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**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

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**PROJECT WORK**

**ON**

**INTRODUCTION OF 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY ENGLISH WRITERS**

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# 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY ENGLISH WRITER'S

## INTRODUCTION

The 19th century is also known as the Victorian Era since it nearly spans the reign of Queen Victoria from 1837-1901. During this time, the British Empire expanded; with a stable government and growing economy due to the rise of industrialization, ampler amounts of people were experiencing social mobility. With the increase of social mobility, class divisions strengthened to separate the aristocracy from those moving up.

The first half of the 19th century was characterized by Romanticism, a literary, artistic, and intellectual movement focused on emotional expression. As scientific inquiry and industry became more prevalent, Romantic writers stepped away from urban life. They wrote heavily on nature, individualism, and the idea of the "common man"—the working class person reflective of everyday society. Following the Romantic and idealized portrayal of life, the mid-19th century shifted to the Realism Movement, which still represents ordinary people and everyday situations, but in a way that is more aligned with reality.

With greater access to publication, 19th-century writers used a multitude of forms to express their ideas and were not limited to specific genres. Prominent authors of this time are known for the ideas they express through their poetry, journals, fictional narratives, and novels. Authors were not limited by their genre. Some of the most prominent 19th-century include

  
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## Jane Austen

### Jane Austen

16 December 1775 – 18 July 1817) was an English novelist known primarily for her six novels, which implicitly interpret, critique, and comment upon the British [landed gentry](#) at the end of the 18th century. Austen's plots often explore the dependence of women on marriage for the pursuit of favourable social standing and economic security. Her works are an implicit critique of the [novels of sensibility](#) of the second half of the 18th century and are part of the transition to 19th-century [literary realism](#).<sup>[2][b]</sup> Her deft use of social commentary, realism and biting irony have earned her acclaim among critics and scholars.

The anonymously published [Sense and Sensibility](#) (1811), [Pride and Prejudice](#) (1813), [Mansfield Park](#) (1814), and [Emma](#) (1815), were a modest success but brought her little fame in her lifetime. She wrote two other novels—[Northanger Abbey](#) and [Persuasion](#), both published posthumously in 1818—and began another, eventually titled [Sanditon](#), but died before its completion. She also left behind three volumes of juvenile

writings in manuscript, the short [epistolary novel \*Lady Susan\*](#), and the unfinished novel [The Watsons](#).

Since her death Austen's novels have rarely been out of print. A significant transition in her reputation occurred in 1833, when they were republished in [Richard Bentley's](#) Standard Novels series (illustrated by Ferdinand Pickering and sold as a set). They gradually gained wide acclaim and popular readership. In 1869, fifty-two years after her death, her nephew's publication of [A Memoir of Jane Austen](#) introduced a compelling version of her writing career and supposedly uneventful life to an eager audience. Her work has inspired a large number of critical essays and has been included in many literary anthologies. Her novels have also inspired many films, including 1940's [Pride and Prejudice](#), 1995's [Sense and Sensibility](#) and 2016's [Love & Friendship](#).

Jane Austen was born in [Steventon, Hampshire](#), on 16 December 1775 in a harsh winter. Her father wrote of her arrival in a letter that her mother "certainly expected to have been brought to bed a month ago". He added that the newborn infant was "a present plaything for Cassy and a future companion".<sup>[9]</sup> The winter of 1776 was particularly harsh and it was not until 5 April that she was baptised at the local church with the single name Jane.<sup>[9]</sup>



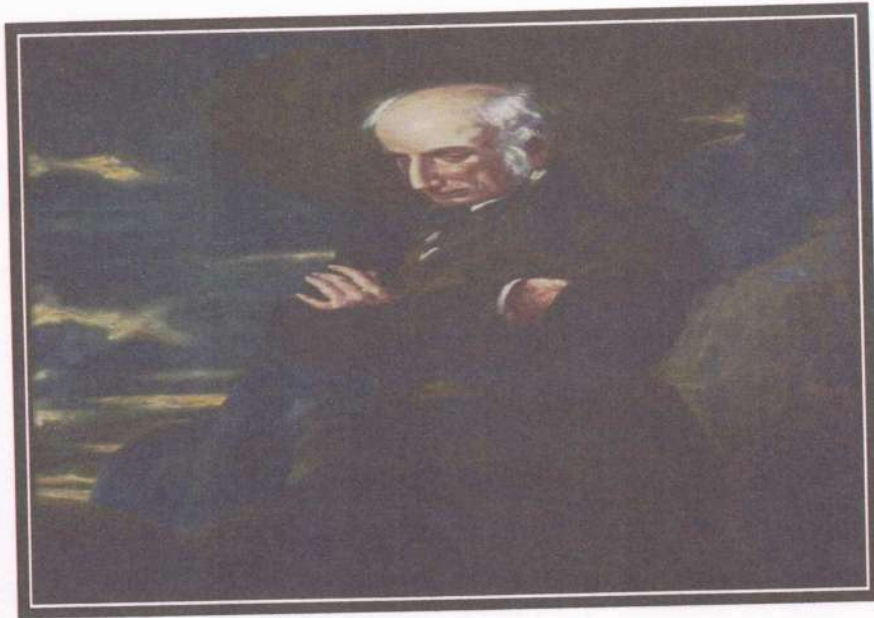
Church of St Nicholas in [Steventon](#), as depicted in [A](#)

