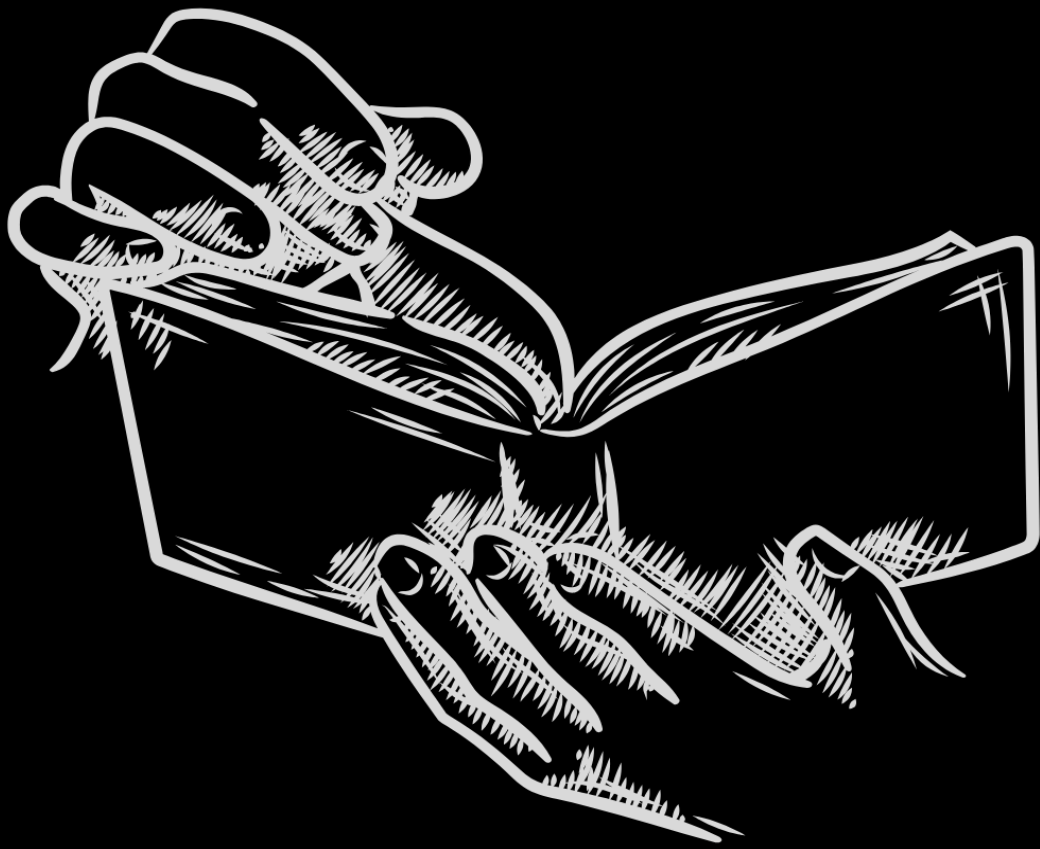


# THE ESSENCE OF WORLD LITERATURE: STUDENTS' VOICES IN CRITICAL ANALYSIS



Міністерство освіти і науки України  
Волинський національний університет імені Лесі Українки

**Збірник студентських есе до курсу «Історія світової літератури»**

**THE ESSENCE OF WORLD LITERATURE:  
STUDENTS' VOICES IN CRITICAL ANALYSIS**

**(за ред. проф. Біскуб І.П.)**

*Методичний посібник*

Луцьк 2024

УДК 821(100).09(072)

Б 65

*Рекомендовано Науково-методичною радою Волинського національного  
університету імені Лесі Українки  
(протокол #5 від 15 січня 2025р.)*

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У навчально-методичному посібнику запропоновані короткі біографічні нариси та критичний аналіз видатних зразків світової літератури від Вільяма Шекспіра до Рея Бредбері, укладені здобувачами освіти ОР Магістр ОП Прикладна лінгвістика. Переклад і комп'ютерна лінгвістика Волинського національного університету імені Лесі Українки. Збірник есе підготовлений у межах вивчення ОК "Історія світової літератури" і засвідчує лінгвістичні та літературознавчі компетенції студентів. Може використовуватись під час викладання курсів з теорії та історії літератури студентам філологічних спеціальностей. Збірник є цінним ресурсом для викладачів, студентів і всіх, хто прагне розширити свої знання та уявлення про літературу.

**УДК 821(100).09(072)**

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## Preface from the Editor



World literature is a tapestry of human thought, emotion, and creativity, woven across centuries and continents. From Shakespeare's timeless explorations of ambition and love, to Kafka's haunting reflections on alienation, to Bradbury's prophetic visions of a world shaped by technology, these works illuminate the complexities of the human experience. They challenge us, inspire us, and invite us to see the world—and ourselves—afew.

This collection of essays is the product of the course History of World Literature, offered to Master's degree candidates majoring in Applied Linguistics at Lesya Ukrainka Volyn National University. The course encouraged students to delve into the lives and works of some of the world's most iconic writers, from Shakespeare to Bradbury, and to engage critically and creatively with their texts.

This collection, authored by students with a passion for literature, celebrates the enduring legacy of these great writers while offering fresh perspectives on their works. Here, you will find not only a tribute to the literary giants who have shaped our cultural landscape but also a testament to the power of young minds engaging with these texts.

Each essay in this volume brings something unique to the table: original ideas, heartfelt emotions, and deeply personal reflections. The biographies of the authors included serve as a window into the lives of the visionaries whose works have transcended time, while the students' analyses breathe

new life into their stories, revealing how these works resonate with today's generation.

As their teacher and the editor, it has been a privilege to witness the thoughtfulness and creativity that went into every essay. The students approached their subjects with curiosity and courage, unafraid to question, interpret, and connect their own experiences to the broader themes of these literary masterpieces. Their voices remind us that literature is not confined to the past; it is alive, evolving, and deeply relevant.

This book is more than a collection of essays—it is a dialogue between the past and the present, between legendary authors and the emerging voices of the future. My hope is that as you journey through these pages, you will find your own perspective enriched, your love for literature rekindled, and your appreciation for the unifying power of stories deepened.

May this collection inspire you as much as it has inspired me and those who contributed to it.

Sincerely,  
Iryna Biskub  
Editor

## Introduction

This anthology presents a collection of literary analyses and critical reflections on iconic works of literature, carefully selected by students. Each analysis offers an in-depth exploration of a particular text, reflecting the student's understanding of the work's themes, characters, and cultural significance. These studies aim to present a diverse range of interpretations and insights, highlighting the impact of the selected works on both the literary world and society at large.

The anthology includes the analyses of classic novels, plays, and stories. The authors of these analyses have approached each text from different perspectives, offering unique interpretations based on their academic backgrounds, personal interests, and literary approaches.

This collection not only showcases students' analytical and critical skills but also underlines the enduring relevance of these literary masterpieces to contemporary discussions of culture, identity, and the human experience. As you explore these works through the eyes of the students, you will gain new perspectives and a deeper understanding of the complexities inherent in these beloved texts.

In the pages that follow, you will find a variety of viewpoints, academic insights, and reflections that together contribute to a deeper appreciation of literature's role in shaping our world.

Master's Degree Candidate  
Nataliia Khoroshykh

## Antoine de Saint-Exupéry



Antoine de Saint-Exupéry was born on 29 June 1900 in León (France) into a noble family that became poor early on. He was the third child of five in the family and grew up with a freedom-loving personality. Despite frequent moves and poverty, he has only fond memories of his childhood.

During his studies, he changed schools several times, and studied art and architecture as a student. But the writer's main lifelong passion was aviation, after he flew for the first time at the age of 12, thanks to the famous pilot Gabriel Wroblewski, who took him to the Amber airport for fun. The experience was enough for the young man to realise what his life's goal would be.

In 1921, after being called up for service, he completed a piloting course and devoted his life to aviation. At first, Exupery flew civilian aircraft, then switched to military aircraft.

In 1926, he became a pilot for the postal service. Three years later, he was appointed head of the Aeropostal branch in Buenos Aires, where he worked until the company went bankrupt. After that, he tested aircraft and delivered mail at the same time. All these years, writing and journalism have been an integral part of his life.



His love of risk and extreme sports often put his life in danger. During his career as a pilot, he experienced 15 plane crashes and accidents. In 1938, on a flight from America to Africa, Exupery's plane crashed in Guatemala, and he was in a coma for several days with a head injury.



During the Second World War, Exupery decides to defend the honour of the country. Thanks to his connections, he joined a flight reconnaissance unit. On 31 July 1944, Major Antoine de Saint-Exupéry did not return from a combat flight. His plane took off from the Borgo airfield on the island of Corsica on a reconnaissance flight and never returned.



For many years, it was not known how Antoine died. For a long time, he was listed as a missing person until the circumstances of his death became known. In 2000, the wreckage of the plane he was piloting was discovered, and in 2008, the first photos from the crash site appeared. It became known that

the cause of the writer's death was an attack by a German pilot.

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry was awarded the Military Cross for his courage and heroism. He is the author of several inventions in the aviation field.

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry wrote his first work in 1914 - the fairy tale “The Odyssey of the Cylinder”. The following year, the Silver Ship magazine published his story “The Pilot”.

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's works are related to the sky and aviation, and he shared with the public his perception of the world through the eyes of a pilot. The author talked about his philosophy, which allowed the reader to look at life differently.

In 1931, the author received the Femina Prize for “Night Flight”, and in 1932, the work was made into a film. He described the crash in the Libyan desert and the adventures the pilot had while travelling across it in his novel “Planet of Men”.

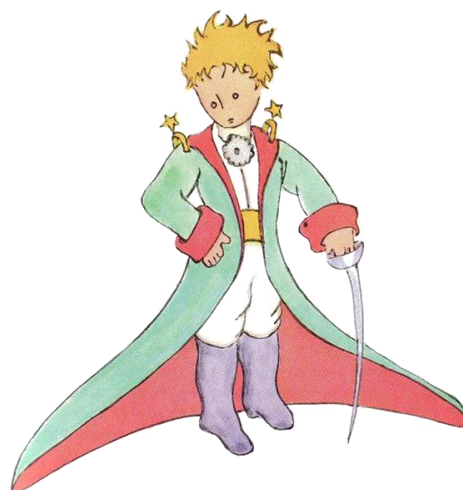
The novel “The Military Pilot” is an autobiographical work. The author was influenced by his experiences in the Second World War. The book, which was banned in France, was an incredible success in the United States. Representatives of an American publishing house ordered a fairy tale from

Exupéry. Thus, the world saw *The Little Prince* with the author's illustrations.

*Antoine de Saint-Exupéry devoted his life to what he loved most in the world - writing and aviation. Despite his small heritage, he is recognised as a world-class classic, and his books are quoted everywhere, read out and studied in schools and universities.*

### **“The Little Prince”**

“The Little Prince” by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry is a timeless and beloved story about the adventures of a young prince who leaves his tiny planet to explore the universe. On his way, he meets various characters and learns valuable life lessons.



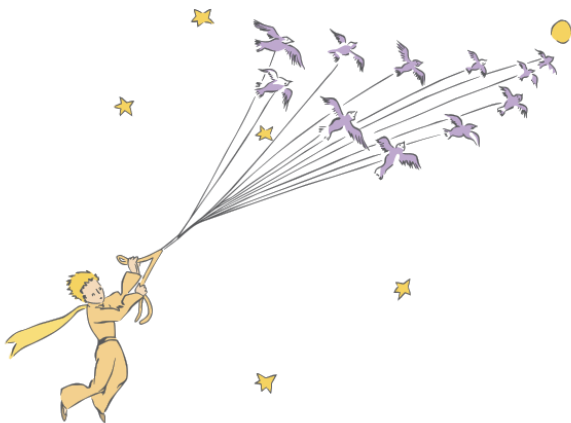
The story begins with a pilot who crashes in the Sahara Desert. While he is trying to fix the plane, he is unexpectedly visited by a little boy, the Little Prince. The little prince tells him that he comes from a distant asteroid where he lives alone with a single rose. He tells the pilot about his encounters with various creatures on other planets, which serve as allegories of human nature.

One of the most important lessons the Little Prince learns is the importance of love and friendship. He befriends a fox who teaches him that the most important things are invisible to the eye. The Little Prince also meets a snake, an arrogant man, a king and a businessman, each representing different aspects of society and human behaviour.

Throughout the story, the Little Prince reflects on the nature of life, love and the human condition. He realises that adults are often preoccupied with trivial matters and are unable to appreciate the beauty of the world. The Little Prince's innocence and curiosity open up a fresh perspective on the life of a pilot who learns to see the world through the eyes of a child.

In the end, the Little Prince decides to return to his planet to take care of his rose. The pilot is left with a new sense of wonder and a better understanding of the importance of love and connection. The Little Prince's

journey serves as a reminder to readers of all ages to appreciate the simple things in life and to approach the world with an open mind.



