

## Rise of the Novel

The English novel, destined to become the most popular and prolific of all English literary forms, first fully emerged in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It was, in large measure, a product of the middle-class ideals and sensibilities, a patterning of imagined events set against a clearly realized social background. From Richardson until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century class consciousness has been shown: the importance of social and financial status and the use of the rise and fall from one class to another as reflecting critical developments in character and fortune indicate the middle-class origin of this literary form. The novel dealt with realism and contemporaneity in the sense that it dealt with people living in the social world known to the writer.

Richardson was a London printer who discovered his talent as a novelist at the age of 51 when he was in the process of compiling a volume of letters helpful to those who were not sufficiently educated to write easily on occasions when letters might be called for. He was working on this collection in 1739 about a servant girl's virtue and the promiscuous nature of her master. He thought of writing a complete novel out of the letters. He remembered the true story of a virtuous girl who eventually married her master after successfully repulsing his more irregular approaches. This combination of prudence and virtue appealed to him. He dropped his work on the letters and, in two months, produced Pamela (1740). The theme is folk theme, the class background is far from being the simple one of lower-born maiden and high-born lord. Richardson's Pamela can be called the pioneer of novels. The ideals that Richardson employs and manipulates in his novels are: prudence and virtue, gentility and morality, reputation and character.

Whether Defoe was "properly" a novelist or not is a matter of definition of terms. His interest on character was minimal and the novel only grew up when it learned to combine Defoe's sense of social and material reality with some awareness of the complexities of human personality.

Henry Fielding (1707-54), who came to the novel after a career as a writer of comedies, burlesques, and satirical plays, a journalist and a barrister, voiced his uneasiness in his Joseph Andrews (1742), written in imitation of the manner of Cervantes. He was also using the theme of morality. Fielding also draws on the picaresque tradition to set his characters on the road and by involving them in a great variety of adventures. His novel Tom Jones (1749) is

a novel both comic and moral. Fielding's last novel Amelia (1751) is altogether different from any of his previous fiction.

Tobias Smollett (1721-71) was Fielding's younger contemporary wrote The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle (1751) which is his longest and most rambling novel. His most attractive novel is his last Humphrey Clinker (1771) which also deals with the theme of picaresque novel.

Laurence Sterne(1713-68) was a more original figure. His Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy (1759-1767), revealed a wholly new concept of form in fiction as well as a kind of sentimental comedy.

Jane Austen made an important contribution to the emergence of novels. She wrote a number of successful novels like Sense and Sensibility, Pride and Prejudice, Emma, Northanger Abbey, Persuasion.