SOCIETY OF YOUNG NIGERIAN WRITERS
OLA ROTIMI POSTAL MUSEUM OF WORLD FAMOUS PLAYWRIGHTS

Compiled by:
Wole Adedoyin
Edward Albee

Edward Albee, born in 1928, American playwright, whose most successful plays focus on familial relationships. Edward Franklin Albee was born in Washington, D.C., and adopted as an infant by the American theater executive Reed A. Albee of the Keith-Albee chain of vaudeville and motion picture theaters. Albee attended a number of preparatory schools and, for a short time, Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut. He wrote his first one-act play, *The Zoo Story* (1959), in three weeks. Among his other plays are the one-act *The American Dream* (1961); *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962); *The Ballad of the Sad Café* (1963), adapted from a novel by the American author Carson McCullers; *Tiny Alice* (1964); and *A Delicate Balance* (1966), for which he won the 1967 Pulitzer Prize in drama. For *Seascape* (1975), which had only a brief Broadway run, Albee won his second Pulitzer Prize. His later works include *The Lady from Dubuque* (1977), an adaptation (1979) of *Lolita* by the Russian American novelist Vladimir Nabokov, and *The Man Who Had Three Arms* (1983). In 1994 he received a third Pulitzer Prize for *Three Tall Women* (1991). Albee won a Tony Award in 2002 for *The Goat, or Who is Sylvia* (2002), a play about a happily married architect who falls in love with a goat. Albee’s plays are marked by themes typical of the theater of the absurd, in which characters suffer from an inability or unwillingness to communicate meaningfully or to sympathize or empathize with one another.
Sholom Aleichem

Sholom Aleichem, pseudonym of SOLOMON RABINOVITZ (1859-1916), Yiddish short-story writer, dramatist, and humorist, who is regarded as one of the most creative writers in Yiddish. He was born in Pereyaslav (now Pereyaslav-Khmel’nitskiy), near Kyiv, Ukraine. His pseudonym, also spelled Shalom and Sholem, is a traditional Hebrew and Yiddish greeting that means “peace be with you.” He was a teacher and rabbi. In 1905 he fled Jewish persecution in Russia and at the outbreak of World War I in 1914 settled in New York City. His best-known works, written in Yiddish, describe the life of simple Russian Jews in small towns. Certain characters recur, including Menachem Mendel, the typical small-town Jew; the eternal dreamer and schemer (Luftmensch); and the best loved, Tobias the Dairyman (Tevye der Milchiger), an indestructible optimist.

Sholom Aleichem's works in English translation include Stempenyu (1913), Inside Kasrilevke (1938), The Old Country (1946), Tevye's Daughters (1949), and Adventures of Mottel, The Cantor's Son (1953). The musical comedy Fiddler on the Roof (1964) is based on Sholom Aleichem's stories about Tevye.
Maxwell Anderson

Maxwell Anderson (1888-1959), American playwright, known for the wide-ranging dramatic style of his 30 produced plays. Born in Atlantic, Pennsylvania, Anderson was educated at the University of North Dakota and Stanford University. He was a schoolteacher and journalist until 1924, when his play What Price Glory?, a colorful drama of World War I (1914-1918) written in collaboration with American author Laurence Stallings, was successfully produced in New York City. Anderson's concerns in his dramas included the corrupting influences of power and wealth, especially in politics; the disillusionment of men caught up in war; and the need for action by the individual in defense of justice and freedom. He wrote several historical dramas in blank verse, including Elizabeth the Queen (1930), Mary of Scotland (1933), and Anne of the Thousand Days (1947). He also wrote the domestic dramas Saturday's Children (1927) and The Bad Seed (1954), as well as the librettos for several musicals, including Knickerbocker Holiday (1938) and Lost in the Stars (1949). Anderson won the 1933 Pulitzer Prize in drama for Both Your Houses (1933). His verse play Winterset (1935), inspired by the 1920s murder trial of two anarchists, known as the Sacco-Vanzetti case, won the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award in 1936 and is considered a classic.
John Ashbery

John Ashbery, born in 1928, American poet, playwright, and novelist, whose book *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror* (1976) won the 1976 Pulitzer Prize for poetry and the 1976 National Book Award for poetry. Influenced by surrealism, a 20th-century artistic and literary movement, Ashbery’s poetry is characterized by abstract, unconventional use of imagery and syntax. His verse often focuses on the act of writing and attempts to reveal the internal world of the poet, rejecting conventional realism. To challenge his readers’ preconceptions about poetry, Ashbery uses unexpected juxtapositions of evocative and incongruous imagery.

Ashbery was born in Rochester, New York. He received his B.A. degree in 1949 from Harvard University and his M.A. degree in English literature in 1951 from Columbia University. While at Columbia, Ashbery established close literary friendships with several other poets, including Kenneth Koch, Frank O’Hara, and James Schuyler. This group—along with artists and musicians of their generation—later became known as the New York School.


Philip Barry

S. N. Behrman

S. N. Behrman (1893-1973), American playwright, born in Worcester, Massachusetts, and educated at Clark College and Harvard and Columbia universities. At Harvard he was a member of the 47 Workshop, a playwriting class conducted by George Pierce Baker. Behrman wrote 21 Broadway plays. Almost all of them, from *The Second Man* (1927) through *But for Whom Charlie* (1964), are comedies of manners, noted for the sophistication and wit of their dialogue and the incisiveness of their characterizations. Within these comedies, however, Behrman also incorporated his concerns about the serious social and political matters of his time. Among his most popular dramatic works are *Biography* (1933) and *No Time for Comedy* (1939). Behrman also wrote numerous screenplays.
Robert Montgomery Bird

Robert Montgomery Bird (1806-1854), American playwright and novelist, born in New Castle, Delaware. He wrote several successful tragedies for the American actor and producer Edwin Forrest. The first, *The Gladiator* (1831), was based on the life of the Roman slave Spartacus. Bird's acknowledged masterpiece, *The Broker of Bogota* (1834), is a domestic tragedy.

In his most popular novel, *Nick of the Woods* (1837), Bird portrays the Native American as a savage, in sharp contrast to the idealized aborigine made popular during the same period by the American novelist James Fenimore Cooper. Bird's other novels include *Calavar* (1834), a tale of the conquest of Mexico, and *The Hawks of Hawk-Hollow* (1835), a romance of the American Revolution (1775-1783).
Marc Connelly

Marc Connelly, full name Marcus Cook Connelly (1890-1980), American playwright, known for his satirical comedies. Born in McKeesport, Pennsylvania, Connelly worked for several years as a columnist and reporter in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Beginning in 1921 he collaborated with the American playwright George S. Kaufman on a series of highly successful comedies, including *Dulcy* (1921), *Merton of the Movies* (1922), and *Beggar on Horseback* (1924). Connelly's best-known work is *The Green Pastures* (1930, Pulitzer Prize), a dramatization of material from *Ol' Man Adam an' His Chillun* (1928), a collection of folk tales by the American writer Roark Bradford. Connelly also wrote many motion-picture screenplays and worked in the New York City theater as a producer, director, and actor. He was a member of the Algonquin Round Table, a group of writers and artists that gathered regularly during the 1920s and 1930s at the Algonquin Hotel in New York City. The group included such American writers as Kaufman, Dorothy Parker, Robert Benchley, Robert E. Sherwood, and Heywood Broun and was known for witty conversation and verbal sparring.
Rachel Crothers

Rachel Crothers (1878-1958), American playwright, born in Bloomington, Illinois. Her first professionally produced play was *Nora*, in New York City, in 1903. Her themes usually concern the social and domestic problems that confront women. Her notable successes include *A Man's World* (1909), *When Ladies Meet* (1932), and *Susan and God* (1937). She directed all her plays.
Clyde Fitch

Clyde Fitch (1865-1909), American playwright, born in Elmira, New York. Several of his plays were especially written for celebrated stars of his time. Among these are *Beau Brummel* (1890), for Richard Mansfield; *Barbara Frietchie* (1899), for Julia Marlowe; and *Her Great Match* (1905), for Maxine Elliott. His other plays include *The Girl with the Green Eyes* (1902), regarded by many as his most significant work. Fitch wrote 33 original plays and 22 adaptations, and his versatility was displayed in the wide range of style and subject matter of his works. He was also one of the most successful playwrights of his time; in 1901 four of his plays ran simultaneously in New York City.
Martin Flavin (1883-1967), American novelist and playwright, who was initially best known for his successful Broadway plays but who was later awarded the 1944 Pulitzer Prize for fiction for his novel *Journey in the Dark* (1943). His novels examine middle-class values and describe lonely characters who learn that material success does not necessarily lead to happiness.

