HUMANITIES INSTITUTE

ENGLISH FICTION

Frederic Will, Ph.D.

Contents

Overview of English literature

MEDIEVAl

16th CENTURY - Renaissance

17th CENTURY

18th CENTURY

Fiction (Defoe; Swift)

19th CENTURY

Fiction (Dickens; Austen)

20th CENTURY

Fiction (Joyce, Hardy, Lawrence, Woolf)

Overview of English Literature

English literature is richly represented for all the major modern periods—Mediaeval, Renaissance, 17th century, 18th century, 19th century, 20th century, and now our own 21st century. In addition there is a great early text, discovered only in modern times but composed in the 8th century—*Beowulf*—which adds a new dimension to the English tradition, itself being of both Germanic and Anglo Saxon provenance. As for the periodization by centuries, this rough and ready means of classifying the stages of English literature is at least a useful guide to assessing the development of this rich body of texts.

From the Mediaeval period we retain texts of profound religiosity, like those of Julian of Norwich or William Langland the author of *Piers Plowman*, tales with religious inflection but vast imagination, like *Sir Gawain*, or *Le Morte Darthur*, or epic panoramas of the life and times of a cross section of people, pilgrims to a shrine, as it happens, but very down to earth and realistic personnages, as it also happens; the characters of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. The narratives and perspectives of the Middle Ages linger among these documents, but reveal the first contours of modernity here and there, especially in Chaucer.

During certain centuries, specific genres prove dominant. In the sixteenth century Renaissance , of Elizabethan English, there is a great flowering both of sonnet poetry, and of drama, and a noticeable decline in the presence of religious themes in literature. One might say that with the growth of the autonomy of the individual, and the quickening pace of that commerce which forces people together, genres of intellectual directness are surging to the fore. The sonnet, that verse form so often consecrated to love and lovers, and circumscribed by a strict formality, becomes a showpiece of literary achievement, reaching its highest achievement in the works of Shakespeare, and in the work of Wyatt and Surrey. Nothing in the poetry of the time surpasses this sonnet work, except perhaps *The Faerie Queene,* the recondite verse masterpiece of Edmund Spenser. As for drama, there is not only Shakespeare, the master of them all, but the brilliant Christopher Marlowe—and others we can't find place to mention here, in this century of dramatic explosion.

The poetic genius of English Renaissance Literature is rivalled by the complex, often religious and passionate, poetry of the 17 th century group later called Metaphysicals—Donne, Herbert, Marvell. This efflorescence of subtle and ironic language, written into many forms, is still today a living directive to the poetic impulse. At the other end of the literary creative spectrum, in this century marked in England by heavy political turmoil—the conflict between the Stuart monarchy and Oliver Cromwell's Commonwealth form of government—lies the epic creativity of the time: John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*. These two profoundly different, but most influential, texts prove the continuing life of the Christian perspective in seventeenth century English literature. Other genres of literature begin to abound, in this century which sees Britain taking on the forms of a middle class early modern society. The satirical dramas of Ben Jonson, directed at the new members of that society, would be appropriate examples.

18th century British literature is likely to seem, from our current view point, more distant that the achievements of the centuries before and after it. One might think of such towering figures as Samuel Johnson, Alexander Pope, John Dryden, Jonathan Swift: while deeply immersed in their own times, these highly educated writers are masters of critique, of social interpretation, of wit and irony. They are not among the driving originators of the new in English literature. One of the most generative figures of the period is Daniel Defoe, a novelist, journalist, and social critic, who anticipates much of the thinking of our own time, about the nature and perils of the social contract.

The 19th century, in British literature as in global culture, is multi dimensional and hard to assemble. The Romantic Movement, at the beginning of the century, is the most easily classified period of development, and with it, in England and Western Europe, the Napoleonic Wars, followed by a sequence of efforts to shore up conservative values. (And, not long after the Restoration in France, the development of Marxist thought, which would rumble through the remainder of the century.) The Romantic Movement saw radically new developments in English poetry—one thinks first of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley, a trio as startlingly brilliant as the Metaphysicals in the 17th century. Wordsworth's *Prelude*, with its conversational line, its introspective power, and its world-sensitive modernity, marks an extraordinary step forward. Of equal innovative power, in 19th century British literature, is the multi sided development of the novel genre. Jane Austen, Charles Dickens and Thomas Hardy are among the several, profoundly different, fictional voices that turn their attention onto the confused but 'progressing' society around them.

The 20 th century will advance into new forms of poetry and drama, and startle the world with the innovations of an English language which is gradually expanding out beyond its British margins, beyond any expectations of literary tradition. In drama, Samuel Beckett, writing both in French and English, creates a stark minimalist theatre which counterpoints the dense allusiveness of the fiction of his fellow Irishman, James Joyce, in *Ulysses*. In poetry Yeats, Auden, and T.S.Eliot go very diversely about opening rare new spaces for the imagination. The novelist D.H. Lawrence, stepping away from the subtleties of the Joycean world, commits himself to a new kind of earthy passion in fiction—and carries it off with a sure touch.

The 21st century has not yet a name or voice, in English literature. But it seems easily predictable that the vigor of the English literary tradition will maintain the world directive standards so long associated with the English language, which is itself increasingly becoming the second world language.

Mediaeval

The Background

The literary culture of pre-conquest Britain can be said to have opened with the introduction of Christianity into Britain, and to be marked by a date like 597, when the Benedictine monk Augustine, sent by Pope Gregory, arrived in Kent, effected the conversion of King Ethelbert, and became the first Archbishop of Canterbury. From that point on access to the classical heritage of the west was made possible. When it came to the discovery of a national literary consciousness, however, the dominant tone in Britain was marked by sharp conflict, among the remaining vestiges of Roman culture and tradition, the introduction of new classical learning, the influence of religious texts reflecting Mediaeval Christianity in several forms, and Germanic influenced Old English texts, which reflected the cultural mix created by a confluence of tribes: Angles, Saxons, Jutes, and native Britons. The greatest work of the pre-conquest period, from the literary standpoint, was *Beowulf* (8th century), and precisely there we see clearly the blend of the Christian with the pagan Germanic. In fact the poetry of the time in general reflects the blending of Christianity with the pagan. The poet we call Cynewulf (750-825) wrote, in his *The Dream of the Rood*, about Christ's cross' reflection on the Crucifixion. (The felling of the cross tree, to begin with, swells with pagan implications, while the tree's power, in confronting injustice, is redolent of pre-Christian vitalism.) An even earlier poet, Caedmon (7th century), wrote religious literature of which nothing remains but nine lines of a Hymn admiring the Creator. This hymn praises the noble vault of heaven, but in terms that could ring from a pagan as well as a Christian soul. This pre-Conquest culture will serve as a reference point in the present entry on 'British literature,' but as you read the works from this early period you will experience the difference of their world from the world introduced by the Norman Conquest, to which we keep referring. That Conquest, which will bring French culture and language into Britain, will decisively link Britain to the classical world of Roman and Greek culture, a world which in earlier Britain was present only as a colonial occupation, not as a driving cultural force. Not the least of the post-conquest differences will be in language: for the blend of French (and thus Latin) with English, which was a byproduct of the Conquest, was to set the tone for a new literary culture in the British Isles; and to open the door to an evolving form of the language you speak today.

Discussion Questions

1. Does *Beowulf* belong to English literature? Does the author of the poem feel he/she is working in any national tradition, or belongs to a nation? Does the poem embody a deep relation to cultures other than British? *Are there vestiges of ancient classical learning in Beowulf*?

2. What attitudes and literary strategies does Chaucer share with the other writers considered in this Unit? Is he deeply touched by the Christian tradition you find in Julian of Norwich or *Sir Gawain?* Would he appreciate the kinds of humor and dark passion we find in *Morte Darthur*? Or is Chaucer a Humanist for the ages, who stands out and above his time?

3. Where do you find allegorical thinking in early English literature, and what do we need to know about allegory, in order to understand the way it works in this early literature? Is it possible for us to take pleasure in allegorical literature today? Do we create and consume allegory ourselves?