### The main characters:

- **The Little Prince** is kind, responsible, naive, and has his own view of the world. He is looking for answers to his questions.
- **The author.** A pilot who crashed in the Sahara. Kind and direct. Responsive, able to empathise.
- **Rose** is moody, wayward, proud, lonely. She was left alone on the asteroid B-612.
- **A king** without subjects, who only issues orders, for example, orders the sun to set in the west.
- **A respecter of persons** who wants to be the most respected on his deserted planet.
- **A drunkard** who drinks to forget that he is ashamed of drinking.
- **A businessman** who is constantly counting the stars because he thinks he owns many of them and wants to buy even more.
- **A lamplighter** on such a small planet where a full day lasts a minute. True to his word, he follows the order to extinguish and light the lantern every minute to correspond to the day and night on his planet.
- **An elderly geographer** who has never been anywhere and has never seen anything he writes down in a book of travellers' stories. He convinced the prince to visit the Earth next.
- **Snake.** Powerful, commands life and death.
- **A lonely fox.** Dreams of being tamed.
- **A railway switchman** who described how passengers were constantly rushing from one place to another in trains, never satisfied with where they were and not knowing what they wanted.

## The main symbols of the work

### ➤ The Little Prince

The Little Prince is the personification of pure children's perception of the world, and at the same time it is a symbol of a person - a traveler in the universe, looking for the secret meaning of things and his own life.

### ➤ Planet of the Little Prince

The planet of the Little Prince is a symbol of the inner world of man, the human soul, a symbol of the house of the human heart.



### ➤ Baobabs

Baobabs are the personified image of evil in general. Antoine de Saint-Exupéry wanted people to carefully uproot the baobabs, which carry evil and can tear the planet - the inner world of a person - apart.

### ➤ Rose

The rose is a symbol of love, beauty and femininity. A beautiful and capricious flower gave the Little Prince its fragrance and inspired his life. And yet he felt very lonely. The hero did not immediately recognise the true inner essence of beauty. It is believed that the prototype of the rose image for the writer was his wife, Consuelo.

### ➤ The fox

The fox has long been a symbol of wisdom and knowledge of life in European fairy tales. The Little Prince's conversations with this wise animal become a kind of culmination in the parable, and the image of the fox also embodies a symbol of friendship, loyalty and responsibility of people for each other.

➤ **Snake**

The snake is a symbol of death and immortality. Legends attribute magical powers to this animal. The snake, which welcomed the Little Prince to Earth, shows him the way to people and warns him that at the end of the story it will help him return to his home planet by giving him its poison.

➤ **Water**

Another important image for Alexandre Saint-Exupéry is a well with water in the desert. Water is the fundamental basis of life, the source of all existence, the ability to renew, revive, the source of power that gives immortality. The author believes that "springs are hidden in every person", you just need to be able to find them and open them.

➤ **The desert**

Accordingly, the desert becomes a symbol of spiritual thirst; of a world devastated by war, human callousness and selfishness; a symbol of a world in which people are dying of spiritual thirst.

**The popular quotes from “The Little Prince”:**

- All adults were children at first, but few of them remember it.
- Words only make it harder to understand each other.
- The heart is the only one that is vigilant. You cannot see the most important things with your eyes.



- You live in your actions, not in your body. You are your actions, and there is no other you.
- There is a firm rule. Get up in the morning, wash your face, put yourself in order - and immediately put your planet in order.
- Adults never understand anything on their own, and children are very tired of having to explain and explain everything to them.
- We are responsible for those we have tamed.

“The Little Prince” contains a philosophical teaching on what a person should be and what his or her purpose is. Through allegory, metaphors and symbols, the writer reveals themes of a cosmic scale: good and evil, life and death, human existence, true love, moral beauty, endless loneliness and many others.

The book has become Saint-Exupéry's most successful work, having sold around 140 million copies worldwide, making it one of the most popular books in history. The work has been translated into over 505 different languages and dialects; among the books with the most published translations, it is second only to the Bible. “The Little Prince” has been adapted for numerous forms of art and media, including audio recordings, radio plays, live stage performances, film, television, ballet, and opera.

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## Emily Brontë

Emily Brontë was a renowned British writer and poet, best known for her only novel, "Wuthering Heights". A central figure in English literature, her work is celebrated for its passionate intensity and vivid depictions of the Yorkshire moors, where she lived most of her life.

She was the fifth of six children in the Brontë family. Her siblings included Charlotte and Anne Brontë, who were also accomplished writers. Their father, Patrick Brontë, was a clergyman, and their mother, Maria, died when Emily was young. The Brontë children grew up in the isolated village of Haworth. Their close-knit family and the harsh yet inspiring moorland landscape deeply influenced their creativity.

Emily initially gained recognition as a poet. Along with her sisters Charlotte and Anne, she published a collection of poems under the pseudonyms Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell. Emily's contributions to this volume, signed as Ellis Bell, displayed her lyrical mastery and intense emotional depth. Emily's only novel *Wuthering Heights* is a dark, Gothic tale of passion, revenge, and the destructive power of love. Initially met with mixed reviews due to its unconventional structure and themes, it is now regarded as one of the greatest works of English literature.

Emily was intensely private, introspective, and deeply attached to the natural world. She preferred the solitude of the moors to social interactions and had a reserved and enigmatic personality. Her health was fragile, and she had a strong, independent spirit that resisted societal norms.

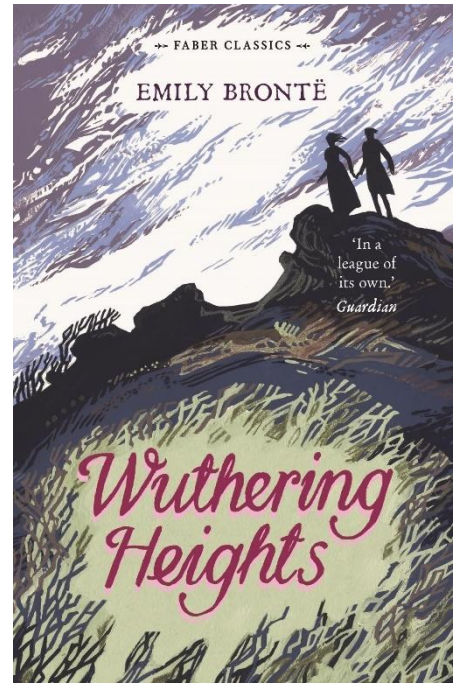
## “Wuthering Heights”

Wuthering Heights is the only novel by the English author Emily Brontë, initially published in 1847 under her pen name "Ellis Bell". It concerns two families of the landed gentry living on the West Yorkshire moors, the Earnshaws and the Lintons, and their turbulent relationships with the Earnshaws' foster son, Heathcliff. The novel, influenced by Romanticism and Gothic fiction, is considered a classic of English literature.

Wuthering Heights is a masterpiece of Gothic literature and one of the most famous novels in English literature. The novel is renowned for its complex narrative structure, intense characters, and exploration of themes such as love, revenge, class, and the destructive nature of passion.

Emily Brontë's work on Wuthering Heights cannot be dated, and she may well have spent a long time on this intense, solidly imagined novel. It is distinguished from other novels of the period by its dramatic and poetic presentation, its abstention from all comment by the author, and its unusual structure. It recounts in the retrospective narrative of an onlooker, which in turn includes shorter narratives, the impact of the waif Heathcliff on the two families of Earnshaw and Linton in a remote Yorkshire district at the end of the 18th century. Embittered by abuse and by the marriage of Cathy Earnshaw—who shares his stormy nature and whom he loves—to the gentle and prosperous Edgar Linton, Heathcliff plans a revenge on both families, extending into the second generation. Cathy's death in childbirth fails to set him free from his love-hate relationship with her, and the obsessive haunting persists until his death; the marriage of the surviving heirs of Earnshaw and Linton restores peace.

Sharing her sisters' dry humor and Charlotte's violent imagination, Emily diverges from them in making no use of the events of her own life and showing no preoccupation with a spinster's state or a governess's position. Working, like them, within a confined scene and with a small group of





characters, she constructs an action, based on profound and primitive energies of love and hate, which proceeds logically and economically, making no use of such coincidences as Charlotte relies on, requiring no rich romantic similes or rhetorical patterns, and confining the superb dialogue to what is immediately relevant to the subject. The somber power of the book and the elements of brutality in the characters affronted some 19th-century opinion. Its supposed masculine quality was adduced to support the claim, based on the memories of her brother Branwell's friends long after his death, that he was author or part author of it. While it is not possible to clear up all the minor puzzles, neither the external nor the internal evidence offered is substantial enough to weigh against Charlotte's plain statement that Emily was the author.

The story is set on the remote Yorkshire moors and revolves around two neighboring families: the Earnshaws of Wuthering Heights and the Lintons of Thrushcross Grange. At its core is the tumultuous relationship between Heathcliff, a foundling adopted by the Earnshaw family, and Catherine Earnshaw, the daughter of the house.

#### **Key Plot Points:**

**Heathcliff's Arrival:** Mr. Earnshaw brings Heathcliff home as an orphaned child, igniting tensions between Heathcliff and Earnshaw's son, Hindley. Catherine, however, forms a deep bond with Heathcliff.

**Love and Betrayal:** Catherine loves Heathcliff but chooses to marry Edgar Linton, a refined neighbor, for social status. This decision devastates Heathcliff, sparking his transformation into a vengeful, manipulative figure.

**Revenge:** Heathcliff gains control of Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange through calculated manipulation and cruelty, extending his vengeance to the next generation.

**Tragic Love:** Catherine dies after giving birth to her daughter, Cathy, leaving Heathcliff consumed by grief and anger. Despite his destructive tendencies, Heathcliff remains obsessed with Catherine's memory.

**Redemption and Resolution:** The next generation, represented by Cathy and Hareton Earnshaw, finds love and peace, breaking the cycle of hatred

and revenge. Heathcliff, unable to bear his tormented existence, dies and is buried next to Catherine.

Early reviews of *Wuthering Heights* were mixed. Most critics recognised the power and imagination of the novel, but were baffled by the storyline, and objected to the savagery and selfishness of the characters. In 1847, when the background of an author was given great importance in literary criticism, many critics were intrigued by the authorship of the Bell novels.

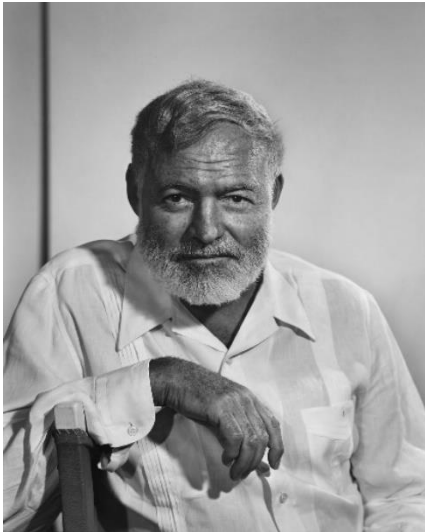
The *Atlas* review called it a "strange, inartistic story", but commented that every chapter seems to contain a "sort of rugged power."

Graham's *Lady Magazine* wrote: "How a human being could have attempted such a book as the present without committing suicide before he had finished a dozen chapters, is a mystery. It is a compound of vulgar depravity and unnatural horrors".

Today, it is studied as a classic of English literature, praised for its psychological depth, poetic language, and unique exploration of human emotions.

