

# **Educator's Guide For Great Authors of the British Isles**

For Advanced Placement and College

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## **MATERIALS IN THE SERIES**

**Educator's Guide** – This Educator's Guide has been prepared to aid educators in utilizing materials contained within this series. In addition to this introductory material, the guide contains the following:

- Suggested Instructional Notes
- Student Learning Goals

## **INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES**

It is suggested that you preview the series and read the Student Goals and Educator Points. By doing so, you will become familiar with the materials and be better prepared to adapt the series to the needs of your class. Please note that each program is set up to be played continuously and you will probably find it best to follow the series and the programs in the order in which they are presented, but this is not necessary. Each program can be divided into chapters accessed through the DVD's Menu Screen under Chapter Selects. In this way each chapter can be played and studied separately. It is also suggested that the series presentation take place before the entire class and under your direction. As you review the instructional programs outlined in the Educator's Guide, you may find it necessary to make some changes, deletions, or additions to fit the specific needs of your students.

## **INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF SERIES**

*Great Authors of the British Isles* is a new approach to presenting, in an unparalleled way, Britain's literary tradition. Home to great authors from Shakespeare to Dylan Thomas, from Jane Austen to J.K. Rowling, the British Isles have pioneered poetry, drama, the short story and the novel. The series is designed to present British Isles' authors and literature in a way that promotes successful student learning. *Great Authors of the British Isles* begins by tracing the dawn of the British Isles literary tradition with the epic saga *Beowulf*. From then, the twin development of the English language and England's literary tradition is traced from Old English through Chaucer's Middle English to the brilliant words of William Shakespeare. England's Renaissance Age follows, showcasing writers, such as Marlowe, Jonson, Milton and Donne, who embodied England's golden age of literature. Next, Augustan and Romantic poets as well as the birth of the novel in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century further develop the British literary tradition. The following program looks at one of the British Isle's greatest gifts to writing – children's literature. The last three programs investigate genre writers who brought us science fiction, detective fiction, and the spy thriller, as well as 20<sup>th</sup> Century playwrights, novelists and poets.

The eight programs are laid out so they can be viewed in their entirety, or by selecting individual chapters, be viewed separately. Each chapter presents a story of British literature. Most importantly literary themes and figures are clearly presented using state of the art visuals that make learning easy and fun.

Below is a list of the series' programs and their chapters. Using these programs, educators can create a lesson plan to cover the specific issues, themes and historical figures mentioned.

**Program 1: Beowulf to Shakespeare**

- 8<sup>th</sup> Century AD - *Beowulf*
- 14th Century - *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*
- 1387-1400 - Geoffrey Chaucer Writes *The Canterbury Tales*
- 1594 - Shakespeare Pens *Romeo and Juliet*

**Program 2: The Renaissance Writers**

- 1581 - Sir Francis Bacon, Renaissance Man
- 1587 - Christopher Marlowe Writes *Tamburlaine the Great*
- 1590 - Edmund Spenser Publishes *The Faerie Queene*
- 1592 - Sir Walter Raleigh's *The Ocean to Cynthia*
  - (Preferred English Spelling)
- 1598 - Ben Jonson Establishes a New Kind of Comedy
- 1631 - John Donne Delivers His Own Death Sermon
- 1658 - John Milton Begins *Paradise Lost*

**Program 3: Augustan and Romantic Poets**

- 1681 - The Age of Dryden Begins
- 1712 - Alexander Pope, *The Rape of the Lock*
- 1755 - Dr. Johnson Completes *A Dictionary of the English Language*
- 1786 - Robert Burns' *Poems Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*
- 1819 - Lord Byron Pens *Don Juan*
- 1790 - 1830 - The Four Romantic Poets
- 1850 - Wordsworth's Spiritual Autobiography Ends
- 1850 - Alfred Lord Tennyson is Made Poet Laureate of England
- 1864 - The Brownings

**Program 4: Early Novelists**

- 1679 - John Bunyan, Father of the English Novel
- 1749 - Henry Fielding Writes *Tom Jones*
- 1813 - *Pride and Prejudice*, a Novel by Jane Austen
- 1819 - Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*
- 1837 - Charles Dickens Begins *Oliver Twist*
- 1847 - The Brontë Sisters
- 1886 - Robert Louis Stevenson Introduces *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*

**Program 5: Children's Literature**

- 1719 - Daniel Defoe Pens *Robinson Crusoe*
- 1865 - Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*
- 1901 - Beatrix Potter Publishes *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*
- 1926 - A.A. Milne Creates *Winnie the Pooh*

- 1937 - J.R.R. Tolkien Writes *The Hobbit*
- 1961 - *James and the Giant Peach* a Title by Roald Dahl
- 1997 - J.K. Rowling Introduces *Harry Potter*

#### **Program 6: The Genre Innovators**

- 1818 - Mary Shelley Gives Rise to *Frankenstein*
- 1887 - Sir Arthur Conan Doyle Introduces Sherlock Holmes
- 1895 - H.G. Wells, *The Time Machine*
- 1932 -1948 - Huxley and Orwell Pen Dystopian Novels
- 1934 - Agatha Christie, First Woman of Detective Fiction
- 1953 - Ian Fleming Writes the First Bond Spy Thriller

#### **Program 7: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Poets and Playwrights**

- 1907 - Rudyard Kipling Wins Nobel Prize
- 1920 - John Galsworthy's *The Skin Game* is Performed
- 1922 - T.S. Eliot, Intellectual Giant
- 1937 - The '30s Poets
- 1953 - Dylan Thomas, Larger Than Life Poet, Dies
- 2005 - Harold Pinter Wins the Nobel Prize

#### **Program 8: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Novelists**

- 1902 - Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*
- 1922 - Virginia Woolf's Bloomsbury Group
- 1924 - E.M. Forster Writes *A Passage to India*
- 1928 - D.H. Lawrence Shocks the World
- 1944 - W. Somerset Maugham's Prophetic *The Razor's Edge*
- 1954 - William Golding Writes *Lord of the Flies*
- 1969 - John Fowles, *The Existentialist*
- 2007 - Doris Lessing, Nobel Prize Winner

### **SUMMARY OF PROGRAMS FOR GREAT AUTHORS OF THE BRITISH ISLES**

#### **Program 1: Beowulf to Shakespeare**

Program one takes a look at how the English language transitioned from Old English to Middle English and then to the rich and brilliant words of William Shakespeare.

Chapter one looks at the solemn splendor of England's finest long poem – *Beowulf*.

Chapter two shows how tales such as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* helped to shape England's shared sense of identity.

Why Geoffrey Chaucer is considered one of the three pillars of England's literary tradition is discussed in chapter three.

Chapter four looks at the life and writing of England's greatest playwright, William Shakespeare.

