works she experimented with

- Stream of consciousness narrative style
- the underlying psychological as well as emotional motives of characters.
- highly experimental narrative techniques, where what seem to be ordinary, every-day events are transformed or dissolved (in almost cinema terms) in the characters' receptive consciousness.
- Intense lyricism and stylistic virtuosity in the words she uses, creating a world that is very full of auditory and visual impressions



Themes

Recurring themes in her works are:

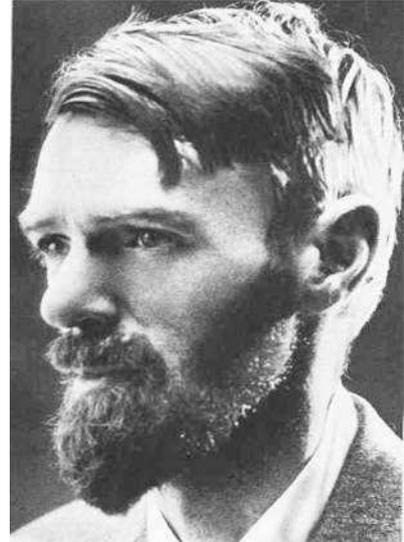
- Feminist and Lesbian themes
- Studies of shell-shock and war
- The intellectual society

For much of her life she suffered depression and mental illness. In 1941, at the age of 59, she committed suicide by filling her pockets with stones and walking into a River and drowning.

Her body was recovered three weeks later and was cremated. The ashes were buried and a monument placed alongside.

D. H. Lawrence

1885-1930



David Herbert Lawrence was the son of a coal miner and a former schoolteacher. His parents were poor and quarrelled most of the time, and Lawrence's childhood was filled with sickness and a depressing industrial environment.

He won a scholarship and trained to be a teacher at Nottingham University where he met Frieda Weekley, (she was originally Frieda von Richthofen, a German aristocrat, who had married a Professor Weekley and come to live in Nottingham.) Lawrence and Frieda fell in love and she left her husband and she and Lawrence eloped to Germany.

After Frieda obtained a divorce they returned to England and were married. (It was a strange marriage, and it is believed that Lawrence had a number of gay love-affairs throughout his life, with Frieda being fully aware of what was happening.)

The publication of his novel "The Rainbow" caused difficulties with the censor and it was seized by the police because of its alleged obscenity. Being married to a German during the First World War added to his problems, and when Lawrence openly criticised the way the war was being run, he and Frieda were accused of spying and signalling to German submarines off the coast of Cornwall. (He later wrote about this persecution in his novel "Kangaroo" written in Australia in 1923) For the rest of the war they lived in poverty and were forced to move from place to place.

As soon as the war was over Lawrence and Frieda left England never to return, except for two very brief visits. For the rest of his life he travelled: Italy, Australia, North America, Mexico, and then Ceylon (nowadays it is called Sri Lanka). Eventually, when told he had incurable tuberculosis, they settled in Italy, hoping the warmer climate would help his health problems

Throughout his travels he continued to write prolifically: novels, short stories, poems (a book of poems called "Birds, Beasts and Flowers" was published in 1923), studies of Freudian psychoanalysis, history books and travel books. Several of these were originally published under a false name, since Lawrence's reputation in England was that of a writer of obscene and unpleasant novels.

His final novel, "Lady Chatterley's Lover" was privately published in Florence and Paris and was immediately attacked for its obscenity. Lawrence answered his critics with a large number of satirical poems, published under the title of "Pansies" and "Nettles", and a long essay on Pornography and Obscenity. However, he was a dying man, and not long after "Lady Chatterley's Lover" was published, he died of tuberculosis, aged just 44.

The major novels

Sons and Lovers (1913)

This is the story of Mrs. Morel and her unhappy marriage to a violent, drunken coal-miner. Her only comfort is her four children, especially her sons. When her first son, William, dies, her second son, Paul, becomes the focus of her life. Paul falls in love with Miriam Leivers, but Mrs. Morel does not approve of Miriam, so Paul finally leaves Miriam. He then begins a passionate affair with a married woman, Clara, but she does not want to divorce her husband. Mrs Morel is taken ill and Paul devotes much of his time to caring for his mother. When she finally dies, Paul is broken-hearted and, left alone.