[Memoir of Jane Austen](#)<sup>[10]</sup>

[George Austen](#) (1731–1805), served as the [rector](#) of the Anglican parishes of Steventon and [Deane](#).<sup>[11][c]</sup> The Reverend Austen came from an old and wealthy family of wool merchants. As each generation of [eldest sons](#) received inheritances, the wealth was divided, and George's branch of the family fell into poverty. He and his two sisters were orphaned as children, and had to be taken in by relatives. In 1745, at the age of fifteen, George Austen's sister [Philadelphia](#) was apprenticed to a [milliner](#) in [Covent Garden](#).<sup>[13]</sup> At the age of sixteen, George entered [St John's College, Oxford](#),<sup>[14]</sup> where he most likely met [Cassandra Leigh](#) (1739–1827).<sup>[15]</sup> She came from the prominent [Leigh](#) family; her father was rector at [All Souls College, Oxford](#), where she grew up

among the gentry. Her eldest brother James inherited a fortune and large estate from his great-aunt Perrot, with the only condition that he [change his name](#) to Leigh-Perrot.<sup>[16]</sup>

George Austen and Cassandra Leigh were engaged, probably around 1763, when they exchanged [miniatures](#).<sup>[17]</sup> He received the [living](#) of the Steventon parish from the wealthy husband of his second cousin, Thomas Knight.<sup>[18]</sup> They married on 26 April 1764 at [St Swithin's Church](#) in [Bath](#), by [license](#), in a simple ceremony, two months after Cassandra's father died.<sup>[19]</sup> Their income was modest, with George's small *per annum* living; Cassandra brought to the marriage the expectation of a small inheritance at the time of her mother's death.<sup>[20]</sup>



## William Wordsworth

### **Early life**

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**William Wordsworth** (7 April 1770 – 23 April 1850) was an English Romantic poet who, with **Samuel Taylor Coleridge**, helped to launch the Romantic Age in English literature with their joint publication *Lyrical Ballads* (1798).

Wordsworth's *magnum opus* is generally considered to be *The Prelude*, a semi-autobiographical poem of his early years that he revised and expanded a number of times. It was posthumously titled and published by his wife in the year of his death, before which it was generally known as "the poem to Coleridge".

Wordsworth was **Poet Laureate** from 1843 until his death from **pleurisy** on 23 April 1850.

### **Family and education**

The second of five children born to John Wordsworth and Ann Cookson, William Wordsworth was born on 7 April 1770 in what is now named [Wordsworth House](#) in [Cockermouth](#), Cumberland, (now in Cumbria),<sup>[1]</sup> part of the scenic region in northwestern England known as the [Lake District](#). William's sister, the poet and diarist [Dorothy Wordsworth](#), to whom he was close all his life, was born the following year, and the two were baptised together. They had three other siblings: Richard, the eldest, who became a lawyer; John, born after Dorothy, who went to sea and died in 1805 when the ship of which he was captain, the [Earl of Abergavenny](#), was wrecked off the south coast of England; and [Christopher](#), the youngest, who entered the Church and rose to be Master of [Trinity College, Cambridge](#).<sup>[2]</sup>

Wordsworth's father was a legal representative of [James Lowther, 1st Earl of Lonsdale](#), and, through his connections, lived in a large mansion in the small town. He was frequently away from home on business, so the young William and his siblings had little involvement with him and remained distant from him until his death in 1783.<sup>[3]</sup> However, he did encourage William in his reading, and in particular set him to commit large portions of verse to memory, including works by [Milton](#), [Shakespeare](#) and [Spenser](#) which William would pore over in his father's library. William also spent time at his mother's parents' house in [Penrith](#), Cumberland, where he was exposed to the moors, but did not get along with his grandparents or his uncle, who also lived there. His hostile interactions with them distressed him to the point of contemplating suicide.<sup>[4]</sup>

Wordsworth was taught to read by his mother and attended, first, a tiny school of low quality in Cockermouth, then a school in Penrith for the children of upper-class families, where he was taught by Ann Birkett, who insisted on instilling in her students traditions that included pursuing both scholarly and local activities, especially the festivals around Easter, May Day and [Shrove Tuesday](#). Wordsworth was taught both the Bible and the [Spectator](#), but little else. It was at the school in Penrith that he met the Hutchinsons, including Mary, who later became his wife.<sup>[5]</sup>