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### Ernest Hemingway

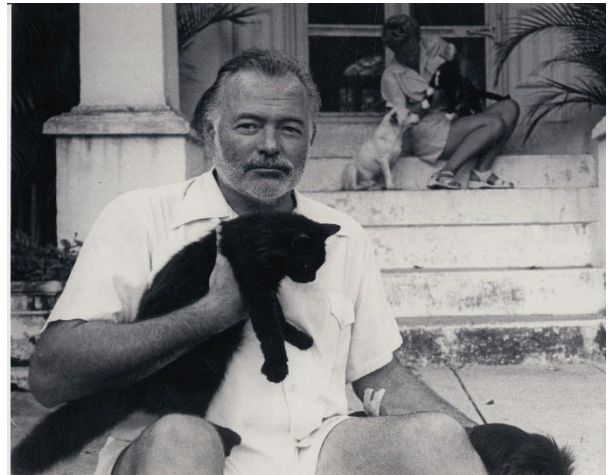
Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961), born in Oak Park, Illinois, started his career as a writer in a newspaper office in Kansas City at the age of seventeen. After the United States entered the First World War, he joined a volunteer ambulance unit in the Italian army. Serving at the front, he was wounded, was decorated by the Italian Government, and spent considerable time in hospitals. After his return to the United States, he became a reporter for Canadian and American newspapers and was soon sent back to Europe to cover such events as the Greek Revolution. Ernest Miller Hemingway, born in Chicago, was the first son of Clarence Edmonds Hemingway and Grace Hall Hemingway. He was educated in public schools and began writing in high school. He spent summers with his family on Walloon Lake in upper Michigan. After graduating high school in 1917, he moved to Kansas City and worked as a reporter for the Star. Hemingway was rejected for military service due to a defective eye, but managed to serve as an ambulance driver for the American Red Cross during World War I. He was injured on the Austro-Italian front at Fossalta di Piave and was decorated for heroism. He fell in love with Red Cross nurse Agnes von Kurowsky, but she declined to marry him. [1]

In 1926 he published *The Sun Also Rises*, a novel with which he scored his first solid success. A pessimistic but sparkling book, it deals with a group of aimless expatriates in France and Spain – members of the postwar Lost Generation, a phrase that Hemingway scorned while making it famous. This work also introduced him to the limelight, which he both craved and resented for the rest of his life. Hemingway's *The Torrents of Spring*, a parody of the American writer Sherwood Anderson's book *Dark Laughter*, also appeared in 1926. [3]

At least in the public view, however, the novel *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) overshadowed such works. Reaching back to his experience as a young

soldier in Italy, Hemingway developed a grim but lyrical novel of great power, fusing love story with war story. While serving with the Italian ambulance service during World War I, the American lieutenant Frederic Henry falls in love with the English nurse Catherine Barkley, who tends him during his recuperation after being wounded. She becomes pregnant by him, but he must return to his post. Henry deserts during the Italians' disastrous retreat after the Battle of Caporetto, and the reunited couple flee Italy by crossing the border into Switzerland. There, however, Catherine and her baby die during childbirth, and Henry is left desolate at the loss of the great love of his life. [3]

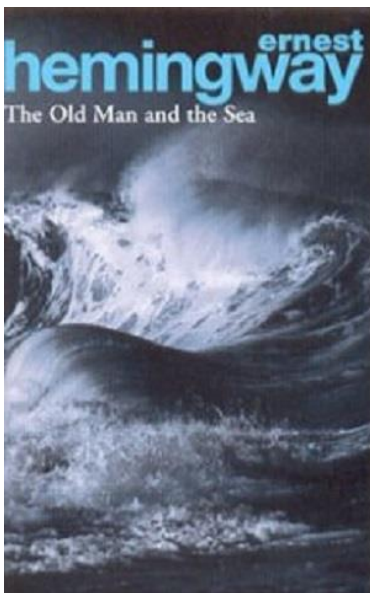
Hemingway's love for Spain and bullfighting led to his works such as *Death in the Afternoon* (1932) and *Green Hills of Africa* (1935). He also purchased a house in Key West, Florida, for fishing and wrote a novel called *To Have and Have Not* (1937). During Spain's civil war, Hemingway made four trips to the country as a correspondent, raising money for the Republicans and writing *The Fifth Column* (1938) set in besieged Madrid. The play's protagonist is based on the author. After his last visit to Spain, Hemingway purchased Finca Vigía, an estate outside Havana, Cuba, and covered the Japanese invasion of China. His works reflect his deep attachment to Spain and his passion for storytelling. [1]



The harvest of Hemingway's considerable experience of Spain in war and peace was the novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940), a substantial and impressive work that some critics consider his finest novel, in preference to *A Farewell to Arms*. It was also the most successful of all his books as measured in sales. Set during the Spanish Civil War, it tells of Robert Jordan, an American volunteer who is sent to join a guerrilla band behind the Nationalist lines in the Guadarrama Mountains. Most of the novel concerns Jordan's relations with the varied personalities of the band, including the girl Maria, with whom he falls in love. Through dialogue, flashbacks, and stories, Hemingway offers telling and vivid profiles of the

Spanish character and unsparingly depicts the cruelty and inhumanity stirred up by the civil war. Jordan's mission is to blow up a strategic bridge near Segovia in order to aid a coming Republican attack, which he realizes is doomed to fail. In an atmosphere of impending disaster, he blows up the bridge but is wounded and makes his retreating comrades leave him behind, where he prepares a last-minute resistance to his Nationalist pursuers.

Hemingway left behind a substantial amount of manuscript, some of which has been published. *A Moveable Feast*, an entertaining memoir of his years in Paris (1921–26) before he was famous, was issued in 1964. *Islands in the Stream*, three closely related novellas growing directly out of his peacetime memories of the Caribbean Island of Bimini, of Havana during World War II, and of searching for U-boats off Cuba, appeared in 1970.



### “The Old Man and the Sea”

Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* is a novella rich with philosophical undertones, exploring themes such as human endurance, the meaning of life, and the individual's place in the universe. Through the story of Santiago, an aging fisherman struggling to catch a giant marlin, Hemingway delves into existential questions about purpose, struggle, and the relationship between humans and nature.

At the heart of the novella lies an existentialist perspective. Santiago's battle with the marlin represents the human condition – a constant struggle for meaning and purpose in a world that offers no guarantees of success. Despite his isolation and old age, Santiago persists, embodying the existentialist ideal that life's value lies in the act of striving itself. Santiago reflects, “*Man is not made for defeat. A man can be destroyed but not defeated.*” This captures the essence of existential resilience – even when faced with failure or death, the act of striving defines human dignity. [2]

The novella parallels Albert Camus' philosophy of the absurd. Santiago's fishing expedition can be likened to Sisyphus rolling his boulder up the hill.

Despite knowing the likelihood of defeat (losing the fish or being outmatched by the sea), Santiago continues his struggle. His perseverance against overwhelming odds exemplifies the absurd hero who defies meaninglessness by creating his own. When Santiago says, *“It is better to be lucky. But I would rather be exact. Then when luck comes you are ready,”* he demonstrates a reliance on personal skill and effort over external forces, echoing Camus’ emphasis on individual action. [2]

Hemingway portrays Santiago as being deeply in tune with nature, reflecting Taoist ideals of harmony and balance. Santiago respects the marlin as a worthy adversary, referring to it as his "brother." This respect symbolizes the interconnectedness of all living things and the cyclical nature of life and death. Santiago’s reflection on the fish: *“You are killing me, fish. But you have a right to. Never have I seen a greater, or more beautiful, or a calmer or more noble thing than you, brother.”* This moment underscores the mutual respect between man and nature. [4]

Santiago embodies stoic principles, displaying self-control, resilience, and acceptance of his circumstances. He endures physical pain and isolation without complaint, focusing on his task with unwavering determination. His stoic attitude enables him to face hardship with grace, finding meaning in the process rather than the outcome. When Santiago endures exhaustion and injury during his struggle with the marlin, he thinks, *“Pain does not matter to a man.”*

Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* is a profound exploration of the philosophical dimensions of human existence. Through Santiago's journey, the novella examines the tension between hope and despair, struggle and futility, and the individual’s place within the natural order. It challenges readers to find purpose and dignity in the act of striving, even in the face of inevitable loss. This philosophical depth is what makes Hemingway’s work timeless and universally resonant. This is a story about an old fisherman who fulfilled his dream of catching the biggest fish, but was unable to keep it. The simple, unpretentious story of the old fisherman Santiago becomes a generalized story of the complex path of a person on earth, who every day

leads an endless struggle for existence, combining it with an attempt to live in harmony with the world around him.

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## Franz Kafka

Franz Kafka, the son of Julie Löwy and Hermann Kafka, a merchant, was born into a prosperous middle-class Jewish family. After two brothers died in infancy, he became the eldest child and remained, for the rest of his life, conscious of his role as elder brother; Ottla, the youngest of his three sisters, became the family member closest to him. Kafka strongly identified with his maternal ancestors because of their spirituality, intellectual distinction, piety, rabbinical learning, melancholy disposition, and delicate physical and mental constitution. He was not, however, particularly close to his mother. Subservient to her overwhelming ill-tempered husband and his exacting business, she shared with her spouse a lack of comprehension of their son's unprofitable and, they feared, unhealthy dedication to the literary "recording of [his]...dreamlike inner life." [1]

German was his first language. In fact, despite his Czech background and Jewish roots, Kafka's identity favored German culture.

Kafka was a smart child who did well in school even at the Altstädter Staatsgymnasium, an exacting high school for the academic elite. Still, even while Kafka earned the respect of his teachers, he chafed under their control and the school's control of his life.[2]

At work Kafka was a popular employee, easy to socialize with and seen as somebody with a good sense of humor. But his personal life still raged with complications. His inhibitions and insecurities plagued his relationships. Twice he was engaged to marry his girlfriend, Felice Bauer, before the two finally went their separate ways in 1917.[2]

Later, Kafka later fell in love with Dora Dymant (Diamant), who shared his Jewish roots and a preference for socialism. Amidst Kafka's increasingly dire health, the two fell in love and lived together in Berlin. Their relationship largely centered on Kafka's illnesses. For many years, even before he contracted tuberculosis, Kafka had not been well. Constantly



strained and stressed, he suffered from migraines, boils, depression, anxiety and insomnia.[2]

Kafka and Dora eventually returned to Prague. In an attempt to overcome his tuberculosis, Kafka traveled to Vienna for treatment at a sanatorium. He died in Kierling, Austria, on June 3, 1924. He was buried beside his parents in Prague's New Jewish Cemetery in Olsanske.[2]

His most popular and best-selling short story, "The Metamorphosis," was completed in 1912 and published in 1915. The story was written from Kafka's third-floor room, which offered a direct view of the Vltava River and its toll bridge.

"I would stand at the window for long periods," he wrote in his diary in 1912, "and was frequently tempted to amaze the toll collector on the bridge below by my plunge." [2]

Incredibly, at the time of his death Kafka's name was known only to small group of readers. It was only after he died and Max Brod went against the demands of his friend that Kafka and his work gained fame. His books garnered favor during World War II, especially, and greatly influenced German literature.[2]

Kafka's unique narrative style and structure in *The Metamorphosis* have also had a profound influence on modern literature. His use of a surreal and nightmarish scenario to explore deep psychological and existential themes has inspired countless writers and artists. The novella's blend of the ordinary with the extraordinary, the mundane with the grotesque, has become a hallmark of Kafkaesque literature.[3]

Kafka's influence is evident in the works of writers such as Jorge Luis Borges, Gabriel García Márquez, and Haruki Murakami, who have adopted and adapted his techniques to explore their own themes of alienation, identity, and the absurd. The concept of "Kafkaesque" has entered the literary lexicon, describing situations that are disorienting, surreal, and oppressive, reflecting the impact of Kafka's vision on contemporary storytelling.[3]



## “Metamorphosis”

The novella begins with Gregor Samsa, a traveling salesman, waking up to find himself transformed into a giant insect. As the story progresses, Gregor's physical transformation parallels his growing estrangement from his family and society. Unable to work, Gregor becomes a burden, and his family grapples with shame, guilt, and resentment, ultimately leading to Gregor's demise.

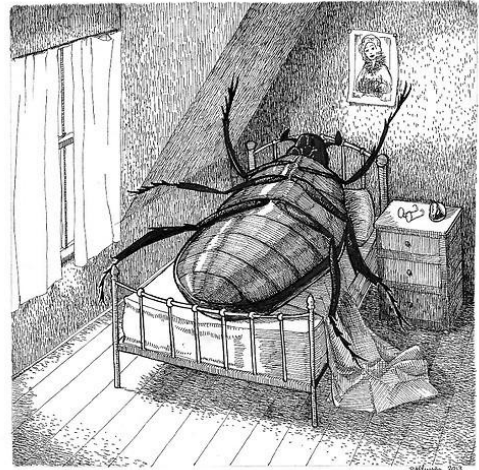
Kafka employs a detached, almost clinical tone that contrasts with the bizarre events of the story. The narrative's lack of explanation for Gregor's transformation underscores the absurdity of existence. The use of third-person limited perspective keeps the reader closely aligned with Gregor's thoughts and experiences, emphasizing his alienation.

Having read *The Metamorphosis*, I have singled out a few key concepts and symbolism that are covered in the novel:

1. Alienation and Isolation
2. Identity and Dehumanization
3. Family Dynamics
4. Absurdity and Existentialism

- Alienation and Isolation

Gregor's transformation serves as a metaphor for his alienation. Even before his metamorphosis, Gregor feels disconnected from his family and society due to his oppressive job and sense of duty. His physical change makes this alienation literal, as he is confined to his room and increasingly treated as less than human.



- Identity and Dehumanization

The story examines how identity is tied to productivity and appearance. Gregor's value to his family is entirely based on his ability to provide financial support. Once he can no longer fulfill this role, he loses his identity and is regarded as a nuisance.

- Family Dynamics

Kafka explores the tensions within the Samsa family, emphasizing how Gregor's transformation disrupts the family's roles. His parents and sister, Grete, initially attempt to care for him but eventually abandon him emotionally. This shift reveals their selfishness and inability to cope with his condition.