### **Chapter 1: 8th Century AD - *Beowulf***

**Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- A brief overview of Britain's history from the end of the Ice Age to the fifth Century invasions by Angles and Saxons
  - The Anglo-Saxons brought with them their rich Germanic language called old English
  - The long tradition of British literature would be built on this language
- *Beowulf* is the oldest and most celebrated Anglo-Saxon long poem from England's early Middle Ages
- The epic poem is about a Norse hero, Beowulf
- Beowulf embarks on a hero's quest to kill the monster Grendel
- The eighth Century poem set the standard for Anglo-Saxon literature
- Beowulf's journey is the model for the epic hero
  - It is also a philosophical tale about the relationship between wisdom and heroism
  - And a cautionary tale about the transitory nature of all human glory

### **Chapter 2: 14th Century - *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight***

**Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- There is no greater impact on English identity than the Arthurian legends
- The legends originate from the 5th and 6th centuries AD, when the British Isles reeled under attacks by Saxon invaders
- The legends are deeply steeped in the Christian tradition
- These legends have influenced British authors to the present day
  - The Arthurian ideal has been taken up by such writers Edmund Spenser, John Dryden, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Algernon Swinburne, T. S. Eliot
- The tale of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight epitomizes the mostly Christian themes of the Arthurian tradition
  - Gawain the Good is the perfect knight – a fighter, lover and devoted to Christ
  - He embodies the ideals of Camelot's Round Table – Chivalry, Honor and Loyalty
  - Gawain challenges the Green knight and in the end, Gawain survives the challenge and so do the ideals of Camelot
- Over the centuries, the Arthurian saga grew to include as many as 225 characters
  - Some of the more famous are Merlin, Morgan la Fey, Lady Guinevere, Lancelot, Percival, Galahad, Gareth and Gawain

### **Chapter 3: 1387-1400 - Geoffrey Chaucer Writes *The Canterbury Tales***

**Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- Geoffrey Chaucer flourished during the heyday of feudal England
- Feudal England was characterized by wars, religious and social turmoil, and a plague known as the Black Death

- Chaucer straddled the world between commoners and nobility
- He was well-educated and served England's royalty, as a diplomat, a courier and a customs official
- Chaucer's familiarity with Royalty and commoners put him in a unique position to provide an enduring map of English life during the last half of the 14th Century
- Chaucer wrote in what is now called Middle English
- *The Canterbury Tales* was purely Middle English in language as well as themes
- The premise of *The Canterbury Tales* is a group of travelers begin a pilgrimage from London to Canterbury Cathedral
- The brilliance of Chaucer and *The Canterbury Tales* is that each pilgrim tells his story from his own perspective in his own unique societal and colloquial voice
- Altogether the tales paint a picture of England during its transition from a medieval to a traditional bureaucratic society
- Chaucer was aware that at the time England was beginning to think of itself as a national entity held together by language, laws and a sense of the common good

#### **Chapter 4: 1594 - Shakespeare Pens *Romeo and Juliet***

#### **Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- Britain's greatest author, and the first pillar of English literature, is William Shakespeare
- A brief history of Shakespeare's life before London
  - Shakespeare was born in 1564 into the lesser gentry class and never had a university education
  - He did have a classics education, including Latin and studying the comic Roman playwrights Terence and Plautus
  - At the age of 18 he married Anne Hathaway
  - After the marriage, Shakespeare disappears from the record for seven years
- When he reappears in 1592, he is already an accomplished London playwright
- What happened to the famous playwright during those missing years is one of the great Shakespearean mysteries
- What distinguished the life of Shakespeare from many of his fellow actors and writers was his keen business sense and he died a wealthy man from his investments
- Shakespeare wrote plays and poetry for 20 years
- His last plays, *Henry VIII* and *Two Noble Kinsman*, were performed in 1613
- Prospero's speech in Act IV, Scene 1 of *The Tempest* is often claimed to be Shakespeare's farewell to the theater
- It wasn't until seven years after his death that a 1623 publication gathered together all Shakespeare's plays into a single folio
  - The folio divided his work into tragedies, comedies and histories
- The unifying theme of the ten historical plays of Shakespeare is that they are all about the English monarchy of medieval England from King John to Henry VIII
  - Shakespeare didn't write them in historical order

- His historical plays were a new way of encouraging English patriotism and supporting the role of the monarchy in English society
- Some scholars claim Shakespeare's histories were propaganda for the Tudor monarchy
- There is no evidence to prove this
- Shakespeare's most profound and widest reaching legacy resides in his comedies
  - He established the romantic comedy
  - Shakespeare wrote 16 comedies between 1589 and 1611
  - He had a light and sure hand with themes of romance and intrigue, all punctuated by sophisticated complexity
  - Some of his universal themes are
    - Resolution of conflict based on forgiveness
    - Moving from grief to life affirming love
    - Interactions of people from different social strata
- Shakespeare's tragedies are the most famous, esteemed and influential works of British literature
  - In these plays Shakespeare shows an unrivaled ability to create vivid complex characters with rich mental lives such as Hamlet, Cleopatra, Macbeth and Othello
  - There are 10 tragedies, and all are characterized by the struggle to find justice and cause in unhappy events
  - Some of his themes are
    - Questioning the value and purpose of life
    - Evolving tragic flaws in his protagonists
  - The only answer for Shakespeare that restores order is death

## **Program 2: The Renaissance Writers**

Program two looks at England's Golden Age of literature and the renaissance in poetry, drama and comedy.

Chapter one looks at one of the leading lights of the English Renaissance, Sir Francis Bacon.

Chapter two shows how Christopher Marlowe's impact on English drama was nearly as great as Shakespeare's.

Chapters three and four show how Edmund Spenser and Sir Walter Raleigh captured the essence of the English Renaissance, each in his own unique way.

Chapter five looks at the life and influence of Ben Jonson on English theater.

How personal religious struggles found their literary expression in the works of men such as John Donne is shown in chapter six.

Chapter seven showcases John Milton and his masterpiece, *Paradise Lost*.

### **Chapter 1: 1581 - Sir Francis Bacon, Renaissance Man**

**Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- Sir Francis Bacon captured the essence of the European Renaissance
- Born in 1561, he is a leading figure in natural philosophy and scientific methodology
- The Renaissance took Europe out of the dark ages
  - It started in Italy with such luminaries as Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci
  - It arrived in England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth
- The English Renaissance produced changes in everything from art, to religion, self-awareness, to bureaucratic government, to science and literature
- Bacon enjoyed the reputation as England's father of modern science
- He wrote extensively on every possible subject

### **Chapter 2: 1587 - Christopher Marlowe Writes *Tamburlaine the Great***

**Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- Christopher Marlowe was 16<sup>th</sup> Century England's original freethinker and greatest dramatist
- Marlowe's first play, *Tamburlaine the Great*, one of the first in blank verse
  - It launched the mature phase of Elizabethan theater
  - It did away with the clumsy moralizing and inept plotting of earlier plays
  - It introduced vivid language, great action scenes and complex characters
- Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* is an indictment of religion
- Marlowe died in 1593 at the young age of 29
- Every British dramatist followed in his footsteps
- Shakespeare eulogized him as 'the dead shepherd'

### **Chapter 3: 1590 - Edmund Spenser Publishes *The Faerie Queene***

**Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- The first great poet of the English Renaissance was Edmund Spenser
- He was part of the 'new poetry' of the Elizabethan Age - The poetry of romantic love
- His masterpiece, *The Faerie Queene*, launched Elizabethan Romantic poetry
  - It was a combination of Italian romance, classical epic and native English
  - It introduced the Spenserian stanza
  - It tells the quest of six knights, each representing a particular virtue: holiness, temperance, chastity, friendship, justice and courtesy
- Spenser's poetry embraced the consciousness of the inner self
- Spenser is considered the father of romantic poetry

### **Chapter 4: 1592 - Sir Walter Raleigh's *The Ocean to Cynthia***

**Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- Sir Walter Raleigh is the epitome of the English Renaissance man

- He wrote his poetic masterpiece, *The Ocean to Cynthia*, during his first imprisonment in the Tower of London
- It captures his obsession with the destruction of time, the loss of love and the nearness of death
- Raleigh was one of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century 's swashbuckling heroes - explorer, soldier and writer
- He was the founder of the failed Roanoke Colony in present day North Carolina
- Raleigh's intense preoccupation with death and human futility makes him one of the most powerful of the English Renaissance authors