## Percy Bysshe Shelley

**Percy Bysshe Shelley** (/bɪʃ/ (listen) *BISH*;<sup>[1][2]</sup> 4 August 1792 – 8 July 1822) was a British writer who is considered one of the major [English Romantic poets](#).<sup>[3][4]</sup> A radical in his poetry as well as in his political and social views, Shelley did not achieve fame during his lifetime, but recognition of his achievements in poetry grew steadily following his death, and he became an important influence on subsequent generations of poets, including [Robert Browning](#), [Algernon Charles Swinburne](#), [Thomas Hardy](#), and [W. B. Yeats](#).<sup>[5]</sup> American literary critic [Harold Bloom](#) describes him as "a superb

craftsman, a lyric poet without rival, and surely one of the most advanced sceptical intellects ever to write a poem."

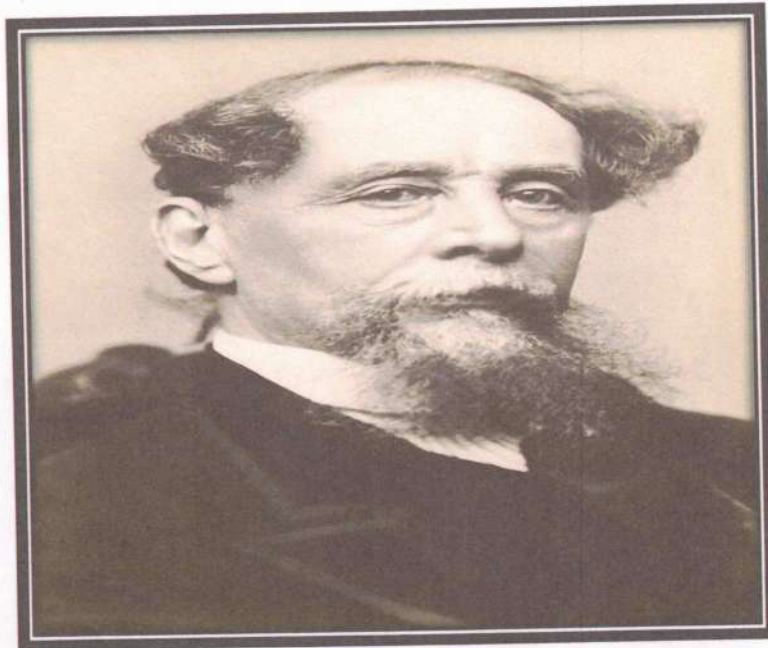
Shelley's reputation fluctuated during the 20th century, but in recent decades he has achieved increasing critical acclaim for the sweeping momentum of his poetic imagery, his mastery of genres and verse forms, and the complex interplay of sceptical, idealist, and materialist ideas in his work.<sup>[6][7]</sup> Among his best-known works are "[Ozymandias](#)" (1818), "[Ode to the West Wind](#)" (1819), "[To a Skylark](#)" (1820), the philosophical essay "[The Necessity of Atheism](#)" (1811), which his friend [T. J. Hogg](#) may have co-authored, and the political ballad "[The Mask of Anarchy](#)" (1819). His other major works include the verse drama [The Cenci](#) (1819) and long poems such as [Alastor, or The Spirit of Solitude](#) (1815), [Julian and Maddalo](#) (1819), [Adonais](#) (1821), [Prometheus Unbound](#) (1820)—widely considered his masterpiece—[Hellas](#) (1822), and his final, unfinished work, [The Triumph of Life](#) (1822).

## Early life and education

Shelley was born on 4 August 1792 at [Field Place, Warnham, West Sussex, England](#).<sup>[13][14]</sup> He was the eldest son of Sir [Timothy Shelley](#) (1753–1844), a [Whig](#) Member of Parliament for [Horsham](#) from 1790 to 1792 and for [Shoreham](#) between 1806 and 1812, and his wife, Elizabeth Pilfold (1763–1846), the daughter of a successful butcher.<sup>[15]</sup> He had four younger sisters and one much younger brother. Shelley's early childhood was sheltered and mostly happy. He was particularly close to his sisters and his mother, who encouraged him to hunt, fish and ride.<sup>[16][17]</sup> At age six, he was sent to a day school run by the vicar of [Warnham](#) church, where he displayed an impressive memory and gift for languages.<sup>[18]</sup>