The Rainbow (1915)

This was a story about two sisters growing up in the industrial north of England and when published, it was seized by the police because it used swear-words and talked openly about sex.

Women in Love (1920)

This was a sequel to “The Rainbow” and continued the story of Ursula and Gudrun Brangwen, two sisters who become friends, and eventually lovers with two local men - Ursula with Rupert Birkin, a school inspector, and Gudrun with Gerald Crich, whose father owns a coal-mine. All four are deeply concerned with questions of society, politics, sexual experience, and friendship. Rupert and Ursula decide to marry, but the relationship between Gerald and Gudrun runs into difficulties. All four go on holiday in the Alps where Gudrun begins an intense friendship with Loerke, an artist from Germany. Gerald, jealous of Loerke and angered by Gudrun, tries to murder Gudrun. He fails, and as he goes back over the mountains, he falls to his death in the snow.

“Women in Love” offers a bleak, bitter vision of humanity, and is now widely recognised as an English novel of great dramatic force and intellectual subtlety

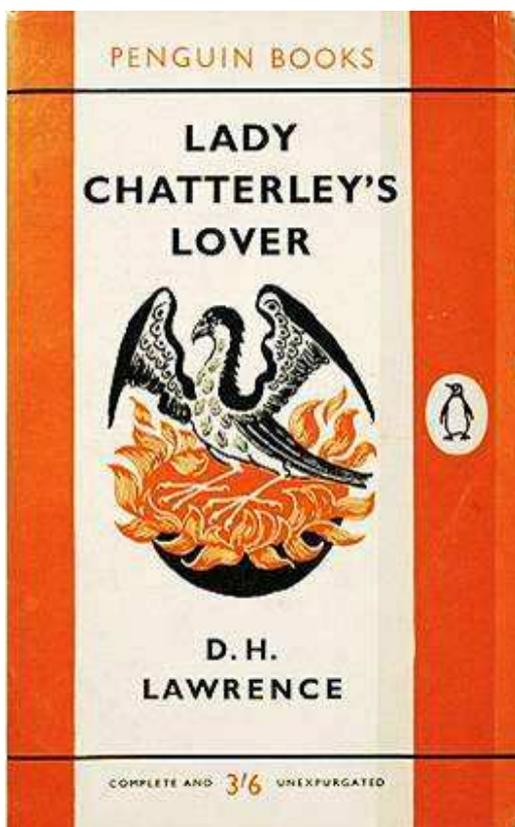
Lady Chatterley’s Lover (1928)

This is the story of Connie Reid married to Clifford Chatterley, a wealthy aristocrat who returns from the war with terrible injuries, paralyzed from the waist down, and unable to have sex. This leads to a growing distance between Connie and her husband. By chance she meets Oliver Mellors, the gamekeeper on Clifford's estate. Mellors is cold towards her, reminding her she is upper class, and he is lower class, but they meet several times at a hut in the forest, where they have sex.

Then one day they have sex on the forest floor and experience simultaneous orgasms, connecting on an intense physical level as a man and a woman, rather than as two people from different classes. Clifford knows nothing about this affair, and dismisses Mellors for a quite separate reason— a scandal involving a divorce action between Mellors and Mellors’s wife. Connie confesses to Clifford that she is pregnant with Mellors's baby, but Clifford refuses to give her a divorce. The novel ends with Mellors working on a nearby farm, waiting for his divorce, and Connie living with her sister, also waiting: the hope exists that, in the end, they will be together.

The Lady Chatterley Trial

In 1928 this novel caused a major scandal, and was banned in Great Britain. Thirty years later the government passed a law removing censorship from works of serious literary value, but keeping censorship for obscene and pornographic works. In 1960 Penguin Books decided to publish an uncensored version of “Lady Chatterley’s Lover” as a test-case, and prove it was an important literary work and not obscene.