Renaissance

The Background

The first Tudor monarch, Henry VII, died in 1485, bringing (in some senses) conclusion to the period of what we have been calling Mediaeval Britain. In the following four centuries Britain took similarly large strides toward what we would, looking back from our moment, probably still call modernity, although we too do not think ourselves so confidently 'modern' as we did a century ago. Kingship under a single monarch, and with strong family lines, was firmly established in the Renaissance period. The language evolved from a condition in which Latinate French was just merging with Anglo Saxon English, into a coherent blend which in Elizabethan England reached a high point of maturity. Above all the consciousness of the British people, as participants in a single national identity, grew to new clarity. At the same time, during this period, the English people were entering into contact with the wide world of Europe, in which dramatic transitions were holding sway. Columbus' discovery of America opened a new pathway for British exploration and trade; scholars went from England to Italy, and brought back inspiring texts of Greek and Latin literature; Martin Luther led a world shaking rebellion against the practices of the Catholic Church. As if in reaction to these challenging events on the world scene, the British cultivated, under their dominant and brilliant Queen Elizabeth, a new sense of national identity. The greatest playwrights in British history—Shakespeare and Marlowe—surged into popularity, giving an unimagined tone and color to London's cultural life.

Discussion Questions

1. Are the Renaissance texts we read here mirrors of their time? Does the social life of England appear clearly through these texts? Is social background a good measure of literary achievement?

2. What relation do you see between the work of Sidney and that of Edmund Spenser? Is Spenser a romantic, in his fascination with archaic diction? Are the two poets similar in their insights into human nature? What is the role of Italian culture and Neoplatonism in shaping the work of the two writers?

3. Is *Twelfth Night* comic, in a sense contemporary to us today? What do you think of the raw humor in this play? Does it contribute to the point of the whole? Does the same kind of raw humor enforce the power of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus?*

17th Century

Background

In the l7th century Britain was evolving into an early form of the complex society we now experience in our own time. The government was a functioning monarchy, with increasing bureaucratic and legislative power, and the first budding of consumer society could be remotely perceived. (Daniel Defoe is a good example of the new man of this society.) This growing modernity of British society affords the perfect milieu for the development of the man of letters, the kind of figure we find in Browne (a doctor), Dryden (playwright and critic) and Ben Jonson, playwright, literary critic, arbiter of opinions. At the same time there are still immense developments both for the epic, in which John Milton and John Bunyan, though profoundly different from one another, join in passionate engagement with the Cromwellian revision. At the same time there is a sharp renewal of the ever British lyric tradition, and poets of unusual genius and wit—Marvell, Donne, and Herbert—not to mention religious sensibility, rise up as if from the ground, and open vast new vistas for English language writing.

Discussion Questions

1. Dryden's *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* is one of the most original and pluralistic of British commentaries on literary values. It features several voices assuming different positions on literary values. How does this text compare to Sir Philip Sidney's *Defence of Poesy*, from the previous century? Has there been a powerful change in overall values during this period?

2. What do you take 'metaphysical' to mean, as a description of the poetry of Donne, Herbert, and Marvell? Is that poetry intricate and complex to read, as is some philosophy? Is there a world view coming through the poetry of these metaphysicals? How do you explain both the rejection of these poets in the l8th century, and the new embrace of them in the 20th?

3. Milton is arguably the most complex, erudite, and passionate of British writers of the long poem, the epic, while John Bunyan, also the writer of a long epic on Christian themes, is of a relatively simple mindset, and an almost

totally allegorical poetic inclination. What does it say, about the British reading public, that it heartily embraced both of these doctrinal writers?

18 Century

Background

By the l8th century the British Empire, which we described as moving toward a middle class and a growing commercial, even international commercial environment, was at the height of its power. British ships controlled the waters, London became an international commercial capital, and British pre colonial presence was about to announce itself in prospective colonies throughout the world. It was into that world of growing geopolitical confidence that the confident public-minded authors of the century grew up and found their voices. Johnson and Pope were strenuous participants in the urban literary and coffee house scene, which was making of London a center of high intellectual culture. Daniel Defoe was a journalist and social commentator, who worked in texts like *A Journal of the Plague Year* to think out the fragilities and dangers of urban society. While the British l8th century was not supreme, for poetic achievement, it excelled in social critique, satirical poetry, like Pope's, and refined aesthetic/ethical perspectives, like those of Shaftesbury.

Discussion Questions

1. The 18th century, in Western culture, is traditionally called the Age of Enlightenment. That term broadly connotes: a practical, demythologized view of human personality and destiny; a devotion to life on this earth; faith in human reason. Do you see those Enlightenment traits in the work of Swift, Dryden and Pope?

2. What is a national literary canon? Who determines what texts belong in a literary canon? Does it make sense to include document-like works, such as those of Mrs. Burney or Equiano, in a literary canon? (Check those 'minor authors' in any anthology of British literature. Are they minor?)

3. The poetry of John Dryden and Alexander Pope fell under sharp criticism, during the Romantic Movement in the l9th century, for being stiff, too formal, too pointed, and even, in many views, mechanical. (When you read Wordsworth and Coleridge, in the next Unit, you may reflect back onto the gap between these century-separated poetries.) What do you think about such charges. Can you read l8th century English poetry as a living part of your own experience?

Defoe, Daniel

Importance of Daniel Defoe. Daniel Defoe (1660-1725) was a new and highly innovative type on the British literary scene. He was a trader/businessman, a spy—both for the government and its opposition, a proto novelist, a poet, and a pamphleteer. His 'travelogue,' *Robinson Crusoe*, 1719, remains as his most memorable text.

The Life of Daniel Defoe. Defoe—the *De* is a 'distinguished addition' which he appended to his family name, Foe--was born (probably) in the parish of St. Giles Cripplegate. His father was a tallow chandler, of comfortable means, and a member of the Butchers' Company, a notable honorary membership of ancient vintage in the City of London. Unlike many early modern English authors, Defoe did not benefit from a distinguished formal education, but as a young man made his life way directly into trade. He traded actively in wines, cotton fabrics, and hosiery, as well as in civet cats—of which he had a collection—for the production of perfume. Despite these multiple involvements, he was frequently in financial difficulty, and we have reason to think he could barely support his wife and eight children, during a marriage which lasted more than fifty years. His unusual insight into the growing commercial vitality of England makes him a particularly valuable witness to the modernization of London, and other major cities of England and Scotland. (His book, *A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, 1719, identifies the development of road and factory building, of banking and industry, throughout the nation, and oozes with praise for the importance of commerce in nation building.) Defoe profits, in his extensive writing—he wrote more than five hundred books—from his own existential involvement with the higher politics of his time, which various personal acquaintances led him into, and from the pure chance that he was present during or shortly after intense and developmentally crucial times in the history of his island nation: the Great Plague which took some 70,000 lives in 1665, and the Great Fire of London, which ravaged the city six years after Defoe's birth.

The Work of Daniel Defoe. We have noted that Defoe wrote more than five hundred books—a total which includes pamphlets and broadsides, as well as full six folios, and which testifies to the explosive development of the urban publishing business in Defoe's London. Among Defoe's best known work are titles which indicate how engrossed he was in depicting the ongoing life of his time, a preoccupation in pursuing which he became what might be called modern Europe's first journalist, or even 'economic journalist.' *Robinson Crusoe,* which was published in l719, placed a shipwrecked sailor on a desert island, where the way in which he made use of his environment, and managed the small population of animals and cannibals with whom he was surrounded on the island, indicate Defoe's sharp sense of the way a society, especially a colonial society, is constructed. *Moll Flanders*, l722, gives us a searching adventure into the world of a street trollop and her on the whole highly successful ways of securing her living. In the same year *The Journal of the Plague Year* was published, a haunting and tangible study of the way a society comes apart under internal pressures which it cannot control. In all of these works Defoe writes as narrator/novelist, journalist/sociologist, and poet.

Reading

Primary source reading

Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, ed. Shinagel, New York, 1993. Norton Critical Edition.

Secondary source reading

Backscheider, Paula, *Daniel Defoe: His Life,* London, l989.

Further reading

Rogers, Pat, ed. *Daniel Defoe: The Critical Heritage*, London, l972.

Suggested paper topics

1. Is Defoe a journalist, a novelist, a reporter? Are those terms clearly defined in his time? (Are they clear in our day, when journalism has assumed many previously unknown forms?) Does Defoe's poetry bear the same stamp of 'social awareness,' as does his prose?

2. Compare Robinson Crusoe to Lemuel Gulliver, the protagonist in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. How would you compare the approaches of Defoe and Swift to creating the narrative of a protagonist who faces 'the extreme other'?