In 1802 he entered the [Syon House Academy](#) of [Brentford, Middlesex](#), where his cousin [Thomas Medwin](#) was a pupil. Shelley was bullied and unhappy at the school and sometimes responded with violent rage. He also began suffering from the nightmares, hallucinations and sleep walking that were to periodically affect him throughout his life. Shelley developed an interest in science which supplemented his voracious reading of tales of mystery, romance and the supernatural. During his holidays at Field Place, his sisters were often terrified at being subjected to his experiments with gunpowder, acids and electricity. Back at school he blew up a paling fence with gunpowder.<sup>[19][20]</sup>





## Charles Dickens

### **Charles John Huffam Dickens**

7 February 1812 – 9 June 1870) was an English writer and social critic who created some of the world's best-known fictional characters, and is regarded by many as the greatest novelist of the [Victorian era](#).<sup>[1]</sup> His works enjoyed unprecedented popularity during his lifetime and, by the 20th century, critics and scholars had recognised him as a literary genius. His novels and short stories are widely read today.<sup>[2][3]</sup>

Born in [Portsmouth](#), Dickens left school at the age of 12 to work in a boot-blackening factory when his father [John](#) was incarcerated in a [debtors' prison](#). After three years he returned to school, before he began his literary career as a journalist. Dickens edited a weekly journal for 20 years, wrote 15 novels, five novellas, hundreds of short stories and non-fiction articles, lectured and performed [readings](#) extensively, was an indefatigable letter writer, and campaigned vigorously for [children's rights](#), for education, and for other social reforms.



## Henry David Thoreau

**Henry David Thoreau** (July 12, 1817 – May 6, 1862) was an American naturalist, essayist, poet, and philosopher.<sup>[3]</sup> A leading [transcendentalist](#),<sup>[4]</sup> he is best known for his book *Walden*, a reflection upon [simple living](#) in natural surroundings, and his essay "[Civil Disobedience](#)" (originally published as "Resistance to Civil Government"), an argument for disobedience to an unjust state.

Thoreau's books, articles, essays, journals, and poetry amount to more than 20 volumes. Among his lasting contributions are his [writings on natural history](#) and philosophy, in which he anticipated the methods and findings of ecology and [environmental history](#), two sources of modern-day environmentalism. His [literary](#) style interweaves close observation of nature, personal experience, pointed rhetoric, [symbolic](#) meanings, and historical lore, while displaying a poetic sensibility, philosophical [austerity](#), and attention to practical detail.<sup>[5]</sup> He was also deeply interested in the idea of survival in the face of hostile elements, historical change, and natural decay; at the same time he advocated abandoning waste and [illusion](#) in order to discover life's true essential needs.<sup>[6]</sup>

Thoreau was a lifelong [abolitionist](#), delivering lectures that attacked the [fugitive slave law](#) while praising the writings of [Wendell Phillips](#) and defending the abolitionist [John Brown](#). Thoreau's philosophy of [civil disobedience](#) later influenced the political thoughts and actions of notable figures such as [Leo Tolstoy](#), [Mahatma Gandhi](#), and [Martin Luther King Jr.](#)<sup>[6]</sup>

Thoreau is sometimes referred to as an anarchist.<sup>[7][8]</sup> In "Civil Disobedience", Thoreau wrote: "I heartily accept the motto,—'That government is best which governs least;' and I should like to see it

acted up to more rapidly and systematically. Carried out, it finally amounts to this, which also I believe,—'That government is best which governs not at all;' and when men are prepared for it, that will be the kind of government which they will have. ... But, to speak practically and as a citizen, unlike those who call themselves no-government men, I ask for, not at once no government, but at once a better government."<sup>[9]</sup>

### Early life and education, 1817–1837 [\[edit\]](#)



Thoreau's birthplace, the [Wheeler-Minot Farmhouse](#) in [Concord,](#)

[Massachusetts](#)

Henry David Thoreau was born David Henry Thoreau<sup>[17]</sup> in [Concord, Massachusetts](#), into the "modest [New England](#) family"<sup>[18]</sup> of John Thoreau, a pencil maker, and Cynthia Dunbar. His father was of French Protestant descent.<sup>[19]</sup> His paternal grandfather had been born on the UK [crown dependency](#) island of [Jersey](#).<sup>[20]</sup> His maternal grandfather, Asa Dunbar, led [Harvard's](#) 1766 student "[Butter Rebellion](#)",<sup>[21]</sup> the first recorded student protest in the American colonies.<sup>[22]</sup> David Henry was named after his recently deceased paternal uncle, David Thoreau. He began to call himself Henry David after he finished college; he never petitioned to make a legal name change.<sup>[23]</sup>

He had two older siblings, Helen and John Jr., and a younger sister, [Sophia Thoreau](#).<sup>[24]</sup> None of the children married.<sup>[25]</sup> Helen (1812–1849) died at age 37,<sup>[25]</sup> from tuberculosis. John Jr. (1814–1842) died at age 27,<sup>[26]</sup> of [tetanus](#) after cutting himself while shaving.<sup>[27]</sup> Henry David (1817–1862) died at age 44, of tuberculosis.<sup>[28]</sup> Sophia (1819–1876) survived him by 14 years, dying at age 56,<sup>[25]</sup> of tuberculosis.<sup>[29]</sup>