Born Martin Archer Flavin in San Francisco, California, he grew up in Chicago, attending the University of Chicago from 1903 to 1905. After leaving the university without graduating, he briefly worked part-time on a newspaper while writing short stories for publication. In 1906 he began working with his family's wallpaper manufacturing company in Joliet, Illinois. He concentrated on his business career until 1918, when he again began writing. In 1923 he had a Broadway success with his play *Children of the Moon*. This enabled him to retire from the wallpaper business in 1926. He had another success in 1929 with *The Criminal Code*, a melodrama inspired by a visit Flavin made to San Quentin prison in California. That same year he had two other plays running on Broadway, *Broken Dishes* and *Cross Roads*.

Flavin later began to write prose fiction. His first novel, *Mr. Littlejohn* (1940), concerns a cold-hearted, wealthy manufacturer who fakes his own kidnapping and sets out on a journey to discover life's meaning, finally learning that the secret of life is to have fun. Flavin's best-known novel, *Journey in the Dark* (1943), describes a man's rise from youthful poverty to wealth as a wallpaper manufacturer in Chicago. For all his success, however, the character is a lonely individual, having neglected his family and friends. Flavin's other works include *The Enchanted* (1947) and *Cameron Hill* (1957).
William Hooker Gillette

William Hooker Gillette (1853-1937), American actor and playwright, born in Hartford, Connecticut. Gillette spent several years touring the United States with various stock companies and in 1881 produced and starred in his own play, *The Professor*. He is best known for his dramatization of *Sherlock Holmes* (1899), which he adapted from the celebrated stories of the English detective-story writer Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Gillette also appeared in two spy dramas set during the American Civil War (1861-1865), *Held by the Enemy* (1886) and *Secret Service* (1895), as well as in *The Admirable Crichton* (1903), by the British playwright Sir James Matthew Barrie. Gillette's only film role was as the title character in *Sherlock Holmes*, in 1916.
Lorraine Hansberry

Lorraine Hansberry (1930-1965), American writer and activist for equal rights for African Americans, best known for her play *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959), which was made into a motion picture in 1961. Lorraine Vivian Hansberry was born in Chicago, Illinois, and because her parents were prominent in national black cultural and political circles, she met many influential African Americans during her childhood. In 1938 Hansberry's family challenged Chicago's segregation laws by moving to an all-white neighborhood. Hansberry attended the University of Wisconsin but left in 1950 and moved to New York City. She was a reporter and editor for *Freedom*, a progressive black newspaper in New York, from 1950 to 1953.

*A Raisin in the Sun* tells the story of a black Chicago family's attempt to find sense in their constrained existence. The play was the first drama by a black woman to be produced on Broadway, and it won the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award in 1959. Hansberry's second play, *The Sign in Sidney Brustein's Window* (1964), concerns a white intellectual in Greenwich Village, New York City. After Hansberry's death from cancer, her husband, songwriter and music publisher Robert Nemiroff, adapted her letters, plays, and papers into the production *To Be Young, Gifted and Black* (1969). This compilation was published in book form that same year. During her career Hansberry also wrote many articles and essays on racism, homophobia, world peace, and other social issues.
Ben Hecht

Ben Hecht (1894-1964), American writer, whose work is known for its original dramatic qualities, flamboyance, and wit. Hecht was born in New York City and grew up in Wisconsin. He moved to Chicago and at the age of 16 became a reporter for the Chicago Journal; he then worked on the Chicago Daily News until 1923. In that year he founded the Chicago Literary Times, a periodical that expressed the iconoclastic views of a group of artists and writers living in Chicago after World War I (1914-1918).

Hecht's first novel, Erik Dorn (1921), was followed by some 24 other books, about 250 short stories, and 20 plays. His plays were collaborations, most notably with the American playwright Charles MacArthur; their plays include The Front Page (1928), Twentieth Century (1933), and Ladies and Gentlemen (1939). Hecht also wrote or collaborated on some 60 screenplays, including Scarface (1932), Nothing Sacred (1937), and Wuthering Heights (1939). With MacArthur he wrote and produced two outstanding films, Crime Without Passion and The Scoundrel, in 1934. Hecht's autobiography, A Child of the Century, appeared in 1954, and a biography of Charles MacArthur, Charlie, followed in 1957.
Lillian Hellman (1905-1984), American dramatist, whose plays are distinguished for the forcefulness of their subject matter, usually a condemnation of personal and social evil. They are also notable for character development and expert construction.

Born in New Orleans, Louisiana, Hellman was educated at New York and Columbia universities. Her plays include *The Children's Hour* (1934), in which a malicious child's accusations of lesbianism ruin the lives of two schoolteachers; *The Little Foxes* (1939), in which the members of a Southern family struggle unscrupulously with one another for the family wealth after the American Civil War (1861-1865); and *The Watch on the Rhine* (1941), in which a leader of an anti-Nazi movement visiting the United States is forced to kill a Nazi agent. This play won her a New York Drama Critics' Circle Award in 1941. Hellman's other plays include *The Searching Wind* (1944); *Another Part of the Forest* (1946); and *The Lark* (1955), a story of Joan of Arc, adapted from the play *L’Alouette*, by the French dramatist Jean Anouilh. In 1960 *Toys in the Attic* (1960) won Hellman a second New York Drama Critics' Circle Award. All of these plays have been made into films.

Hellman was awarded the 1970 National Book Award in arts and letters for her autobiography *An Unfinished Woman* (1969).
Sidney Coe Howard (1891-1939), American playwright, born in Oakland, California, and educated at the University of California and Harvard University. His first play, the romantic drama *Swords*, was produced in 1921. *They Knew What They Wanted* (1925), a drama set among the grape growers of California, won the Pulitzer Prize in drama in 1925. Among Howard's other theatrical works are *The Silver Cord* (1926); *Yellowjack* (1928); *Half-Gods* (1929); *The Late Christopher Bean* (1933); *Dodsworth* (1934), from the novel by Sinclair Lewis; and *Paths of Glory* (1935). He also adapted for the American stage several plays from the French, Spanish, and Hungarian and wrote the screen versions of such popular novels as Lewis's *Arrowsmith* and *Dodsworth* and Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind*. 
William Inge

William Inge (1913-1973), American playwright. William Motter Inge was born in Independence, Kansas, and educated at the University of Kansas. He wrote four Broadway hits: *Come Back, Little Sheba* (1950); *Picnic* (1953), which won both the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award and the Pulitzer Prize for drama in 1953; *Bus Stop* (1955); and *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs* (1957). All were later adapted as films. He received an Academy Award in 1961 for best original screenplay for *Splendor in the Grass* (1961). His later Broadway productions—*A Loss of Roses* (1959), *Natural Affection* (1963), and *Where's Daddy* (1966)—were less successful. He also wrote a number of one-act plays and two novels, *Good Luck, Miss Wychoff* (1970) and *My Son Is a Splendid Driver* (1971). Inge's work offers a probing but tender look into the depths of emotion beneath the surface of the unfulfilled lives of the people in the small towns of his native Midwest.
George S. Kaufman