Excerpt http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/the-true-born-englishman-excerpt/

***T**hus from a mixture of all kinds began,*
That het'rogeneous thing, an Englishman:
In eager rapes, and furious lust begot,
Betwixt a painted Britain and a Scot.
Whose gend'ring off-spring quickly learn'd to bow,
And yoke their heifers to the Roman plough:
From whence a mongrel half-bred race there came,
With neither name, nor nation, speech nor fame.
In whose hot veins new mixtures quickly ran,
Infus'd betwixt a Saxon and a Dane.
While their rank daughters, to their parents just,
Receiv'd all nations with promiscuous lust.
This nauseous brood directly did contain
The well-extracted blood of Englishmen.

Which medly canton'd in a heptarchy,
A rhapsody of nations to supply,
Among themselves maintain'd eternal wars,
And still the ladies lov'd the conquerors.

Jonathan Swift

The importance of Jonathan Swift. Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) was an Irish poet, satirist, pamphleteer and political activist (first Whig, then Tory), novelist, and finally Dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin.

The Life of Jonathan Swift. Jonathan Swift, a posthumous child, was born of English parents, John and Erik, in Dublin in 1667. Through the generosity of an uncle, he was educated at Kilkenny School and Trinity College, Dublin, from which he graduated in l686. In l688 he went to England to serve as the private secretary to Sir William Temple, who was to be an important guiding figure throughout Swift's life. At Templeton's estate Jonathan Swift met Esther Johnson, the Stella of his early poems, and a figure of emotional importance for him. In l692 Swift earned his M.A. from Oxford, and shortly thereafter he was ordained a priest in the Church of Ireland, and given a small country parish, whose isolation he hated. About 1696-7, he wrote his powerful satires on corruption in religion and learning, which were published in 1704 and reached their final form in a fifth printed edition in 1710. In 1702 Swift received a Doctorate of Divinity, from Trinity College Dublin. At age thirty-two, he returned to Ireland where he devoted his talents to politics and religion, and his works in prose were written to further various political causes. In 1709 he published *The Tale of a Tub* and *The Battle of the Books,* both of which brought him public attention. After l720 he began his greatest work, *Gulliver's Travels,* which he completed in 1728.

The Work of Jonathan Swift. *Gulliver's Travels* is Swift's most enduring satire. Although full of allusions to recent and current events, and vibrant with Swift's own very strong political opinions, the work still rings true today, for its objects are human failings, the defective political, economic, and social institutions that they call into being. Swift adopts an ancient satirical device: the imaginary voyage. His narrative center, Gulliver, appears among four different cultural or genetic groups—some tiny (from his view point) some huge (from his view point), some foolish, some gifted. There is not only satire but anthropology in this work, the structure of which also mirrors the travelogues and explorationist diaries that were very popular in the centuries following encounter with the Americas, and the ensuing colonial efforts. *The Tale of a Tub* and *The Battle of the Books* continue to develop Swift's disinterested social objectivity. *The Tale of a Tub* airs the religious views of three different passengers on a vessel, displaying what seem the exaggerated view of a religious sceptic and a religious zealot, and the relatively moderate view, that of Swift himself, clearly, of an Anglican clergyman. *The Battle of the Books* is Swift's take on the controversy, of heated interest at the time, over whether the ancients or the moderns are to be preferred in matters of taste and value.

The evaluation of Jonathan Swift. As a poet, satirist, commentator on his time, and political activist, Swift has a uniquely powerful ability to transport us back into his world. One theme threads his whole opus, and deserves mention as perhaps Swift's most lasting originality. The Dean of St. Patrick's had many friends, loved various individuals, but had a dim and often bitter view of humans as a species. He considered mankind gross, self-interested, contentious, and smelly. In so asserting, throughout his work, he made no apologies.

Reading

Primary source reading
Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, New York, 1996. Dover reprint.

Secondary source reading
Ehrenpreis, Irvin, *Swift*, 3 vols., London, 1962-83.

Further reading
Higgins, Ian**,** *Swift's Politics: A Study in Disaffection,* Cambridge, l994.

Suggested paper topics

1. Jonathan Swift frequently writes the grotesqueness of the human body into his fictions. He seems fascinated with the dark fallen condition of mankind. As an aid to understanding this side of Swift's work, look into the book *Life and Death* (1959), by the American classicist Norman O. Brown. A wonderful paper could result from reviewing Swift in the light of Brown.
2. At the time of Swift the European discovery of far distant lands and cultures was far under way. Columbus had come upon a new world, and Montaigne reflected the excitement of that discovery well over a century before its time. Swift taps into the growing fascination with the travel narrative, and puts it to use both to satirize his own culture—especially through the Houyhnhnms—and to fantasize the adventures of Lemuel in relation to other worlds

and attitudes. In other words, this set of Gulliver tales is full of self awareness and analysis. Gulliver is in each tale set off from the people he discovers, by size or personal traits. *Does the unique charm of Swift's presentation come down to a kind of inner social geometry each of us carries inside, by which we are intrigued by seeing and feeling events from different angles?*

3. In the l9th century, which was on the whole scornful of l8th century British literary styles, Swift was even more reviled than Pope or Dryden. Thomas de Quincy, in the mid 19th century, wrote that 'the meanness of Swift's nature, and his rigid incapacity for dealing with the grandeurs of the human spirit, with religion, with poetry or even with science when it rose above the mercenary practical, is absolutely appalling. His own Yahoo is not a more abominable one-sided degradation of humanity than he himself is under this aspect. . . .' I think you see that Swift's scatological imagination, his scorn for social traditions, his mocking of human pretenses all goes against the grain of thinking which flies under the Romantic banner. You might want to enlarge your sense, of this Classical/Romantic polarity, by checking out Irving Babbitt's scholarly classic, *Rousseau and Romanticism* (1919).

Excerpt http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/a-beautiful-young-nymph-going-to-bed/

Corinna, Pride of Drury-Lane,
For whom no Shepherd sighs in vain;
Never did Covent Garden boast
So bright a batter'd, strolling Toast;
No drunken Rake to pick her up,
No Cellar where on Tick to sup;
Returning at the Midnight Hour;
Four Stories climbing to her Bow'r;
Then, seated on a three-legg'd Chair,
Takes off her artificial Hair:
Now, picking out a Crystal Eye,
She wipes it clean, and lays it by.
Her Eye-Brows from a Mouse's Hide,
Stuck on with Art on either Side,
Pulls off with Care, and first displays 'em,
Then in a Play-Book smoothly lays 'em.
Now dextrously her Plumpers draws,
That serve to fill her hollow Jaws.
Untwists a Wire; and from her Gums
A Set of Teeth completely comes.
Pulls out the Rags contriv'd to prop
Her flabby Dugs and down they drop.
Proceeding on, the lovely Goddess
Unlaces next her Steel-Rib'd Bodice;
Which by the Operator's Skill,
Press down the Lumps, the Hollows fill,
Up hoes her Hand, and off she slips
The Bolsters that supply her Hips.
With gentlest Touch, she next explores
Her Shankers, Issues, running Sores,
Effects of many a sad Disaster;
And then to each applies a Plaster.
But must, before she goes to Bed,
Rub off the Daubs of White and Red;
And smooth the Furrows in her Front,
With greasy Paper stuck upon't.
She takes a Bolus e'er she sleeps;
And then between two Blankets creeps. With pains of love tormented lies;

19th century

The divisions of a national literature by periods is arbitrary, yet after the periodization occurs it seems to have defined a fact of nature. Such is the case with English literature. As one sees from the pre Romantic poets, like Cowper, there was already by the mid-l8th century a marked softening of sensibility in some popular poetry, and something like a rediscovery of the power of nature. The same changes were visible in the landscape painting of the time. At any rate the period we call Romantic was on the horizon, and it was to acquire sharper definition with the political and social awakening provoked by the Napoleonic Wars, and the defeat of that autocratic Empire on the battlefield at Waterloo. It has become a convention to define the Romantic period from 1798, when Wordsworth and Coleridge published *The Lyrical Ballads*, to l832, the year of the death of the great Romantic historical novelist Walter Scott. By this latter date, the British government had passed Reform Legislation which sanctified the privileges of the Middle Class, and changed England from a rural nation to a semi industrialized urban one.