Dickens's literary success began with the 1836 serial publication of *The Pickwick Papers*, a publishing phenomenon—thanks largely to the introduction of the character *Sam Weller* in the fourth episode—that sparked *Pickwick* merchandise and spin-offs. Within a few years Dickens had become an international literary celebrity, famous for his humour, satire and keen observation of character and society. His novels, most of them published in monthly or weekly installments, pioneered the *serial* publication of narrative fiction, which became the dominant Victorian mode for novel publication.<sup>[415]</sup> *Cliffhanger* endings in his serial publications kept readers in suspense.<sup>[6]</sup> The instalment format allowed Dickens to evaluate his audience's reaction, and he often modified his plot and character development based on such feedback.<sup>[5]</sup> For example, when his wife's *chiropodist* expressed distress at the way Miss Mowcher in *David Copperfield* seemed to reflect her own disabilities, Dickens improved the character with positive features.<sup>[7]</sup> His plots were carefully constructed and he often wove elements from topical events into his narratives.<sup>[8]</sup> Masses of the illiterate poor would individually pay a *halfpenny* to have each new monthly episode read to them, opening up and inspiring a new class of readers.<sup>[9]</sup>

Charles spent time outdoors, but also read voraciously, including the *picaresque novels* of *Tobias Smollett* and *Henry Fielding*, as well as *Robinson Crusoe* and *Gil Blas*. He read and re-read *The Arabian Nights* and the Collected Farces of *Elizabeth Inchbald*.<sup>[17]</sup> At the age of 7 he first saw *Joseph Grimaldi*—the father of modern *clowning*—perform at the Star Theatre, Rochester.<sup>[18]</sup> He later imitated Grimaldi's clowning on several occasions, and would also edit the *Memoirs of Joseph Grimaldi*.<sup>[19](nb.1)</sup> He retained poignant memories of childhood, helped by an excellent memory of people and events, which he used in his writing.<sup>[20]</sup> His father's brief work as a clerk in the Navy Pay Office afforded him a few years of private education, first at a *dame school* and then at a school run by William Giles, a *dissenter*, in Chatham.<sup>[23]</sup>

He studied at [Harvard College](#) between 1833 and 1837. He lived in [Hollis Hall](#)<sup>[30]</sup> and took courses in [rhetoric](#), classics, philosophy, mathematics, and science.<sup>[31]</sup> He was a member of the Institute of 1770<sup>[32]</sup> (now the [Hasty Pudding Club](#)). According to legend, Thoreau refused to pay the five-dollar fee (approximately equivalent to \$147 in 2022) for a Harvard master's diploma, which he described thus: [Harvard College](#) offered it to graduates "who proved their physical worth by being alive three

years after graduating, and their saving, earning, or inheriting quality or condition by having Five Dollars to give the college".<sup>[33]</sup> He commented, "Let every sheep keep its own skin",<sup>[34]</sup> a reference to the tradition of using [sheepskin vellum](#) for diplomas.

[Thoreau's birthplace](#) still exists on Virginia Road in Concord. The house has been restored by the Thoreau Farm Trust,<sup>[35]</sup> a nonprofit organization, and is now open to the public.



## Emily Dickinson

### **Emily Elizabeth Dickinson**

December 10, 1830 – May 15, 1886) was an American poet. Little-known during her life, she has since been regarded as one of the most important figures in [American poetry](#).<sup>[2]</sup> Dickinson was born in [Amherst, Massachusetts](#), into a prominent family with strong ties to its community. After studying at the [Amherst Academy](#) for seven years in her youth, she briefly attended the [Mount Holyoke Female Seminary](#) before returning to her family's home in Amherst. Evidence suggests that Dickinson lived much of her life in isolation. Considered an eccentric by locals, she developed a penchant for white clothing and was known for her reluctance to greet guests or, later in life, even to leave her bedroom. Dickinson never married, and most of her friendships were based entirely upon correspondence.<sup>[3]</sup>

While Dickinson was a prolific writer, her only publications during her lifetime were 10 of her nearly 1,800 poems, and one letter.<sup>[4]</sup> The poems published then were usually edited significantly to fit conventional poetic rules. Her poems were unique for her era; they contain short lines, typically lack titles, and often use [slant rhyme](#) as well as unconventional [capitalization](#) and punctuation.<sup>[5]</sup> Many of

her poems deal with themes of death and immortality, two recurring topics in letters to her friends, and also explore aesthetics, society, nature, and spirituality.<sup>[6]</sup>

