

The English Novel



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Who can imagine life without novels?

They have served not merely as diversions but as companions for so much of our lives, offering hours of pleasure and, at their best, insights few of us can ever quantify. And if the speed at which they pile up by our bedside often exceeds our ability to read them, there's a security in looking ahead to the next enticing volume.

But the simple joy of reading novels sometimes obscures our awareness of the deeper roles they play in our lives: honing our intellect, quenching our emotional thirsts, and shaping our sense of ourselves and of the world we live in.

Many of our most basic assumptions, as Professor Timothy Spurgin notes, have been shaped by novels. To the extent that we see society as complex and interconnected, or view human personality as the product of early childhood experience, we are—whether we realize it or not—under the influence of novelists like Jane Austen and Charles Dickens, George Eliot and Virginia Woolf.

The impact and significance of the novel form may be especially obvious in the case of

the English novel. Through the period that gave rise to the novel, England experienced a convulsive social transformation—one that produced the world's first modern, capitalist economy. Along the way, traditional social values often appeared to be outdated, and so did traditional narrative forms.

It is no surprise, then, that the great English novelists were eager to create something new and different. Breaking from traditions in which stories were usually centered on aristocrats and nobles, they focused on the thoughts and feelings of ordinary people, taking pains to capture the rhythms of everyday life. At the same time, they also reacted to a number of larger developments: industrialization and urbanization, democratization and globalization.

What insights and attitudes do we owe to these writers? How do their lives and works fit into the larger history of the novel form—and what is the meaning of that history for us today?

Professor Spurgin answers these questions and many others, tracing the novel from its beginnings in the 18th century, when Samuel Richardson penned *Pamela*, to its culmination in the work of the 20th century Modernists, including Lawrence, Joyce, and Woolf.

作者介绍:

Dr. Timothy Spurgin is the Bonnie Glidden Buchanan Professor of English Literature and Associate Professor of English at Lawrence University, where he has taught for more than 15 years. He received his B.A. at Carleton College and his M.A. and Ph.D. in English Literature from the University of Virginia.

A respected and admired lecturer, Professor Spurgin teaches courses on Romanticism, contemporary critical theory, and the English novel, among other topics. He has also served two terms as director of Lawrence University's freshman program—recognized as one of the best in the nation.

Professor Spurgin has received two coveted teaching awards from Lawrence University—the Outstanding Young Teacher Award and the Freshman Studies Teaching Prize—and he is a three-time recipient of the Babcock Award, given by university students to the individual who, "through involvement and interaction with students, has made a positive impact on the campus community." Professor Spurgin's scholarly work has appeared in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Dickens Studies Annual*, and *Dickens Quarterly*.

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评论

Very systematic guide to English novels with precise descriptions to each writer. I adore those who can illustrate an issue clearly without bunches of literary terms. (唯一的美中不足就是少数没读过的书被剧透了==

推荐！

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