The trial was the cause of great public interest. The quoting of four-letter swear-words and the reading of explicit sexual passages in the High Court was the source of much public merriment. The prosecution witnesses included churchmen and bishops, and the defence included just as many authors and professors. In summing up the case for the prosecution the Counsel said to the jury: "Ask yourselves the question: Is it a book that you would have lying around the house? Is it a book you would wish your wife or servants to read?"

The idea that people still had servants, or that husbands could decide what their wives could read was so out of date that the jury allowed the book to be published. Over 10,000 copies were sold on the first day. More importantly, literary freedom in the UK was established, and this was a significant milestone in the history of English Literature.



George Orwell 1903-1950

He was an Englishman, born in Bombay, India, where his father was working. He was educated at Eton – the most exclusive and most expensive school in England, and then worked in Burma in the Indian Imperial Police.

With this kind of imperial and upper-class background, it was surprising that his political beliefs became more and more left-wing. He fought and was wounded in the Spanish Civil War, and then returned to England to work as a journalist.

His first writing success was a novel “Down and Out in Paris and London “ (1933). He then worked as a war correspondent for the BBC in the Second World War. In spite of his left-wing sympathies, he gradually became disenchanted with the workings of the Soviet communist system and developed his own personal socialist politics.

His novel “Animal Farm” (1945) was a biting satire on the whole Soviet system and its politics. His next novel, “Nineteen-Eighty-Four” , went even further. It was a terrifying prophecy of what the world would be like if political freedom was banned, and scientific “thought-control” was achieved. This is what he feared would happen in the Soviet Union.

The adjective “Orwellian” is used to describe the kind of state where all individual freedoms are removed and total dictatorship rules. He died in 1950, aged 47.

Animal Farm (1945)

“A satirical allegory”

“Animal Farm” is a short novel by George Orwell, published in 1945. It is the story of a farm where the animals feel they are being treated badly. Things come to a head when the farmer forgets to feed them, so the animals remove the farmer and take over control of the farm themselves. This way all the animals will be treated fairly and equally. However, it doesn’t work out in that idealistic way.

The story is an **allegory**. (An allegory is a story in which abstract ideas are given a personal form – a story where one set of things is really meant to represent something else.) It is also a **satire** (a piece of writing that humorously attacks the way things are at the time.) It is therefore a **satirical allegory**.

The subject is the world of political totalitarianism in the Soviet Union under the leadership of Stalin from the 1930s onwards. It is political satire.

The themes of the novel

The events and characters in Animal Farm represent the early history of the Soviet Union. The story is an allegory in which animals play the roles of the Bolshevik revolutionaries. They overthrow the human owners of the farm, and create a commune in which, at first, all animals are equal. Soon, however, differences start to emerge between the different species or classes of animal. The novel shows how a society’s ideals can be changed and corrupted by people in positions of power.

The Characters in “Animal Farm” and their real-life equivalents

Napoleon:

This is clearly Joseph Stalin – the all-powerful and ruthless head of the Soviet system.

Old Major:

He is the inspiration behind the Revolution. He could, therefore be Karl Marx or Lenin. George Orwell was a Socialist and agreed with many of the original ideas of Marx and Lenin. Therefore Old Major’s ideas and intentions were good, but were ruined by the corruption which followed.



*From the 1954 animated film version of “Animal Farm”
by Joy Batchelor and John Halas*

Snowball

a white boar, is Napoleon's rival. He is inspired by Leon Trotsky. He wins over most animals, but is driven out of the farm in the end by Napoleon.

Squealer

a small fat pig, is Napoleon's public speaker. Inspired by the Russian paper “Pravda” and the politician, Molotov, Squealer twists and abuses the language to excuse, justify, and praise everything Napoleon does. He represents all the propaganda Stalin used to justify his actions. Squealer regularly uses the threat that the farmer, Mr Jones, will return as a means of stopping the other animals complaining about the special favours granted to the pigs. He also uses statistics and figure to convince the animals that life is getting better and better. Most of the animals have only dim memories of life before the revolution; therefore they are convinced.