George S. Kaufman (1889-1961), American playwright, director, and producer, who cowrote several of the most successful comedies of his time. Born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Kaufman worked as a journalist before devoting himself exclusively to the writing of plays. He was a member of the Algonquin Round Table, a group of writers and artists that gathered regularly during the 1920s and 1930s at the Algonquin Hotel in New York City. The group included such American writers as Dorothy Parker, Robert E. Sherwood, Heywood Broun, Marc Connelly, and Robert Benchley and was known for witty conversation and verbal sparring. Kaufman's fame rests principally on works that he wrote in collaboration with other noted American writers. His chief contribution to these collaborations was acidly satirical, often hilarious dialogue. With Marc Connelly he wrote *Merton of the Movies* (1922) and *Beggar on Horseback* (1924); with Morrie Ryskind, *Animal Crackers* (1928) and *Of Thee I Sing* (1931; Pulitzer Prize, 1932); with Moss Hart, *Once in a Lifetime* (1930), *You Can't Take It with You* (1936; Pulitzer Prize, 1937), *I'd Rather Be Right* (1937), *The Man Who Came to Dinner* (1939), and *George Washington Slept Here* (1940); with John P. Marquand, *The Late George Apley* (1944); with Edna Ferber, *Dinner at Eight* (1932) and *Stage Door* (1936); with his wife, Leueen MacGrath, *The Small Hours* (1951); and with Abe Burrows, *Silk Stockings* (1955).
Sidney Kingsley (1906-1995), American playwright, born in New York City, and educated at Cornell University. In 1933 his first professionally staged play, *Men in White*, was produced. Awarded the 1934 Pulitzer Prize in drama, it reveals with penetrating realism trials of the medical profession. *Dead End* (1935), a bitter story of the lives of New York City slum children, was also successful. He was given the New York Drama Critics’ Circle Award for *The Patriots* (1942), a historical drama, and for *Darkness at Noon* (1952), an adaptation of the novel by Arthur Koestler. One of his most popular plays is *Lunatics and Lovers* (1954), a broad farce. *Night Life* (1962) is a melodrama of big-city life.
Tony Kushner


Kushner was born in New York City and raised in Lake Charles, Louisiana. Encouraged by his parents, both of whom were musicians, he became interested in theater at a young age. He attended Columbia University and New York University, earning degrees in medieval studies and theater. Kushner began writing and producing plays in the 1980s with a theater group he had founded. His first major play, *A Bright Room Called Day* (1985), which draws parallels between Germany in the 1930s and the United States in the 1980s, was produced in several regional theaters throughout the United States.

Kushner gained international prominence and won critical acclaim with the first part of *Angels in America*, titled *Millennium Approaches* (1991). In 1993 it won both the Pulitzer Prize for drama and the Tony Award for best play. The second part of *Angels in America*, *Perestroika* (1993), won Kushner a second Tony for best play (1994). *Millennium Approaches* and *Perestroika* follow the lives of eight characters over a six-year period, chronicling their attitudes towards homosexuality and the effects of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) on their relationships. *Slavs! (Thinking About the Longstanding Problems of Virtue and Happiness)* (1994), a short play about the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) under former president Mikhail Gorbachev, was performed at Actor's Theater of Louisville, Kentucky, and the New York Theater Workshop.
David Mamet

David Mamet, born in 1947, American playwright, screenwriter, and director, whose dramatic style reflects the inarticulateness and violence in alienated members of the lower-middle class. His characters struggle against seemingly endless cycles of failure in personal relationships and commercial ventures alike. Their frustration is expressed in terse, pugnacious dialogue, littered with profanity. Mamet’s tightly constructed language functions as a weapon to dominate and manipulate. Poetic, comically fragmented, and often shocking, Mamet’s use of language has been compared to that of Greek dramatist Aristophanes, American writer Ernest Hemingway, Irish author Samuel Beckett, and English playwright Harold Pinter.

Mamet was born in Flossmoor, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago, on November 30, 1947. He received a B.A. degree in 1969 from Goddard College, where he served as an artist-in-residence in the early 1970s. In 1973 he founded the St. Nicholas Theater Company in Chicago, where he worked as artistic director from 1973 to 1976. He also served as associate director of the Goodman Theater in Chicago in 1978 and 1979. Although his career as a playwright originated in Chicago’s regional theaters, many of Mamet’s strongest influences came from his early training on the East Coast, especially his work with American acting teacher Sanford Meisner at Meisner’s Neighborhood Playhouse in New York City. Borrowing from an acting exercise that schooled performers in developing character repetition, Mamet created for his scripts a syntax of half-spoken thoughts and rapidly shifting moods.

When Mamet’s first plays, *Sexual Perversity in Chicago* and *Duck Variations* (both 1972), were produced off-Broadway (see Broadway) in 1975, they quickly established him as a writer of the “new realism,” a style marked by naturalistic language and a small number of characters in a contained environment. *American Buffalo* (1975), set in a Chicago junk store (used as a metaphor for American capitalism), startled audiences and critics with its bleak outlook and antisocial underpinnings. Mamet received a Pulitzer Prize in 1984 for his play *Glengarry Glen Ross* (1983), about a group of troubled Chicago real estate agents.
Arthur Miller

Arthur Miller (1915-2005), American dramatist, whose works are concerned with the responsibility of each individual to other members of society. Simply and colloquially written, Miller’s plays sprang from his social conscience and from his compassion for those who are vulnerable to the false values imposed on them by society. Some critics regard Miller’s work as the most serious attempt in recent American drama to achieve the tragic force of ancient Greek plays.

Born in New York City, Miller was the son of a coat manufacturer who suffered financial ruin in the Great Depression of the 1930s. After graduating from high school, Miller worked and saved money for college. From 1934 to 1938, he studied at the University of Michigan. As a student, Miller won awards for his comedy *The Grass Still Grows*. After graduation, he returned to New York City to write.

Miller’s first Broadway play, *The Man Who Had All the Luck* (1944), opened to poor reviews and closed after four performances. His first successful play was *All My Sons*, which the New York Drama Critics’ Circle chose as the best play of 1947. *All My Sons* revolves around Joe Keller, the family patriarch, who has sold defective parts for war planes and allowed his partner to take the blame. A study of the effect of opportunism on family relationships, it foreshadowed much of Miller’s later work. Another of Miller’s early achievements was the novel *Focus* (1945), an attack on anti-Semitism that was well received.
Eugene Gladstone O’Neill

Eugene Gladstone O’Neill was born in a New York City hotel room, the second son of James and Ella O’Neill. For most of Eugene’s childhood the family lived on the road while his father, an Irish-born actor, repeatedly played the lead role in a dramatic version of the historical novel *Le Comte de Monte-Cristo* (1844; *The Count of Monte-Cristo*, 1846) by French writer Alexandre Dumas. “You might say I started as a trouper,” O’Neill would recall. “I knew only actors and the stage. My mother nursed me in the wings and in dressing rooms.”

O’Neill was educated in Catholic schools until, as a teenager, he insisted on attending a nonreligious boarding school. He spent his boyhood summers at the family’s summer home in New London, Connecticut, the setting of several of his plays. O’Neill’s mother had become addicted to morphine after being prescribed it while giving birth to him, and when he was 15 years old, O’Neill discovered his mother’s addiction. He then entered an emotionally turbulent period characterized by drunken sprees, including one for which he was thrown out of Princeton University. Despite his problems with alcohol, O’Neill was a voracious reader. He especially liked Irish-born writer George Bernard Shaw, Russian political activist Emma Goldman, and German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche.