- Absurdity and Existentialism

Kafka portrays a universe devoid of reason or fairness. Gregor's transformation is unexplained, reflecting the absurd nature of existence. The novella questions the meaning of life and the arbitrary nature of human suffering.

- The Insect

Gregor's transformation into a bug symbolizes his feelings of worthlessness and insignificance. The grotesque nature of his new form mirrors how society and his family view him once he ceases to be "useful."

- The Locked Door

The door to Gregor's room represents barriers to communication and understanding. Gregor is physically and emotionally isolated from his family, and they become increasingly unwilling to bridge the gap.

- Grete's Violin

Grete's violin symbolizes art, hope, and human connection. However, when Gregor attempts to connect with Grete through her music, it results in her rejection of him, signaling the final breakdown of their bond.

*The Metamorphosis* remains a powerful exploration of the human condition, blending absurdity, tragedy, and dark humor. It forces readers to confront uncomfortable questions about identity, family, and the value of life in a seemingly indifferent world.

In my opinion, this book is definitely not a page-turner, even though, it is not too extensive. You need to read it thoroughly and with a slow tempo so as to reflect on things he wants to deliver and grasp the gist of his work.

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## Jerome David Salinger

J.D. Salinger, known for his reclusive nature, remains a towering figure in American literature. His groundbreaking novel, “The Catcher in the Rye”, reshaped post-World War II literature and propelled him to literary stardom. Despite publishing few works, Salinger significantly influenced 20th-century American writing. His short stories, many featured in “The New Yorker”, inspired early literary careers, including those of Philip Roth, John Updike, and Harold Brodkey. After leaving New York City in 1953, Salinger led a secluded life, releasing only one additional story before his passing.

Jerome David Salinger, born on January 1, 1919, in New York City, was the youngest of two children. His father, Sol Salinger, successfully managed a cheese and ham import business, while his mother, Miriam, was of Scottish descent.

Salinger showed little interest in academics despite his evident intelligence. After failing out of the McBurney School on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, his parents sent him to Valley Forge Military Academy in Wayne, Pennsylvania.

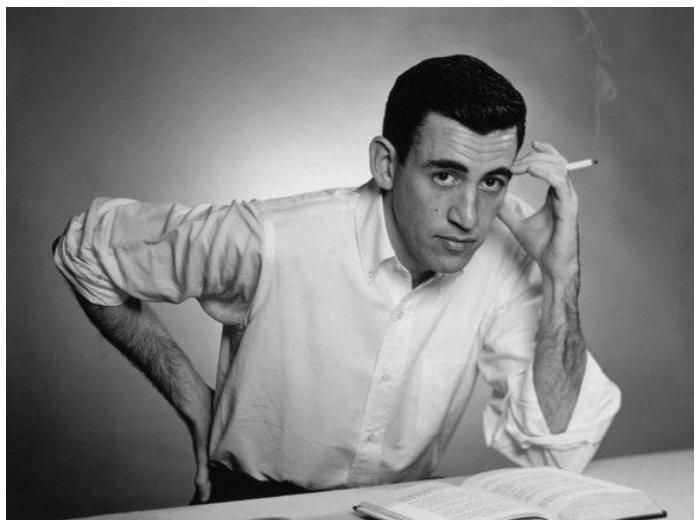
After graduating from Valley Forge, Salinger spent a year at New York University before traveling to Europe. With financial support and encouragement from his father to learn another language and gain insight into the import business, he spent five months abroad, mainly in Vienna. However, Salinger focused more on studying language than on business.

Back in the U.S., he briefly attended Ursinus College in Pennsylvania before returning to New York to take night classes at Columbia University. There, he encountered Professor Whit Burnett, who profoundly influenced his future.

Burnett, both a skilled teacher and the editor of “Story” magazine, recognized Salinger's potential as a writer. Encouraged by Burnett, Salinger began writing more prolifically, and his stories soon appeared not only in “Story” but also in prominent publications like “Collier’s” and “The Saturday Evening Post”.

Salinger's burgeoning career was abruptly interrupted by World War II, like that of many young American men at the time. Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, he was drafted into the army, serving from 1942 to 1944. During his military service, Salinger participated in key events, including landing at Utah Beach during the Normandy Invasion and fighting in the Battle of the Bulge. Despite the chaos of war, he continued writing, drafting chapters for a novel centered on a disillusioned young man named Holden Caulfield.

The war left Salinger deeply affected, and he experienced a nervous breakdown, leading to a stay in a hospital after the conflict ended. Though the specifics of his hospitalization remain unclear, it was during this period that he met Sylvia, a German woman. The two married, but their relationship lasted only eight months.



In 1955, Salinger married Claire Douglas, the daughter of renowned British art critic Robert Langdon Douglas. Their marriage lasted over a decade, during which they had two children, Margaret and Matthew.

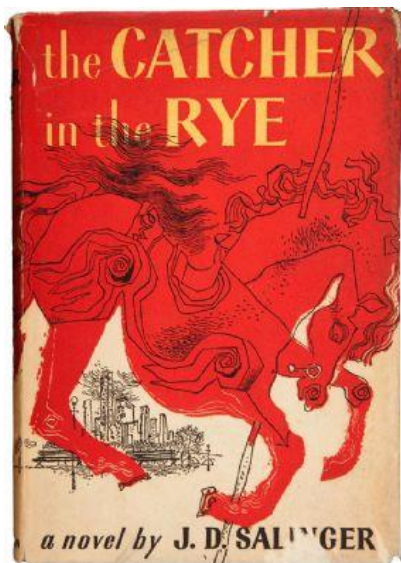
Despite Salinger's attempts to maintain his privacy, some aspects of his life became public. In 1966, his wife Claire Douglas filed for divorce, claiming that continuing the marriage "would seriously injure her health and endanger her reason."

Six years later, Salinger began a relationship with Joyce Maynard, a college freshman whose essay, “An 18-Year-Old Looks Back on Life,” in “The New York Times Magazine” had caught his attention. The couple lived

together in Cornish for 10 months before Salinger abruptly ended the relationship. In 1998, Maynard published a memoir depicting Salinger as controlling and obsessive. A year later, she auctioned off his letters, which sold for \$156,500. The buyer later returned the letters to Salinger as a gift.

In 2000, Salinger's daughter Margaret released her own memoir, portraying her father in an equally critical light. Like Maynard's book, it received mixed reviews. Salinger had other relationships after Maynard, including dating actress Elaine Joyce. He later married Colleen O'Neill, a young nurse, and they remained married until his death on January 27, 2010, at his Cornish home.

Though Salinger published no new work during the last four decades of his life, he reportedly continued writing daily. Rumors suggest he left behind a significant body of unpublished work, with estimates speculating as many as 10 completed novels locked away in his home.



### **“The Catcher in the Rye”**

After returning to New York in 1946, Salinger quickly resumed his writing career and soon saw his work featured in his favorite publication, “The New Yorker”. At the same time, he continued working on his novel, which culminated in the 1951 release of “The Catcher in the Rye”.

“The Catcher in the Rye” follows the story of Holden Caulfield, a 16-year-old boy who has just been expelled from Pencey Prep, a prestigious boarding school. Disillusioned by the world around him and struggling with his own inner turmoil, Holden leaves the school early and heads to New York City, where he plans to wander aimlessly until he figures out what to do next.

Throughout the novel, Holden narrates his experiences in a candid, often sarcastic tone, expressing his disdain for the “phoniness” he perceives in the adult world. He feels disconnected from everyone around him, from his classmates at Pencey to the strangers he encounters in New York. His only

solace comes in his idealized memories of his younger brother, Allie, who died of leukemia a few years earlier. Holden is haunted by Allie's death and unable to cope with the pain of losing him.

As Holden roams the city, he seeks comfort in several encounters, including with former classmates, a couple of women he meets in a nightclub, and even a young girl named Phoebe, his beloved sister, who represents one of the few people Holden feels he can trust. Despite these fleeting connections, Holden remains unable to find peace, constantly battling his own sense of alienation and the pressure to conform to societal expectations.

Holden's journey through New York is marked by confusion, self-doubt, and an increasing sense of emotional instability. He has a series of failed encounters – attempts to connect with others or escape from his pain. His cynicism leads him to lash out at the world around him, and his growing isolation culminates in a mental breakdown. He even fantasizes about running away and living a simpler life, away from the “phony” world he despises.

The novel's title comes from a moment when Holden imagines himself as the “catcher in the rye”, standing in a field of rye where children play near the edge of a cliff. He fantasizes about saving them from falling off, symbolizing his desire to protect innocence and preserve the purity of childhood in a world that seems increasingly corrupt. This image serves as a metaphor for Holden's struggle to hold onto something real and untainted amidst his own growing despair.

By the end of the novel, Holden's journey takes him to the brink of a breakdown. He has a breakdown and ends up in a mental institution, where he is being treated for his emotional distress. He expresses uncertainty about his future, but he hints at a possible recovery as he plans to leave the institution and return home. Holden's story ends on an ambiguous note, leaving readers to ponder whether he will find peace or continue to struggle with his inner demons.

“The Catcher in the Rye” is a story about the pain of growing up, the confusion of adolescence, and the search for meaning in a world that often feels superficial and harsh. Holden's voice captures the raw, turbulent



emotions of a young man caught between childhood and adulthood, making the novel a timeless exploration of human experience.

In “The Catcher in the Rye”, J.D. Salinger explores several profound themes that reflect the struggles of adolescence and the complexities of human experience.

**Some of the key themes include:**

1. Isolation and alienation

Throughout the novel, Holden Caulfield grapples with feelings of profound isolation. He feels disconnected from society, unable to connect with others, and often views people around him as “phonies”. This sense of alienation is a central part of his character, and Salinger uses Holden’s narrative to explore the emotional turmoil and loneliness that many young people feel as they transition from childhood to adulthood.



2. Loss of innocence

Holden is deeply affected by the death of his younger brother, Allie, and his inability to cope with this loss is a central element of the story. His obsession with protecting the innocence of children – symbolized by his fantasy of being the "catcher in the rye" (“*I’m standing on the edge of some crazy cliff. What I have to do, I have to catch everybody if they start to go over the cliff – I mean if they’re running and they don’t look where they’re going I have to come out from somewhere and catch them. That’s all I’d do all day. I’d just be the catcher in the rye and all*”) – reflects his desire to preserve purity in a world he views as corrupted by adulthood. The theme of innocence is explored through Holden’s memories of Allie, his relationship with his younger sister Phoebe, and his desire to shield children from the harsh realities of life.

3. Authenticity vs. phoniness

Holden is highly critical of the adult world, which he sees as insincere and hypocritical. He uses the term "phony" to describe people who he believes

are false or superficial. Throughout the novel, Holden's quest for authenticity and his disdain for pretense drive much of his behavior, even as he himself struggles with his own identity. Salinger uses this theme to reflect on the societal pressures to conform and the difficulty of finding truth in a world full of masks.

#### 4. Struggles of adolescence and coming-of-age

Holden's journey is a classic coming-of-age story, exploring the turmoil of adolescence. As he navigates the complex emotions of growing up, he struggles with his identity, the expectations placed on him by society, and the tension between childhood and adulthood. His internal conflict and resistance to the adult world represent the broader theme of the challenges of growing up and the discomfort of transitioning to maturity.

#### 5. Mental health and emotional struggles

Holden's emotional breakdowns and erratic behavior suggest an underlying struggle with mental health. Throughout the novel, his depression, grief, and anger are apparent, culminating in a mental collapse. Salinger touches on the theme of mental illness and the difficulty of coping with trauma, suggesting that Holden's journey is not just about adolescence but also about grappling with deep emotional pain and instability.

#### 6. Search for meaning and identity

Holden's journey is also one of self-discovery. He constantly questions his place in the world, his purpose, and his identity. He criticizes others for conforming to societal norms, yet he too is unsure of who he is or what he wants. This theme of searching for meaning is central to Holden's internal conflict, as he navigates the tension between who he is and who he is expected to be.

In conclusion, J.D. Salinger's "The Catcher in the Rye" offers a deep exploration of adolescence, the challenges of growing up, and the search for meaning in a superficial world. Through Holden Caulfield, Salinger delves into themes of isolation, disillusionment, and the desire for authenticity. The novel's exploration of loss, societal rejection, and mental health resonates with readers, especially those navigating similar struggles. Holden's voice provides a powerful reflection on the universal quest for self-

discovery and truth. Despite its controversies, the novel remains a timeless work in American literature.

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### Jane Austen

Jane Austen was an English novelist whose books, set among the English middle and upper classes, are notable for their wit, social observation and insights into the lives of early 19th century women.

Jane Austen was born on 16 December 1775 in the village of Steventon in Hampshire. She was one of eight children of a clergyman and grew up in a close-knit family. She began to write as a teenager. In 1801 the family moved to Bath. After the death of Jane's father in 1805 Jane, her sister Cassandra and their

mother moved several times eventually settling in Chawton, near Steventon.