Minimus

is a poetical pig who writes the second and third national anthems of Animal Farm after the singing of "Beasts of England" is banned. He represents the admirers of Stalin both inside and outside the USSR - writers like Maxim Gorky.

Clover, Mollie, and Boxer

The three horses represent the three social classes. Boxer represents the lower class, Clover the middle, and Mollie the upper. In the end, Boxer, or the lower class, is the one who gets most exploited by the pigs; a criticism of how the “proletariat” suffered most under the Communist Party in the Soviet Union

Mr Jones

represents Tsar Nicholas II of Russia, the deposed ruler, who had been facing severe money problems in the days before the Russian Revolution of 1917. Mr. Jones is a very heavy drinker. He drinks so much that he forgets to feed his animals – in the way that Tsar Nicholas forgot to look after his own people.

Mr Frederick

is the tough owner of Pinchfield, the well-run neighbouring farm. He represents Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party.

Mr Pilkington

who owns another neighbouring farm, Foxwood, is another farmer. He is easy-going but not entirely honest. He represents the western powers like Britain and America.

The card game at the end

This card-game represents the famous Conference held in Tehran, where all the countries were flattering each other with kind words, and at the same time cheating on each other. This is what happened at the Tehran Conference, when the Soviet Union formed an alliance with the

United States and Britain – countries that had been fighting each other at the start of the Revolution were now pretending to be great friends with each other.

At the end of the card game, both Napoleon and Pilkington draw the Ace of Spades (which is the highest-ranking card). They begin to fight, and, although George Orwell did not know at the time, this would symbolize the beginning of the Cold War and the years of the Iron Curtain.

The famous propaganda phrase created by the animals in “Animal Farm” is

“Four legs, good. Two legs, bad”

This is an echo of two other phrases (actually not by George Orwell but frequently quoted on connection with "Animal Farm") :

"Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely".

“All people are created equal – but some are more equal than others”

Other similarities and symbols:

- The Horn and Hoof Flag is like the Hammer and Sickle flag
- The Windmill is a symbol of the Soviet Five-Year Plans
- When the windmill fails to work, saboteurs are blamed – like the mass killings and show trials of the Soviet days
- When the raven called Moses leaves but returns, this is a symbol of the Russian Orthodox Church – at first banned but then brought back to give the workers hope
- When the chickens decide to destroy their eggs rather than let them be collected – this symbolises the Ukrainian peasants who burned their crops rather than hand them over to the Soviet Government.
- The dogs may represent Stalin’s secret police

Critical View

“Animal Farm” is considered to be one of the best novels of the 20th Century. It revived the literary form of satire, and was an important landmark in the genre of political writing.

1984 (1948)

The Story

In 1984, Winston Smith lives in London which is part of the country Oceania. The entire world has been split into three countries, Oceania, Eurasia, and Eastasia, and each of these is a totalitarian state headed by “Big Brother”.

The state controls everyone’s behaviour, and even their thoughts. Winston hates this oppression and secretly longs to join the Brotherhood, a supposed group of underground rebels intent on overthrowing the government. Winston meets Julia and they secretly fall in love and have an affair, something which is considered a crime. One day Winston meets O’Brian, an inner party member, who seems to share Winston’s hatred, and Winston and Julia are invited to O’Brian’s house to be introduced into the Brotherhood.

But it is a trap. O’Brian is actually a faithful member of the Inner-Party and has been watching Winston for the past seven years. Winston and Julia are sent to the “Ministry of Love” - a rehabilitation centre for criminals accused of “thought-crime”. There, Winston is separated from Julia, and tortured until his beliefs coincide with those of the Party. Winston denounces everything he believed in, even his love for Julia, and is released back into the public where he wastes his days at the Chestnut Tree drinking gin.

The Main Characters

Winston Smith

The 39 year old protagonist of the novel whose rebellion against Big Brother and the Party and love for Julia is completely wiped out by O'Brian at the Ministry of Love.