From 1909 to 1912 O’Neill jumped from experience to experience. He prospected for gold in Honduras, served as an assistant manager of a theatrical troupe organized by his father, went to South America and South Africa as a seaman, toured as an actor with his father’s troupe, and worked as a newspaper reporter in New London. His time at sea provided vivid memories that would enliven his early plays.
Clifford Odets

Clifford Odets (1906-1963), American playwright, regarded as the most gifted of the American social-protest playwrights of the 1930s. Born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, he was reared in New York City. He left school at the age of 15 to become an actor. In 1931 Odets helped found the Group Theatre in New York City. Most of his plays were produced by the Group Theatre, including *Waiting for Lefty* (1935), a one-act play about a taxi drivers' strike that established his fame; *Awake and Sing!* (1935), about a Jewish family in the Bronx during the Great Depression; and *Till the Day I Die* (1935). After the unsuccessful production of his play *Paradise Lost* (1935), Odets went to Hollywood, California, where he wrote the screenplay for the motion picture *The General Died at Dawn* (1936). He then returned to New York City, where he wrote more plays for the Group Theatre, including *Golden Boy* (1937), *Silent Partner* (1938), *Rocket to the Moon* (1938), *Night Music* (1940), and *Clash by Night* (1941), all concerned with the frustration of individual potential by economic insecurity and the materialistic ideals of middle-class society. Odets subsequently spent several years in Hollywood and wrote many screenplays, including *None but the Lonely Heart* (1944) and *The Story on Page One* (1959). He also wrote the plays *The Big Knife* (1949) and *The Country Girl* (1950).
John Howard Payne (1791-1852), American playwright, actor, and diplomat, born in New York City, and educated at Union College. He was a successful actor, and he wrote about 60 plays, chiefly translations and adaptations. His best-known works are *Brutus, or, The Fall of Tarquin* (1818), a verse tragedy, and *Charles II, or, The Merry Monarch* (1824), a comedy. He also wrote the libretto of the opera *Clari, or, The Maid of Milan* (1823), which contains the famous song “Home, Sweet Home.” From 1842 to 1845, and again from 1851 to 1852, Payne served as United States consul in Tunisia.
Elmer Leopold Rice (1892-1967), American dramatist, born in New York City, and educated in law at New York University. Instead of practicing law, he began his career as a playwright with *On Trial* (1914), the first American play to use the flashback technique, important also in literature and motion pictures. Rice experimented with dramatic form. *The Adding Machine*, his expressionistic fantasy satirizing the dehumanizing effects of machines, was produced in 1923. Frequently, themes in his works stemmed from his identification with the underprivileged. His *Street Scene* (1929), a realistic drama that focused on the New York City slums, received the 1929 Pulitzer Prize in drama and in 1947 was made into an opera by the American poet Langston Hughes and the German-born American composer Kurt Weill. In the 1930s, Rice was New York regional director of the Federal Theatre Project. Included among Rice's other plays are *Counsellor-at-Law* (1931), *We, the People* (1933), *A New Life* (1943), and *Dream Girl* (1945). He also wrote novels, essays, and the autobiography *Minority Report* (1963).
William Saroyan

William Saroyan (1908-1981), American writer, born in Fresno, California. His early writings frequently deal with his beloved Armenian family and its capacity for joy in the face of adversity. Notable among these works are the collection of short stories *My Name Is Aram* (1940) and the novel *The Human Comedy* (1943). Saroyan's many plays, lyrical and loosely constructed, include *My Heart's in the Highlands*, which was produced to much acclaim in 1939, and *The Time of Your Life*, for which he was awarded a Pulitzer Prize in 1940. Saroyan refused to accept the award for a work he deemed no more laudable than any of his others.
Ntozake Shange, born in 1948, African American playwright and poet, whose major contribution to American drama is the *choreopoem*, which involves narrative pieces presented with music and dance. This form is exemplified by her best-known work, *for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf* (1976). She was born Paulette Williams in Trenton, New Jersey, and changed her name as a young adult in recognition of her African heritage; her Zulu name means “she who comes with her own things” and “she who walks like a lion.” She graduated from Barnard College in 1970. She received a master's degree from the University of Southern California (1973), and has taught at several colleges and universities.

*For colored girls...* began in 1975 as a series of poems performed in bars and cafes. After the addition of music and dance, it was eventually performed at the Public Theater in New York City and then moved to Broadway, where it played for two years (1976-1977) and won a Tony Award nomination for best play in 1977. Since then it has been performed internationally. In *for colored girls...* a group of women perform poems, often to music, that express issues, abuses, and emotions in black women's lives. Shange's other produced plays include *a photograph* (1977), *boogie woogie landscapes* (1979), and *spell #7* (1979). All three were published in a single work titled *three pieces* (1992). She also wrote the play *Betsey Brown* (1989), based on her autobiographical novel of the same title about a teenage black girl growing up during the 1950s.
Sam Shepard

Sam Shepard, born in 1943, American playwright and actor, whose plays deal with modern social concerns such as individual alienation and the destructive effects of family relationships in an ailing American society. Born Samuel Shepard Rogers, Jr., in Fort Sheridan, Illinois, he attended San Antonio Junior College, located in California, but did not graduate. In 1963 he moved to New York City, where he wrote the one-act plays *Cowboys* and *The Rock Garden*, which were produced in 1964 as part of the off-off-Broadway theater movement. Other short plays were produced by La Mama Experimental Theater Club in 1964 and 1965, and by the Cherry Lane's New Playwrights series in 1965 and 1966.

Robert E. Sherwood

Robert E. Sherwood (1896-1955), American dramatist, whose works often reflect his pacifist convictions. Born in New Rochelle, New York, Sherwood was educated at Harvard University. He was an editor for *Vanity Fair* magazine from 1919 to 1920 and an editor and influential film critic for *Life* magazine from 1920 to 1928 before establishing himself as a popular playwright. He was a member of the Algonquin Round Table, a group of writers and artists that gathered regularly during the 1920s and 1930s at the Algonquin Hotel in New York City. The group included such American writers as Dorothy Parker, Heywood Broun, Robert Benchley, Marc Connelly, and George S. Kaufman and was known for witty conversation and verbal sparring. Sherwood's most important plays include *Waterloo Bridge* (1929), *Reunion in Vienna* (1931), *The Petrified Forest* (1935), *Idiot's Delight* (1936; Pulitzer Prize, 1936), *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* (1938; Pulitzer Prize, 1939), and *There Shall Be No Night* (1940; Pulitzer Prize, 1941). During World War II (1939-1945) Sherwood served as overseas director of the Office of War Information and was a speechwriter for President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The film *The Best Years of Our Lives*, for which he wrote the screenplay, won the Academy Award for best picture in 1946. Sherwood also wrote the biographical study *Roosevelt and Hopkins* (1948; Pulitzer Prize, 1949).
Neil Simon

Neil Simon, born in 1927, American playwright, and winner of two Tony Awards and a Pulitzer Prize. Simon was born in the Bronx, a borough of New York City. He entered the United States Army at the age of 16 and studied briefly at New York University and at the University of Colorado. Discharged from the army in 1946, he worked in the mail room at Warner Bros., where his brother, Danny, worked for the publicity department. The two brothers also wrote comedy sketches for radio and television comedy stars. Some of their collaborations were displayed in the Broadway shows *Catch a Start* (1955) and *New Faces of 1956*. Simon left the duo to write on his own, winning Emmy nominations for his work on the “Sid Caesar Show” (1957) and the “Garry Moore Show” (1959). He adapted Broadway shows into television specials and then wrote his first play, *Come Blow Your Horn* (1961), which ran for two years on Broadway.