### **Chapter 5: 1598 - Ben Jonson Establishes a New Kind of Comedy**

**Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- Ben Jonson was as important to English Renaissance drama as William Shakespeare  
Recognized as the first independent Englishman of letters, Jonson was designated England's first poet laureate in 1617 by King James I
- In 1598 Jonson wrote and produced his masterpiece - *Every Man in His Humour*
- A landmark in satirical comedy, it introduced a whole new way of looking at the human condition as well as structuring a play
- *Every Man in His Humour* became known as the first urban play
  - It introduces a gallery of fools, each with his own flaw, and exposes each one's folly
  - Medical science of the time considered these character flaws, or humors, to be the result of improper balance of bodily fluids
- Jonson's plays expanded on his deep psychological insights into human behavior
- His reputation after his death in 1637 has been mixed

### **Chapter 6: 1631 - John Donne Delivers His Own Death Sermon**

**Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- John Donne's *The Anniversaries* is generally acknowledged as the greatest English long poem written between Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* and Milton's *Paradise Lost*
- His metaphysical sermons are some of the best-known in the English language
- Donne's legacy as a poet and preacher is one of contradiction
- Revered by his literary contemporaries, he is found difficult to read today
- A brief biography of John Donne
  - He was born in London in 1572 to a prosperous Roman Catholic family
  - He was part of the literary circle that included Ben Jonson
  - In 1601 sat in Queen Elizabeth's last Parliament
  - He ended up for a time in the infamous Fleet Prison
  - In 1615 he entered the Anglican ministry and found his calling as a preacher
- His elaborate style, flair for drama and his quick wit soon established him as one of the greatest preachers of the era
- A few days before his death he preached *Death's Duel*, said to be the words of a dying man

## **Chapter 7: 1658 - John Milton Begins *Paradise Lost***

**Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- John Milton was the last of the great Renaissance writers
- He was blind and poor when he began dictating his magnum opus, *Paradise Lost*
- In many ways *Paradise Lost* reflects Milton's personal despair over the troubled times which England had just experienced
  - In 1642 the country plunged into a bloody civil war
  - The regicide of King Charles I and the exile of his son, Charles II
  - The replacement of the English monarchy with the Commonwealth of England
  - The country clamored for the return of the Monarchy and Charles II in 1660
- A brief biography of Milton
  - When Milton finished his education he became an activist
  - He challenged the church hierarchy, advocated legalizing divorce, removal of censorship, and justified the regicide of Charles I
  - He vigorously defended England's attempt to establish a Republic
- *Paradise Lost*'s twin narrative themes are the fall of the Archangel Lucifer from Heaven and Adam and Eve's fall from Eden
- A brief overview of the 12 books
  - Book one begins in Hell with Milton describing every form of evil
  - The Fallen Angels plot to get revenge against God by war or trickery
  - Lucifer goes to earth, witnesses the beauty of God's creation and despises it
  - He overhears Adam warn Eve they mustn't eat from the Tree of Knowledge
  - Archangel Raphael warns Adam about Lucifer
  - Lucifer, disguised as a serpent, preys on Eve's vanity and tricks her into eating from the Tree of Knowledge
  - When Adam discovers Eve has sinned, he knowingly does the same, declaring they are bound together, having been made of the same flesh
  - God dispatches Archangel Michael to send them out of Paradise
- The timelessness of *Paradise Lost* is that it speaks directly to the soul of the reader
  - For many the story of Lucifer mirrors Milton's own life of rebellion
  - Others make the argument that Milton's life mirrors Adam's
- *Paradise Lost* is followed by *Paradise Regained*
- Milton died in 1674, setting the stage for the conflicts that were about to rise during the age of enlightenment where scientific knowledge challenged all divine authority

## **Program 3: Augustan and Romantic Poets**

Program three delves into the new kind of poet produced by the British Isles, the poet hero who finds inspiration in nature and love.

Chapters one and two show how the appreciation of classical literature infused a grander tone into the poetry of John Dryden and Alexander Pope.

How Dr. Samuel Johnson sought to bring order to the English language through his dictionary is discussed in chapter three.

Chapter four shows how Scottish poet Robert Burns was the first to break free of the Neo-classical Renaissance of Augustan poets.

Chapters five and six investigate the Romantic Age in English literature by showcasing the lives and works of Lord Byron, William Blake, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Keats and Percy Bysshe Shelley.

Chapter seven shows how William Wordsworth brought a new dimension to English Literature by creating an intimate relationship between the author and the reader.

How Alfred Lord Tennyson became England's Poet Laureate is discussed in chapter eight.

Chapter nine shows how Victorian Age poets Elizabeth Barrett Browning and her husband Robert Browning laid the foundation for 20th Century modernism.

### **Chapter 1: 1681 - The Age of Dryden Begins**

**Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- John Dryden was a poet, playwright, literary critic and classics translator
- His genius dominated the literary world of Restoration England
- The era became known in literary circles as The Age of Dryden
- Dryden grew up during England's conflicts between Monarchy and Parliament
- In 1660 he wrote *Astraea Redux*, celebrating the return of Charles II
  - The public speech launched Dryden's twin careers as a government official and as the leading literary light of Restoration England
- Dryden's plays anticipated the philosophical ideals embraced by the 18<sup>th</sup> Century's Age of Enlightenment
- Dryden's greatest achievements continue to be his satires
- In his final years Dryden made his living as a translator of classics
- Dryden died in 1700 and was interred in Westminster Abbey

### **Chapter 2: 1712 - Alexander Pope, *The Rape of the Lock***

**Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- Pope is known for some of the greatest aphorisms in the English language
- Born into a London linen merchant's family in 1688, Pope was largely self-educated
  - He was influenced by the classics as well as Chaucer and Shakespeare
- Pope used poetry to tell people how to live their lives properly and make society better
  - His famous satirical poem, *The Rape of the Lock* illustrates this
  - First, Pope tells readers it is wonderful to be beautiful from the point of view of the observer
  - But at the same time he advises it is stupid to be taken in by surface beauty
- Pope became one of the first writers to make a living entirely through writing

### **Chapter 3: 1755 - Dr. Johnson Completes *A Dictionary of the English Language***

**Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- Dr. Samuel Johnson was a poet, essayist, moralist, literary critic, biographer, editor and lexicographer
- He was the quintessential writer's writer, contributing to and helping all of his writer friends
- He established literary criticism and biography as legitimate forms of literature
- He is best known for his dictionary of the English language
  - Johnson's *A Dictionary of the English Language* was a tour de force of scholarship and had a far reaching effect on modern English
  - It provided a sense of the English language as it was really used
  - The dictionary became a critical framework for all the great British writing
- Johnson's dictionary remained the most widely used British dictionary until publication of the Oxford English Dictionary in 1928

### **Chapter 4: 1786 - Robert Burns' *Poems Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect***

**Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- Robert Robbie Burns was Scotland's National Poet
- His verse captures universal feelings shared by all people
- Burns' formal schooling was scanty
- His breakthrough book *Poems Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* first appeared in 1786
- It led to the literati of the era crowning him 'A heaven taught plowman'
- He eloquently echoed rural themes that embodied the emotions of the masses
- Burns became the model of the poet as a native genius
  - This impression was partly myth and partly true
  - Burns' upbringing was hard and he suffered financially for most of his life, but he was also well read, with a quick wit and keen intelligence
- Recognizing the opportunity to break free from neo classicism of Augustan poets, he crafted poems relying on Scotland's rich oral tradition
- Before he died at age 37, Burns wrote over 300 poems and songs

### **Chapter 5: 1819 - Lord Byron Pens *Don Juan***

**Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- The first great poet celebrity Lord Byron's life epitomized epic romantic fiction
  - He had numerous love affairs, made a self-imposed exile from his native England, and died a hero's death at the young age of 36
- Born George Byron in 1788, he became George Gordon Byron, 6th Baron Byron when he was only 10
- Though his education was haphazard, his obsessive passion for life and love made him a model of the Romantic Movement
- He was the epitome of the tortured, isolated, sulking poet, revolting against the aristocratic social and political norms of the Age of Enlightenment