Revolution and Society. We have seen the power of poetry throughout English literature; from *Beowulf* to the *Canterbury Tales* to Shakespeare to Pope—to create a very mixed bag—dominant expressions in poetry were formative for the whole tenor of a literary age. With the advent of the Romantic Period this feature of English literature is marked: passionate and powerful poetry—in Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, and many more—assumes the leading role in defining the art tone of the period. At the same time there is a strong sense that the shape of culture and society is changing. Revolutions –American in l776, French in l798—are convulsing the pattern of Western history, and the Industrial Revolution is beginning to modify the social life of Western Europe and especially England.

The Revolutionary Spirit: All the major Romantic poets, with the exception of John Keats, were enthusiasts for the new spirit of Revolution in Europe and America. All that was liberating in these movements seemed to want expression in the spirit of poetry. Wordsworth thought it was bliss to be born at the time of the French Revolution, while Shelley and Byron were particularly moved by the self-liberation of the Greeks from the Ottoman occupation. Everywhere human rights were being promoted as sacred—just at the Industrial Revolution was rendering those rights endangered.

New conception of literary language: Wordsworth and Coleridge, in *The Lyrical Ballads* (1798) promoted the speech of common men and women, as they heard it in the Lake Country which was home to them. This speech seemed to be the richest source for poetic creation, and it was a source totally different from that privileged by a Neoclassicist like Alexander Pope. (Remember the Latinate sophistication of Pope's rhymed couplets.) There is an unmistakable correlation between Wordsworth's poetic language and the movement toward popular democracy in the Revolutions of the time.

A New Model of the Past. The Romantic Movement saw a turning away from the model of the ancient Greek and Latin classics, and from the historical setting those Classics emerged from. (The trend was reflected in educational practice, too, for from early in the l9th century the study of Greek and Latin gradually began its decline.) In place of the classical model the Middle Ages—a period of grail quests, faith and idealism; at least if you saw it that way—began to dominate the imagination.

Discussion questions

1. You will notice that Pope and Swift died only a few years before the birth of William Blake, in 1757. In with the new! If you were to mix up the works of these three writers in a pile, with no author identification tags on them, would you be able to tell which of the works were by Blake, and which by the other two? How would you tell?

2. Review Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads*, and the *Preface* to them. Do you find in the early Wordsworth lyrics that simplicity of diction, that general hostility to poetic high style, which will be profoundly different from the ornate language of such as Dryden and Pope? Are Wordsworth's lyrics themselves simple, in language or thought?

3. When you look at the poetry of Byron (d. 1824), Keats (d. 1821), and Hopkins (d. 1899) can you see some unifying factor(s) which marks the group as l9th century? Please take this question back into our earlier entries, and consider whether centuries seem useful categories for literary history, or whether perhaps generations seem more useful benchmarks, for understanding groups of writers?

Charles Dickens

The Importance of Charles Dickens. Charles Dickens (1812-1870) was the best known, and most popular, English novelist of the nineteenth century. That means, in fact, that he was at the center of Briitish culture, for in that century of the novel the entire nature of the new urban society of Britain was mirrored back to the world.

Life of Charles Dickens. Charles Dickens was born in Portsmouth, as the second of eight children of John and Elizabeth Dickens. His father was a clerk in a Navy pay office, but not long after Charles' birth the family removed to a house in Chatham, Kent, where they remained until Charles reached the age of eleven. Though Charles was not yet enjoying a formal education, he was reading passionately on his own, especially in the eighteenth century English novelists, Smollet and Fielding. The modest peace of the family, however, was soon to be broken. Charles' father overspent himself, and was put in debtors' prison. As a consequence, Charles was obliged to enter the workforce, first of all in a blacking warehouse, where he earned six shillings a week pasting labels on pots of boot blacking. (The observations Dickens made, on this job and others, and In the boarding house where he found himself in his father's absence, went into his later fictions, as did all the major experiences, grimy as well as stimulating, he encountered in his later life. It was, incidentally, the practice of the time for the entire family to join the imprisoned debtor, and Dickens had thus ample opportunity to see the British prison system up close.) Upon his father's release from prison, thanks to an unexpected inheritance, Dickens was sent to Wellington House Academy, a modest educational establishment. From 1827-28 he worked as a law clerk, then as an editor of a law journal. All this time, as can be imagined, Dickens was actively writing, although essentially on the sketches he would later turn into his novels and short stories. In l836 Dickens married, a happy commitment that would lead to ten children. In l842 he made the first of two trips to the United States, then not long after returning he fell in love with a much younger woman—she eighteen, he forty five—and separated from his wife. The last years of Dickens' life, we can say simply, were devoted consistently to fiction.

The Work of Charles Dickens. It should be noted, from the start, that most of Dickens' publications were serialized in magazines and journals, so that even some of his most ambitious and extensive fiction was being presented in an incremental form which we might compare to TV serial reception today. Largely out of that system of production—and Dickens wrote with furious energy, like his contemporary Balzac in France—emerged a sequence of often comic, often sociologically bitter, frequently (and darkly) autobiographical fictions, which serve as a depiction of the whole socially underdeveloped middle class and poverty level of nineteenth century England. The greatest works to emerge from that creative effort are still quite familiar to the English reading public: *The Pickwick Papers* (1836-7), *Oliver Twist* (1837-8), *A Christmas Carol* (1843), *David Copperfield* (1849-50), *Bleak House* (1852). The list as such is woefully incomplete, for Dickens had immense creative energy, and wrote as though his life blood depended on it.

Reading

Primary source reading

Charles Dickens*, A Tale of Two Cities*, ed. Maxwell, London, 2003. Penguin edition

Secondary source reading

Carey, John, *The Violent Effigy: A Study of Dickens' Imagination,* London, l991.

Further reading

Sanders, Andrew, *Dickens and the Spirit of the Age,* Oxford, l999.

Suggested paper topics

1. Compare Defoe, arguably the first journalist/novelist in English literature, with Charles Dickens the novelist. Does Dickens, like Defoe, provide a sociology of his time, while creating tales of it? Or is Dickens imaginative, in a sense which puts him into a more clearly fictional realm?

2. What effect do you suppose serial publication had on Dickens' creative achievement? Do you suppose he was excessively governed by popular taste? Or was he able to shape that taste by his own force?

Excerpt http://www.literature.org/authors/dickens-charles/two-cities/book-02/chapter-01.html

TELLSON'S BANK by Temple Bar was an old-fashioned place, even in the year one thousand seven hundred and eighty. It was very small, very dark, very ugly, very incommodious. It was an old-fashioned place, moreover, in the moral attribute that the partners in the House were proud of its smallness, proud of its darkness, proud of its ugliness, proud of its incommodiousness. They were even boastful of its eminence in those particulars, and were fired by an express conviction that, if it were less objectionable, it would be less respectable. This was no passive belief, but an active weapon which they flashed at more convenient places of business. Tellson's (they said) wanted no elbow-room, Tellson's wanted no light, Tellson's wanted no embellishment. Noakes and Co.'s might, or Snooks Brothers' might; but Tellson's, thank Heaven!--

Any one of these partners would have disinherited his son on the question of rebuilding Tellson's. In this respect the House was much on a par with the Country; which did very often disinherit its sons for suggesting improvements in laws and customs that had long been highly objectionable, but were only the more respectable.

Thus it had come to pass, that Tellson's was the triumphant perfection of inconvenience. After bursting open a door of idiotic obstinacy with a weak rattle in its throat, you fell into Tellson's down two steps, and came to your senses in a miserable little shop, with two little counters, where the oldest of men made your cheque shake as if the wind rustled it, while they examined the signature by the dingiest of windows, which were always under a shower-bath of mud from Fleet-street, and which were made the dingier by their own iron bars proper, and the heavy shadow of Temple Bar. If your business necessitated your seeing "the House," you were put into a species of Condemned Hold at the back, where you meditated on a misspent life, until the House came with its hands in its pockets, and you could hardly bunk at it in the dismal twilight. Your money came out of, or went into, wormy old wooden drawers, particles of which flew up your nose and down your throat when they were opened and shut. Your bank-notes had a musty odour, as if they were fast decomposing into rags again. Your plate was stowed away among the neighbouring cesspools, and evil communications corrupted its good polish in a day or two. Your deeds got into extemporised strong-rooms made of kitchens and sculleries, and fretted all the fat out of their parchments into the banking-house air. Your lighter boxes of family papers went up-stairs into a Barmecide room, that always had a great dining-table in it and never had a dinner, and where, even in the year one thousand seven hundred and eighty, the first letters written to you by your old love, or by your little children, were but newly released from the horror of being ogled through the windows, by the heads exposed on Temple Bar with an insensate brutality and ferocity worthy of Abyssinia or Ashantee.

