

Eighteenth Century Novels

SOCIAL BACKGROUND

- ▶ After the disruption and change of 17th century, a desire for rational agreement, and increasing confidence mark the literary culture after 1688.
- ▶ There were improvements in agriculture and industry, by trade with England's overseas empire.
- ▶ There was more leisure at home as Britannia dominated the far South Pacific, and literature gained a reading public.
- ▶ It was a period of intellectual progress with greater emphasis upon reason and rationality, and is thus also known by the term, 'The Age of Enlightenment'.
- ▶ The success of the Glorious Revolution also ensured that the society was now bonded by an enlightened self-interest and the dual necessities of securing individual liberty and securing the individual rights.
- ▶ Sir Isaac Newton (1642–1727) came up with his *Principia and Opticks*, also John Locke (1632–1704) and Anthony Ashley Cooper, his pupil provided an intellectual basis for the theories of politics and religion

- ▶ The industrial revolution appears to have paved the way for the rise of the middle class.
- ▶ Much of the 18th century literature with its polite or aristocratic tone happens to be created by authors who belonged to the middle class.
- ▶ There was a demand for reading literature that would present characters in real life events.
- ▶ Moreover, with the increase in literacy the demand for reading material also increased rapidly.
- ▶ There was a flourishing of newspapers and periodicals which carried literary essays.
- ▶ In Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary* the most cited prose writer is Samuel Richardson, who came up with the epistolary novel *Pamela* that developed from his idea of creating specimens of letters for different social situations.
- ▶ Richard Steele and Joseph Addison worked together to produce *The Tatler*, a collection of essays.
- ▶ The rise of individualism also played a significant role in the emergence of the novels

The Novelists

- ▶ Daniel Defoe (1660–1731): *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), *Captain Singleton* (1720), *Colonel Jack* (1722), *Moll Flanders* (1722), *Roxana: The Fortunate Mistress* (1724)
- ▶ Jonathan Swift (1661–1745):
- ▶ Samuel Richardson (1689–1761):
- ▶ Henry Fielding (1707–1754):
- ▶ Tobias Smollet (1721–1771):
- ▶ Laurence Sterne (1730–1768):