- Byron's initial claim to poetic fame came in 1812 with the publication of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*
- What followed were poems that were often the antithesis of the romantic poets, choosing irony over transcendence
- In his best-known satirical work, *Don Juan*, Byron creates the ironic epic
  - At the same time, *Don Juan* is in many ways autobiographical

### **Chapter 6: 1790 - 1830 - The Four Romantic Poets**

#### **Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- William Blake, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Keats and Percy Bysshe Shelley are united by Britain's great Romantic period
  - All four men wrote lyrical poetry and found inspiration in the sublime of nature
  - They were all infinitely interested in the workings of the mind and imagination
  - They all produced major works between 1790 and 1830
- Poet, painter and print maker, William Blake was the groundbreaking figure in poetry and visual arts of the Romantic Age
  - His *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* set the stage for Britain's greatest era of poetry
- Percy Bysshe Shelley became the idol for generations of artists and philosophers
- John Keats is a poet who beneath the sensuous surface of his words, weaves a brilliant tangle of opposite feelings
- Samuel Taylor Coleridge was a co-founder of the Romantic Movement and a member of England's celebrated Lake District Poets

### **Chapter 7: 1850 - Wordsworth's Spiritual Autobiography Ends**

#### **Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- William Wordsworth is one of the founding fathers of British literature and one of the founders of the literary Romantic Movement
- He turned writing into what is now defined as "literature"
- Wordsworth's great ode, *Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood* invites us to experience how age causes us to lose sight of the divine
  - The ode reveals Wordsworth's grasp of the emerging understanding of psychological development
- Wordsworth introduced the idea of the process of writers discovering themselves
  - Discovering their inner nature by writing, while at the same time allowing the reader to engage in the same process by reading
- Wordsworth used his poetry as a way of extending the principles of the Enlightenment into literature
- Wordsworth's assembly of the laws of man in a system of poems stands as insightful and fresh today as when they were written

## **Chapter 8: 1850 - Alfred Lord Tennyson is Made Poet Laureate of England**

**Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- Born at the beginning of the Romantic Era, Tennyson showed a deep command of the English language through beautiful and evocative lyrics
- He was the key literary figure in Britain's transition from the age of the Romantics to the Victorian Era
- He wrote as Britain transformed from an agricultural country to an industrialized one
- Tennyson captured the era's zeitgeist and became known as the 'Poet of the People'
- In 1850, Tennyson succeeded Wordsworth as England's Poet Laureate, holding the position until his death 1892

## **Chapter 9: 1864 - The Brownings**

**Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Robert Browning were Victorian poets who bridged the chasm between Romanticism and modern British literature
- Together in 15 glorious years, in the friendly confines of Florence Italy, they found romance, companionship and creative inspiration
- Elizabeth, a liberal, a humanist and a self-taught intellectual, was the most important female British poet of the 19th Century
- Through her poetry she searched for the role of the modern woman, and founded concerns about feminism and spirituality
- She argued that the poet's duty was to 'represent our age'
- In Italy Robert gained the insight to transform his poetry from the conventional to works that were extraordinarily daring and original
- He brought into British poetry the vocabulary and rhythm of common speech
- Robert's innovation influenced all poets that followed from Thomas Hardy to T.S. Eliot to William Butler Yeats

## **Program 4: The Early Novelists**

Program four shows the development of the first novel, showcasing the great novelists of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries.

Chapter one investigates why John Bunyan is considered the first English novelist.

Chapter two shows why Henry Fielding was the first novelist to personalize this new genre.

Why Jane Austen is considered the greatest of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century's romantic women novelists is shown in chapter three.

Chapter four depicts the life of Sir Walter Scott and his creation of the historical novel.

Chapter five describes how Charles Dickens, the third pillar of British literature after Shakespeare and Chaucer, opened the novel to its full range of possibilities.

The Brontë sisters' incredible contributions to British literature are discussed in chapter six.

Chapter seven describes how Robert Louis Stevenson brought the golden age of the British novel to a close.

### **Chapter 1: 1679 - John Bunyan, Father of the English Novel**

#### **Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will**

##### **learn:**

- John Bunyan was a Christian mystic and preacher
- He came to understand that man's nature was essentially flawed and only faith in God's grace held the key to salvation
- He was imprisoned for his religious beliefs that were at the heart of Bunyan's great Christian allegory: *Pilgrim's Progress*
- Many call *Pilgrim's Progress* the first English novel
  - *Pilgrim's Progress* is an allegorical journey to salvation
  - It follows a man named Christian, who is tormented by spiritual anguish, and Christian's spiritual guide, Evangelist
- Today, those who share Bunyan's Christian faith continue to revere his writings as a spiritual guide
- Students of English literature regard this spiritual autobiography as something new and thus the first English novel

### **Chapter 2: 1749 - Henry Fielding Writes *Tom Jones***

#### **Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will**

##### **learn:**

- Many call Henry Fielding the father of the modern novel because he was the first major novelist to unabashedly write fiction
- Fielding set out to go into law, but was forced to turn to writing to make a living
- Fielding introduced the innovative device of the omnipotent narrator
- Fielding's 1749 comic masterpiece, *Tom Jones*, shows off his innovative flair at its best
  - The novel is robust, filled with earthy humor and sensual pleasure, surrounding the pursuit of young love
  - Through the deft use of satire, *Tom Jones* portrays the conflict between lust and social morality
  - *Tom Jones* offers insights into English society and institutions of the time
  - Readers also catch a glimpse of true human nature, and the idea of society as a complex, mutually dependent totality
- Fielding laid the foundation for all the great British novelists that were to follow

### **Chapter 3: 1813 - *Pride and Prejudice*, a Novel by Jane Austen**

**Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- In her books Jane Austen establishes a relationship between herself and her readers
  - It is a relationship of romantic love, sexual tension without sex, and sisterhood
- Jane Austen was born in 1775 into the lower class of English gentry
  - Part of a close-knit family, it was through their unwavering support that she was able to develop as a professional writer
- She was one of the premier novelists of the romantic movement
- Her 1813 *Pride and Prejudice* is Britain's 2<sup>nd</sup> best-loved book
- An entire society has grown up around her - the Austenites
  - These people feel an intimacy and personal friendship with Austen
- Though Austen never married, all of her novels end with marriage
- Austen died at the young age of 42 from a mysterious illness

### **Chapter 4: 1819 - Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe***

**Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- Sir Walter Scott is known as “the author of Waverley”
- Scott became the first English-language author to have a truly international career in his lifetime with readers in Europe, Australia, and North America
- Although he obtained a law degree, Scott's lifelong interest in Scottish folktales led to his becoming a writer
- In 1805 his *Lay of the Last Minstrel* was published to public acclaim
- In 1819, Scott founded one of the most popular literary forms, the historical novel, with *Ivanhoe*
  - *Ivanhoe* is credited with reviving interest in medieval England

### **Chapter 5: 1837 - Charles Dickens Begins *Oliver Twist***

**Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- Charles Dickens wrote during the Victorian Age when Britain was at the height of its industrial might
  - Industrialization had completely transformed the country
  - Britain had become an urban society of great wealth and great poverty
  - Dickens' writings captured the era's zeitgeist
- Dickens was the greatest creator of characters in English literature since Shakespeare
  - They populate Dickens' dreamy world of brilliant urban landscapes
- Charles Dickens was born in 1812, the son of a working-class family
- His experience as a child laborer would become a source of his creative drive and his preoccupation with the themes of poverty, alienation and betrayal
- Dickens launched his successful writing career with *The Pickwick Papers*
- *Oliver Twist* in 1837 showed Dickens' true literary genius
  - It was the first book written from the child's perspective and was an early example of the social novel

