

READER

in the 20th
century

ENGLISH LITERATURE

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Since it is aimed to serve as a background literary guide to the complete course of English Literature – 4th part, I had to collect, classify and briefly define the place of each author and work included. In this process I have followed mainly such authors as Malcolm Bradbury, Anthony Burgess, and, quite closely, Carter and MacRae.

The senior students of 2004 helped me extensively with building the corpus of texts by developing projects which fixed their attitudes to representative texts, the accessible internet sites for literature, and their difficulties - in both their orientation through the vast amount of authors and works, and working with the texts.

I am also obliged to my assistant Slavka Popova who followed in her seminars the reading list which more or less forms the contents of this Reader, and drew my attention to the students' likes and dislikes by studying the frequency of choosing one or another author or work where self-aware British literary criticism does not always coincide with the tastes and viewpoints of the undergraduates. That is the basic reason for adding an extensive Introduction to the Cultural contexts of the 20th century British literature whose aim is to build up a systematic guide, set accents and spotlight eminent figures and works in the context of global human culture.

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PREFICE

This Reader, like any other reader, is limited in its aim to support the standard course of English literature of the 20th century in the majors of English studies for senior students of English Philology, Applied Linguistics and the retraining postgraduate courses for English language teachers.

Therefore its immediate objectives are 1) to give a thorough and systematic overview of the most representative literary events of the 20th century and 2) to provide reading matter for classwork - serving to awake interest, challenge discussion, provide texts for language enrichment and literary translation and eventually to lead to further reading and writing.

Although it is compiled from multitude of sources, its approach is rather technical and fact-searching than purely critical. This is the approach of a historian of culture rather than that of a mentor, our aim being to leave space for the students of English literature to develop their own research guided by the framework of this Reader but not limited by it.

The texts are taken from open accessible sources which have been made public domain. The order of the texts traditionally follows literary genres and historic chronology. The biographies of the authors included here follow a common pattern which makes searching for information easier in view of the language difficulties the undergraduates commonly display.

Sometimes comments and order might sound provocative: it is the essential task of this Reader to challenge further study of literature and writing for literature.

PART 1

THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY AND THE MODERN AGE

Cultural Contexts

In terms of the cultural contexts of Britain the twentieth century came before the end of the 19th century. The Victorian Age bore in itself the seeds of which grew and spread the world over the schemes, the models and the trends of the English speaking civilization of today.

The 20th century was also, figuratively said, the *longest* century in the British cultural history since it contained contexts, events and achievements so dense and influential that no previous cultural epoch had seen. The historians of culture and the literary critics have more or less agreed to see the end of the World War II as a convenient borderline between the two halves of the 20th century, which in no way means that there are two independent and completely different cultures as far as the general cultural texture and current, are concerned. To go further, for the sake of convenience (but not to the purpose of setting limitations to literary analysis), there are the smaller subdivisions of the first half of the 20th century:

1. From Queen Victoria's Jubilee in 1887 to the 'turn of the century' (the term adopted by M. Bradbury);
2. From 1900 to the First World War;
3. The time between the First World War and the 1930s;
4. The time of the Great Depression and the Second World War.

The cultural changes, however, did not depend on the change of the generations of the most outstanding representatives.

Creativity is not limited by age; it changes with age and challenges next age to change. In the field of literature the changes can be felt in the complexity of original individual subjective reflections comprising the puzzle of the objective reality like the separate musicians in an orchestra who follow with their individual instruments and scores the growth of the symphony of civilization.

• Historical Background

The 19th century was a time of quick economic and social changes and the 1900s saw a completely different historical age from that some 30 years back. The British Empire which had expanded under Queen Victoria began to disintegrate: the Boer War in South Africa marked the beginning of colonial rebellions against British imperialism.

The First World War brought about mass destruction and led many towards the extreme ideas of Fascism and Marxism which held attractions for many intellectuals and workers especially during the 1930s. While Yeats, Eliot and Ezra Pound sympathized with fascism, respected British socialists such as H. G. Wells and Bernard Shaw who visited Russia to collect facts, tended to see it as an antidote to political despair. Liberalism, characteristic of the Gladstone Parliament