

BRITISH LITERATURE

a/Middle Ages

The oldest literary monument of the Anglo-Saxon period is the old Germanic legend about Beowulf (from the 8th century).

During the Middle Ages Roman Catholic Church was strongly criticized by John Wycliffe (1320-1384) a professor of Oxford University. With his students he translated the whole Bible into English.

b/The Renaissance and Humanism

The end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of Renaissance in literature is marked by Canterbury Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer (1345?-1400).

Sir Thomas More (1478-1535) wrote the Utopia, a vision of imaginary island with perfectly organized society. The greatest personality of this period is William Shakespeare. He was born in Stratford-upon-Avon. Little of his life is known until 1592 when he came to London. In 1599 he bought the Globe Theatre. First he helped adapt or re-write older plays but later he started to write his own plays and he was very successful. His comedies are The Comedy of Errors, The Taming of the Shrew, The Two Gentlemen of Verona, The Merchant of Venice, A Midsummer-Night's Dream, Merry Wives of Windsor, Much Ado about Nothing, As You Like It, Twelfth Night. History plays: Henry VI, Richard III, Richard II, Henry IV, Henry V, Julius Caesar. Tragedies: Romeo and Juliet, Macbeth, Hamlet, King Lear, Othello.

c/17th Century

John Milton is the main figure of this period. His masterpiece is Paradise Lost.

d/18th Century

Literature became popular among the middle class.

Daniel Defoe was a politician, traveller and journalist. His most famous work is Robinson Crusoe. Jonathan Swift was a sharp critic. His most popular work is Gulliver's Travels.

e/Romanticism

Sir Walter Scott is a founder of historical novel. His Ivanhoe is from the period of Richard the Lionhearted. The other novels are Waverley and Kenilworth. The best English romantic poets are Percy Bysshe Shelley and Lord George Gordon Byron. His main work is Childe Harold's Pilgrimage.

f/ Victorian Age (Critical Realism) – 19 th Century

Among the best authors of this period belong Emily Bronte and her Wuthering Heights, Charlotte Bronte – her Jane Eyre. Charles Dickens described truly life of poor people in England in 19 th century. Among his major novels belong: The Pickwick Papers, Oliver Twist.

g/ The First Half of the 20 th Century

David Herbert Lawrence analyzes sexual relations between a man and a woman in his Lady Chatterley s Lover. Robert Lewis Stevenson wrote romantic adventurous stories Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Treasure Island. Oscar Wilde was from Dublin. He was criticized by London society and even put to prison for homosexuality. He wrote The Picture of Dorian Grey and fairy tales The Happy Prince, The Selfish Giant. Rudyard Kipling was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1907 as the first British author. He wrote short stories about India, the sea, the jungle and its animals- The Jungle Book, The second Jungle Book. Next writer from this period is Arthur Conan Doyle and his Sherlock Holmes. George Bernard Shaw is the most famous personality in drama. In his plays he criticizes the false morals of the society. His masterpiece is Mrs. Warren s Profession, Pygmalion.

h/ Contemporary Literature

J.R.R. Tolkien created a phantasy world of Middle-Earth where small hobbits seek happiness, goodness and live many adventures. The Lord of the Rings has three parts. Agatha Christie is the most widely read author in the world. She is the Queen of a detective story. Arthur C. Clarke is a wellknown science-fiction writer- 2001: A Space Odyssey. Samuel Beckett a Noble Prize winner in 1969, born in Dublin, is important both for drama and prose. In his famous play Waiting for Godot two tramps are waiting for Godot. Today s book market offers many books by Dick Francis, Robin Cook and J. K. Rowling.