Julia

Member of the Junior Anti-Sex league who becomes Winston's secret lover and fellow rebel.

O'Brian

Member of the Inner-Party who learns that Winston has rebellious tendencies and sets a trap for him over the course of 7 years and ultimately destroys him.

Big Brother

Mysterious omnipresent figurehead who is the embodiment of all the ideals of the party.

Ministry of Love

A rehabilitation centre which uses torture and brainwashing technique in order to convert its prisoners into the thinking and beliefs of the party. Once this is done, the prisoners are later killed, sent to forced labour camps, or even released back into society.

Symbols

Scarlet Sash

Emblem of the Junior Anti-Sex league which all its members wear. Actually, it is camouflage for Julia and other members of the party to give them the appearance of celibacy while they are actually promiscuous.

Room 101

the final stage of the torture and rehabilitation at the ministry of love. The room symbolizes the one thing each person hates and fears most. It symbolizes the fearfulness and helplessness each person experiences when faced with his greatest fear.

Chess pieces - the chess pieces symbolizes the players in the great political game. The white pieces are the Party and shows the way in which they never lose.

Literary Style & Philosophy

Orwell's prose is very descriptive and informative. He portrays terrifying images and conveys horrifying truths in a calm voice that contrasts effectively with the true horrors of his message. Foreshadowing and suspense is used to heighten the novel, which warns of the terrifying dangers man may create for himself in his attempts to build an Utopian society. Orwell foresees that ordinary people could be fooled into believing that everyone must become totally obedient to the government in order to create an orderly society. He was writing with the very recent experience of Nazi Germany and Stalin's totalitarianism in mind.

The novel creates slogans for this new world:

- "You must love Big Brother. It is not enough to obey him; you must love him."
- "War is peace, Freedom is slavery, Ignorance is strength"
- "Big Brother is watching you"

And with the phrase "The past was erased, the erasure was forgotten, the lie became truth" he describes the way the party manipulates history by changing all documents referring to its past history.



Graham Greene 1904-1991

Graham Greene was a very successful and popular all-round writer. His successes included novels, short stories, plays, travel-writings and cinema screenplays. He managed to achieve both serious literary acclaim and commercial success. By the time of his death, he was one of England's most respected, most honoured and richest literary figures.

He was born into a wealthy and successful family – his father became headmaster of an important school, one of his brothers became a famous doctor, and another became head of the BBC. However, Graham seems to have had an unhappy time at school. He is said to have attempted suicide several times – once even by Russian roulette.



He attended Oxford University and in 1925 published his first work – a book of poetry. After University he started work as a journalist. In 1926 he converted to Roman Catholicism. The following year he married, and eventually had two children, but after 22 years of marriage he left his wife and went to live with another woman. But, because of his Catholic beliefs, he did not divorce his wife.

His first novel “The Man Within” (1929) sold well enough to encourage him to stop working for the newspaper and to become a full-time novelist. His first very big success was “Stamboul Train” (1932) which was sold to Hollywood and filmed as “Orient Express” in 1934. He was now launched into a very successful career as a novelist and writer of screenplays.

During the war he worked for the British Secret Service, traveling to many countries. (After he died it was revealed that he had been in contact with the secret service through all his life, and no one really knows whether Graham Greene was a novelist who also was a spy, or if he was a spy whose life-long novelist's career was the perfect cover.) He certainly managed to visit very many places which were politically dangerous or of interest to the military. And many of his novels reflected this: “The Third Man” (Vienna at the end of the Second World War), “Our Man in Havana” and “The Comedians” (set in the Haiti of the dictator, Papa Doc Duvalier.)

He lived the last years of his life in Switzerland and died at the age of 86 in 1991 – regarded as one of the most important and successful novelists of the 20th Century.

Themes and Influences:

- Many of his works explored moral and political themes.
- His deeply felt Catholic faith played an important part in his writing.
- He was extremely interested in international politics and espionage.
- His early works were in two distinct styles: commercial and literary

His later works mixed the two styles and were literary as well as best-sellers.