- His eighth novel, *David Copperfield*, published in 1850 is the first deeply psychological novel in the modern sense
  - *David Copperfield* is also considered a Bildungsroman – a novel of self-cultivation
- Dickens gave public readings that made him hugely successful
- In his late 40s Dickens began his historical masterpiece - *A Tale of Two Cities*
  - *A Tale of Two Cities* mirrors his own life when his marriage was falling apart
  - The book follows the parallel lives of several people through the events leading up to and including the French Revolution
- After *A Tale of Two Cities*, Dickens entered a dark period of retrospection
  - Out of this came *Great Expectations* where Dickens once again uses the highly subjective first-person narrative to rework his own childhood
  - Dickens sees the chief problems in life as being people's failing to understand one another clearly
  - He also underscores the inhumanity of British social institutions
- Dickens completed the last of his 14 novels in 1865
- He continued his public readings until his death after a stroke in 1870
- No author has been more popular with Hollywood and the BBC than Dickens

## **Chapter 6: 1847 - The Brontë Sisters**

### **Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- The Brontë sisters - Charlotte, Emily and Anne - are the greatest novelist sisters of the Victorian Age
  - Each sister created a startlingly new paradigm for Victorian fiction
  - Each sister's literary voice was unique
  - Charlotte and Anne wrote about oppressed governesses who solved their problems through good marriages
  - Emily and Anne wrote scenes of violence and perversity
  - Charlotte pioneered realism
  - Emily wrote romantic and lyrical novels
  - Anne made her mark with didactic or reform novels
- The Brontë sisters began writing at an early age by collaborating on stories
- Each sister published a masterpiece of English literature
  - Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* tells the story of a young woman, tormented physically and emotionally from her childhood to becoming a governess
  - Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* broke new ground with its stark depictions of mental and physical cruelty
  - Anne Brontë's *Agnes Grey* follows the travels of a young governess who works for middle class families
- The impact the Brontë sisters has been wide-ranging, profoundly influencing everything from Marxism to feminism to post structuralism

**Chapter 7: 1886 - Robert Louis Stevenson Introduces *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde***  
**Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- Robert Louis Stevenson is known today for three masterworks, *Treasure Island*, *Kidnapped*, and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*
- Stevenson was born in 1850 into an upscale family in Edinburgh, Scotland
- A sickly child, health issues plagued him all his life, however, blessed with a vivid imagination, he resolutely pursued a writing career
- His career was cut short when his chronic illnesses caught up with him at age 34
- In the 20th Century he was recognized for his keen social and psychological insights
- *Treasure Island* is considered a coming-of-age story
  - It is also a wry commentary on the ambiguity of morality as seen in the one legged, charismatic villain, Long John Silver
- *Kidnapped*, is the best example of Stevenson's skill as a storyteller
- His *magnum opus* is his brilliant 1886 foray into the Gothic - *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*
  - Here, Stevenson provides powerful insights into the dual nature of the human psyche: good and evil as two sides of the same coin
  - As a social commentary, the novel is an indictment of Victorians' obsession with outward respectability while at the same time satisfying base desires

**Program 5: Children's Literature**

Program five shows how a group of eclectic British authors brought forth a new genre of literature – children's books.

Chapter one depicts the life of Daniel Defoe and the creation of the first children's novel, *Robinson Crusoe*.

Chapter two shows how Lewis Carroll would change the nature of children's literature forever.

Chapter three describes the life and literature of Beatrix Potter.

How author A.A. Milne created Winnie the Pooh and Christopher Robin is depicted in chapter four.

Chapter five discusses the groundbreaking children's fantasy of J.R.R. Tolkien.

How author Roald Dahl redefined children's literature is the subject of chapter six.

Chapter seven delves into the fantasy and philosophy of J.K. Rowling's hit series, Harry Potter.

### **Chapter 1: 1719 - Daniel Defoe Pens *Robinson Crusoe***

**Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* was the first children's book
- Defoe, born in London sometime around 1660, was an English trader, writer, journalist, spy, prisoner, polemicist and poet
- As a polemicist his themes included schemes for social and economic improvements
- In *Crusoe*, Defoe created a new archetype, a hero still popular 300 years later
  - The modern individual and the self-made man who defeats hostile outside forces
- The story is about a lone survivor of a shipwreck stranded on an island for 28 years
- He creates a mini-colonial civilization by taming animals, gathering fruit, growing crops, and hunting
- The book is full of adventure, pirates, shipwrecks, cannibals, mutiny
- Crusoe finally makes his escape when a ship of mutineers sails to the island
- *Robinson Crusoe* has become one of the most successful books of all time
- Defoe firmly set the stage for Britain's great tradition in children's literature

### **Chapter 2: 1865 - Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland***

**Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, also known as Lewis Carroll, is the most profound and enduring of all Victorian writers
- He contributed greatly to the popularity of children's books
- As a university teacher, Dodgson's life was unremarkable
- As the author Lewis Carroll he was brilliant, establishing what is known as the nonsense tradition in English literature
- Carroll used nonsense and absurd logic to undermine Victorian England's sentimentality about childhood innocence and its system of rules and morals
- In *Alice in Wonderland*, Alice's pursuit of meaning slips away every time, just when it seems to be within her grasp
- It is said Dodgson wrote his masterpiece *Alice in Wonderland* for Alice Liddell, the young daughter of Christchurch's dean
- Six years later he wrote the much darker and gloomier *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There*
  - Here the theme is not lack of meaning but total annihilation
- Children quickly learn the make-believe world of Lewis Carroll is more fun than the fictional narratives of adults

### **Chapter 3: 1901 - Beatrix Potter Publishes *The Tale of Peter Rabbit***

**Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- Beatrix Potter wrote and illustrated her children's book *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*
  - It follows the mischievous and disobedient young Peter Rabbit as he is chased about the garden of Mr. McGregor
  - The tale was written for the son of Potter's governess

- Beatrix Potter was born into a wealthy family
- An independent child, she was drawn to the study of biology and nature
- Following *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, Potter published 23 children's books
- Her books contain a unique blend of fantasy and an unsentimental understanding of animals and people
- She allowed that nature was both beautiful and ruthless
- Potter was also a genius at business and was the first to not only market her books but every manner of associated products

#### **Chapter 4: 1926 - A.A. Milne Creates *Winnie the Pooh***

**Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- Alan Alexander Milne authored one of the happiest books of childhood
- Upon its publication *Winnie the Pooh* was celebrated as the greatest British children's book since *Alice in Wonderland*
  - Christopher Robin was author A.A. Milne's only child
  - "Pooh" was just one of his son's many stuffed animal playmates
- Before WWI, Milne gained popularity as a satirist, essayist and writer of light verse
- After the war, he transitioned to a serious playwright and novelist
- With the birth of his son, Christopher Robin, Milne took up children's literature
- A book of children's poems was followed by his classic *Winnie the Pooh*
- *Winnie the Pooh* follows the British tradition of using clever language to entertain but not educate
- A.A. Milne died in 1956, regretting that he would always be known best as a children's writer

#### **Chapter 5: 1937 - J. R. R. Tolkien Writes *The Hobbit***

**Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- J.R.R. Tolkien was a Medievalist professor who lectured at Oxford
- His literary goal was to create a mythology for England greater than the Christian-influenced Arthurian legends
- His mythology is contained in his legendary books; *The Hobbit* and the trilogy – *The Lord of the Rings*
- Middle Earth, the setting of his great writings, is the magical Celtic world of England, filled with hobbits, elves, dwarves, evil creatures and men
- Tolkien's great English mythology is presented in three stages
  - *The Silmarillion* contains Middle Earth's creation story
  - *The Hobbit* introduces the quest of Bilbo Baggins to win a share of the treasure guarded by the dragon, Smaug
  - The three volumes of *The Lord of the Rings* expand upon Bilbo's adventure
- Frodo Baggins embarks on an epic journey to save Middle Earth by returning the all-powerful "One Ring" to its proper place
- The undercurrent of Tolkien's anti-hero mythology is that he was keenly aware of those individuals or groups or races who exist as societal outcasts