Simon attracted attention with *Barefoot in the Park* (1963). He won a Tony Award for *The Odd Couple* (1965), which became a long-running television comedy. His three autobiographical plays—*Brighton Beach Memoirs* (1983), *Biloxi Blues* (1985), and *Broadway Bound* (1986)—were praised for their compassion and deeper character development. *Brighton Beach Memoirs* won the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award for best play (1983). That year a Broadway theater was named for Simon, the first time such an honor was awarded to a living playwright. *Lost in Yonkers* won a Tony Award as the best play of 1991, and the Pulitzer Prize in drama that same year. Simon decided to open his play *London Suite* (1994) off-Broadway, citing the untenable financial conditions imposed by Broadway theater owners. Simon has also written original screenplays and motion-picture versions of many of his plays.
John William Van Druten

John William Van Druten (1901-1957), American dramatist and novelist, born in London. He studied law at London University and became a United States citizen in 1944. He is known chiefly as a writer of sophisticated comedy. His greatest stage successes, most of which he also directed, were *The Voice of the Turtle* (1943) and *Bell, Book and Candle* (1950), and his dramatic adaptations *I Remember Mama* (1944), from sketches about a Norwegian-American family by Kathryn Forbes, and *I Am a Camera* (1951), from a collection of Berlin stories by Christopher Isherwood. Van Druten attempted serious drama in *The Druid Circle* (1947). His other plays include *There's Always Juliet* (1931), *The Distaff Side* (1933), *Gertie Maude* (1937), *Old Acquaintance* (1940), and *The Damask Cheek* (1942).
Wendy Wasserstein

Wendy Wasserstein (1950-2006), American playwright, noted for her bittersweet plays that focus on the struggles of contemporary American women. Her plays also reflect her Jewish heritage and the influence of Russian playwright and prose writer Anton Chekhov.

Wendy Wasserstein was born in the New York City borough of Brooklyn. She studied at Mount Holyoke College, City College of New York, and the Yale School of Drama. While she was studying at City College, Wasserstein’s play Any Woman Can’t (1973) was produced off-Broadway (see Broadway), prompting her to pursue a career as a playwright.

Wasserstein’s first major play, Uncommon Women and Others (1977), which she began writing while studying at Yale, was based on her years at the all-female Mount Holyoke College. The drama concerns a group of five women who reunite six years after their college graduation and consider whether they have achieved their goals and upheld their ideals. Wasserstein gained national recognition when the play was televised by the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) in 1978. Her play Isn’t It Romantic, which was first produced in 1981 and was revised in 1983, follows the lives of two women, one Jewish and one Protestant, contemplating marriage and motherhood.

Wasserstein’s best-known play, The Heidi Chronicles (1988), traces the life of art historian Heidi Holland from high school through the social change of the 1960s and 1970s to her life and career in New York in the 1980s. The work earned Wasserstein a Pulitzer Prize (1989), a Tony Award for best play (1989), and numerous other awards. In 1995 she adapted The Heidi Chronicles for television.

Wasserstein’s other plays include When Dinah Shore Ruled the Earth (1975; written with American playwright Christopher Durang); The Sorrows of Gin (1979; adapted for PBS from a short story by American writer John Cheever); Tender Offer (1983); Miami (1986); The Man in a Case (1986; adapted from a short story by Chekhov); The Sisters Rosensweig (1993).
Thornton Wilder

Thornton Wilder (1897-1975), American author, whose plays and novels, usually based on allegories and myths, have reached a worldwide audience through various versions. Thornton Niven Wilder was born in Madison, Wisconsin, and educated at Oberlin College and Yale University. While teaching, he achieved success as both a novelist and a playwright. In his compelling novel *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* (1927; Pulitzer Prize, 1928), Wilder united the lives of a disparate group of travelers in colonial Peru through a single event, the disaster in which they die. His other novels include *The Ides of March* (1948), an epistolary work about the Roman statesman Julius Caesar, and *The Eighth Day* (1967), about the events surrounding a murder. For the latter work Wilder was awarded the 1968 National Book Award. *Theophilus North* (1973) is a group of short stories.

Wilder's direct, accessible style also works well in drama. His first full-length play, the allegorical *The Trumpet Shall Sound* (1926), preceded a long list of popular one-act plays and translations. An enduring work of American drama is *Our Town* (1938), a touching look at small-town American life that brought Wilder the 1938 Pulitzer Prize in drama. It was theatrically experimental for its time, performed on a stage without scenery or props, using stepladders to represent the upstairs of a house and folding chairs to indicate a graveyard. *The Skin of Our Teeth* (1942), a comic view of human life through the ages, won the 1943 Pulitzer Prize in drama.

One of Wilder's most successful works, *The Matchmaker* (1954), derived ultimately from a 19th-century Austrian comedy, was made into a motion picture in 1958 and adapted in 1964 as the musical comedy *Hello, Dolly!*, which was filmed in turn in 1969.
Tennessee Williams

Tennessee Williams (1911-1983), American playwright and two-time Pulitzer Prize winner, whose works are set largely in the American South.

Williams was born in Columbus, Mississippi, on March 26, 1911, and named Thomas Lanier Williams. He spent most of his youth in St. Louis, Missouri. After intermittent attendance at the University of Missouri and Washington University, he received a B.A. degree from the University of Iowa in 1938. He worked at a variety of odd jobs until 1945, when he first appeared on the Broadway scene as the author of The Glass Menagerie. This evocative “memory play” won the New York Drama Critics' Circle award as the best play of the season. It was filmed in 1950 and has been performed on the stage throughout the world. The emotion-charged A Streetcar Named Desire (1947) has been called the best play ever written by an American. It was successfully filmed (1951), and the play won Williams his first Pulitzer Prize in drama. He was awarded another Pulitzer for Cat on a Hot Tin Roof (stage, 1954; film, 1958). All three of these plays contain the poetic dialogue, the symbolism, and the highly original characters for which Williams is noted and are set in the American South, a regional background which the author used to create a remarkable blend of decadence, nostalgia, and sensuality. Other successful plays by Williams are Summer and Smoke (1948), rewritten as Eccentricities of a Nightingale (produced 1964); The Rose Tattoo (1950); the long one-act Suddenly Last Summer (1958); Sweet Bird of Youth (1959); and Night of the Iguana (1961).

Although Williams continued to write for the theater, he was unable to repeat the success of most of his early works. One of his last plays was Clothes for a Summer Hotel (1980), based on the American writer F. Scott Fitzgerald and his wife, Zelda. Williams died in New York City, February 25, 1983.

Two collections of Williams's many one-act plays were published: 27 Wagons Full of Cotton (1946) and American Blues (1948). Williams's fiction includes two novels, The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone (1950) and Moïse and the World of Reason (1975) and four volumes of short stories—One Arm and Other Stories (1948), Hard Candy (1954), The Knightly Quest (1969), and Eight Mortal Ladies Possessed (1974).
August Wilson

August Wilson (1945-2005), American playwright, whose plays chronicled black American life in the 20th century, with each play representing one decade. Many of Wilson’s dramas deal with conflict between African Americans who accept mainstream American culture and those who want to embrace their African heritage and their role in the black community.

Frederick August Kittel was born in a poor black neighborhood called The Hill in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and most of his plays are set there. He later adopted his mother’s maiden name, Wilson. In the ninth grade Wilson dropped out of school after a teacher accused him of plagiarism because his work was considered “too good” for a black student. He continued his education independently through extensive reading.

During the 1960s Wilson became involved in the civil rights movement. In 1968 he founded the Black Horizons Theater Company, a community theater in Pittsburgh devoted to addressing issues of black Americans. A decade later he moved to Minneapolis, Minnesota, and began writing plays for a small theater company there.

