

# British literature timeline

## (till the 19th century)

### Old English literature

A legendary hero who kills powerful **frightening** creatures and becomes a king was celebrated in the Old English **epic**, *Beowulf*, written by an unknown writer in the 8th century.

The most important king of this Anglo-Saxon period, Alfred the Great (849 - 901) was also a **scholar** and writer. He **supported** the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* describing the life, history and language of this time.

### Medieval literature

**Geoffrey Chaucer** (1340 - 1400) is considered to be the father of English poetry because he wrote in English

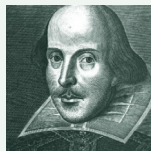


rather than in French or Latin. His *Canterbury Tales* records the **imagined** conversations of **pilgrims** as they journeyed from London to Canterbury.

### Renaissance and Reformation

The Renaissance in England culminated during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (ruled 1558 - 1603), a period of prosperity, successful sea voyages, and cultural activities. The Reformation of the Church in England from Catholic to Protestant was begun by Elizabeth's father, King Henry VIII in the 1530s.

**William Shakespeare** (1564 - 1616), the world's greatest playwright, wrote historical plays about Kings of England



(*Richard II*, *Henry V*), comedies (*Twelfth Night*, *As You Like It*), tragedies (*Romeo and Juliet*, *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*) as well as love poetry, in the form of sonnets. Many well-known English **sayings** come from Shakespeare's work, and he had a great influence on the English language.

### The English Revolution and Restoration

In 1640, a revolutionary struggle, The Civil War between the King's army and Oliver Cromwell's Parliamentary **forces**, began. In 1660, the bourgeoisie decided to restore the monarchy and Charles II (the son of executed Charles I) returned from exile in France.

**John Milton** (1608 - 1674) one of the



greatest poets is celebrated for his powerful, rhetoric poetry and is famous mainly for his epic poem *Paradise*

*Lost*. Besides poems, Milton published **pamphlets defending civil and religious rights**.

### 18th century literature

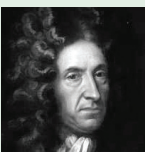
This century is the time of the **Enlightenment**, the "Age of Reason", when all branches of science were developed and resulted in great technical progress.

**Jonathan Swift** (1667 - 1745) uses his



black humour and irony in his satirical pamphlets (*The Battle of Books*). His most famous work is *Gulliver's Travels*, a satire on British society.

**Daniel Defoe** (1660 - 1731) is



remembered for his book *Robinson Crusoe*, which is still one of the most popular books among children. In *Moll Flanders*, he gives a realistic picture

of the life of a prostitute in London.

**Henry Fielding's** (1707 - 1754)



masterpiece, *Tom Jones*, is a novel about a rather **controversial** character of an **adventurous sincere boy**, who had no respect for the **moral codes** of society, but had a natural **sense of justice**.

### Romantic literature

Literature at the end of the 18th century turned again to sentiments, traditions, and exotic settings.

**George Gordon, Lord**



**Byron** (1788 - 1824) represents the so-called "Revolutionary Romantics". His work is **concerned with** the freedom of the individual as well as

nations (*The Prisoners of Chillon*).

**Sir Walter Scott** (1771 - 1832) took for



his novels themes from Scottish history (*Waverley*, *Rob Roy*) and from English history (*Ivanhoe*).

Themes of horror and mystery appeared in **prose** called "Gothic novels".

**Mary Shelley** (1797 - 1851) wrote



*Frankenstein*, which is the most well-known of the Gothic novels with the horror genre that we are so familiar with in films and on TV today.

### Victorian novels

During the Victorian Age (Queen Victoria ruled from 1837 - 1901), novels in which writers described English society with all its characters became the most popular literary form.

There were many talented women writers: The Brontë sisters lived in isolation in North Yorkshire. *Jane Eyre* by **Charlotte Brontë** (1816 - 1855) and



*Wuthering Heights* by **Emily Brontë** (1818 - 1848) were two of the most original novels of the day as they were very **fresh and unconventional**.

**Charles Dickens** (1812 - 1870) wrote



novels where heroes and **villains** were taken from the **hustle and bustle** of Victorian London (*Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*, *Great Expectations*, *Bleak House*).

**Thomas Hardy** (1840 - 1928) wrote



about life in the Dorset countryside. He **depicted** the tragedy of the common man in his struggle with the elements and the social system of the time (*Tess of the D'Urbervilles*).

Dagmar Prosková, Jane Haward (Great Britain)

### vocabulary

**frightening** ['fraɪt(ə)nɪŋ] - děsivý

**epic** ['epɪk] - epos

**scholar** ['skɒlə] - učenec

**to support** [sə'pɔ:t] - podporovat

**is considered to be** [kən'sɪdəd] - je považován za

**records the imagined** [rɪ'kɔ:dz ɪ'mædʒɪnd] - zachycují smyšlené

**pilgrim** ['pɪlgrɪm] - poutník

**saying** ['seɪɪŋ] - úsloví

**forces** [fɔ:sɪz] - vojsko, armáda

**pamphlets defending civil and religious rights**

[ˈpæmflɪts dɪ'fendɪŋ 'sɪv(ə)l rɪ'lɪdʒəs] - pamflety obhajující občanská a náboženská práva

**Enlightenment** [ɪn'laɪt(ə)n(ə)m(ə)nt] - osvícenství

**controversial** [kɒntrə'vɜ:ʃ(ə)l] - kontroverzní, sporný

**adventurous sincere boy** [əd'ventʃ(ə)rəs sɪn'sɪə]

- upřímný kluk milující dobrodružství

**moral codes** ['mɒr(ə)l] - morální pravidla

**sense of justice** ['dʒʌstɪs] - smysl pro spravedlnost

**is concerned with** [kən'sə:nd] - se zabývá

**prose** [prəʊz] - próza

**fresh and unconventional** [ʌnkən'venʃ(ə)n(ə)l] - svěží a nekonvenční

**villain** ['vɪləɪn] - padouch

**hustle and bustle** ['hʌs(ə)l 'bʌs(ə)l] - ruch a shon

**to depict** [dɪ'pɪkt] - líčit