### **Chapter 6: 1961 - *James and the Giant Peach*, a Title by Roald Dahl**

**Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- Roald Dahl had an interesting and at times tragic life
- His 1961 book, *James and the Giant Peach*, carries on the tradition of children's books that are unsentimental, often dark, but humorous, clever and entertaining
- In *James and the Giant Peach*, young James Henry Trotter is orphaned
- He must go to live with two cruel aunts who treat him like a slave
  - An old man appears, offering James a bag of crystals that cause a dead peach tree to grow a piece of fruit the size of a house
  - Dahl also weaves funny singsong poetry into his fantastical tales, which makes his books wonderful to read aloud
- Dahl doesn't hide the fact that the world can be a grim and unfair place
- But Dahl appeals to the strong sense of natural justice in children
- He invites young readers to revel in a marvelously imagined world where people, both good and bad, get exactly what they deserve

### **Chapter 7: 1997 - J. K. Rowling Introduces *Harry Potter***

**Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- JK Rowling's *Harry Potter* series is in many ways a parallel to British society today
- The seven book series turned out to be the best-selling book series ever
- An orphan, young Harry survives a childhood in the care of a cruel aunt and uncle
- He experiences a reversal of fortune when he enters the world of wizardry
- Harry is educated at Hogwarts, where he discovers a magical world paralleling the human world
- In Harry's fictional world choice rather than fate or character determines one's future
  - Choices make you the author of your own life
- Loved by readers of all ages, J.K. Rowling has joined the well-established tradition of British fantasy for children

### **Program 6: The Genre Innovators**

In Program six we see how British authors pioneered horror, science fiction, cautionary tales, detective novels and spy thrillers.

Chapter one depicts the life of Mary Shelley and her creation of the first Gothic horror novel.

Sherlock Holmes, the archetypal detective, and his creator, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, are discussed in chapter two.

Chapter three investigates how the 19<sup>th</sup> Century's quest for technology would lead to the science fiction genre pioneered by H.G. Wells.

Chapter four depicts how the darker side of technology called for cautionary tales such as *Brave New World* and *1984*.

In Chapter five we shall look into how Agatha Christie, the first woman of detective novels, redefined the genre.

Chapter six shows how Ian Fleming created the archetypical spy thriller hero.

### **Chapter 1: 1818 - Mary Shelley Gives Rise to Frankenstein**

**Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- The most famous literary work of Britain's 19<sup>th</sup> Century romantic era was Mary Shelley's Gothic novel *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*
- It still resonates as a cautionary indictment of the modern scientific world and the unpredictable consequences of technology and the exploitation of the natural world
- Mary Shelley was born into an avant garde English family
  - Her mother was feminist, philosopher, educator, and writer Mary Wollstonecraft, and her father was philosopher, novelist, and journalist William Godwin
- At the age of 15 she met the dashing, Romantic poet and political radical Percy Bysshe Shelley
- *Frankenstein* resulted from a contest to see who could write the most frightening story
- Drawing upon her own childhood, Mary explores what happens when a man attempts to have a child without a woman
  - The novel also focuses on the dangers of science
  - The novel is a brilliant allusion to the mythic fire Prometheus stole from the gods
  - Shelley shows that the experiment of an unmothered child without thought of its consequences can become a monster
- Mary Shelley's legacy rests on establishing the foundation for the Gothic horror genre

### **Chapter 2: 1887 - Sir Arthur Conan Doyle Introduces Sherlock Holmes**

**Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- Sherlock Holmes is the most recognized character in all detective fiction
- He was made famous by the master of Victorian detective fiction – Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
- Doyle trained to become a doctor but began writing stories while in medical school
- In 1887 he introduced Sherlock Homes in his novella, *A Study in Scarlet*
- Doyle modeled Holmes after one of his medical professors
- Doyle's Sherlock Holmes would set the standard for all literary whodunit heroes
  - The standard included an extraordinary ability to focus, keen observation skills, razor sharp wit, a master of martial arts, and a man of science and reason
  - Holmes was also wonderfully eccentric
- Doyle wrote 70 books and became the highest paid author of the era
- Sherlock Holmes is the most portrayed movie character in history

### **Chapter 3: 1895 - H.G. Wells, *The Time Machine***

**Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- H.G. Wells, was one of the most influential writers of the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century
- Many now call him the father of science fiction
- His favorite topic was the future
  - He saw the future beset by technological innovation as marvelous as it is transformative and dangerous
- Wells transformed novel writing to include histories, political commentary and most importantly scientific conjecture
- Herbert George Wells was born on September 21<sup>st</sup> 1866 into England's lower-class
  - Wells was an avid reader and taught himself the scientific theories of the day
  - Wells studied biology and evolution with Thomas Henry Huxley
- Wells wrote his novels with belief that the British Empire was in moral decline
- For Wells the future would not necessarily be better than the present
- In *The Time Machine*, a gentleman inventor travels into the future and finds a world in decline
- Wells clearly recognized that scientific power in the wrong hands can reshape the world into an unfamiliar dangerous place, as in *The Island of Dr. Moreau*
- Wells' provocative *War of the Worlds* has had the greatest continuing impact on the psyche of the world
  - The novel, written in two books, details the Martian invaders relentless attack on Earth
- After his breakthrough science fiction novels, Wells continued to write history, social critique, and futurism
- He also involved himself in the politics and social controversies of the time

### **Chapter 4: 1932 -1948 - Huxley and Orwell Pen Dystopian Novels**

**Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- Aldous Huxley was born into one of Britain's premier intellectual families
- Huxley became one of the preeminent thinkers and writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century
- He turned out a breathtaking two books every year for five decades
- He is best known for his landmark cautionary tale *Brave New World*
  - It tells of a world where, "Man has replaced nature by science, morality by drugs, and individuality by total conformity"
  - The book is a profound cautionary story and an indictment of social engineering
- One of Huxley's young Eton students was George Orwell
- Orwell, working for the British government in WWII, got his first taste of institutional conformity
- The experience would lead him to write indictments of totalitarianism
  - *Animal Farm* and *1984* are cautionary tales of what might happen if social trends of the day were not reversed

- His creation Newspeak and the concept of Big Brother were two of the most ingenious inventions in British literature

### **Chapter 5: 1934 - Agatha Christie, First Woman of Detective Fiction**

#### **Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- Agatha Christie, known as, the Queen of Crime, is listed by *The Guinness Book of World Records* as the greatest selling author of all time
- She first achieved acclaim with her detective novel *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*
  - It introduced the Belgian detective, Hercule Poirot
- Her endearing Miss Jane Marple did not appear until 1927 in *The Thirteen Problems*
  - Marple was based on Christie's grandmother
  - As a spinster, Marple allowed Christie to dispense with mannerisms associated with being a woman, such as sex and intimacy
- Her two famous sleuths are keenly intelligent, but not superheroes
  - Their enduring popularity rests as an everyman and everywoman
- She established a successful formula for detective fiction – the intellectual whodunit
  - It sacrificed character development for an intriguing combination of gripping mystery and compelling detection
- Christie turned out a novel every year from 1920 until 1976
- She prepared for her own death and the deaths of her celebrated detectives by writing their finales during WWII and storing them in a vault until her passing

### **Chapter 6: 1953 - Ian Fleming Writes the First Bond Spy Thriller**

#### **Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- Ian Fleming's own life inspired his creation, James Bond
  - During the war, Fleming was a Naval Intelligence Officer
- After the war he served as a journalist with London's *Sunday Times*
- Fleming's 007 set the standard not only for the super spy but for the spy genre
- By using Britain's decline on the world stage as a backdrop, Fleming introduced the storyline of the underdog against powerful global conspiracies
  - In Fleming's era it was the Cold War
- He also introduced the use of technological gadgets that are now part of every spy novel
- He built the mold of the perfect super spy - suave, sexy, savvy, laconic
- In 2000, *The Times* ranked him fourteenth on its list of the 50 greatest British writers since WWII

### **Program 7: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Poets and Playwrights**

Program seven explores how as science brought dizzying change to Britain's Victorian moral certitude, a new artistic movement responded - Modernism.