In 1985 Wilson’s first major work, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* (1984), won the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award for best play. It portrays the exploitation of Ma Rainey—a real-life, early blues star—by white music executives. Wilson won a Pulitzer Prize in 1987 for his play *Fences* (1985), in which an embittered ex-baseball player struggles to balance his family obligations with his desire for freedom. In 1990 Wilson won a second Pulitzer Prize for *The Piano Lesson* (1987), in which a brother and sister argue over whether to sell a piano that has tragic significance in their family history: The piano was once traded for their grandparents, who were slaves.

Jack Davis

Jack Davis (1917-2002), Australian writer and activist, known for his poetry, plays, and dedication to Aboriginal causes (see Aboriginal Australians). Davis was born in Perth, in Western Australia, of part-Aboriginal parents. When Davis was 14 years of age he lived for nine months on an Aboriginal settlement where he witnessed the abusive treatment of Aboriginal people. After he left the settlement, Davis worked as a stockman, a boxer, and a horse breeder, among other jobs. He learned the language and traditions of the Nyoongah, an Aborigine tribe, from which his mother was descended, and spent time at other settlements, such as the Brookton Aboriginal Reserve, east of Perth. From 1942 to 1979, he worked as editor of the Aboriginal Publications Foundation, five years of which (1972-1977), he was managing editor.


In connection with his work for Aboriginal causes, Davis held various posts, including manager of the Perth Aboriginal Centre from 1967 to 1971, director of the Aboriginal Advancement Council (Western Australia), president of the Aboriginal Lands Trust (Western Australia) in 1971, and joint editor of the Aboriginal magazine *Identity* from 1973 to 1979. He was also a member of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and the Aboriginal Arts Board of the Australian Council.
Barry Humphries

Barry Humphries, born in 1934, Australian entertainer and author, creator of the stage and television comedy characters Dame Edna Everage, an Australian housewife, and Sir Les Patterson, an outrageous cultural attaché.

Born in Melbourne, Australia, John Barry Humphries attended Melbourne University and from 1953 to 1959 worked in the theater, primarily in revue skits. The suburban housewife Edna Everage made her stage debut in 1955 as the first of several characters Humphries created to satirize middle-class, suburban life in Australia. Dame Edna is instantly recognizable by her “natural wisteria” hair color and her sequined harlequin eyeglasses. His less well-known creation, Sir Les Patterson, is the constantly drunk, ever-vulgar, and obese Australian cultural attaché to Britain.

In 1959 Humphries went to England where he worked as an actor in the theater and on television. In 1962 he toured Australia with *A Nice Night’s Entertainment*, the first of his one-man satirical shows featuring Edna and compatriots. In addition to his stage shows, Humphries wrote a comic strip, *The Adventures of Barry McKenzie*, which appeared in the British satirical magazine *Private Eye* from 1963 to 1974. The strip gave rise to two films, *The Adventures of Barry McKenzie* (1972) and *Barry McKenzie Holds His Own* (1974). The films also starred Barry’s aunt Edna, acted by Humphries, who ostensibly was made a dame at this time by Australian prime minister Gough Whitlam.

Elizabeth Jolley

Elizabeth Jolley (1923-2007), Australian novelist, radio dramatist, and short-story writer, who in the 1980s emerged as one of Australia’s most daring and entertaining authors. Her writing is typically comic, and often eccentric, but it always has a serious subtext, as her stories commonly explore the effects on the lives of individuals of displacement, or of being outcast.

Born in Birmingham, England, to an English father and Austrian mother, Jolley grew up in a German-speaking household. She trained and worked as a nurse in London from 1940 to 1946 before her marriage to Leonard Jolley. In 1959, when her husband became a university librarian in Western Australia, Jolley emigrated there with him.

Jolley became a full-time writer in 1964 but wrote for many years, often working on several projects simultaneously, before having anything published. She first came to prominence with radio plays such as Night Report (1975), The Performance (1976), The Shepherd on the Roof (1977), and Two Men Running (1982); and for short-story collections such as Five Acre Virgin (1976), The Travelling Entertainer (1979), and Woman in a Lampshade (1983).

Jolley’s first novel, Palomino, about a lesbian relationship, appeared in 1980. Other novels followed, including Mr. Scobie’s Riddle (1982); The Well (1986); The Sugar Mother (1988); and two with an autobiographical bias, My Father’s Moon (1989) and Cabin Fever (1990). Her later novels include The George’s Wife (1993), The Orchard Thieves (1995), An Accommodating Spouse (1999), and An Innocent Gentleman (2001). Jolley also worked as a teacher, lecturer, and writer-in-residence at several colleges and universities in Western Australia.
Hermann Broch

Hermann Broch (1886-1951), Austrian novelist, playwright, and philosopher, best known for his novel *Der Tod des Vergil* (The Death of Virgil, 1945), which presents the fictional reflections of the ancient Roman poet Virgil during the last hours of his life. Broch was born in Vienna, Austria. He was a director of his family's textile company from 1907 until 1928, but at the age of 29 he sold the firm in order to study mathematics and philosophy at Vienna University.

Broch's trilogy of novels, *Die Schlafwandler* (The Sleepwalkers, 1931-1932), was influenced by the writings of French author Marcel Proust, Irish author James Joyce, and Austrian author Franz Kafka. The trilogy presents the middle classes of Germany, between 1888 and 1918, as lacking purpose or ideals and sleepwalking through social upheavals. After the Nazi occupation of Austria in 1938, Broch spent five months in a prison camp as a suspected oppositionist. With the aid of friends such as James Joyce, however, Broch was released, and in 1940 he was able to emigrate to the United States, where he continued to write.

Among Broch's later works, *Die Schuldlosen* (The Guiltless, 1950) depicts the years between 1918 and 1933 and the passivity that allowed the rise of Nazism (see National Socialism). His last, uncompleted novel, *Der Versucher* (The Seducer, 1953), re-creates the history of Nazism as represented by a crisis in a mountain village. In his later years Broch wrote mainly works of political theory, including *Die unbekannte Grosse* (The Unknown Quantity, 1933).
Franz Grillparzer

Franz Grillparzer (1791-1872), Austrian playwright, whose somber tragedies and historical dramas are considered masterpieces of the 19th-century Austrian theater. Born in Vienna, the son of a lawyer, he studied law at Vienna University but left for lack of funds. He made his living as a civil servant. In 1818 he became poet to the court theater.

Grillparzer wrote many tragedies of dramatic and poetic beauty, particularly notable for their psychological insight. *Sappho* (1818) deals with the problematical relationship of art to life. The pessimistic trilogy *Das goldene Vlies* (The Golden Fleece, 1822) is concerned with the ancient Greek tale of Jason and Medea. Grillparzer's masterly *The Waves of Sea and Love* (1831; trans. 1947) depicts the Greek lovers Hero and Leander. *A Dream Is Life* (1834; trans. 1946) and *The Jewess from Toledo* (1872; trans. 1953) are based on classical Spanish themes. Although many of Grillparzer's works were disliked by the censors and the public, they influenced later dramatists, such as the German Gerhart Hauptmann and the Belgian Maurice Maeterlinck.
Hugo von Hofmannsthal

Hugo von Hofmannsthal (1874-1929), Austrian poet, playwright, and essayist, best known for his early lyrical poetry and for his long collaboration as librettist with the composer Richard Strauss, which resulted in six operas, including *Der Rosenkavalier* (1911).

Hofmannsthal was born in Vienna and educated at Vienna University. At the age of 16 his first poems were published and at 17 his first verse playlet, *Gestern* (Yesterday), all under the pseudonym of Lorris. His early verse, written in an impressionistic vein and marked by a tendency toward mysticism, brought him instant acclaim in Austria and Germany as a poet of great promise. During the following years he wrote short verse plays, notably *The Death of Titian* (1892; trans. 1913) and *Death and the Fool* (1893; trans. 1913). In these, as in his verse, his aim was to create a mystical, poetic mood. In 1901, Hofmannsthal gave up the writing of lyrics, declaring that language alone was unsatisfying as a means of communication. After this he frequently adapted the work of earlier playwrights and introduced more action. His *Jedermann* (1911), based on the English morality play *Everyman*, has been produced at the Salzburg Festival (which he helped to found) yearly since 1920.