Jane Austen

The greatness of Jane Austen. Jane Austen (1775-1817) (and Charles Dickens) brought the new nineteenth century form of the novel to its greatest power, finding their ways to depict the essences of a new society, which was palpably different from the cultural world even of late eighteenth century England. Jane Austen's fame grows constantly, in our own century hungry for the careful moral thinking of an earlier age.

The Life of Jane Austen. Jane Austen was born in l775 in the Steventon Rectory, in Hampshire; she had six brothers and one sister—unmarried as was Jane. Jane Austen's parents were substantial gentry, on the lower fringes of the aristocratic class. Her father was from a family of prosperous woolen merchants, and worked in the family business, later serving as Rector at Steventon Rectory. Both Jane's father and her brothers were instrumental in directing her early education, which was in fact primarily reading. (For that purpose she was favored with a huge library composed of her father's books and those of a widely read uncle.) We should think of her childhood as on the whole peaceful and creative, set as it was in charming country landscape, and among enthusiastic readers and thinkers. The dominant tone of the family, from which Jane Austen gained so much of her own confidence and brilliance, and in which she observed a small but intense cross section of her own culture, was one of creative collegiality. The family performed plays, read to each other—as Jane got older—from Jane's own work, which turns out to be, even in its most mature phases, subtly intertwined with her juvenilia. The life that Jane Austen led, inside this sociable and educated home, was very different, in educational background and public exposure, from that led by almost all the male authors in this syllabus. One tends to think, for a parallel to Jane's Austen's cultural upbringing, of the life development of Emily Dickinson, in the United States. It is even relevant to this comparison that Jane Austen, like Emily Dickinson, never married; Jane Austen had one 'love affair'—in the style of her times--and turned down one proposal of marriage.

The Work of Jane Austen. Jane Austen wrote many youthful stories and essays, which played into her later work, but the three novels for which she is chiefly remembered were all published within a short time: *Sense and Sensibility* (1811); *Pride and Prejudice* (1813); and *Emma* (1815). The intrigue of these novels, which are largely set in upper class country house interiors, and subtly intertwine with all the dramas of contemporary life—marriage negotiations, intra-family jealousies, the fine texture of joy, innocence, and malignity in the daily—forming what we might think of as an indispensable sociology of a class in action, a class, in fact, which was not to survive for long. (The industrial world, poverty and commerce, in which Dickens' texts plunge, was on its way to rewriting the history of nineteenth century culture.) The kinds of events which trigger the decisions and denouement of Austen's fictions is evident in *Pride and Prejudice*. The theme turns around marriage choices and negotiations, as the competing sisters, in a country squire family, attempt both to evaluate suitors and to play out their own rivalries in the marriage game. Happiness is achieved, on at least one front, when Elizabeth Bennett overcomes her prejudice, and Mr. Darcy his pride, and union is complete.

Reading

Primary source reading

Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, ed. Jones, London, 2009. Penguin edition

Secondary source reading

Nokes, David, *Jane Austen: A Life*, London, l997.

Further reading

Mason, Michael, *The Making of Victorian Sexual Attitudes,* Oxford, l994.

Suggested paper topics

1. Jane Austen is by and large considered a comic novelist. Does that term seem to apply well? Does 'comic,' here connote domestic, and subtly ironic? Is Austen distinctively different from Charles Dickens, in regard to these traits?

2. Does the social world Austen depicts, and satirizes, belong to the elite of society? If so, does she write about universal human values? If so what are they, and how does she extract them from the behavior of her characters and settings?

Excerpt http://gutenberg.readingroo.ms/2/1/8/3/21839/21839-h/21839-h.htm#CHAPTER_VIII

Mrs. Jennings was a widow with an ample jointure. She had only two daughters, both of whom she had lived to see respectably married, and she had now therefore nothing to do but to marry all the rest of the world. In the promotion of this object she was zealously active, as far as her ability reached; and missed no opportunity of projecting weddings among all the young people of her acquaintance. She was remarkably quick in the discovery of attachments, and had enjoyed the advantage of raising the blushes and the vanity of many a young lady by insinuations of her power over such a young man; and this kind of discernment enabled her soon after her arrival at Barton decisively to pronounce that Colonel Brandon was very much in love with Marianne Dashwood. She rather suspected it to be so, on the very first evening of their being together, from his listening so attentively while she sang to them; and when the visit was returned by the Middletons' dining at the cottage, the fact was ascertained by his listening to her again. It must be so. She was perfectly convinced of it. It would be an excellent match, for he was rich, and she was handsome. Mrs. Jennings had been anxious to see Colonel Brandon well married, ever since her connection with Sir John first brought him to her knowledge; and she was always anxious to get a good husband for every pretty girl.

The immediate advantage to herself was by no means inconsiderable, for it supplied her with endless jokes against them both. At the park she laughed at the colonel, and in the cottage at Marianne. To the former her raillery was probably, as far as it regarded only himself, perfectly indifferent; but to the latter it was at first incomprehensible; and when its object was understood, she hardly knew whether most to laugh at its absurdity, or censure its impertinence, for she considered it as an unfeeling reflection on the colonel's advanced years, and on his forlorn condition as an old bachelor.

Mrs. Dashwood, who could not think a man five years younger than herself, so exceedingly ancient as he appeared to[32] the youthful fancy of her daughter, ventured to clear Mrs. Jennings from the probability of wishing to throw ridicule on his age.

"But at least, Mamma, you cannot deny the absurdity of the accusation, though you may not think it intentionally ill-natured. Colonel Brandon is certainly younger than Mrs. Jennings, but he is old enough to be my father; and if he were ever animated enough to be in love, must have long outlived every sensation of the kind. It is too ridiculous! When is a man to be safe from such wit, if age and infirmity will not protect him?"

20th Century

Background

The Twentieth Century represents a break from the preceding centuries, not only because of the emergence of globally-encompassing total war, but because the technologies developed during this time made human tampering with fate, human history, and nature a matter of the touch of a button. Sweeping political change and social movements characterize the twentieth century, and they provide much of the underlying tension and motivation in the literary works of the time. While one might imagine that the century's preoccupation with self-awareness would lead to evidence that consciousness of self was, in fact, heightened, the events of the period would argue just the opposite to be true. Consumerism and materialism co-opt self-consciousness by reducing spirituality itself to a commodity. At least these were the insights of the late twentieth century. Perhaps they were simply the self-evident truths of a planet of Peter Pans who use the promise of technology to gain power of nature in order to provoke disruption – not just in the status quo, but in processes that were, in the past, known to be inviolable law (of nature, of humanity).

Many of the highest literary creations of the twentieth century were powerfully contorted by the distresses of society, political conflict, and personal questioning of the meaning of existence. These witnesses to our extreme social discomfort would be such as Beckett, Yeats tormented by the issues of Irish English conflict, Eliot writing out the loss of faith in a small apocalyptic epic, Hardy and Lawrence, very differently assassinating the mediocrity of their own time. The early part of the century, of course, saw the high bloom of Modernism, aspects of which we have already reviewed: the work of Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Marcel Proust in France, Thomas Mann in Germany. Modernism, an aesthetic substitute for the lost harmony cosmos of Alexander Pope or John Donne, acquired through art the simulacrum of a better world no longer believed in.

Discussion Questions

1. Beckett and Joyce represent two opposite styles of writing. Both Irishmen—but consummate writers of English—the one is stripped down and absurdist, while the other is prolix, and brimming over with allusive meanings and implications. Would you say that these are two representative ways of responding to the complexity of the twentieth century world climate? Which style seems to you to do its expressive work better?

2. In her novels, *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*, and elsewhere, Virginia Woolf puts into play her view of the fractured and pulsive nature of human perception. Consciousness is broken down into what we know is true; we are constantly alert, in innumerable registers, to many coordinate sensations, from which we pass from one to another without rest, until death. Does Woolf's project, to write out this state of consciousness, seem to you peculiarly part of the self-awareness of the twentieth century literary mind?