Chapter one depicts the life and work of Britain's first Nobel Prize laureate in Literature, Rudyard Kipling.

Chapter two shows how John Galsworthy reinvigorated British drama by examining the injustices of the British class system.

T.S. Eliot, an intellectual leader of British literature, is depicted in chapter three.

A new wave of British poetry hallmarked by a greater social consciousness and led by the '30s poets is discussed in chapter four.

Chapter five examines the life and poetry of Welsh author Dylan Thomas.

Chapter six looks at how Harold Pinter led the British theater revival in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

### **Chapter 1: 1907 - Rudyard Kipling Wins the Nobel Prize**

**Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- In his day Rudyard Kipling was the best known and most influential author writing about the British Empire, and was called the unofficial laureate of the British Empire
  - He was a strong advocate and defender of colonialism
- But it was his pioneering work in the art of the short story that earned him accolades from academia and a Nobel Prize in Literature in 1907
- Kipling is today controversial, because of his belief that it was the duty of the British Empire to bring civilization to the third world
- His literary greatness rests on his two *Jungle Books*
  - His tales of the orphaned Mowgli, raised by wolves and taught the way of the jungle by Baloo the bear, has inspired generations of young boys and girls

### **Chapter 2: 1920 - John Galsworthy's *The Skin Game* is Performed**

**Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- John Galsworthy is the last and one of the most prolific of the Edwardian authors
- He wrote 22 plays spanning 25 years, and is the author of the multi-generational, English family saga commonly called *The Forsyte Chronicles*
- Born in 1867 into a wealthy shipping family, Galsworthy was intent on going into work other than writing
- Everything changed when a young Galsworthy met Joseph Conrad, then a first mate on a sailing ship
- Galsworthy's writing paints two distinct pictures of English society
  - In his fiction, such as *The Forsyte Saga*, he presents the prim but vacuous life of upper-middle-class British society
  - With his plays Galsworthy paints a picture of the grim and often unjust life of the less fortunate
    - *The Silver Box* underscores how class influences justice
    - *Strife* portrays the exploitation of labor by management
    - *The Eldest Son* exposes the repression of women

- *Justice* represents the failings of the English prison system
- Galsworthy's 1920 *Skin Game* and its portrayal of old versus new money has proved to be his most popular play
- Galsworthy won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1932

### **Chapter 3: 1922 - T.S. Eliot, Intellectual Giant**

**Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- T.S. Eliot was one of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century's intellectual giants, the greatest of the modernist poets, and a Christian mystic
- He was a mentor to and critic of all men and women of letters in the 20th Century
- Born into a wealthy American family, he went for a PhD in philosophy at Harvard
- Eliot was keenly aware of the empty social rituals he participated in
- The struggle with the predicaments of subjectivity found its expression in Eliot's early work, 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock'
- After 'Prufrock' Eliot met fellow American expatriate Ezra Pound who recognized Eliot's genius
- Eliot decided to stay in England and become a British citizen
- During this time he wrote his stunning critique of modernism, 'Wasteland'
- The modernist critique continued 3 years later with 'The Hollow Men'
- The same year 'The Hollow Men' was written, Eliot joined the publishing firm of Faber and Faber
- At Faber and Faber, he was responsible for publishing important English poets including W.H. Auden, Stephen Spender, and Ted Hughes
- In 1936 Eliot published the first of his four quartets
  - Each of the poems includes meditations on the nature of time, existence, and the mystical aspect of Christianity
  - Each poem is associated with one of the four classical elements: air, earth, water, and fire
  - In the four quartets Eliot's earlier harsh critique of the emptiness and shallowness of modernism is replaced by a deep understanding
- Eliot won the Nobel Prize in 1948

### **Chapter 4: 1937 – The '30s Poets**

**Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- W. H. Auden and Steven Spender were Britain's leading post modernist writers
  - These writers saw poetry as a means to teach, communicate political views and demonstrate social protest
- Auden and Spender met at Oxford in the late 20s and became the nucleus of what later would be called Britain's '30s poets
  - These included the who's who of the British Isles' ante-WWII poet elite
- After Oxford, Auden and Spender's poetry took different paths
  - Auden became noted for his clipped style and an engagement with moral and political issues

- Spender concentrated on themes of his own sexuality, social injustice and class struggle
- Auden died in 1973 and Spender in 1995

### **Chapter 5: 1953 - Dylan Thomas, Larger-Than-Life Poet, Dies**

**Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- Welsh poet Dylan Thomas was the legendary everyman poet
- Born in Wales in 1914, Thomas was a sickly child and undistinguished student
- His 1934 poem, *Light Breaks Where No Sun Shines*, caught the attention of the literary world
- Soon Thomas was recognized as the leader of the next wave of British poetry
- Thomas engaged in themes that encompassed the concerns of the average person
  - The paradox of the ever-changing world
  - Landscapes of sea, country and the outer world in general
- Although Thomas was appreciated as a popular poet in his lifetime, what drove his enduring fame were his BBC readings and broadcasts
- His masterpiece was his play *Under Milk Wood*
  - Mixing lyrical prose with ballads and songs, it presents a haunting portrait of a fictional Welsh fishing village
- Finally his drinking and ill health caught up with him and he died at age 39

### **Chapter 6: 2005 - Harold Pinter Wins the Nobel Prize**

**Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- Harold Pinter's play *The Homecoming* epitomizes the themes that have come to characterize a Pinter play
  - The sparseness of set and characters
  - The thickness of the outer and inner nearby menace
  - The dangerous threatening cold and near brutality
- Pinter was born in 1930 into an East London, lower middle class Jewish family
- His terrifying experiences during the London blitz of WWII left him with feelings of bewilderment, loneliness and loss
  - These became major themes in all of his works
- Pinter wrote over 25 plays between 1957 and his death in 2008
- At the time of his death he had become the elderly statesman of British theater having won the Nobel Prize for literature in 2005

### **Program 8: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Novelists**

Program eight investigates how the end of the Victorian Age led to an outpouring of genius from the British Isles' novelists.

Chapter one shows how Joseph Conrad used the novel to delve into the dark recesses of the human psyche.

Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury group are discussed in chapter two.

Chapter three depicts the life and work of E.M. Forster.

Chapter four shows how D. H. Lawrence used his literary skills to paint a picture of the relationship between sensuality and love.

Chapter five looks at how Somerset Maugham merged Eastern mysticism with Western culture.

How William Golding pioneered magic realism is discussed in chapter six.

Chapter seven examines the existentialism of John Fowles.

Chapter eight looks at the life and work of Nobel Prize winner Doris Lessing.