Although Dickinson's acquaintances were most likely aware of her writing, it was not until after her death in 1886—when Lavinia, Dickinson's younger sister, discovered her cache of poems—that her work became public. Her first collection of poetry was published in 1890 by personal acquaintances [Thomas Wentworth Higginson](#) and [Mabel Loomis Todd](#), though both heavily edited the content. A complete collection of her poetry became available for the first time when scholar Thomas H. Johnson published *The Poems of Emily Dickinson* in 1955.<sup>[7]</sup> In 1998, *The New York Times* reported on an infrared technology study revealing that much of Dickinson's work had been deliberately censored to exclude the name "Susan".<sup>[8]</sup> At least eleven of Dickinson's poems were dedicated to her sister-in-law [Susan Huntington Gilbert Dickinson](#), though all the dedications were obliterated, presumably by Todd.<sup>[9]</sup> These edits work to censor the nature of Emily and Susan's relationship, which many scholars have interpreted as romantic.<sup>[9][10][11]</sup>

## Family and early childhood [\[edit\]](#)



The Dickinson Children (Emily on the left), c. 1840. From the Dickinson Room at Houghton Library, Harvard University.

Emily Elizabeth Dickinson was born at the [family's homestead](#) in [Amherst, Massachusetts](#), on December 10, 1830, into a prominent, but not wealthy, family.<sup>[12]</sup> Her father, [Edward Dickinson](#) was a lawyer in Amherst and a trustee of [Amherst College](#).<sup>[13]</sup> Two hundred years earlier, her patrilineal ancestors had arrived in the New World—in the [Puritan Great Migration](#)—where they prospered.<sup>[14]</sup> Emily Dickinson's paternal grandfather, [Samuel Dickinson](#), was one of the founders of [Amherst College](#).<sup>[15]</sup> In 1813, he built the Homestead, a large mansion on the town's Main Street, that became the focus of Dickinson family life for the better part of a century.<sup>[16]</sup> Samuel Dickinson's

eldest son, Edward, was treasurer of Amherst College from 1835 to 1873, served in the [Massachusetts House of Representatives](#) (1838–1839; 1873) and the [Massachusetts Senate](#) (1842–1843), and represented [Massachusetts's 10th congressional district](#) in the [33rd U.S. Congress](#) (1853–1855).<sup>[17]</sup> On May 6, 1828, he married [Emily Norcross](#) from [Monson, Massachusetts](#). They had three children:

- [William Austin](#) (1829–1895), known as Austin, Aust or Awe
- Emily Elizabeth
- [Lavinia Norcross](#) (1833–1899), known as Lavinia or Vinnie<sup>[18]</sup>

She was also a distant cousin to [Baxter Dickinson](#) and his family, including his grandson the organist and composer [Clarence Dickinson](#).

By all accounts, young Dickinson was a well-behaved girl. On an extended visit to Monson when she was two, Dickinson's Aunt Lavinia described her as "perfectly well and contented—She is a very good child and but little trouble."<sup>[20]</sup> Dickinson's aunt also noted the girl's affinity for music and her particular talent for the piano, which she called "the *moosic*

Dickinson attended primary school in a two-story building on Pleasant Street.<sup>[22]</sup> Her education was "ambitiously classical for a Victorian girl".<sup>[23]</sup> Wanting his children to be well-educated, her father followed their progress even while away on business. When Dickinson was seven, he wrote home, reminding his children to "keep school, and learn, so as to tell me, when I come home, how many new things you have learned".<sup>[24]</sup> While Dickinson consistently described her father in a warm manner, her correspondence suggests that her mother was regularly cold and aloof. In a letter to a confidante, Dickinson wrote she "always ran Home to Awe [Austin] when a child, if anything befell me. She was an awful Mother, but I liked her better than none."<sup>[25]</sup>





## Louisa May Alcott

### **Louisa May Alcott**

November 29, 1832 – March 6, 1888) was an American novelist, short story writer, and poet best known as the author of the novel [Little Women](#) (1868) and its sequels [Little Men](#) (1871) and [Jo's Boys](#) (1886).<sup>[1]</sup> Raised in New England by her [transcendentalist](#) parents, [Abigail May](#) and [Amos Bronson Alcott](#), she grew up among many well-known intellectuals of the day, including [Margaret Fuller](#),<sup>[2]</sup> [Ralph Waldo Emerson](#), [Nathaniel Hawthorne](#), [Henry David Thoreau](#), and [Henry Wadsworth Longfellow](#).<sup>[3]</sup>

Alcott's family suffered from financial difficulties, and while she worked to help support the family from an early age, she also sought an outlet in writing. She began to receive critical success for her writing in the 1860s. Early in her career, she sometimes used pen names such as **A. M. Barnard**,

under which she wrote lurid short stories and [sensation novels](#) for adults that focused on passion and revenge.<sup>[4]</sup>