The Catholic Influence in his Earlier Novels

Catholic religious themes are at the heart of much of his writing. His four major Catholic novels are:

Brighton Rock (1938)
The Power and the Glory. (1940)
The Heart of the Matter (1948)
The End of the Affair (1951)

The cinema work

His writing for the cinema was also important. He wrote the screenplay, and afterward the novella, for the now-classic film "The Third Man"(1949) , set in post-war Vienna, telling the story of Harry Lime and his black-market dealings. This film still regularly appears in the list of the best films of all time. Several of his novels were adapted into films, making him very wealthy.



The famous scene in the sewers of Vienna from the film "The Third Man"

International politics and espionage

In his later works, Graham Greene became less Catholic and more Left-wing political. He attacked the American policy in Vietnam in "The Quiet American". He was a strong critic of American imperialism and supported the Cuban leader, Fidel Castro in "Ways of Escape". Political intrigue and spying are the themes of

The Quiet American (1955)
Our Man in Havana (1958)
The Human Factor (1978)

Some of his major novels

The Power and the Glory (1940)

In a poor, remote section of southern Mexico, the Red Shirts have taken control. God has been outlawed, and the priests have been systematically hunted down and killed. Now, the last priest strives to overcome physical and moral cowardice in order to find redemption.

The Third Man (1950)

The story is set in Vienna, devastated by World War 2 and divided into four separate zones. An American writer arrives, seeking an old friend, Harry Lime, who has offered him a job. He discovers that Harry Lime was recently hit and killed by a lorry while crossing the street. He is told that two men witnessed his death and carried him away. But he becomes suspicious and wonders if Lime's death had really been an accident, especially when he hears there was a third man present at the scene.

The Quiet American (1955)

Set in the 1950's, it tells the story of Fowler, a middle-aged British reporter in Vietnam covering the local guerrilla attempts to throw out the French colonial government. Fowler is an opium addict in love with a young Vietnamese girl named Phuong. She is not quite a prostitute; she is more of an escort looking for love. A young idealistic "quiet American" called Joe Pyle arrives and steals Phuong away from Fowler. Joe Pyle ends up dead in the river and Fowler is suspected of the murder. Underlying the story is a gruesome and disturbing portrait of life in a war-torn third world country. French colonialism in Vietnam is a strange world of formalities, proper manners, and class elitism in strong contrast to the daily grim realities of opium addiction, brothels, death, and destruction. Curiously this novel predicted the eventual outcome of the later Vietnam War, and for a long time was considered to be "anti-American"



Alec Guinness as James Wormold in the film version of "Our Man in Havana"

Our Man in Havana (1958)

Set in the capital city of Cuba in the corrupt days of the Batista regime (before the Castro Revolution) this is a black comedy, making fun of the British Secret Service. James Wormold, a vacuum-cleaner salesman, is mistakenly offered the job as a spy for the British. Since he desperately needs the money he accepts the offer. But he has no information to send to London, so he pretends to have a network of agents, and he carries his reports to extremes by sending sketches of parts of a vacuum cleaner, telling

them that these are sketches of a secret military installation in the mountains. The spy-masters in London are so impressed they send him a radio assistant with spy paraphernalia. After a lot of adventures, the top people in London discover the truth. Rather than admit they were fooled, and to stop the secret getting out, they give James Wormold a teaching job at the spy headquarters and recommend him for an official honour.