Richard Strauss adapted Hofmannsthal's play *Elektra* (1903) as an opera that was performed in 1909. Afterwards, Hofmannsthal wrote five other librettos for Strauss, of which *Der Rosenkavalier* and *Ariadne auf Naxos* (1912) are regarded as masterpieces.
Arthur Schnitzler

Arthur Schnitzler (1862-1931), Austrian physician, dramatist, and novelist, who was noted for his psychological dramas of contemporary Viennese life. He was born in Vienna, studied medicine at Vienna University, and was a practicing physician until 1894, when he began to devote himself to writing. Schnitzler formed (1891) the Young Vienna group with the Austrian poet and dramatist Hugo von Hofmannsthal and several other writers.

Neither religious nor idealistic, Schnitzler produced striking works in a lucid, serene style, dealing with three recurrent themes: human relationships, injustice and prejudice, and fear of old age and death. He explored the problems of the relationship between men and women in plays such as Affairs of Anatol (1893; translated 1911) and Reigen (1897; translated Merry-Go-Round, 1953; filmed as La Ronde, 1950), all of which are set against the sensuous, romantic life of his contemporary Vienna. Schnitzler chronicled the anti-Semitism prevalent in his time in the novel The Road to the Open (1908; translated 1923) and the tragedy Professor Bernhardi (1912; translated 1927). As Schnitzler aged, he became obsessed with the fear of old age and death, as reflected in his novels Beatrice (1913) and Casanova's Homecoming (1918; translated 1921).

Schnitzler was in close contact with Sigmund Freud, with whom he shared many medical and psychological opinions. Among Schnitzler's other works are The Green Cockatoo (1899; translated 1913), None but the Brave (1901; translated 1926), Fräulein Else (1924; translated 1925), and Rhapsody: A Dream Novel (1925; translated 1927).
Franz Werfel

Franz Werfel (1890-1945), Austrian novelist, poet, and dramatist, whose reputation was established in Austria and Germany by the end of World War I (1914-18), and who later became a successful author in the United States. He was born in Prague. He attended the University of Prague and served in the Austrian army in World War I. Writing, however, was his major interest; his first play appeared in print in 1910. Werfel settled in Vienna until fear of expanding Nazi power forced him, as a Jew, to flee to France in 1938 and to the United States in 1940, where he spent the last years of his life.

Werfel was fascinated by the theater. Among his plays are *Juarez and Maximilian* (1924), basis of the American film *Juarez* (1939); and *Jacobowsky und der Oberst* (1944), adapted into a successful theatrical comedy, *Jacobowsky and the Colonel* (1944), and a film, *Me and the Colonel* (1958). Werfel also wrote several novels, one of which, *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh* (1933; trans. 1934), an epic tale of Armenian resistance to Turkish invaders, had a remarkable success in the U.S. In *The Song of Bernadette* (1941; trans. 1942), which became a popular American film (1944), Werfel shows his sympathy with Roman Catholicism as he recounts the incidents leading to a young girl's elevation to sainthood.
Václav Havel

Václav Havel, born in 1936, Czech political leader, dramatist, and essayist. Havel was a leader in the democratic opposition movement that helped bring about the collapse of the Communist government of Czechoslovakia in 1989. He was president of Czechoslovakia from 1989 to 1992. After Czechoslovakia dissolved into the Czech Republic and Slovakia in January 1993, Havel served as president of the Czech Republic from 1993 to 2003.

Havel was born in Prague, Czechoslovakia, the son of a commercial real estate developer. In 1948, when Havel was a young teenager, a Communist regime backed by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) took power in Czechoslovakia. Havel’s upper-middle-class background severely limited his chances for formal education under the Communist system. However, his family’s extensive private library enabled him to educate himself in the classics of world literature and philosophy. Havel worked through his teen years as a laboratory assistant and attended secondary school in the evenings. In 1959 he began working as a stagehand and assistant director with a Prague theater company and studied dramatic arts at the Prague Academy of Film Arts. In 1963 Havel’s first play, *Zahradni slavnost* (The Garden Party), a satire about dehumanizing government bureaucracy, was performed in Prague. *Vyrozumeni* (The Memorandum), another satirical portrayal of life under Communism, was performed in 1965.
Milan Kundera

Milan Kundera, born in 1929, Czech novelist, poet, playwright, and short-story writer, known for combining humor, eroticism, and political criticism in his writings. Born in Brno, the son of a noted concert pianist, he attended Charles University in Prague. From 1958 to 1969, he taught film studies at the Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts in Prague. He also worked as a laborer and as a jazz musician. In 1968, after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, the Czech government began requiring all literature to endorse and praise Communist ideals. Kundera refused to conform to the new requirements, and the following year he was fired from his job and publication of his works was banned in his country. In 1975 he emigrated to France, where he taught comparative literature at the University of Rennes from 1975 to 1980 and at the École des Hautes Études in Paris after 1980.

Kundera’s first novel, Žert (1967; translated as The Joke, 1969), and a volume of short stories, Směšné lásky (1963-1968; Laughable Loves, 1975), attacked Communist political repression through witty and ironic depictions of the lives of Czech people. After 1968, most of Kundera’s writing was first published either in French or in English. Other novels include Život je jinde (written 1969; first published as Life is Elsewhere, 1974) and Kniha smichu a zapomnění (first published in French, 1979; The Book of Laughter and Forgetting, 1980), an anthology of reminiscences that led to the revocation of his Czech citizenship. Nesnesitelná lehkost bytí (first published in French, 1984; The Unbearable Lightness of Being, 1984), the story of a love affair set against a background of government bureaucracy and political oppression, established Kundera as one of the most important writers in Europe. It became a key text in the history of Eastern European dissidence for its portrait of the emptiness of life within an authoritarian state and in 1988 was made into a successful motion picture. Kundera’s later works include Nesmrtelnost (written 1990; Immortality, 1991); La lenteur (1995; Slowness, 1996); and La Ignorancia (2000; Ignorance, 2002).
Johannes Ewald (1743-1781), Danish dramatist and lyric poet, born in Copenhagen, and educated at the University of Copenhagen. His *Elegies* (1766), written on the death of Frederick V, established his reputation as a poet. His biblical drama *Adam og Eva* was rejected by the Society of Arts in 1767 and its publication delayed until 1769. During the next decade Ewald wrote many brilliant works in tragedy, comedy, and farce, including *Rolf Krage* (1770) and the heroic drama *Balder's Death* (1774; trans. 1899), the first Danish drama to be composed in iambic pentameter and one that revived interest in the ancient history and mythology of Scandinavia. His finest work, the lyrical drama *Fiskerne* (The Fishermen, 1779), contains the lyrics to “King Christian Stood by the Lofty Mast,” which later became the Danish national anthem. Ewald founded the Danish Literary Society in 1775 and influenced the work of many later writers.
Karl Adolph Gjellerup (1857-1919), Danish writer and Nobel laureate, born on the island of Sjælland. He studied theology, but later became an atheist under the influence of the Danish literary critic Georg Morris Brandes. After 1892 Gjellerup lived in Germany; many of his writings are in German and demonstrate his admiration for the humanistic and mystical side of German culture. His last writings also show a preoccupation with Buddhism. Among his works are the novels *En idealist* (1878), *Minna* (1889; trans. 1913), and *The Pilgrim Kamanita* (1906; trans. 1911). Gjellerup was also a poet and a playwright. He shared the 1917 Nobel Prize in literature with the Danish novelist Henrik Pontoppidan.
Ludvig Holberg (1684-1754), Danish writer, considered the founder of Danish literature. He was born in Bergen, Norway, and educated at the universities of Copenhagen and Oxford. He taught at the University of Copenhagen and in 1747 was made baron Holberg.