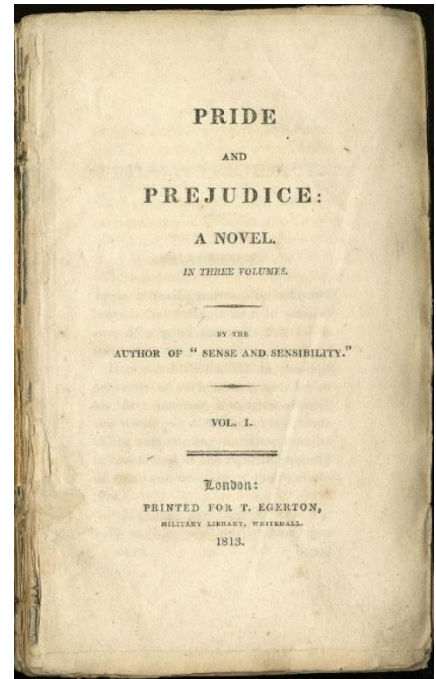
Jane's brother Henry helped her negotiate with a publisher and her first novel, 'Sense and Sensibility', appeared in 1811. Her next novel 'Pride and Prejudice', which she described as her "own darling child" received highly favourable reviews. 'Mansfield Park' was published in 1814, then 'Emma' in 1816. 'Emma' was dedicated to the prince regent, an admirer of her work. All of Jane Austen's novels were published anonymously.



In 1816, Jane began to suffer from ill-health, probably due to Addison's disease. She travelled to Winchester to receive treatment, and died there on 18 July 1817. Two more novels, 'Persuasion' and 'Northanger Abbey' were published posthumously and a final novel was left incomplete [2].

## “Pride and Prejudice”

Pride and Prejudice is the story of a young woman in the 1800's, Elizabeth Bennet. The Bennet family has five daughters, and in an age where the only thing women could do was marry rich, all the girls are pressured to find wealthy matches to secure the family's comfort. Elizabeth, however, refuses to marry the first man she comes along, and only marry when for love. She is intelligent, independent, and sharp-witted, standing in stark contrast to her mother's preoccupation with securing advantageous marriages for her daughters. Elizabeth meets brooding, silent, proud and very rich Mr. Darcy, who at first has no interest in Elizabeth. His first words about Elizabeth were quite outrageous. *“She is tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me; I am in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men”* [1, p.9].



Over time, he begins to fall in love with her wit and charm. Elizabeth thinks Darcy is the last man she could ever marry, but through the course of the novel, begins to see that her prejudices towards him are fake and that he is a true gentleman who is only shy. The question remains - will they overcome their pride and prejudices and get married?

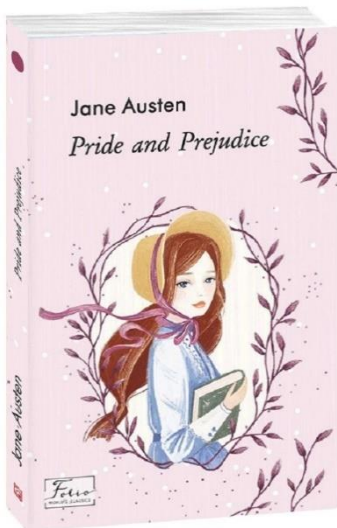
Elizabeth Bennet is a feminist icon of her era, embodying the balance of wit, independence, and emotional intelligence. Her response to Mr. Darcy's initial proposal is one of the most powerful moments in the novel, demonstrating her unwillingness to compromise her values: *"From the very beginning— from the first moment, I may almost say— of my acquaintance with you, your manners, impressing me with the fullest belief of your arrogance, your conceit, and your selfish disdain of the feelings of others, were such as to form that groundwork of disapprobation on which succeeding events have built so immovable a dislike"* [1, p.144].

This statement underscores Elizabeth's courage to confront social hierarchies and gender norms. Mr. Darcy's transformation, on the other hand, makes him one of literature's most compelling romantic heroes. His famous declaration of love and apology exemplifies his growth: *"In vain I*

*have struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you.*" [1, p.141]. Darcy's humility and willingness to reflect on his flaws highlight Austen's message about the importance of self-awareness and personal growth.

However, throughout the book, we see the characters change and open up in new ways. Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy overcome their respective flaws- her prejudice and his pride - to find happiness in a marriage built on mutual respect and affection. Their union symbolizes Austen's ideal of a relationship where equality, personal growth, and love triumph over societal expectations and material concerns. Elizabeth's happiness at the novel's conclusion is a testament to her journey of self-discovery and emotional maturity. She reflects on Darcy's transformation and her own changed feelings with both humour and warmth: *"I am the happiest creature in the world. Perhaps other people have said so before, but not one with such justice. I am happier even than Jane; she only smiles, I laugh."* [1, p. 282].

Similarly, Mr. Darcy's growth is evident in his heartfelt acknowledgment of Elizabeth's influence on his character: *"You taught me a lesson, hard indeed at first, but most advantageous. By you, I was properly humbled"* [1, p. 272]. Darcy's willingness to confront his flaws and make amends reflects his profound respect and love for Elizabeth, reinforcing the idea that true happiness comes from self-improvement and understanding.



The ending of *Pride and Prejudice* is deeply satisfying because it rewards the characters' growth and validates Austen's central themes. Elizabeth and Darcy's relationship, built on trust, humility, and shared values, serves as a powerful counterpoint to the societal pressures and material concerns that dominate other relationships in the novel. As Elizabeth tells her aunt about her feelings for Darcy: *"We are to be the happiest couple in the world"* [1, p.281]. This joyous conclusion affirms Austen's belief that genuine happiness in marriage can only be achieved when both partners view each other as equals and embrace their individual journeys of self-improvement.

To sum up, I'm not a huge fan of 'classical classics' where the writing style is dull and hard to understand. I was so pleased to find that this is not the case with Austen's writing style. I enjoyed every single page of this wonderful novel, and truly did not want it to end! I will certainly be reading more Austen! I would recommend this book to anyone - fans of romance, family-oriented stories, comedies, fans of classics, and even reluctant readers of classics who would like an easy gateway into the world of classic novels.

*Pride and Prejudice* is more than just a romantic comedy—it's a deep look at human nature. Its sharp humour, cleverness, and meaningful insights keep it relevant, while its lovable characters and uplifting message make it a delight to return to over and over. Austen shows us that love and understanding, while complicated, can overcome social obstacles. This timeless spirit of resilience, wit, and growth is what makes *Pride and Prejudice* a perennial favorite among readers worldwide.

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## Jenny Tinghui Zhang

Jenny Tinghui Zhang is a talented Chinese-American author known for her powerful storytelling and lyrical writing.

Jenny Tinghui Zhang is a Chinese-American writer who grew up in Austin, Texas. Her debut novel, "Four Treasures of the Sky", has been praised for its emotional storytelling and historical accuracy. Her works often explore themes such as identity, cultural heritage, and the challenges faced by immigrants.

She has published essays and short stories in well-known outlets like "The Rumpus" and "The Cut". Zhang's writing is known for its emotional depth, poetic language, and vivid imagery.

### **"Four Treasures of the Sky"**

"Four Treasures of the Sky" by Jenny Tinghui Zhang is a historical novel set in the late 19th century, blending Chinese folklore with a tale of survival, identity, and resilience. The story follows a young Chinese girl named Daiyu, who is stolen from her homeland and sent into the harsh realities of America during a period of intense anti-Chinese sentiment.

Told in evocative prose, the novel explores themes of cultural displacement, personal reinvention, and the longing for belonging. Daiyu faces a lot of challenges as she struggles to adapt to a world that constantly denies her humanity. Her journey shows the courage it takes to maintain one's inner spirit.

This is a moving and beautifully crafted story about hope, strength, and the enduring power of identity, written with emotional depth and a profound sense of history.

Four Treasures of the Sky begins in China, where Daiyu leads a quiet life in a small town, learning calligraphy from her grandmother: This art shapes her identity, but her life is suddenly disrupted when she is kidnapped.



She is sold to human traffickers and secretly shipped to America. Forced to work in a brothel, she hides her true identity by pretending to be a boy. Eventually, she ends up in a San Francisco brothel, where she witnesses the harsh treatment of many women, especially immigrants.

As she faces these challenges, Daiyu learns how to survive and finds the strength to fight for her freedom, grappling with her lost home and evolving sense of self. The novel is deeply emotional, exploring themes like xenophobia, human trafficking, and the fight for personal identity.



### **Historical issue (anti-Chinese sentiment)**

In the novel "Four Treasures of the Sky", anti-Chinese sentiment is expressed through the many difficulties the main character, Daiyu, faces because of her background. After she is kidnapped and sent to America, she faces deep racism and discrimination related to her Chinese background.

#### 1. Race and Identity:

- Daiyu, as a Chinese immigrant, faces racism and hostility due to her background. In America, Chinese people are often perceived as "other", lowering their social status.

#### 2. Stereotypes of Chinese:

- Chinese immigrants, especially women, are often perceived as cheap labor or objects for sexual exploitation. This reflects deep-rooted stereotypes regarding Chinese culture, ethnicity, and the role of Chinese in American society.

#### 3. Isolation and Marginalization:

- Chinese people, especially immigrants, are often marginalized, living in separate communities where they experience both cultural and social isolation.

#### 4. Low social status and exploitation:

- The Chinese in the book are often perceived as less important, reducing their ability to integrate into American society. This is evident in

human trafficking, where Dayuy and other women are placed in situations of brutal exploitation because their background and status are not given due weight.

#### 5. Xenophobia and hostility towards Chinese immigrants:

- In San Francisco, there is open xenophobia towards the Chinese. They are blamed for social and economic problems, which leads to increased hostility and violence against them.

#### 6. Exploitation of Chinese Women:

- The book portrays Chinese women as particularly vulnerable to human trafficking due to their cultural, linguistic, and social isolation. As a result, they are subjected to sexual violence and physical exploitation in brothels, where their Chinese background only exacerbates their situation.



"Four Treasures of the Sky" left a powerful impression on me. The way the book represents the struggles of its protagonist, Daiyu, is both heartbreaking and inspiring. It's a raw and emotional journey that explores complex themes like racism, xenophobia, and human trafficking, and it really makes you reflect on the suffering that so many people, especially immigrants,

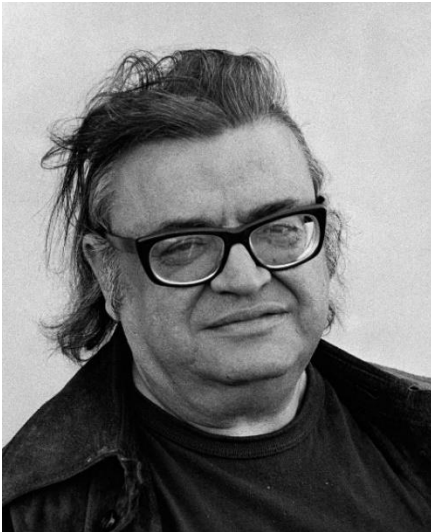
face.

What struck me the most was how the story doesn't shy away from showing the harsh realities of life for those who are marginalized. Daiyu's experiences in both China and America are a painful reminder of how prejudice and exploitation can be. At the same time, the book does a remarkable job of showing her resilience-how she fights not just for survival, but for her sense of self, even when the world around her seems to strip that away.

The anti-Chinese sentiments and how they shape Daiyu's experience felt particularly relevant, given how deeply racism can affect someone's life. The story is a tough read, but it's one that stays with you, challenging you to think more deeply about identity, freedom, and the injustices faced by the most vulnerable in society.

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### Mario Francis Puzo

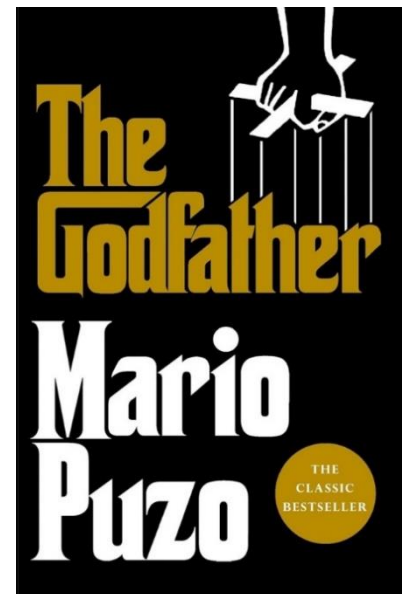
Mario Francis Puzo was an American author and screenwriter. He wrote crime novels about the Italian-American Mafia and Sicilian Mafia, most notably *The Godfather* (1969), which he later co-adapted into a film trilogy. He received the Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay for the first film in 1972 and for *Part II* in 1974. His final novel, *The Family*, was released posthumously in 2001.