The Human Factor (1978)

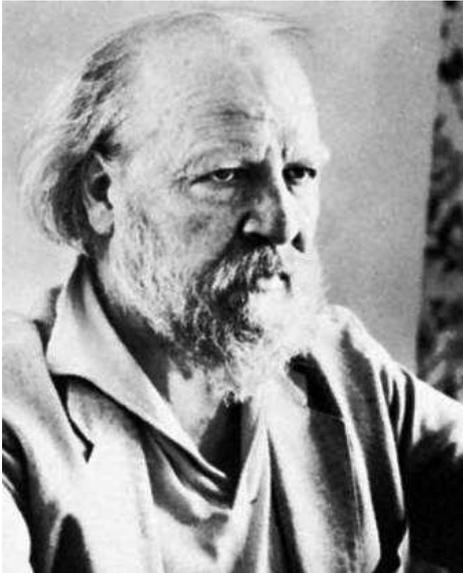
Maurice Castle is an old bureaucrat in the British secret service. He is married to a black African woman whom he met while working in South Africa. He lives a quiet life and is looking forward to his retirement. But things go wrong, and a "leak" of information is traced to Castle's office. His younger colleague is blamed. Castle gets involved in trying to save his colleague's reputation. In a mix of Communists, double-agents, and the political problems of South Africa, the novel builds its suspense around:

- the psychological pressures on the people involved
- the doubt and paranoia bred by a culture of secrecy,
- the lack of morality by the men at the top
- and above all, loyalties (to whom and what and at what cost?)

Greene creates psychological portraits of people caught up in the days of the Cold War and deals with the impact of international affairs on the complicated lives of individuals and vice versa. The combination of international politics affecting people's individual lives is a perfect way of describing Graham Greene's novels.

Literary Style:

- He concentrates on showing the characters' internal lives, and their mental, emotional, and spiritual depths.
- Many of his characters are troubled with internal, existential struggles.
- Many of his characters are world-weary, and cynical, finding themselves living in seedy and sordid circumstances.
- Many of the stories take place in poor, hot, and dusty tropical countries like Mexico, West Africa, Vietnam, Cuba and Haiti.
- His novels often have religious themes at the centre. Catholicism is presented against a background of human evil, sin and doubt.



William Golding 1911-1993

After graduating from Oxford University, William Golding worked as an actor and a theatre director. At the start of the Second World War he joined the Navy and rose to the rank of Commander. He saw active service in the War, including involvement in the sinking of the German battleship "Bismarck" and the D-Day landings in Normandy.

After the war he returned to teaching and in 1954 published "The Lord of the Flies". After a slow start, it gradually became a great success and enabled Golding to give up teaching and become a full-time writer. Much of his writing had a Christian or religious theme, dealing with how difficult it is for man to live a good, Christian life in modern society.

He wrote several more novels, winning major prizes, including the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1983. Five years later he was honoured with a knighthood by the Queen of England – and became Sir William Golding. However, he is chiefly remembered for his outstandingly successful and much acclaimed novel "The Lord of the Flies".

The Lord of the Flies (1954)

The Images in the Title:

The title of the novel comes from a line in Shakespeare's "King Lear": (Act IV, Scene 1)

"As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods,
They kill us for their sport".

There is another meaning in the title. The name of Satan's second-in-command in Hell is Beelzebub, an Old Hebrew word which literally means the "god of the fly" – hence the Lord of the Flies.

The background to the novel

It is a "new" version of a novel written nearly one hundred years earlier – a novel called "The Coral Island" by a Scottish novelist, R.M. Ballantyne. In Ballantyne's story a group of English boys are shipwrecked on an island. They have a series of brave adventures, they all behave in a splendid "British" way, organize themselves in a very civilized way, and when they are finally rescued, everyone is very proud of how well they managed.

William Golding took the same story (he even used some of the same names for the boys) but – a hundred years later, with no British Empire, and Britain, heavily bombed and almost bankrupt after the Second World War, his was a very different version.

The story:

A group of boys, aged 6 to 12, are on a plane being evacuated from a war. The plane is shot down, the pilot killed, and the boys are stranded on a tropical island. The boys decide they need a leader, and hold a vote between two possible leaders, Ralph and Jack. They choose Ralph, but this will soon lead to some rivalry. Early on, the boys are full of optimism and expect the island to be fun, despite the fact that many of the boys are scared of a "Beast" — allegedly some kind of dangerous wild



From the 1963 film version of "Lord of the Flies".

animal on the island seen by one of the younger boys.