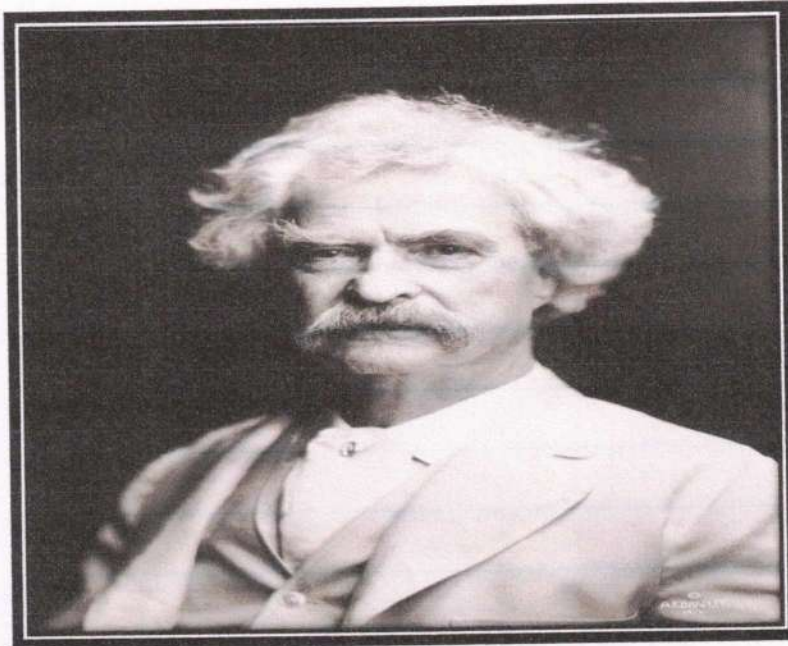
Published in 1868, [Little Women](#) is set in the Alcott family home, Orchard House, in [Concord, Massachusetts](#), and is loosely based on Alcott's childhood experiences with her three sisters, [Abigail May Alcott Nieriker](#), [Elizabeth Sewall Alcott](#), and [Anna Alcott Pratt](#). The novel was well-received at the time and is still popular today among both [children](#) and adults. It has been adapted for stage plays, films, and television many times.

Alcott was an [abolitionist](#) and a [feminist](#) and remained unmarried throughout her life. She also spent her life active in such reform movements as temperance and women's suffrage.<sup>[5]</sup> She died from a stroke in [Boston](#) on March 6, 1888, just two days after her father had died.

## Early life

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Louisa May Alcott was born on November 29, 1832,<sup>[1]</sup> in [Germantown](#),<sup>[1]</sup> which is now part of [Philadelphia, Pennsylvania](#), on her father's 33rd birthday. She was the daughter of [transcendentalist](#) and educator [Amos Bronson Alcott](#) and social worker [Abby May](#) and the second of four daughters: [Anna Bronson Alcott](#) was the eldest; [Elizabeth Sewall Alcott](#) and [Abigail May Alcott](#) were the two youngest. As a child, she was a tomboy who preferred boys' games.<sup>[6]</sup> The family moved to Boston in 1834,<sup>[7]</sup> where Alcott's father established an experimental school and joined the [Transcendental Club](#) with [Ralph Waldo Emerson](#) and [Henry David Thoreau](#). Bronson Alcott's opinions on education, tough views on child-rearing, and moments of mental instability shaped young Alcott's mind with a desire to achieve perfection, a goal of the transcendentalists.<sup>[8]</sup> His attitudes towards Alcott's wild and independent behavior and his inability to provide for his family created conflict between Bronson Alcott, his wife, and their daughters.<sup>[9][10]</sup> Abigail resented her husband's inability to recognize her sacrifices and related his thoughtlessness to the larger issue of the inequality of sexes. She passed this recognition and desire to redress wrongs done to women on to Louisa.



## Mark Twain

**Samuel Langhorne Clemens** (November 30, 1835 – April 21, 1910),<sup>[1]</sup> best known by his pen name **Mark Twain**, was an American writer, **humorist**, entrepreneur, publisher, and lecturer. He was praised as the "greatest humorist the United States has produced",<sup>[2]</sup> and **William Faulkner** called him "the father of **American literature**".<sup>[3]</sup> His novels include *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) and its sequel, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884),<sup>[4]</sup> the latter of which has often been called the "Great American Novel". Twain also wrote *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889) and *Pudd'nhead Wilson* (1894), and co-wrote *The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today* (1873) with **Charles Dudley Warner**.

