

The Beginning of the Novel

- English novel
- Novel of the 19th century
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- Modern Novel
- Post Modern Novel

English Novels

The early English novels concerned themselves with complex, middle-class characters struggling with their morality and circumstances. "Pamela" a series of fictional letters written in 1741 by Samuel Richardson, is considered the first real English novel. Other early novelists include Daniel Defoe, who wrote "Robinson Crusoe" (1719) and "Moll Flanders" (1722),. Jane Austen is the author of "Pride and Prejudice" (1812), and "Emma" (1816), considered the best early English novels of manners.

Novels in the 19th Century

The first half of the 19th century was influenced by the romanticism of the previous era. The focus was now on nature and imagination rather than intellect and emotion "Wuthering Heights" (1847) by Emily Bronte; "The Scarlet Letter" (1850) by Nathaniel Hawthorne about puritanism and guilt.

Realism and Naturalism

The rise of industrialization in the 19th century precipitated a trend toward writing that depicted realism. Realism evolved quickly into naturalism which portrayed harsher circumstances and pessimistic characters rendered powerless by the forces of their environment. Naturalist novels include "Uncle Tom's Cabin" (1852) by Harriet Beecher Stowe, which was a major catalyst for the American Civil War.

Modern Novels

The 20th century is divided into two phases of literature--modern literature (1900-1945) and contemporary literature (1945 to the present), also referred to as postmodern. The characters in modern and contemporary novels questioned the existence of God, reason, and the nature of reality. Novels from this era reflected great events such as The Great Depression, World War II, Hiroshima, the cold war and communism. Famous modern novels include "To The Lighthouse" (1927) by English novelist and essayist Virginia Woolf.

Postmodern Novels

Realism and naturalism paved the way into postmodern novels with characters that were more reflective. The postmodern novel includes magical realism, and the graphic novel. It asserts that man is ruled by a higher power and that the universe cannot be explained by reason alone. Postmodern novels include: "The Color Purple" (1982) by Alice Walker.