



Otázka: British and American literature

Jazyk: Angličtina

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British and American literature

Reading is a good way how to enlarge your vocabulary and you can use your imagination while reading. We can divide books into short stories, novels, thrillers, etc. Books are sold in bookshops, but it is possible to lend them in libraries. Some books are also available on the internet, as a free online version.

BRITISH LITERATURE

OLD ENGLISH LITERATURE

- The oldest literary monument of the Old English literature is the old Germanic legend about **Beowulf**.
- It is written by an **unknown writer** in the 8th century. Legend is about a hero who killed powerful frightening creatures and becomes a king.

MEDIEVAL LITERATURE

- **GEOFFREY CHAUCER** was called the Father of English. He wrote Catnbury Tales. It is a portrait of 30 pilgrims who travel from London to Canterbury.



RENAISSANCE AND REFORMATION

- The Renaissance in England culminated during the rule of Queen Elizabeth II.
- **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE** was the world's greatest playwright, He wrote historical plays about Kings of England (Richard II, Henry V), comedies (**Twelfth Night, As You Like It**) and tragedies (**Romeo and Juliet, Julius Caesar, Hamlet, Macbeth, King Lear**).

REVOLUTION AND RESTORATION

- In 1640, a revolutionary struggle, The Civil War between the King's army and Oliver Cromwell's Parliamentary forces began.
- **JOHN MILTON** is the main figure of this period. He is celebrated for his powerful, rhetoric poetry and he is famous for his epic poem **Paradise Lost**. Besides poems, he published **pamphlets defending civil and religious rights**.

18TH CENTURY LITERATURE

- 18th century is the time when all branches of science, economy, society and journalism were developed. Novels and drama developed too, and literature became popular among the middle class.
- **JONATHAN SWIFT** was a sharp critic. He criticizes politics in England, kingdom, corruption, army, bad politicians etc. He uses his black humour and irony in his satirical pamphlets. His most famous work is **Gulliver's Travels**.
- **DANIEL DEFOE** was a politician, trader, traveller, journalist, pamphleteer and a spy. His most famous work is **Robinson Crusoe**.
- **HENRY FIDGERALD** wrote a realistic novel **Tom Jones**.

ROMANTIC LITERATURE



- Towards the end of the 18th century and during the first third of the 19th century, romanticism appears in literature with emotions and passions rather than intellectual attitude.
- **SIR WALTER SCOTT** was Scottish novelist, playwright and poet. He is the founder of the historical novel. He took for his novel themes from Scottish history (*Waverly, Rob Roy*) and from English history (*Ivanhoe*).
- **MARY SHELLEY** wrote *Frankenstein*, which is the most well-known of the Gothic novels with the horror genre.
- **LORD BYRON** and **PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY** represent revolutionary romanticism, unhappy and usually lonely heroes fight for freedom and their fight ends in vain.
- **LORD BYRON'S** main work is *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and **SHELLEY'S** *Prometheus Unbound*.
- **JANE AUSTEN** wrote a domestic novel. She wrote *Pride and Prejudice*.

VICTORIAN LITERATURE

- During the Victorian Age, writers described English society with all characters.
- *Jane Eyre* by **CHARLOTTE BRONTE** and *Wuthering Heights* by **EMILY BRONTE** were two of the most original novels of the day.
- **CHARLES DICKENS** wrote novels *Oliver Twist* and *David Copperfield*.

LATE VICTORIAN LITERATURE

- **OSCAR WILDE** was criticized by London society. He wrote *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

MODERNISM

- The modern literature was influenced by two world wars, revolution and tension of the world.
- **VIRGINIA WOOLF** became a representative of modernism. Her main works include *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*.



- **JAMES JOYCE** is a representative of the modern novel. He wrote an experimental prose. His work **Dubliners** is a collection of short stories.
- **GEORGE BERNARD SHAW** is the most famous personality in drama of this period. In his plays he criticizes the false morals of the society. He wrote **Pygmalion** and he received the Nobel Prize.

CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

- **JOHN WAIN** was a poet, novelist and critic. He wrote **The Young Visitors**. He belonged to a group of authors **angry young men**, who expressed disillusionment and emptiness of intellectuals after WWII. They criticize snobs and people in power.
- **KINGSLEY AMIS** was the most famous member of this group. He was a novelist, poet, critic and a teacher. He is world famous for his **Lucky Jim**.

Other famous contemporary writers are:

- **J.R.R. TOLKIEN** created a phantasy world of Middle-Earth in his works – **Hobbit**, **The Lord of the Rings**.
- **GEORGE ORWELL** wrote allegory novels criticizing totalitarian society, for example **Animal Farm** and **Nineteen Eighty-Four**.
- **ARTHUR C. CLARKE** is a well-known science fiction writer. He wrote **A Space Odyssey** and **The Fountains of Paradise**.
- **SAMUEL BECKETT**, a Nobel Prize winner is important for drama and prose. He wrote absurdist play **Waiting for Godot**.

AMERICAN LITERATURE

COLONIAL NON-FICTION LITERATURE

- **JOHN SMITH** is considered to be the first American writer. He was an explorer and colonist. His **A True Relation of Virginia** is said to be the first American book written in English.



- **WILLIAM BRADFORD** was a Puritan writer who described life in the early English settlements. He wrote book **Of Plymouth Plantation**.

DEMOCRATIC ORIGINS AND REVOLUTIONARY WRITERS AND THE AMERICAN ENLIGHTENMENT 1776-1820

- It is time of the American Revolution against Britain.
- **BEJNAMIN FRANKLIN** is one of the most important figures of the period. He was a renaissance man" – a person of many skills. He writes about his life, his successes and failures. **The Way to Wealth** gives the reader advice how to become successful.
- **THOMAS PAINE** was an English-born essayist and pamphleteer. His pamphlet "**Common Sense**" is a sharp critique of the colonial system and explains why the Americans should rise against Britain.
- **THOMAS JEFFERSON** became the 3rd President of the United States of America. He is the main author of the **Declaration of Independence**.
- **WASHINGTON IRVING** was America's first professional writer and the founder of short story in the USA. He wrote **A History of New York** and **The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Cryon**.
- **JAMES FENIMORE COOPER** wrote a **Leatherstocking Tales**.

THE ROMANTIC PERIOD 1820-1860

- **EDGAR ALLAN POE** is founder of science-fiction and the detective. His best-known poem is **The Raven**. In this poem is the raven, as a symbol of death, who repeats the poem's famous refrain "nevermore".
- **HARRIET BEECHER STOWE**
- **WALT WHITEMAN** is considered as one of the best American poets of all the time. **Leaves of Grass** is a collection of poems, he compares freedom to grass – it should grow everywhere.
- **EMILY DICKINSON** is another poet considered as one of the greatest in American history. Her poems do not have any titles.
- **HERMAN MELVILLE** wrote a long novel **Moby-Dick**.



REALISM 1860-1914

- **MARK TWAIN** wrote novels **The Adventures of Tom Sawyer** and **The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn**.
- **STEPHEN CRANE** wrote ***Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*** and ***The Red Badge of Courage***.

20TH CENTURY LITERATURE

- In the 20th century, writers were looking for new ways of writing and new topics. Their writings expressed their feelings about living in the modern age.
- **The Lost Generation** is a group of writers who lost their illusion. They wrote about young people who don't find any pleasure in everyday life. The group included Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, etc.
- **ERNEST HEMINGWAY** is probably the most famous representative writer. His novel **The Old Man and the Sea** earned him the Nobel Prize for literature.
- **FRANCIS SCOTT FITZGERALD** is well known for **The Great Gatsby**.
- **JOHN STEINBECK** wrote about people who fall to the bottom of the society. He wrote a novel **Of Mice and Men** and novel **The grapes of Wrath**.
- **WILLIAM STYRON** is best known for **Sophie's Choice**.
- **Beat Generation** is a group of writers, they rebelled against the conventions of mainstream American life and writing. The group included Jack Kerouac, William Blake and more.
- **JACK KEROUAC** wrote **On the Road**, which became a kind of a Bible for his followers. It tells stories of people travelling across America.