### **Chapter 1:1902 - Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness***

#### **Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- Joseph Conrad was the first writer of the modernist British novel
- Born in 1857 in Poland, Conrad left home at 17, joining the British Merchant Service
- In 1886 he became a naturalized British subject
- Conrad's 20 years at sea and his travels to exotic regions deeply influenced his writing
- While serving as a first mate on board a passenger ship, Conrad met John Galsworthy
  - The two men encouraged each other to write what would turn out to be many literary masterpieces
- Though often thought of as a writer of exotic sea tales, Conrad is known more for exploring moral ambiguities of human nature
- In his masterwork, *The Heart of Darkness*, Conrad delved deep into the insoluble struggle of an individual mind against what he called "the incomprehensible"
  - *The Heart of Darkness* focuses on Charley Marlow as he relates an exotic tale piloting a steamship up an African river to an isolated ivory trading station
  - Marlow is in search of the company manager, Kurtz, who is supposedly civilized, and finds instead a soulless man who has gone to heinous extremes to survive
  - Conrad's novel exposes the sinister side of English colonialism
  - It also shows how the veneer of civilization can be stripped away to reveal savagery
- Conrad wrote 20 novels and many short stories and essays before his death in 1924

### **Chapter 2: 1922 - Virginia Woolf's Bloomsbury Group**

#### **Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- The most powerful intellectual circle of early 20th Century England was the Bloomsbury group

- Founded in 1903, the Bloomsbury Group reached the pinnacle of its influence in the 20s before fading away in World War II
  - It included writers, painters and thinkers from all disciplines
  - Its celebrated leader was Virginia Woolf
- This group rejected Victorian social mores, religion, codes of behavior and intellectual dogma
- They promoted new philosophies, post impressionistic art, new social theory in economics, modernistic literature and expanding sexual relationships
- Virginia Woolf was raised in a literary family
- She gained recognition as a talented novelist with *Jacob's Room* in 1922
- Woolf became the leader of Modernism with her subsequent books, including the 1925 *Mrs. Dalloway*
  - *Mrs. Dalloway* showcases Woolf as an innovator of the stream-of-consciousness style
  - She also explored the underlying psychological and emotional motives of characters
- Woolf is perhaps best known for her collection of essays forming the foundation for modern feminism
- Virginia Woolf committed suicide in 1941

### **Chapter 3: 1924 - E.M. Forster Writes *A Passage to India***

#### **Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- Edward Morgan Forster was born into an Irish-Welsh, middle-class family and grew up during the height of the British Empire
- He wrote the greatest literary accomplishment of the British Modernism movement - *A Passage to India*
- At Cambridge, Forster developed an affirmation of the world of sensory and sensual experience, combined with a real thirst for truth from human relationships
- Following his Cambridge years, Forster traveled the world and began writing
- His brilliant 1910 novel, *Howard's End*, changed the landscape of the British novel
- *Howard's End* chronicles three families of Britain's Edwardian middle class
- Forster is a favorite of Hollywood
- Five of his six novels have been made into successful movies including *A Passage to India*
  - The plot is simple, and the characters are flat until they come into the interaction with each other on the canvas of the novel
  - It examines India's bid for independence in the twilight of the British Raj through the relationship between the Englishwoman Adela Quested and the Indian Dr. Aziz
  - It was Forster's last novel, although he continued to write until his death in 1970

#### **Chapter 4: 1928 – D.H. Lawrence Shocks the World**

**Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* championed the pleasures of the body and brought sex into literature
  - It promoted the idea that intellectual companionship is not enough for a fulfilling, loving and caring relationship between a man and woman
- In the book, Lady Chatterley's love affair with Oliver Mellors goes much deeper than simple notoriety of sex
  - Their class difference underscores the unfair dominance of intellectuals over the working class
  - Her heightened sexual experience with Mellors proves love can only happen with the body and not just with the mind
- Lawrence was born into a coalminer's family
- His writing was influenced heavily by his working class upbringing, the strained relations between his parents, and his elopement with a married woman
- In his brief 45 years D.H. Lawrence left behind a vast amount of work spanning all genres
- The master of the modernist novel, he rejected the cold machine society that dominated urban landscapes
- He searched for a way of living amid the aloofness of industrialization with tenderness and loving connection between men and women
- D. H. Lawrence died in 1930

#### **Chapter 5: 1944 – W. Somerset Maugham's Prophetic *The Razor's Edge***

**Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- Somerset Maugham's career spanned seven decades
- He originated the espionage thriller, wrote 20 novels, more than 25 plays and over 15 collections of short stories
- His two greatest novels were *Of Human Bondage* and *The Razor's Edge*
- A brief biography of Maugham
  - Born at the zenith of the Victorian Era in 1874
  - Both parents died before he was eleven
  - He studied medicine which was an invaluable time for him as a writer
  - During his studies he wrote *Liza of Lambeth*, which launched his writing career
- Many say Maugham's masterpiece is his semi-autobiographical novel *Of Human Bondage*
  - It was written while Maugham served in France as a member of the Literary Ambulance Drivers
- However, Maugham's *The Razors Edge* places him as an *avant-garde* writer
  - Published in 1944, *The Razors Edge* anticipated the embrace of mystical Eastern culture by Americans and Europeans
  - It tells the story of WWI pilot, Larry Darnell

- Darnell returns from the war and gives up a life of privilege to search for some transcendent meaning in his life
- Maugham died in 1965, having completed his final work at age of 89

### **Chapter 6: 1954 - William Golding Writes *Lord of the Flies***

#### **Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- William Golding was the pioneer of magic realism in literature
  - In magic realism fantastic motifs are characterized by two conflicting perspectives
  - One is based on a rational view of reality
  - The other is based on the acceptance of the supernatural as prosaic reality
  - Magic realism is set in the normal, modern world with authentic descriptions of humans and society
  - It celebrates the body, the senses and relationships between humans
- In 1954 Golding's masterpiece, *Lord of the Flies*, was published
  - The novel tells the story of children stranded on an island trying to govern themselves
  - The book showcases the moral ambiguity and fragility of civilization
- Golding's third novel *Pincher Martin* deals with the last moments of the sole survivor of a torpedo attack during World War II
  - It underscores the fragile line between reality and hallucination
- Golding was a member of a group of European writers traumatically affected by World War II, known as the 'atrocities writers'
- Golding died in 1993 ten years after receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature

### **Chapter 7: 1969 - John Fowles, The Existentialist**

#### **Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- John Fowles was the greatest of the British existential writers, in the tradition of John-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus and Franz Kafka
- His writing was motivated from the belief that life was absurd and meaningless
- Born in 1926, Fowles enlisted at the end of WWII, though he never saw action
- His experiences as a Royal Marine clashed with his studies at Oxford and from that moment on he questioned the meaning of existence
- His four greatest novels are *The Collector*, *The Aristos*, *The Magus*, and *The French Lieutenant's Woman*
- Fowles died in 2005

### **Chapter 8: 2007 - Doris Lessing, Nobel Prize winner**

#### **Student Goals – In this *Great Authors of the British Isles* chapter the students will learn:**

- Doris Lessing's works explored the removal of restricting cultural norms and taboos
  - Removing the restrictions on what a woman could do and be
  - Removing the stereotypes about aging
  - She also explored atheism, Marxism, mysticism as a practicing Sufi, and science fiction

- Doris Lessing grew up on a farm in the British colony of South Rhodesia
- In 1949 Lessing left Africa for London to pursue her writing
- Her first novel, *The Grass is Singing* was published a year later
- In her classic, five-part series of autobiographical novels, *Children of Violence*, each book explores a different theme
  - Racism is a product of a whole way of thinking
  - The cycle of procreation is a prison for women
  - Communism is a failed experiment
  - Dissolving culturally induced boundaries in life and the psyche produce an expanded consciousness as well as the possibility of real human relationships
  - And in the final novel, *The Four Gated City*, the vision of a new humanity that extends beyond the material visible world
- In *The Prisons We Choose To Live Inside*, Lessing shows us that all the 20<sup>th</sup> Century 'isms' are structures we need always to move beyond