They manage to light a fire, using the glasses of a short-sighted boy called Piggy. The fire burns out of control and damages part of the island, then the boy who saw the Beast goes missing and is never seen again. Gradually the island descends into chaos as Jack and Ralph continue to struggle for power, and eventually the boys split into two rival "tribes". Ralph's tribe is the more "civilized" while Jack's tribe are the "hunters and gatherers".

Jack's tribe hunts and kills a wild pig and decides to host a feast. They cut off the pig's head and place it on a stick as an "offering" to the Beast. Flies swarm around the head of the pig, and one of the boys, Simon, has an hallucination and hears the dead pig "speaking" to him.

The two tribes begin to fight each other. Simon is mistaken for the Beast and the boys attack him and beat him to death. Piggy's glasses are stolen and used to start another fire, but Piggy is killed trying to get his glasses back. By now the boys have become like the most uncivilized savages .

The fire is seen by a passing ship, and they are rescued in a kind of "*deus ex machina*" (*) when one of the ship's officers comes ashore in a boat to investigate. Ralph declares to the captain of the ship that it is he who is the leader of the children and for the first time on the island, Ralph cries. The marine officer turns his face away from Ralph and all the weeping children and stares at the horizon of the sea, where his naval vessel shines in grey and silver.

(*) "*Deus ex machina*" : In the old non-Christian plays people were always being rescued by one or other of the old gods. In these plays the god would descend from heaven in a chariot or sitting on a cloud. This chariot or cloud was lowered onto the stage by some kind of machine. The "god coming out of the machine" was the way in which human beings were rescued. They couldn't rescue themselves. They needed a god. The arrival of the airplane pilot to rescue the boys is just like a god coming out of the heavens.

The moral argument of the story

Their story on the island is almost religious, and is a kind of image of how Golding saw the post-World society. Ralph and Simon both demonstrate Christ-like behaviour, but this doesn't help – they are unable to control the human nature of the others. And this human nature is savage.

The moral argument of the book is more complicated than a simple story of man's "original sin" (*). Golding asks many questions – questions like : is the "civilised" world to which the boys will return any better than the island society of the boys? And these questions are left unanswered.

R.M. Ballantyne's book from the 1850s was full of optimism and great hope for society and civilization. Golding's book from the 1950s is darker and more pessimistic.

(*) "*Original Sin*" – this is the ideas that all mankind is basically corrupt and full of sin. This sin originally came from Adam and Eve – so all mankind will always be full of sin. The only way this "original sin" can be taken away is through belief in Jesus Christ. In "Lord of the Flies" even the two boys (Ralph and Simon) who are "Jesus-like" cannot save the others.

Symbols and images in Lord of the Flies

The Moral Philosophy and Images

- The island, a paradise with food, water, and other natural resources, is a kind of Garden of Eden.
- The first appearance of the beast (in a nightmare) is in the form of a serpent, which represents Evil in the Bible's Book of Genesis.
- Simon talks to the head of the pig, which is known as the "Lord of the Flies" (Beelzebub, or the Devil). This is like the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness.
- When the Navy officers rescue the boys, it could be an image of the Second Coming of Jesus (as told in the Bible books of Revelation)
- However the Naval Officer can also be seen as the "beast from water" (feared previously by the boys), as he comes in a "trim cruiser" from conflict in the fictional third world war. This reminds us of Golding's view that "darkness" is within all men's hearts.
- The "Lord of the Flies" reveals that evil and the terror of the beast is not an external threat, but an inborn evil within the boys themselves.

The Political Philosophy and Images

1. The boys, alone, without any adult supervision, can build a completely new small society with no influences from the past.
2. The nature of the island, with food and water, is a kind of paradise – a Utopia – a perfect society.
3. The actions of the boys represent the different kinds of government: Ralph and Piggy represent democratic ideals. Jack represents more a kind of dictatorship or absolute monarchy.
4. In the end chaos defeats order. This shows Golding's beliefs that no matter how well planned government is, chaos and mob-rule will always follow when government agrees to the demands of the public.