3. Yeats and Eliot, at various points in their writing, pay tribute to the aristocratic ideals which are fading in their century. Yeats is attracted to the pride and dignity of some of the old families of Ireland. Eliot pays tribute to the beauties of a class society in which everyone knows, and values, his place—the world view of Alexander Pope. Among the major twentieth century English writers do you see any strong tendency toward the opposite view from that of Yeats and Eliot? Does the Marxist perception, of a classless society and human economic equality, play any part in the major literature of the century?

James Joyce

The signficance of James Joyce. James Joyce (1882-1941) carried the novel form into the twentieth century, and in so doing renovated the English language, and the sense of the global complexity of twentieth century society. After Joyce, fiction could not revert to the more innocent narratorial form of Dickens or Austen.

The Life of James Joyce. James Joyce was born in the Dublin suburb of Rathgar, as the eldest of ten surviving children. His family was at that point relatively prosperous, having inherited from a lime and cork business, and not long after Joyce's birth, his father having been made a rate collector for the city of Dublin, the family removed to an upscale suburb. That situation, however, was to prove short lived, for Joyce's father, though talented, had difficulty earning a living, or controlling his drinking, which was the ultimate reason for the family's slide into poverty. Consequently the family moved from home to home, each one successively shabbier. Joyce studied voraciously to break from what he considered to be the intellectual shabbiness of Dublin. This was not easy, though he did indeed manage to acquire an education: first at Clongowes Wood College, a Jesuit boarding school, then at Belvedere College, Jesuit also, and finally at University College, Dublin, which he entered in 1898. Dublin, however, soon lost all charm for Joyce, and in l902 he moved to Paris, intending to study medicine, and though he found it too difficult, following medical lectures in French, he was from that time on essentially a foreigner to Ireland. In rejecting Dublin, he embraced continental Europe, and sought to shape his mind into a new way of thinking, and in doing so to reinvent literature. To do so required a fervent and unwavering belief in his own genius, which his circle of friends found trying at times. For over a decade he taught English in Triest, and for twenty years, at the invitation of Ezra Pound, he lived in Paris.

The Work of James Joyce. Joyce's first significant work, *Dubliners*, dates from 1914, and concludes with the story 'The Dead,' one of his finest pre-experimental short stories. His greatest work, *Ulysses,* was first published in book form on February 2, 1922, on Joyce's fortieth birthday. The book contains innovations in organization, style and narrative technique that have influenced countless other writers; Joyce wove together mythical themes from many cultures, explored the sexual subconscious with what was then great daring, and stretched verbal and syntactical ingenuity almost to the breaking point; so that it is, perhaps, no great wonder that Joyce had difficulty with publication, his novel having been judged obscene by the U.S. Post Office, and banned from circulation in England and the United States. Eventually, bans were lifted and the book circulated more freely, public sentiment turning sharply in favor of the text. Joyce's last major work, *Finnegans Wake* (1939), took him fourteen years to write, and strives to encapsulate a world history in the dreams of a certain publican named Humphrey Earwicker. In that last novel Joyce presses the power of verbal daring, allows metaphor, pun, allusion, erudite or scatological reference to explode, and to this day remains a rich mine for interpretation and fascination.

Evaluation of James Joyce. Joyce brought language out as the center of the verbal creative act, and though he always had a distinct narrative to tell, dislocated as it sometimes seems, it was the way he told that narrative, cunning, punning, that made his work a new threshold for literary development in the West.

Reading

Primary source reading

James Joyce, *Ulysses,* London, 2010. Penguin edition.

Secondary source reading

Ellman, Richard, *James Joyce,* Oxford, l982).

Further reading

Kenner, Hugh, *Joyce's Voices*, London, l978.

Suggested paper topics

1. Gabriel, in 'The Dead', is a fully developed form of the character Joyce imagined as himself. In Joyce's first published set of tales, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1914), one Stephen Daedalus, later a major figure in *Ulysses*, assumes the personality which will become Gabriel's: detached, wistful, forced to learn his own artistic mission as an observer of life. That is the personality that will make of Stephen Dedalus in *Ulysses* a fit base for explorations, through a language made up of languages, puns, and allusions to the whole frame of human history. As

the title of that epic search indicates, Homer's Odysseus (Ulysses, through Latin) is the final everyman, virtuous and vulgar in all the essential mixtures, but at the same time an observer, like Gabriel and Stephen. The Gabriel personality will tightly link 'The Dead' to *Ulysses. How does Joyce make use of Homer's work?*

2. Is literature a direct reflection of its time? Or has literature a history that is basically independent of its time? (I recommend a look at Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973), as an aid to understanding how literature is felt and created from within the practitioner standing in a long line of predecessors.) The spur of this question, in the case of Joyce, is *where did he come from*? *Whom did he make use of in his writing? What is the unique contribution of his own imagination?*

Excerpt http://www.gutenberg.org/files/4300/4300.txt

He added in a preacher's tone: --For this, O dearly beloved, is the genuine Christine: body and soul and blood and ouns. Slow music, please. Shut your eyes, gents. One moment. A little trouble about those white corpuscles. Silence, all. He peered sideways up and gave a long slow whistle of call, then paused awhile in rapt attention, his even white teeth glistening here and there with gold points. Chrysostomos. Two strong shrill whistles answered through the calm. --Thanks, old chap, he cried briskly. That will do nicely. Switch off the current, will you? He skipped off the gunrest and looked gravely at his watcher, gathering about his legs the loose folds of his gown. The plump shadowed face and sullen oval jowl recalled a prelate, patron of arts in the middle ages. A pleasant smile broke quietly over his lips. --The mockery of it! he said gaily. Your absurd name, an ancient Greek! He pointed his finger in friendly jest and went over to the parapet, laughing to himself. Stephen Dedalus stepped up, followed him wearily halfway and sat down on the edge of the gunrest, watching him still as he propped his mirror on the parapet, dipped the brush in the bowl and lathered cheeks and neck. Buck Mulligan's gay voice went on. --My name is absurd too: Malachi Mulligan, two dactyls. But it has a Hellenic ring, hasn't it? Tripping and sunny like the buck himself. We must go to Athens. Will you come if I can get the aunt to fork out twenty quid? He laid the brush aside and, laughing with delight, cried: --Will he come? The jejune jesuit! Ceasing, he began to shave with care. --Tell me, Mulligan, Stephen said quietly. --Yes, my love?

Thomas Hardy

The Life of Thomas Hardy. Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) was born in Higher Brockhampton, east of Dorchester, in Dorset. His father was a stonemason and builder. Hardy was basically home schooled by his mother, for the first years of his life. The he went on to the Academy for Young Gentlemen in Dorchester, where he picked up a reasonable knowledge of Latin. At the age of eleven, he left school, for lack of tuition money, and apprenticed himself to an architect. (This period of practical work was to resonate out widely into his mature novels, in which architectural structures play a large symbolic role.) In l862 Hardy entered King's College, London, in order to professionalize his skills at architecture. At the same time, however, Hardy was finding himself surer of his literary skills, and even vocation, and was beginning to earn enough, from his writing, to justify a change in career. His career decision, to leave architecture for writing, led Hardy down the path of large fate-filled novels in which the English landscape played a major role. In that landscape the forces of nature proved *powerful* antagonists to humanity, as did the human prove to himself, when from within him fate time and time again turned against him. Hardy composed his dark Wessex novels throughout the later 19th century, then in his last three decades turned increasingly toward lyric poetry. In his last volume of poetry, *Poems of 1912-13*, he celebrated the passing of his first wife, the true love of his life.

The Work of Thomas Hardy. In his own time Hardy was especially recognized as a powerful novelist, whose quite bleak view of life was perfectly set in the gloomy landscapes of what he—summoning up the Anglo Saxon name of a tract of several western countries--called Wessex. Across the bleak stretches of *Wessex*, stony and hilly and half cultivated, Hardy's characters tend to trudge through their difficult agricultural lives, a wary eye forever out for the rough dictates of fate, the depression of an uncertain market, and the age old weight of the human condition. A great fictional world is built out of these severe ingredients, and embodies itself in absorbing works such as: *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *Tess of the d'Urbervilles (*1891), or *Jude the Obscure* (1895). Hardy's poetry, which is equally bleak in outlook—penetrated by the agnostic thinking of Darwin and the geologists—seemed to Hardy his own greatest skill. His poetic procedure is often metrically old fashioned, but strangely complex and realized. Here is the beginning of 'A Broken Appointment'':

You did not come,
And marching Time drew on, and wore me numb.
Yet less for loss of your dear presence there
Than that I thus found lacking in your make
That high compassion which can overbear
Reluctance for pure lovingkindness' sake.