Twain was raised in **Hannibal, Missouri**, which later provided the setting for *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*. He served an apprenticeship with a printer and then worked as a typesetter, contributing articles to the newspaper of his older brother **Orion Clemens**. He later became a riverboat pilot on the **Mississippi River** before heading west to join Orion in **Nevada**. He referred humorously to his lack of success at mining, turning to journalism for the **Virginia City Territorial Enterprise**.<sup>[5]</sup> His humorous story "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" was published in 1865, based on a story that he heard at **Angels Hotel** in **Angels Camp, California**, where he had spent some time as a miner. The short story brought international attention and was

even translated into French.<sup>[6]</sup> His wit and satire, in prose and in speech, earned praise from critics and peers, and he was a friend to presidents, artists, industrialists, and European royalty. Although initially an ardent [American imperialist](#) who spoke out strongly in favor of American interests in the [Hawaiian Islands](#), he later became vice president of the [American Anti-Imperialist League](#) from 1901 until his death in 1910, coming out strongly against the [Philippine-American War](#).<sup>[7][8]</sup>

Twain earned a great deal of money from his writing and lectures, but invested in ventures that lost most of it, such as the [Paige Compositor](#), a mechanical typesetter that failed because of its complexity and imprecision. He filed for [bankruptcy](#) in the wake of these financial setbacks, but in time overcame his financial troubles with the help of [Standard Oil executive Henry Huttleston Rogers](#). He eventually paid all his creditors in full, even though his declaration of bankruptcy meant he was not required to do so.

Twain was born shortly after an appearance of [Halley's Comet](#), and he predicted that he would "go out with it" as well, dying a day after the comet was at its closest to Earth.<sup>[9]</sup>

## Early life



Samuel Clemens, age 15 holding [metal type](#) in a [composing stick](#) that spells out his first name. He understood that the photographic printing process reversed the contents of an image in the same way backwards moveable type was reversed in printing to give clear copy.

spells out his first name. He understood that the photographic printing process reversed the contents of an image in the same way backwards moveable type was reversed in printing to give clear copy.

Samuel Langhorne Clemens was born on November 30, 1835, in [Florida, Missouri](#). He was the sixth of seven children of [Jane](#) (*née* Lampton; 1803–1890), a native of [Kentucky](#), and [John Marshall Clemens](#) (1798–1847), a native of [Virginia](#). His parents met when his father moved to [Missouri](#). They were married in 1823.<sup>[10][11]</sup> Twain was of [Cornish](#), [English](#), and [Scots-Irish](#) descent.<sup>[12][13][14][15]</sup> Only three of his siblings survived childhood: [Orion](#) (1825–1897), Pamela (1827–1904), and Henry (1838–1858). His brother Pleasant Hannibal (1828) died at three weeks of age,<sup>[16][17]</sup> his sister Margaret (1830–1839) when Twain was three, and his brother Benjamin (1832–1842) three years later.<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

When he was four, Twain's family moved to [Hannibal, Missouri](#),<sup>[18]</sup> a port town on the [Mississippi River](#) that inspired the fictional town of St. Petersburg in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.<sup>[19]</sup> [Slavery was legal in Missouri](#) at the time, and it became a theme in these writings. His father was an attorney and judge who died of [pneumonia](#) in 1847, when Twain was 11.<sup>[20]</sup> The following year, Twain left school after the fifth grade to become a printer's apprentice.<sup>[1]</sup> In 1851, he began working as a [typesetter](#), contributing articles and humorous sketches to the [Hannibal Journal](#), a newspaper that Orion owned. When he was 18, he left Hannibal and worked as a printer in [New York City](#), [Philadelphia](#), [St. Louis](#), and [Cincinnati](#), joining the newly formed [International Typographical Union](#), the printers [trade union](#). He [educated himself in public libraries](#) in the evenings, finding wider information than at a conventional school.<sup>[21]</sup>

Twain describes his boyhood in [Life on the Mississippi](#), stating that "there was but one permanent ambition" among his comrades: to be a steamboatman. "Pilot was the grandest position of all. The pilot, even in those days of trivial wages, had a princely salary – from a hundred and fifty to two hundred and fifty dollars a month, and no board to pay." As Twain described it, the pilot's prestige exceeded that of the captain. The pilot had to "get up a warm personal acquaintanceship with every old snag and one-limbed cottonwood and every obscure wood pile that ornaments the banks of this river for twelve hundred miles; and more than that, must... actually know where these things are in

the dark". Steamboat pilot Horace E. Bixby took Twain on as a cub pilot to teach him the river between New Orleans and St. Louis for \$500 (equivalent to \$17,000 in 2022), payable out of Twain's first wages after graduating. Twain studied the Mississippi, learning its landmarks, how to navigate its currents effectively, and how to read the river and its constantly shifting channels, reefs, submerged snags, and rocks that would "tear the life out of the strongest vessel that ever floated".<sup>[22]</sup> It was more than two years before he received his pilot's license. Piloting also gave him his pen name from "mark twain", the leadsman's cry for a measured river depth of two fathoms (12 feet), which was safe water for a steamboat



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