



The Oxford Illustrated History of English Literature

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Britain possesses a literary heritage virtually unrivaled in the Western world. This lavishly illustrated volume explores the richness, diversity, and continuity of that tradition. Under the general editorship of Pat Rogers, some of Britain's foremost literary scholars trace the history of English literature from its first stirrings in Anglo-Saxon poetry to the present day.

The contributors aim to convey to the reader the pleasure and exhilaration of literature, rather than to provide a bare outline of schools and periods of writing. At the heart of the volume towers the figure of Shakespeare, who has a special chapter devoted entirely to himself. The volume also offers detailed treatments of other major writers such as Chaucer, Milton, Donne, Wordsworth, Dickens, Eliot, and Auden, and up-to-date discussions of living authors such as Muriel Spark and Seamus Heaney. More than a mere chronology, this versatile work provides a basic core of information and invaluable supplementary material, including suggestions for further reading, maps, a chronological table of dates, and a detailed index with birth and death dates of individuals listed. It also moves beyond these facts and events to characterize the broad sweep of ideas and the main concerns of British writers over the past thirteen centuries.

The illustrations chosen--thirty-five in color and over two hundred in black and white--bring to life the content and concerns of the text. They range in subject from manuscripts and book illustrations to works of art and architecture, portraits, social scenes, landscapes, and caricatures, illuminating not only the literature but also the ideas, preoccupations, and outlooks that fostered it. Rather than simply decorating the text, the illustrations complement and enlarge it.

All experts in their chosen areas, the contributors bring to this volume a deep understanding and great enthusiasm and zest for their subject. Collectively, they have woven together the complex strands of English literature into a highly readable narrative.

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