### “The Godfather”

The Godfather is a crime novel by American author Mario Puzo. Originally published on 10 March 1969 the novel details the story of a fictional Mafia family in New York City and Long Island, headed by Vito Corleone, the Godfather. The novel covers the years 1945 to 1955 and includes the back story of Vito Corleone from early childhood to adulthood.

The first in a series of novels, The Godfather is noteworthy for introducing Italian words like consigliere, caporegime, Cosa Nostra, and omertà to an English-speaking audience. It inspired a 1972 film of the same name.

The Corleone family is one of the Five Families of the New York Mafia. In the years after World War II, the families avoid open warfare in favour of mutual cooperation. The peace is broken after Don Vito Corleone is shot by men working for drug kingpin Virgil "The Turk" Sollozzo. Two of Corleone's sons, Santino (Sonny) and Michael, take an active role in the family business with the help of consigliere Tom Hagen and the family's two trusted caporegimes, Peter Clemenza and Salvatore Tessio. When Michael murders Sollozzo and his bodyguard, corrupt NYPD Captain Mark McCluskey, while meeting with them in a restaurant, the conflict escalates into a full-scale



war which results in Sonny's murder. Michael must return from hiding in Sicily to assume control of the family as the new Don. Under his retired father's tutelage, Michael orchestrates a plan to exact revenge, while relocating the Corleone family's power base to Las Vegas in order to further his goal of legitimizing the family and getting them out of organized crime. This encompasses the murder of all of the Corleone family's enemies, including Michael's brother-in-law Carlo Rizzi, who played a part in Sonny's murder. After selling all of the family's remaining businesses in New York, the Corleones permanently move to Las Vegas.



### *Vito Corleone*

*"Now You Come To Me And You Say, 'Don Corleone, Give Me Justice.' But You Don't Ask With Respect, You Don't Offer Friendship."*

Vito Corleone oversees a business founded on gambling, bootlegging, prostitution, and union corruption, but he is known as a kind, generous man who lives by a strict moral code of loyalty to friends and, above all, family. He is also known as a traditionalist who demands respect commensurate with his status; even his closest friends refer to him as "Godfather" or "Don Corleone" rather than "Vito".

### *Tom Hagen*

*"Mr. Corleone Never Asks A Second Favor Once He's Refused The First, Understood?"*

Tom Hagen is the informally adopted son of the mafia boss Don Vito Corleone. He is a lawyer and the consigliere to the Corleone family. Logical and gentle, he serves as the voice of reason within the family. He is German-Irish ancestry. As a child he grew up in a broken family, the son of an abusive alcoholic. Sonny Corleone finds the orphaned Hagen living on the street and suffering from an eye infection, takes him home, and asks his parents to take him in.



## Michael Corleone

*"Just when I thought I was out, they pull me back in."*

Michael Corleone is the youngest son of the powerful Corleone crime family. Initially reluctant to join the family business, Michael becomes deeply involved after a violent attack on his father. Over time, he transforms from a World War II hero to a ruthless Mafia boss, prioritizing power and family loyalty above all else. His character is defined by internal conflict, moral decay, and a chilling sense of authority.

## *Philip Tattaglia*

*"But I must have strict assurance from Corleone. As time goes by and his position grows stronger, will he attempt any individual vendetta?"*

Philip Tattaglia was a dandy and a womanizer whose business gave him opportunity to indulge his weaknesses, for he had many. His personality was unpleasant to others and other Dons hated him. He relied on the help of stronger men like Virgil Sollozzo and Emilio Barzini, as well as his own sons, to keep him afloat

## Virgil Sollozzo

*"Don Corleone, I need a man who has powerful friends. I need a million dollars in cash. I need, Don Corleone, those politicians you carry in your pocket"*

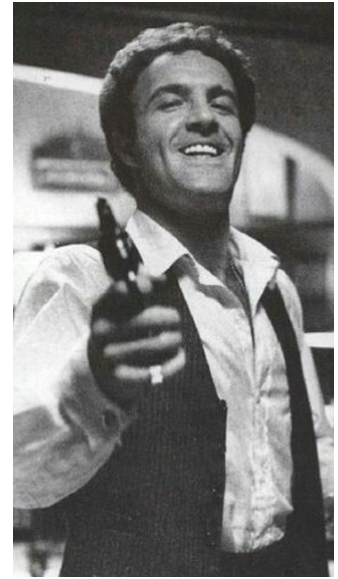
Sollozzo was a patient and methodical man, who preferred to mastermind things from behind the scenes, but was also not afraid to get his hands dirty. He was also extremely cunning and intelligent, understanding the success that could be made from drugs, but also the need he would have for powerful allies such as Vito Corleone and Emilio Barzini



## *Sonny Corleone*

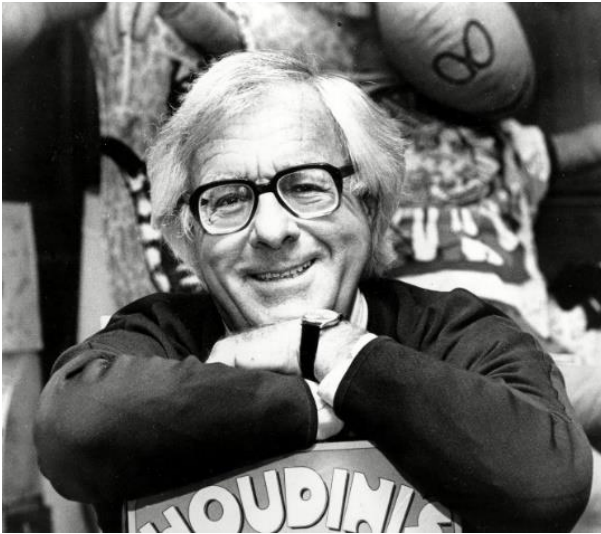
*"You Touch My Sister Again And I'll Kill Ya."*

Sonny Corleone is the hot-headed eldest son of Vito Corleone. Known for his impulsive and violent nature, Sonny often acts on emotion rather than strategy. Despite his fierce loyalty to his family, his temper leads to reckless decisions, ultimately contributing to his tragic downfall.



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## Ray Bradbury

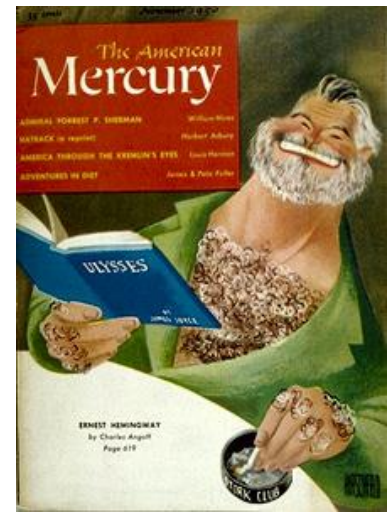
First of all, I would like to start with Ray Bradbury. He was born August 22, 1920, Waukegan, Illinois, U.S. – died June 5, 2012. Bradbury was an American author best known for his highly imaginative short stories and novels that blend a poetic style, nostalgia for childhood, social criticism, and an awareness of the hazards of runaway technology [1].

Bradbury, a renowned author, was influenced by horror films, books, and science fiction magazines. He had a memorable encounter with carnival magician Mr. Electrico in 1932, who he believed was a reincarnation of his best friend who died in World War I. After he returned to the carnival, Mr. Electrico introduced him to other performers and told him he was a reincarnation of his friend. Bradbury began writing full-time, and since then, he has written every day of his life [5].

In 1934, Bradbury moved to Los Angeles and joined the Los Angeles Science Fiction League in 1937. He was encouraged by writers like Henry Kuttner, Edmond Hamilton, Robert Heinlein, and Leigh Brackett. Bradbury published his first short story, "Hollerbochen's Dilemma," in the league's "fanzine," *Imagination!* In 1939, he published his own fanzine, *Futura Fantasia*. He attended the first World Science Fiction convention in New York City and made his first professional science fiction magazine sale in 1941 with his short story "Pendulum." Many of his early stories, featuring fantasy and horror elements, were published in *Weird Tales*. His style, characterized by metaphors and similes, distinguished him from the utilitarian pulp magazine writing [1].



In the mid-1940s Bradbury's stories started to appear in major magazines such as *The American Mercury*, *Harper's*, and *McCall's*, and he was unusual in publishing both in pulp magazines such as *Planet Stories* and *Thrilling Wonder Stories* and "slicks" (so-called because of their high-quality paper) such as *The New Yorker* and *Collier's* without leaving behind the genres he loved. *The Martian Chronicles* (1950), a series of short stories, depicts Earth's colonization of Mars, which leads to the extinction of an idyllic Martian civilization. However, in the face of an oncoming nuclear war, many of the settlers return to Earth, and after Earth's destruction, a few surviving humans return to Mars to become the new Martians. The short-story collection *The Illustrated Man* (1951) included one of his most famous stories, "The Veldt," in which a mother and father are concerned about the effect their house's simulation of lions on the African veldt is having on their children [3].

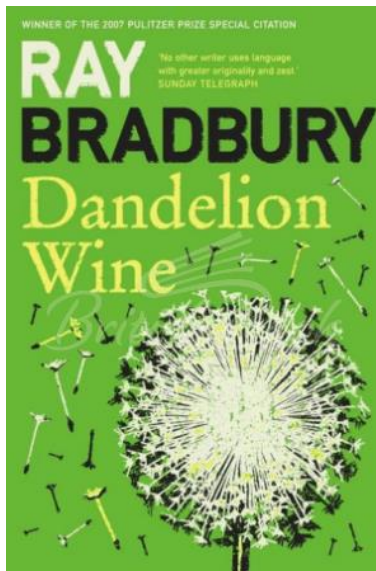


Bradbury's next novel, *Fahrenheit 451* (1953), is regarded as his greatest work. In a future society where books are forbidden, Guy Montag, a "fireman" whose job is the burning of books, takes a book and is seduced by reading. *Fahrenheit 451* has been acclaimed for its anti-censorship themes and its defense of literature against the encroachment of electronic media. An acclaimed film adaptation was released in 1966 [2].

The collection *The Golden Apples of the Sun* (1953) contained "The Fog Horn" (loosely adapted for film as *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* (1953), about two lighthouse keepers' terrifying encounter with a sea monster; the title story, about a rocket's dangerous journey to scoop up a piece of the Sun; and "A Sound of Thunder," about a safari back to the Mesozoic to hunt a *Tyrannosaurus*. In 1954 Bradbury spent six months in Ireland with director John Huston working on the screenplay for the film *Moby Dick* (1956), an experience Bradbury later fictionalized in his novel *Green Shadows, White Whale* (1992). After the release of *Moby Dick*, Bradbury was in demand as a screenwriter in Hollywood and wrote scripts for *Playhouse 90*, *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, and *The Twilight Zone* [6].

In the 1970s Bradbury no longer wrote short fiction at his previous pace, turning his energy to poetry and drama. Earlier in his career he had sold several mystery short stories, and he returned to the genre with *Death Is a Lonely Business* (1985), an homage to the detective stories of writers such as Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett mixed with an autobiographical setting of 1949 Venice, California, where Bradbury lived at the time. Two sequels, *A Graveyard for Lunatics* (1990) and *Let's All Kill Constance* (2002), mined his experiences in 1950s and '60s Hollywood. His final novel, *Farewell Summer* (2006), was a sequel to *Dandelion Wine*. He adapted 59 of his short stories for the television series *The Ray Bradbury Theatre* (1985–92) [1].

Bradbury was often considered a science fiction author, but he said that his only science fiction book was *Fahrenheit 451*. Strictly speaking, much of his work was fantasy, horror, or mysteries. He said, "I use a scientific idea as a platform to leap into the air and never come back." He received many honours for his work including an Emmy for his animated adaptation of *The Halloween Tree* (1994) and the National Medal of Arts (2004). In 2007 the Pulitzer Prize Board awarded



### “Dandelion Wine”

One of Bradbury’s most personal works, *Dandelion Wine* (1957), is an autobiographical novel about a magical but too brief summer of a 12-year-old boy in Green Town, Illinois (a fictionalized version of his childhood home of Waukegan). His next collection, *A Medicine for Melancholy* (1959), contained “All Summer in a Day,” a poignant story of childhood cruelty on Venus, where the Sun comes out only every seven years. The Midwest of his childhood was once again the setting of *Something Wicked This Way Comes* (1962), in which a carnival comes to town run by the mysterious and evil Mr. Dark. The next year, he published his first collection of short plays, *The Anthem Sprinters and Other Antics* [3].

