

## The Development of English Novel in English Literature in the 18th century

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### Types of Novel in English Literature

There are two main classes of fictional prose:

1. **Tale or Romance:** It depends on incident and adventure for its chief interest.
2. **Novel:** It depends more on the display of character and motive. The novel is more complicated than the tale.

The English novel took birth in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries and reached a great height in the [Age of Pope and Dr. Johnson](#).<sup>1</sup>

The group of the first four novelists of the Augustan Age or Neo-classical age: **S. Richardson, T. Smollett, H. Fielding,** and **L. Sterne,** in whose hands Novel blossomed, are called the four wheels of the novel.

### Factors Responsible for the Rise of Novel in the 18th Century:

#### • [Rise of Middle Class](#)

The literature of the 17<sup>th</sup> century flourished under the patronage of the upper classes. The 18<sup>th</sup> century in England social history is characterised by the rise of the middle class.

Because of tremendous growth in trade and commerce, the England merchant class was becoming wealthy and this newly rich class wanted to excel in the field of literature also.

The highborn writers neglected this class and their tastes and aspirations were expressed by the novelists of the time. The Novel was, in fact, the product of middle class. With the rise of middle class, hence, the rise of the novel was quite natural.

#### • [Growth of Newspapers and Magazines](#)

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the appearance of newspapers and magazines attracted a large number of readers from the middle class. These new readers had little interest in the romances and the [tragedies](#) which had interested the upper class.

Thus need for new type of literature rose that would express the new ideas of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and this new type of literature was none but novel.

#### • [Rise of Realism](#)

The 18th-century literature was characterised by the spirit of realism and romantic features like enthusiasm, passion, imaginations etc. declined in this period.

Reason, intellect, correctness, satirical spirit etc. were the main characteristics of 18th-century literature. The English novel had all these characteristics.

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<sup>1</sup> The [Neoclassical Age](#).

- **Role of Women**

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, women of upper classes and the middle classes could partake in a few activities of men. Although they could not engage themselves in administration, politics, hunting, drinking etc. hence, in their leisure time, they used to read novels.

- **Decline of Drama**

The decline of drama also contributed to the rise of the novel in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, drama lost its fame that it had in the [Elizabethan Age](#).