Hardy's poetry compels us with a tone which, though largely conventional in prosody, stops us with harsh chunks of thought, rough hewn words (*Powerfuller*, in 'Hap') and a consistently bleak world view which sharply marks itself off from Hopkins and the earlier Romantics. Hardy also looks closely at the harsh realities of social existence, with a sense for the bitter in the daily. What poem could capture the paradoxical pain of virtue lost more spittingly than 'The Ruined Maid'? This dramatic dialogue plays ironically, and bitterly, on the social outcasting of members who break the moral conventions of the community, but are hiddenly admired—for some of the perks that go with crossing the line.

Reading

Primary source reading

Thomas Hardy, *The Mayor of Casterbridge,* ed. Wilson, Kindle book, 2003**.**

Secondary source reading

Gatrell, Simon, *Hardy and the Proper Study of Mankind,* London, l993.

Further reading

Pinion, J. B., *Hardy the Writer: Surveys and Assessments*, Basingstoke, l990.

Suggested paper topics

1. How does Hardy's work reflect the post WWI world? Is his pessimism and dark tone a reflection of his world, or simply part of his personality? How does that tone come out in poetry? Is he a better craftsman in prose fiction or poetry?

2. Can you see Hardy's architectural background in some of his fiction? Does it appear in the structure of an entire work, or in a preoccupation with structures, within his work?

Excerpt http://fiction.eserver.org/novels/mayor_of_casterbridge.html

One evening of late summer, before the nineteenth century had reached one-third of its span, a young man and woman, the latter carrying a child, were approaching the large village of Weydon-Priors, in Upper Wessex, on foot. They were plainly but not ill clad, though the thick hoar of dust which had accumulated on their shoes and garments from an obviously long journey lent a disadvantageous shabbiness to their appearance just now.
The man was of fine figure, swarthy, and stern in aspect; and he showed in profile a facial angle so slightly inclined as to be almost perpendicular. He wore a short jacket of brown corduroy, newer than the remainder of his suit, which was a fustian waistcoat with white horn buttons, breeches of the same, tanned leggings, and a straw hat overlaid with black glazed canvas. At his back he carried by a looped strap a rush basket, from which protruded at one end the crutch of a hay-knife, a wimble for hay-bonds being also visible in the aperture. His measured, springless walk was the walk of the skilled countryman as distinct from the desultory shamble of the general labourer; while in the turn and plant of each foot there was, further, a dogged and cynical indifference personal to himself, showing its presence even in the regularly interchanging fustian folds, now in the left leg, now in the right, as he paced along.
What was really peculiar, however, in this couple's progress, and would have attracted the attention of any casual observer otherwise disposed to overlook them, was the perfect silence they preserved. They walked side by side in such a way as to suggest afar off the low, easy, confidential chat of people full of reciprocity; but on closer view it could be discerned that the man was reading, or pretending to read, a ballad sheet which he kept before his eyes with some difficulty by the hand that was passed through the basket strap. Whether this apparent cause were the real cause, or whether it were an assumed one to escape an intercourse that would have been irksome to him, nobody but himself could have said precisely; but his taciturnity was unbroken, and the woman enjoyed no society whatever from his presence. Virtually she walked the highway alone, save for the child she bore.

Lawrence, D.H.

The Importance of D. H. Lawrence. Poet, painter, novelist, cultural critic, D. H. Lawrence (1885-1930) was an exceptionally acute critic of the problems with bourgeois modern society, and a powerful counteragent to the too self-conscious literary world of Joyce or Proust, with their narratological experiments. His novels and poetry introduced, into western literature, a new rediscovery of the pagan world in its full richness.

The Early Life of D.H. Lawrence. D. H. Lawrence was born in the mining community of Eastwood, in Nottinghamshire. He was the fourth child of John Lawrence, a barely literate miner, and of a beloved mother, who, though formerly a grade school teacher, had been forced by family poverty to do manual work in a lace factory. Consequently Lawrence was obliged to begin his education at the local elementary school, Beauvale Board School, where he studied from 1891-98. Having proven himself an excellent student, he was the first graduate of the school to be given a scholarship leading to further work at Nottingham High School. (While at the High School, Lawrence made friends with a school chum, with whom he shared books and enthusiasm for books: Lawrence's substitute for the literate family background in which many British writers were embedded.) From l902-06 Lawrence enrolled at the University College of Nottinghamshire. Throughout his educational development, Lawrence was writing poems and short stories, some of the latter of which were to morph into Lawrence's major novels.

Lawrence's literary career. Much of Lawrence's literary career was carried on while he was traveling. (By l919 he had essentially abandoned England, and set off on travels, in Europe, Australia, The United States, and Mexico, which were congenial to his imagination, and freeing from an England he was coming to hate, especially for its squalor and pettiness.) In l912 he married Frieda Weekley, née Richtofen, then the wife of one of Lawrence's Professors; the two left England in 1919, heading for Germany, then Italy, then throughout a lifetime marriage to those parts of the world in which Lawrence felt he could still discover something of the primal beat of humanity.

D. H. Lawrence's Work. The work of D.H. Lawrence from the beginning strikes out on a tone of great personal independence, willed freedom from the hyper sophisticated modernism of Joyce and Proust. Lawrence is out to discover the true presence of existence in his writing, and attempts to do so in vivid poetry, like 'Snake,' of which the following is an excerpt:

He reached down from a fissure in the earth-wall in the gloom
And trailed his yellow-brown slackness soft-bellied down, over the edge of
the stone trough
And rested his throat upon the stone bottom,
And where the water had dripped from the tap, in a small clearness,
He sipped with his straight mouth,
Softly drank through his straight gums, into his slack long body,
Silently.

In a long succession of novels—*The White Peacock*, 1910; *Sons and Lovers*, l913; *The Rainbow,* 1915; or *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, 1928—Lawrence works the territory of passion, the powerful urges of sexuality emerging from the earth itself, the shallowness of civilization and its conventions—and occupies a position, in the literary culture of his time, of pornographer or at best scandal maker. The legal manoevers surrounding the attempted publication of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, which was long considered obscene and unprintable, make the point forcefully. Could Lawrence have imagined that the freeing of the passions, which he promoted, would in our time turn into the indifference of 'sex and violence.'

Reading

Primary source reading

D.H.Lawrence*, Sea and Sardinia,* ed. Kainins, Kindle edition, 1999.

Secondary source reading

Meyers, Jeffrey*, D.H. Lawrence: A Biography,* London, l990.

Further reading

Bell, Michael, *D. H. Lawrence: Language and Being*, Cambridge, l991.

Suggested paper topics

1. Does D. H. Lawrence's work seem 'explicit and shocking' today, as it did in its own time? Your answer in the negative will, naturally, require explaining. What has changed in literary tastes, and cultural tolerance, since Lawrence's time?

2. What do you think of Lawrence's desire to return to simpler and more archaic life forms, where the blood flows strongly and sexually in the veins? Can you see why the guardians of social order were shocked by his perspective? Can you see why he was aggressively resentful toward the work of Joyce and Marcel Proust?