First point that I would like to show is about time. This quote illustrates the idea of the subjectivity of time, because for Douglas, every moment of

summer is filled with intense sensations. Here, time is described through emotional experience, which corresponds to Bergson's idea of duration. "The world, like a great iris of an eye, opened. He took a deep breath. He exhaled. The day was green and yellow, the grass was green and yellow, the trees were green and yellow. The sky was blazing, the sun clear, hot, and yellow." [4, 10-25].

The phrase is attributed to an old woman who tells Douglas that death is inevitable, but that it does not need to be feared or sought. This idea resonates with Heidegger's ideas that accepting one's own mortality helps a person live more consciously. "You'll live and get hurt," said the voice of the old woman. "But for now, don't go looking for death; it'll find you soon enough." [4, 194-200].

The passage shows the central metaphor of the novel: dandelion wine is a symbol of preserving moments of happiness through memory. This reflects Proust's idea of the connection between sensory experiences and memories. "Dandelion wine. The words were summer on the tongue. The wine was summer caught and stoppered." [7, 220-240].

The story of Leo Auffman and his "happiness machine" is a critique of the belief that technology can replace genuine human emotions. This story resonates with Martin Buber's thoughts on the importance of authentic relationships. It reflects the existentialist idea that each person experiences the world in his or her own way. In the novel, this idea is developed through Douglas's various interactions with other characters who are searching for their meaning in life. "Some people turn sad awfully young. No special reason, it seems, but they seem almost to be born that way. They bruise easier, tire faster, cry quicker, remember longer." [4, 98-120].

Equally important are Bradbury's reflections on mortality and acceptance of the cycle of life. Through his confrontation with death, young Douglas goes through the process of growing up, realizing that the beauty of life lies in its fragility and finitude. This lesson resonates with existentialist ideas about the need to find meaning in every day.

In conclusion, Ray Bradbury's *Dandelion Wine* is a philosophical masterpiece that transcends its narrative simplicity to grapple with some of life's most profound questions. Through its exploration of time, mortality,

memory, and the pursuit of meaning, the novel invites readers to reflect on their own existence and cherish the ephemeral nature of life. Bradbury's vision, rooted in both the wonder of childhood and the wisdom of maturity, offers a timeless reminder to live fully and embrace the beauty in every moment. And nowadays we downplay the importance of our feelings, our problems, because of the war. Because there are people who are worse off, who have lost their homes. There is only one life, so you cannot ignore others and do what you like only then. But I think we should remember why we came to this world. Remember our childhood, how carefree we were and look for good moments in life and situations that happen.

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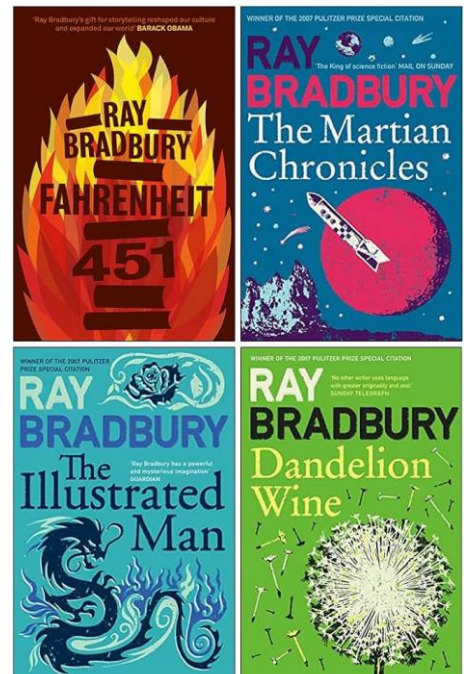
## Ray Bradbury

Ray Douglas Bradbury was an American writer, who gained popularity because of his short stories full of imagery. They represent the combination of poetic style, nostalgia for childhood, social criticism, and an awareness of the danger technologies have. [1]

He was born on August 22, 1920, in Waukegan, Illinois, to Esther Bradbury and Leonard Spaulding Bradbury. However, in 1934, he and his family moved to Los Angeles. There R.

Bradbury attended Los Angeles High School and was keen on the drama club he participated in. In addition, Hollywood attracted his attention, so he spent some time roller-skating there and sometimes meeting celebrities. [2] World War II started when Ray Bradbury was in his youth. However, he was rejected at his request to join the army because of his bad eyesight. This was when he decided to start writing and publishing science-fiction stories in fanzine. The first story Bradbury sold was "The Lake". After that, he was working on "The Fireman" story and was asked by the magazine to extend it so that they could publish it as a novel. This is how the "Fahrenheit 451" appeared. Among his other famous works are "The Martian Chronicles" (1950), "The Illustrated Man" (1951), "The October Country" (1955), "Dandelion Wine" (1957) and many others.

Ray Bradbury worked in different genres, including fantasy, science fiction, horror, mystery, and realistic fiction. It is easy to track his love for description in his works. Besides this, he actively used metaphors, similes, personifications, symbols and other stylistic devices.



## “Fahrenheit 451”

"Fahrenheit 451" is a dystopian novel written and published by Ray Bradbury in 1953. The central topic of the story is a future American society, where books are banned. If they are found in people's houses they get burnt and people get arrested for breaking the law.



After graduating school Ray Bradbury didn't attend a university because his parents couldn't afford this. Hence he spent lots of his time self-educating in libraries. He noticed that there were no science fiction novels in stock. It was the first time he learned about censorship. As a result, he concluded that the emergence of radio and television had a destructive impact on

books. Besides this, politics played a big role. As a teenager, Bradbury learned about the Nazi burning of books with opposite ideologies to the ones Adolf Hitler had, and the political repressions conducted by Joseph Stalin against writers and poets. All these things influenced the author's choice of the central topic for the "Fahrenheit 451" novel. [3]

"Fahrenheit 451" is a story about a fireman Guy Montag, who after working as a fireman and burning books for a long time started to question the real reasons behind book prohibition. The book consists of three parts: "The Hearth and the Salamander", "The Sieve and the Sand" and "Burning Bright".

In the first part of the book, the author introduces the main characters to us. The reader meets Guy Montag, a fireman, and his wife Mildred Montag, who is obsessed with parlor walls. The main task of firemen in that society is not to put down the fire but to burn the outlawed books together with people's houses. Guy lives his usual life without questioning the things he does. However, it changes once he meets his neighbor Clarisse McClellan, a young girl who stands out from that society. She is very curious in nature and interested in so many things that Guy hasn't even thought about. One of the topics of their discussions is happiness. After meeting and talking to Clarisse daily, Guy understands he is unhappy. One evening, he comes home

and finds his wife unconscious. She took too much sleeping medicine and was on the edge of death. Guy calls the emergency ambulance and two men come. They mechanically do their job and leave for other calls. The next morning Mildred wakes up and doesn't remember anything, continuing watching the parlor walls and living her meaningless life. After a few days of not seeing Clarisse, Montag finds out she was hit by a car and died. Nevertheless, she



somehow changed Guy's mindset and he started to notice things he hadn't noticed before. Another situation that influences him is when firemen come to the house of a woman who refuses to leave her books and is burnt alive. Montag is shocked by her decision and takes a book from that place to understand the real reason books get burnt so actively. In that part, the reader also meets Captain Beatty, Montag's boss. He finds out that Guy has books in his house and together with the Mechanical Hound comes to warn him to get rid of them. However, Montag still wants to learn more.

In the next part, Guy tries to find someone to support his ideas. He recollects a meeting with an intelligent man Faber and wants to find him.



He brings the Bible to his house and tries to persuade this former English professor to help him. Faber hesitates because of the fear of being discovered by the firemen but agrees to join Guy on his journey. He gives him an earpiece communicator so that they can talk in the distance. In that part, the reader sees a conversation between Montag and Captain Beatty, from which we understand that Beatty

has a very deep knowledge of books. He tries to convince Guy that books destroy society but he only makes him want to find out more. It turns out that Montag has been collecting books for a long time in his house. Mildred is against this, but Guy still wants to read them and understand why they got banned. In addition, he reads one of the poems to his wife's friends but they get offended and upset by such action. As a result of such clueless

action, these women together with Mildred report Montag to the firemen. This part ends with firemen coming to the Guy's house.

In the last part, Montag is forced to burn his house himself. Beatty discovers his earpiece and also wants to find Faber. However, trying to prevent this from happening Guy kills Captain with fire and escapes. While running he is hunted down by the Mechanical Hound, which he has always been afraid of. He gets injected with an anesthetic but manages to destroy the Hound as well and runs to the Faber's house. At that time, he is declared wanted, so he instructs Faber to burn everything he has touched not to be found by other Hounds and continues running. During his flee he finds out that the war has officially started. He gets to the destination and meets former intellectuals. They recognize the man from the news and understand the reason he comes. The leader of the book Granger explains that they are the only ones left who remember the information they learned from books. While they are talking the city gets bombed and destroyed, so it is their task now to come and rebuild the new society.

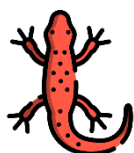
## Symbols



**Fire** is the symbol of destruction and censorship. It shows the prohibition government puts on society to control it. In this way people become stupid and narrow-minded.



**Books** symbolize knowledge and high intelligence. Only people who read books and remember the information from them can rebuild better society in the future. They represent freedom and capability to make decisions.



**Salamander** is a symbol of the fireman job which is depicted on their uniforms and fire trucks. According to the ancient mythology, it was believed that salamanders were born from fire and had the ability to shoot flames from their mouths. It stands for the identity of the fireman and their role in that society.





**The Phoenix** is a symbol of rebirth. In mythology, it is a bird which can reborn from its ashes. It represents the chance of society to recover from the destruction which it experienced not only after the war but also after people's illiteracy and unawareness of the knowledge suppression.



**Seashell Radio and parlor walls** symbolize the government's control of society through media. It is the result of book absence in people's lives. It stands for the attempt of people to escape the reality not to face their real emotions and not be alone with their thoughts.



**Mirrors** are the symbol of seeing your true self. At the end of the book Granger suggests building a "mirror factory". It is a way to show people their imperfection and the mistakes they have made to prevent them in the future.

## Quotes

*"There must be something in books, something we can't imagine, to make a woman stay in a burning house; there must be something there. You don't stay for nothing." [4, p. 52]*

It is said by Guy Montag as a realization that books can not be banned and burned without a particular reason. He understands that there is a hidden meaning behind each book, something that the government is afraid of.

*"We need not to be let alone. We need to be really bothered once in a while. How long is it since you were really bothered? About something important, about something real?" [4, p. 53]*

It is said by Guy Montag as a way to reach Mildred's consciousness and convince her that the society they live in is broken. He tries to show her the importance of books and get her support in his journey.

*“A book is a loaded gun in the house next door. Burn it. Take the shot from the weapon.” [4, p. 60]*

It is said by Captain Beatty to discourage Montag’s interest in books. In this way, Beatty wanted to persuade Guy that books represent a danger to society and that they need to be destroyed.

*“If you don’t want a man unhappy politically, don’t give him two sides to a question to worry him; give him one. Better yet, give him none.” [4, p. 62]*

It is also said by Captain Beatty to show Montag that it is easier to control a narrow-minded society. Hence people who do not read books and listen to parlor walls will eventually become mindless and will not notice the knowledge suppression.

*“Stuff your eyes with wonder, live as if you’d drop dead in ten seconds. See the world. It’s more fantastic than any dream made or paid for in factories.” [4, p. 156]*

It is said by Granger to Montag to encourage his natural curiosity, something that was banned by the government. In this way, he wants to show the value of life and the things people experience during it.

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\*some images are generated by AI



## Richard Bach

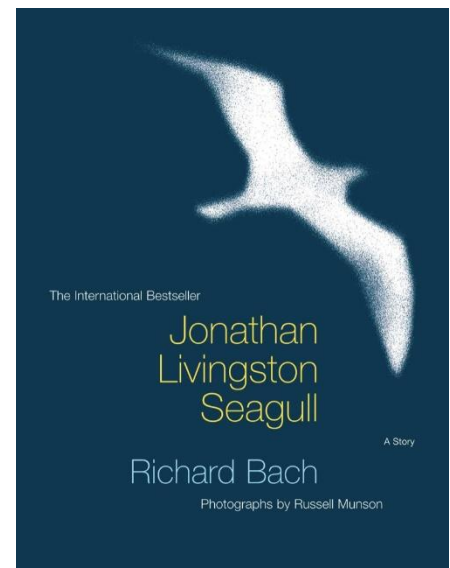
Richard David Bach was born on June 23, 1936, in Oak Park, Illinois. He spent his childhood in Long Beach, where he would gaze through a homemade telescope, skin dive along the shores of Newport Beach, and build model airplanes in his backyard Quonset hut, all while dreaming of flying a real plane one day.

In 1959, his life took a dramatic turn when, on a walk home, he heard a voice behind him whisper, “Jonathan Livingston Seagull.” Turning around, he found no one there.

