



Included in this workshop:
READING 5D Demonstrate familiarity with works of fiction by British authors from each major literary period.

The Growth and Development of Fiction

It's hard to imagine a time when the novel, as we know it, was not a common literary form. However, in the long history of literature, the rise of fiction as a popular genre is a relatively recent phenomenon.

A Novel Idea

The **novel** is an extended fictional narrative written in prose. Typically, the narrative depicts the development of a character and revolves around a plot and theme, which collectively act as its organizing principle. The novel as we think of it came into being after Daniel Defoe published *Robinson Crusoe* in 1719. During this time, the novel was viewed primarily as a form of entertainment. In the mid-18th century, the novels *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1747–1748) by Samuel Richardson and *Tom Jones* (1749) by Henry Fielding advanced the development of plot and characterization. *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1760–1767), a highly original work by Laurence Sterne, focused on characters' conversations and remembrances instead of on action. These works inspired other writers to take the novel form in new directions.

The Novel Comes of Age

The Victorian period (1832–1901) is often called the age of the novel. The Victorian era ushered in the focus on realistic depictions of life that continues to this day. Victorian novels are known for their **realism**—the detailed presentation of everyday life. Through the novel, Victorian writers wanted to document the lives and the values of the English, including the lower classes. As the Victorian era continued, social concerns began playing a greater role in the general society, and the novel became a tool for exposing society's ills. No other writer used this tool as effectively as did Charles Dickens. His novels *Oliver Twist* (1837–1839), *A Christmas Carol* (1843), *David Copperfield* (1849–1850), and *Bleak House* (1852–1853) described in riveting detail the troubling state of England's lower classes. (See pages 1010–1011 for more on Dickens.)

Close Read

Based on this passage, describe the attitudes of the workhouse authorities and parish authorities toward Oliver. Do they seem indifferent? caring? cruel? Explain what led you to your conclusion.

For the next eight or ten months, Oliver was the victim of a systematic course of treachery and deception. He was brought up by hand. The hungry and destitute situation of the infant orphan was duly reported by the workhouse authorities to the parish authorities. . . . The parish authorities magnanimously and humanely resolved, that Oliver should be “farmed,” or, in other words, that he should be despatched to a branch-workhouse some three miles off, where twenty or thirty other juvenile offenders against the poor-laws, rolled about the floor all day, without the inconvenience of too much food or too much clothing. . . .

—Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist*

New Forms Emerge

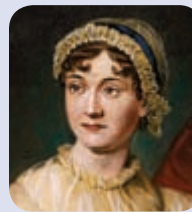
In the 19th century, a remarkable variety of English novels were written, giving rise to several popular, new subgenres:

- **Historical novels**—In this type of novel, historical facts are combined with fictional elements to re-create the spirit of a past age. Charles Dickens based *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) on historical accounts of the French Revolution.
- **Gothic novels**—Horror tales became extremely popular in England near the turn of the 19th century. *Frankenstein* (1818) by Mary Shelley is the best-known example of gothic fiction.
- **Detective novels**—Mystery is a major ingredient of detective fiction. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle mastered this form in the late 1800s and created Sherlock Holmes, still the world's most famous detective.
- **Newgate novels**—Stories focusing on criminals and their motives attracted a growing audience. Newgate fiction—named after a famous London prison—explored the nature of crime and violence. An example is Charles Dickens's *Barnaby Rudge* (1841), which looks at the effects of civil unrest and riot.

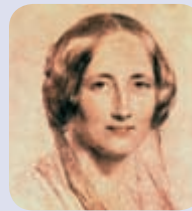
After 1880, realism spawned several other schools of literary writing, including psychological realism and naturalism. In France, **naturalism** promoted a grimmer, more “scientific” approach to fiction. Naturalistic writing was an attempt to depict the human condition as objectively as scientific writings depicted the processes of nature. An example is *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891), in which Thomas Hardy portrayed a hostile world where only the “fittest” prospered.

WOMEN NOVELISTS

As the reading public became increasingly female and middle class, female writers emerged. Romantic writer Jane Austen led the way with novels of manners, works known for their focus on courtship, parental authority, and other domestic issues. However, Victorian women writers were determined to overcome the commonly accepted view that writing was a man's profession, and they extended the topics of many of their works far beyond the home.



Jane Austen
1775–1817
Sense and Sensibility
Pride and Prejudice
Emma



Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell
1810–1865
Mary Barton
Cranford
North and South



George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans)
1819–1880
The Mill on the Floss
Silas Marner
Middlemarch



Emily Brontë (Ellis Bell)
1818–1848
Wuthering Heights



Charlotte Brontë (Currer Bell)
1816–1855
Jane Eyre
The Professor
Shirley