Excerpt http://www.gutenberg.net.au/ebooks01/0100181.txt
Ours is essentially a tragic age, so we refuse to take it tragically. The cataclysm has happened, we are among the ruins, we start to build up new little habitats, to have new little hopes. It is rather hard work: there is now no smooth road into the future: but we go round, or scramble over the obstacles. We've got to live, no matter how many skies have fallen. This was more or less Constance Chatterley's position. The war had brought the roof down over her head. And she had realized that one must live and learn. She married Clifford Chatterley in 1917, when he was home for a month on leave. They had a month's honeymoon. Then he went back to Flanders: to be shipped over to England again six months later, more or less in bits. Constance, his wife, was then twenty-three years old, and he was twenty-nine. His hold on life was marvellous. He didn't die, and the bits seemed to grow together again. For two years he remained in the doctor's hands. Then he was pronounced a cure, and could return to life again, with the lower half of his body, from the hips down, paralysed for ever. This was in 1920. They returned, Clifford and Constance, to his home, Wragby Hall, the family 'seat'. His father had died, Clifford was now a baronet, Sir Clifford, and Constance was Lady Chatterley. They came to start housekeeping and married life in the rather forlorn home of the Chatterleys on a rather inadequate income. Clifford had a sister, but she had departed. Otherwise there were no near relatives. The elder brother was dead in the war. Crippled for ever, knowing he could never have any children, Clifford came home to the smoky Midlands to keep the Chatterley name alive while he could. He was not really downcast. He could wheel himself about in a wheeled chair, and he had a bath-chair with a small motor attachment, so he could drive himself slowly round the garden and into the fine melancholy park, of which he was really so proud, though he pretended to be flippant about it. Having suffered so much, the capacity for suffering had to some extent left him. He remained strange and bright and cheerful, almost, one might say, chirpy, with his ruddy, healthy-looking face, and his pale-blue, challenging bright eyes. His shoulders were broad and strong, his hands were very strong. He was expensively dressed, and wore handsome neckties from Bond Street. Yet still in his face one saw the watchful look, the slight vacancy of a cripple. He had so very nearly lost his life, that what remained was wonderfully precious to him. It was obvious in the anxious brightness of his eyes, how proud he was, after the great shock, of being alive. But he had been so much hurt that something inside him had perished, some of his feelings had gone. There was a blank of insentience. Constance, his wife, was a ruddy, country-looking girl with soft brown hair and sturdy body, and slow movements, full of unusual energy. She had big, wondering eyes, and a soft mild voice, and seemed just to have come from her native village. It was not so at all. Her father was the once well-known R. A., old Sir Malcolm Reid. Her mother had been one of the cultivated Fabians in the palmy, rather pre-Raphaelite days. Between artists and cultured socialists, Constance and her sister Hilda had had what might be called an aesthetically unconventional upbringing. They had been taken to Paris and Florence and Rome to breathe in art, and they had been taken also in the other direction, to the Hague and Berlin, to great Socialist conventions, where the speakers spoke in every civilized tongue, and no one was abashed.

Woolf, Virginia

The upbringing of Virginia Woolf. Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) was born in London, into a highly literate family, crowded with siblings from Virginia's parents' previous marriages. Virginia's father was Sir Leslie Stephen, an accomplished academician and scholar, who founded the to this day prestigious *Dictionary of National Biography*. Virginia and her sister were on the whole educated at home, and though Virginia resented that her brothers were sent away for schooling, later to University, while she remained at home, still she seems to have enjoyed her robust and stimulating family. (She remembered particularly the pleasure of family vacations to St. Ives, Cornwall, when the whole group would be creatively at ease by the sea shore.) In 1895, however, Virginia's mother died, and Virginia suffered the first of what were called her nervous breakdowns. She was devastated. In 1904 this trauma was to be repeated, with equal force, by Virginia's father's death, which left her in collapse. What we may tend to consider bipolar disease, today, may have had another explanation, childhood sexual abuse; though this interpretation is questionable.

Education and career life. Virginia's higher education consisted of correspondence courses offered by The Ladies' Department of King's College, a reasonable sprinkling of language and history. It must be said, though, that the truly educational driver in Virginia's life was the family's removal to Bloomsbury, shortly after Sir Leonard's death. Once in that new social milieu, Virginia found herself surrounded by artists and writers—but also by thinkers like Clive Bell, Lytton Strachey, John Maynard Keynes, the economist. Her mind unfolded not only into the creative potential of language, but into the issues of man in the universe. On a more fleshly unfolding, this was a time not only for the marriage of Virginia Woolf, to Leonard Woolf (in l912), but for Virginia's love affair with the classy writer, Vita Sackville-West. The Blloomsbury group, as the leading figures in this cultural community were called, were distinctively liberal, in political and moral terms.

The Work of Virginia Woolf. Virginia Woolf is best known for her novels, which figure as part of the Modernist movement—fellow writers being Mann, Joyce, Proust—but she comes at her world descriptions with a distinctive slant. For one thing Virginia Woolf sees the world, quite naturally, from a woman's perspective, both through the lens of women characters and from her own standpoint, as background narrator. Already in her early essay on 'Modern Fiction' she heralds a new sensibility in the writers of her time. The narrator and the personae of her characters are no longer viewed as substantial shaping forces, but rather as composites of sense experience and flow. (Woolf does not work on the assumption of an integral character.) This optic makes itself vivid in such great later novels as *To the Lighthouse* (1927), in which the shimmering reflections of light on the sea reinforce the modes of flickering sense experience which appear to construct the personal universes of the main characters. The bias toward her own gender, as the model for perception, quite naturally leads Virginia Woolf into complex presentations of women as literature. This tendency is perhaps at its most noteworthy in *Mrs Dalloway* (1925). The story concerns one day in the life of a woman of some social standing who is preparing a dinner party. In the course of the preparation her mind fantasizes every detail of the coming event, including the elaborate past histories of many of the guests to be, histories which blend into a wide ranging canvas/picture of British society before the First World War.

Reading

Primary source reading

Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, London, l990.

Secondary source reading

Clements, P. and Grundy, Isobel, eds. *Virginia Woolf: New Critical Essays*, London, l983.

Further reading

Bell, Quentin, *Virginia Woolf: A Biography i: Virginia Stephen*, London, l972.

Suggested paper topics

1. Both Virginia Woolf and Walter Pater subscribe to a philosophy of sensations and flux, and share—do you agree?—a view of the way an observer puts together some kind of visual whole, in writing. Are both of these writers fundamentally secular? Is there any aperture, in their writing, for a religiously transcendent perspective?

2. Does Virginia Woolf experiment fictionally as much as do Joyce and Proust? Is *To the Lighthouse*, for instance, a challenge to daily perception? Is it possible to construct a valid narrative out of elements of perception, as Virginia Woolf presents them in *To the Lighthouse*?

Excerpt http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks02/0200331.txt

He--for there could be no doubt of his sex, though the fashion of the time did something to disguise it--was in the act of slicing at the head of a Moor which swung from the rafters. It was the colour of an old football, and more or less the shape of one, save for the sunken cheeks and a strand or two of coarse, dry hair, like the hair on a cocoanut. Orlando's father, or perhaps his grandfather, had struck it from the shoulders of a vast Pagan who had started up under the moon in the barbarian fields of Africa; and now it swung, gently, perpetually, in the breeze which never ceased blowing through the attic rooms of the gigantic house of the lord who had slain him. Orlando's fathers had ridden in fields of asphodel, and stony fields, and fields watered by strange rivers, and they had struck many heads of many colours off many shoulders, and brought them back to hang from the rafters. So too would Orlando, he vowed. But since he was sixteen only, and too young to ride with them in Africa or France, he would steal away from his mother and the peacocks in the garden and go to his attic room and there lunge and plunge and slice the air with his blade. Sometimes he cut the cord so that the skull bumped on the floor and he had to string it up again, fastening it with some chivalry almost out of reach so that his enemy grinned at him through shrunk, black lips triumphantly. The skull swung to and fro, for the house, at the top of which he lived, was so vast that there seemed trapped in it the wind itself, blowing this way, blowing that way, winter and summer. The green arras with the hunters on it moved perpetually. His fathers had been noble since they had been at all. They came out of the northern mists wearing coronets on their heads. Were not the bars of darkness in the room, and the yellow pools which chequered the floor, made by the sun falling through the stained glass of a vast coat of arms in the window? Orlando stood now in the midst of the yellow body of an heraldic leopard. When he put his hand on the window-sill to push the window open, it was instantly coloured red, blue, and yellow like a butterfly's wing. Thus, those who like symbols, and have a turn for the deciphering of them, might observe that though the shapely legs, the handsome body, and the well-set shoulders were all of them decorated with various tints of heraldic light, Orlando's face, as he threw the window open, was lit solely by the sun itself. A more candid, sullen face it would be impossible to find. Happy the mother who bears, happier still the biographer who records the life of such a one! Never need she vex herself, nor he invoke the help of novelist or poet. From deed to deed, from glory to glory, from office to office he must go, his scribe following after, till they reach whatever seat it may be that is the height of their desire. Orlando, to look at, was cut out precisely for some such career. The red of the cheeks was covered with peach down; the down on the lips was only a little thicker than the down on the cheeks. The lips themselves were short and slightly drawn back over teeth of an exquisite and almond whiteness. Nothing disturbed the arrowy nose in its short, tense flight; the hair was dark, the ears small, and fitted closely to the head.