A fan letter to Ray Bradbury in 1962 sparked a lasting friendship between the two, as well as Richard’s inclusion in Ray’s exclusive writers’ group, which convened monthly in Ray’s Los Angeles basement. It was at these meetings that Richard first presented his manuscript for “Jonathan Livingston Seagull”.

The book was finally published by Macmillan in 1970, featuring Russell Munson’s stunning photographs of seagulls in flight, it became a global bestseller, selling over 44 million copies and ranking among the top-selling fiction novels of all time. The book has remained in print for more than fifty years [1].

Jonathan Livingston Seagull has profoundly impacted readers worldwide by encouraging them to pursue their passions and embrace their individuality, breaking free from societal constraints. Its timeless themes of self-discovery and personal fulfillment continue to inspire generations to reflect on their own journeys and strive for excellence in their lives.



## “Jonathan Livingston Seagull”

In reading Richard Bach’s Jonathan Livingston Seagull, I find that it functions beautifully as a fable that combines prose with deep philosophical insights. The narrative, structured in three parts, introduces Jonathan, a seagull who longs to explore flight beyond the limits of his flock. His



dedication to mastering the art of flying sets him apart, which is clearly captured in the quote “*Most gulls don’t bother to learn the flying part of the game.*” [2].

This tension between conformity and the desire for personal aspirations resonates strongly with me, especially as Jonathan’s journey leads him to self-discovery and eventual ostracism from the flock. His encounters with other like-minded gulls highlight the joy of embracing one’s passions and breaking free from societal expectations.

What strikes me most are the significant themes of pursuit, self-acceptance, and mentorship intertwined throughout the story. Jonathan’s character exemplifies the quest for excellence, demonstrating that true fulfillment comes from relentless pursuit of one’s dreams. The quote, “*The only thing that matters is that you find your own way...*” [2] really captures this idea and encourages me to forge my own path. As Jonathan returns to impart his knowledge, the narrative emphasizes the importance of sharing what we’ve learned with others. Ultimately, Jonathan Livingston Seagull serves as a powerful reminder to follow our dreams and embrace our individuality, prompting me to reflect on my own journey toward personal fulfillment.

The quote “*You have the freedom to be yourself, your true self, here and now, and nothing can stand in your way*” [2] really resonates with me. It emphasizes the importance of self-acceptance and individuality. This statement makes me think about how everyone has the right to express their true identity without being held back by what society expects. It suggests

that the limits we face are often self-imposed, encouraging us to push past doubts and fears about how others might view us.

Jonathan, the protagonist, perfectly embodies this struggle as he pursues his passion for flying, despite the judgment from his flock. His journey highlights the value of being authentic and the fulfillment that comes from embracing our uniqueness.

The quote “*You are not a drop in the ocean. You are the entire ocean in a drop*” [2] resonates with me on many levels. This powerful statement really emphasizes the significance of individual experiences and the depth of our existence. It reminds me that each person’s life is not just a small part of the bigger picture; rather, each life is rich with potential and meaning in its own right.



For me, this quote aligns perfectly with my love for personal reflection. It encourages me to appreciate the small moments in life and recognize that every experience contributes to my overall journey. Just like Jonathan Livingston Seagull, who embarks on a quest for self-discovery, I find value in examining my thoughts and feelings. This quote inspires me to understand that my existence, with all its complexities and nuances, holds immense worth and contributes to the bigger picture of life. It motivates me to embrace my individuality and explore the depths of my own potential.

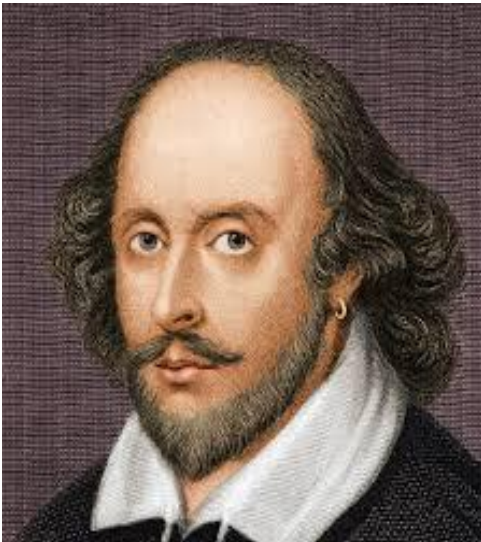
Overall, “Jonathan Livingston Seagull” serves as a significant reminder for readers to reflect on their own experiences and the challenges they may face, encouraging a more authentic and confident way of living. Jonathan’s journey of self-discovery underscores the importance of following one’s passions and celebrating individuality. The themes of pursuit, self-acceptance, and mentorship resonate widely, inspiring individuals to transcend societal expectations and carve their own paths.

The book not only highlights the joy of chasing dreams but also emphasizes the value of sharing knowledge and experiences with others. This sense of connection fosters community and support, enhancing personal journeys. The quotes throughout the narrative act as powerful reminders that everyone has the potential to make meaningful contributions to the world around them.

In summary, this fable encourages readers to appreciate the richness of their experiences and recognize that each life is filled with potential and significance. It inspires a continuous reflection on one's journey and the embrace of individuality, understanding that uniqueness adds depth to the broader picture of life.

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## William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare was an English playwright, poet, and actor, one of the most famous writers in world literature, who lived during the Renaissance period. Shakespeare was born in 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon, England, and died in 1616. His works encompass numerous tragedies, comedies, and historical plays, as well as poetry, particularly sonnets, which were extremely popular in his time.

During his 52 years of life, William Shakespeare became one of the most famous playwrights in the world, creating 17 comedies, 10 chronicles, 11 tragedies, 5 poems and 154 sonnets. His most famous works are: "Romeo and Juliet", "Hamlet, Prince of Denmark", "Othello" and "Macbeth"[3].

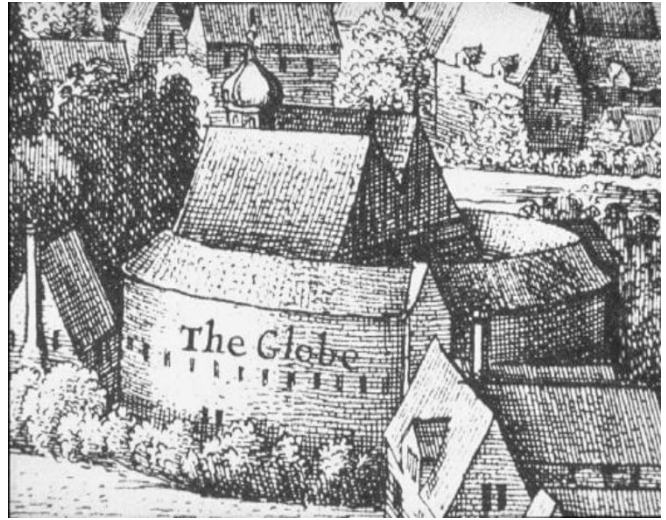
Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway on November 28, 1582, in Worcester, in Canterbury Province. Hathaway was from Shottery, a small village a mile west of Stratford. Shakespeare was 18, and Anne was 26 and, as it turns out, pregnant. Their first child, a daughter they named Susanna, was born on May 26, 1583. Two years later, on February 2, 1585, twins Hamnet and Judith were born. Hamnet died of unknown causes at age 11[4].



In 1594, Shakespeare joined Lord Chamberlain's Men, the London acting company that he worked with for the duration of his career. Later called the King's Men, it was considered the most important troupe of its time and was very popular by all accounts. Some sources describe Shakespeare as a founding member of the company, but whatever the case, he became central

to its success. Initially, he was an actor and eventually devoted more and more time to writing.

By 1599, Shakespeare and several fellow actors built their own theater on the south bank of the Thames River, which they called the Globe Theater.



*Julius Caesar* is thought to be the first production at the new open-air theater. Owning the playhouse proved to be a financial boon for Shakespeare and the other

investors. In 1613, the Globe caught fire during a performance of *Henry VIII* and burned to the ground. The company quickly rebuilt it, and it reopened the next year[4].



### "Romeo and Juliet"

"Romeo and Juliet" is one of Shakespeare's most famous tragedies, likely written between 1591 and 1595. It is the story of two young people who fall in love with each other, but unfortunately, their love cannot overcome the feud between their families — the Montagues and the Capulets. Through this play, Shakespeare reveals not only the depth of love but also the consequences of family conflicts that ruin the lives of these young lovers [1].

The play is set in the Italian city of Verona. Romeo Montague, initially infatuated with another girl (Rosaline), accidentally attends a ball at the Capulet house, where he meets Juliet. Despite belonging to rival families, their love quickly blossoms. They decide to marry secretly to unite their hearts, but soon their love leads to a series of tragic events.



Tybalt, Juliet's cousin, kills Romeo's friend Mercutio, and in revenge, Romeo kills Tybalt, which leads to his exile from Verona. Juliet, in an attempt to avoid an arranged marriage to Paris, plans to flee with Romeo using a potion that will make her appear dead. However, due to an unfortunate accident, Romeo does not receive the message about the plan and believes Juliet has died, so he drinks poison. When Juliet wakes up and finds him dead, she kills herself. The death of the young lovers causes a reconciliation between their families, but by then, it is too late [1].

### **Main Themes of the Play "Romeo and Juliet"**

1. *Love and Passion* - the love between Romeo and Juliet is a strong and reckless feeling that ignores family feud. It is true love that leads to tragedy due to external circumstances.

2. *Fate and Destiny* - Romeo and Juliet are "star-crossed lovers," whose fate was sealed before their birth. Their death is the inevitable result of the feud between their families.

3. *Social Conflicts and Family Feud* - the conflict between the Montagues and Capulets is the main cause of the tragedy. The hatred passed down through generations leads to the deaths of the young lovers.

4. *Death* - the theme of death is central, symbolizing the destructive effects of hatred and social conflict. The deaths of the protagonists are the final resolution of the tragedy [2].

"*Romeo and Juliet*" is a timeless classic that still touches the heart of the reader with its deep emotional power and relevance. The story of two lovers who suffer because of social barriers raises important questions about love, hate, sacrifice, and fate. Through the way the story unfolds, we can see how human emotionality and perception of the world can lead to tragedy, even when we think we are acting for the best reasons.

The theme of the conflict between personal desire and external pressure is particularly important. Both Romeo and Juliet, as well as their families and friends, experience this struggle between freedom of choice and traditional values that determine their actions.

"Romeo and Juliet," written over 400 years ago, remains relevant today, especially in the context of conflicts between families, communities, and countries, such as the war in Ukraine. The feud between the Montagues and Capulets resembles the struggle between two warring sides, like the war between Ukraine and Russia, where innocent people suffer due to differences. Just as Romeo and Juliet became victims of their families' feud, ordinary people in Ukraine become victims of war and violence. Their deaths symbolize the absurdity of the conflict, which can be prevented through dialogue and peace. Like the play's characters, many people in Ukraine dream of a peaceful future free from violence and hostility.

### **Important quotes from the novel:**

*"O, where art thou, Romeo?"* - this phrase by Juliet is one of the most famous in literature and symbolizes the depth of her feelings for Romeo. It reflects Juliet's inner struggle as she cannot be with the one, she loves due to social barriers. *"Love is a fiery flame that burns the heart."* - Shakespeare compares love to fire, making it both captivating and destructive. This refers to how a strong feeling can bring both joy and suffering. *"Do not trust the words, but listen to them."* - this quote emphasizes the importance of not only what people say but how they say it. It reminds us of the deeper understanding of human intentions. *"What is there to value more than this—my love?"* - Romeo declares that his love for Juliet is more important than anything in the world. This phrase highlights his devotion and self-sacrifice in his feelings.

"Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare is a work that addresses universal themes such as love, hate, family conflict, and death. This work has had a great influence on literature and culture, and its elements often become a source of inspiration for contemporary authors. The story of these two lovers, who experience not only internal but also external struggles, is immortal, as its emotional depth and humanity continue to amaze and delight new generations of readers.

This work offers important lessons for contemporary society, as the themes explored in it remain relevant today. Hostilities between nations, countries, or even families can lead to enormous tragedies, as demonstrated through the story of Romeo and Juliet. Today, we can see parallels with

modern conflicts, particularly with the war in Ukraine, where innocent people suffer due to the confrontation between states. As in the play, so in real life, it is crucial to strive for peace and understanding, as hostility cannot be resolved through violence but only through dialogue and the desire for reconciliation.

"Romeo and Juliet" is not just a story about lovers, but also a lesson on how social conflicts, regardless of their origins, can impact the lives of each of us.

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Навчально-методичне видання

Збірник студентських есе до курсу «Історія світової літератури»  
THE ESSENCE OF WORLD LITERATURE: STUDENTS' VOICES IN  
CRITICAL ANALYSIS

(за ред. проф. Біскуб І.П.)

*Методичний посібник*

Літературний редактор *Ірина Біскуб*

Верстка *Наталія Хороших*