At a time when the only literary use of Danish was in hymns and ballads, and plays on the Danish stage were given only in German or French, Holberg wrote a vast body of dramatic, poetic, and historical works that almost by themselves established Danish as a literary language. In all, he wrote more than a dozen successfully performed plays in Danish. They include the comedies Den Vaegelsindede (The Waverer, 1722) and Henrik eg Pernille (1724). His poem Pedar Paars (1719; translated 1962), a satire on contemporary manners, is a Danish classic. Other verse satires are Metamorphosis (1726) and Niels Klim's Subterranean Journey (1741; translated 1960). Holberg also wrote a history of Denmark and a volume of philosophical essays. His letters were published in five volumes between 1748 and 1754.
Johannes V. Jensen

Johannes V. Jensen (1873-1950), Danish writer, born in Farsø, Jutland, and educated at the University of Copenhagen. His writings are notable for their profound understanding and sympathetic portrayal of humble people. He first gained recognition for *Himmerlandshistorier* (Tales from the Himmerland, 3 volumes, 1898-1910), a collection of folktales of the people of his native province. Jensen was deeply interested in the theory of evolution and is best known for a series of six novels (1909-20) in which he expounded his view of the development of humankind from savagery to lofty intellectual aspiration. These novels were combined (1938) into two volumes under the title *Den Lange Rejse*, after they had been translated into English under the title *The Long Journey* (3 volumes, 1922-24). Jensen, who wrote more than 60 volumes of poetry, plays, and novels, was awarded the 1944 Nobel Prize in literature.
Kaj Harald Leininger Munk

Kaj Harald Leininger Munk (1898-1944), Danish playwright and clergyman. His plays, although traditional in form, with strong religious overtones, sparked a revival of Danish drama in the 1930s. Munk's most successful works were *Herod the King* (1928); *Ordet* (1932), translated as *The Word*, a miracle play set in modern Jutland; and *He Sits at the Melting Pot* (1938), an anti-Nazi drama. All three were published in translation in *Five Plays* (1953). For his outspoken opposition to the Nazis, expressed in his dramas and sermons, Munk was executed during the German occupation of Denmark.
Adam Gottlob Oehlenschläger

Adam Gottlob Oehlenschläger (1779-1850), Danish poet and dramatist, who was the leader of the romantic movement in Danish literature. He was born in Copenhagen. In his writings he was influenced by German romanticism and Old Norse sagas. His first published volume of verse was *Digte* (Poems, 1803). He traveled throughout Europe from 1805 to 1809, returning to Denmark to become professor of aesthetics at the University of Copenhagen. Most of his plays are based on Scandinavian history or Norse mythology. They include the lyric drama *Sanct-Hansaften-Spil* (St. John's Eve Play, 1803) and the historical tragedies *Hakon Jarl* (Earl Hakon, 1807), *Baldur hin Gode* (Baldur the Good, 1808), and *Axel and Valborg* (1809; trans. 1851). Other important works are the tragedy *Correggio* (1811; trans. 1846) and the fantasy in verse *Aladdin of the Wonderful Lamp* (1820; trans. 1857).
Willem Bilderdijk

Willem Bilderdijk (1756-1831), Dutch poet and dramatist, born in Amsterdam. Handicapped from birth, he gave his energies to writing and teaching, at one time tutoring Louis Bonaparte, brother of Napoleon, who briefly ruled (1806-10) Holland. Bilderdijk's passionate love poetry and sensitive religious verse introduced the romantic movement to Dutch literature. In Gebed (Prayer, 1796) he set an example followed by religious poets in Holland for a generation. His most enduring work is an incomplete epic, De ondergang der eerste wareld (The Destruction of the First World, 1820), telling of conflict among Cain's descendents. He expressed his critical views on the importance of feeling in poetry in the poem De kunst der poezij (The Art of Poetry, 1908), but being disinclined toward self-criticism, he seldom maintained his ideals in his own work. His plays, heavily didactic, have been largely forgotten.
Gerbrand Adriaenszoon Bredero

Gerbrand Adriaenszoon Bredero (1585-1618), Dutch playwright and poet, born in Amsterdam. Bredero was a distinguished lyric poet of the Golden Age of Dutch literature and ranked among the foremost Dutch writers of comedy. He specialized in farces and light, romantic dramas. Bredero's masterpiece was *De Spaansche Brabander* (The Spaniard from Brabant, 1617).
Joost van den Vondel

Joost van den Vondel (1587-1679), Dutch poet and playwright, born in Cologne, Germany; for most of his life he lived in Amsterdam. Although largely self-taught, Vondel became the outstanding poet of Holland's golden age. As a humanist, he rebelled against the strict Calvinism of his day; later he converted to Roman Catholicism.

Vondel's first successful play, *Het Pascha* (The Passover, 1621), and his early poems were the result of his study of classical drama and poetic theory. Lyrics from his subsequent plays are considered the finest poetry in the Dutch language. His adaptations of classical Greek tragedies, masterpieces of the high baroque style, are actually concerned with the search for Christian faith. They were accompanied by a parallel series of original tragedies—among them *Hierusalem verwoest* (Jerusalem Laid Waste, 1620); *Jeptha* (1659); and a trilogy: *Lucifer* (1654; trans. 1917), which is considered to have influenced the English poet John Milton, *Adam in Exile* (1664; trans. 1952), and *Noah* (1667). Medieval Dutch traditions shaped one of his most famous plays, *Gijsbrecht van Aemstel* (1637).
John Arden

John Arden, born in 1930, English dramatist. His early plays *Serjeant Musgrave's Dance* (1959) and *The Workhouse Donkey* (1963) contain trenchant social criticism and show the influence of German dramatist Bertolt Brecht. Subsequent works, often written in collaboration with his wife, Margaretta D'Arcy, express increasing concern with the political situation in Northern Ireland and dissatisfaction with the professional and subsidized theater world.

Arden was born in Barnsley and educated at King's College at the University of Cambridge and at the Edinburgh College of Art, where he qualified as an architect. He first gained attention with a prize-winning radio play, *The Life of Man* (1956). This success was followed by *The Waters of Babylon* (1957) and *Live Like Pigs* (1958), both produced at the Royal Court Theatre. *Serjeant Musgrave's Dance* is generally regarded as Arden’s finest work; it deals with the realities of war and the tragically unsuccessful attempt by a group of deserters to act effectively against those guilty of encouraging war.

Later plays include *The Happy Haven* (1960), written with Margaretta d'Arcy; *Armstrong's Last Goodnight* (1964), which adventurously extended the techniques and political concerns of *Serjeant Musgrave's Dance*; and *Left-handed Liberty* (1965). *The Island of the Mighty* provoked considerable controversy when performed by the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1973.
Francis Beaumont (1584?-1616), English poet and playwright, best known for the tragicomedies he wrote together with John Fletcher. From about 1606 to 1614, the two collaborated on several plays (the exact number is disputed) that were very popular with audiences of the time. Beaumont attended the University of Oxford, England, but did not graduate. In 1600 he was admitted to the Inner Temple in London to study law. His first published poetry was *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus* (1602), which was put out anonymously. He contributed prefatory verses for the comedy *Volpone* by English playwright Ben Jonson, and he continued to contribute such verses to Jonson’s works until 1611.

Beaumont's first play, *The Woman Hater*, was probably written in 1605. His next published play, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1607?), is a brilliant satire on the literary tastes of the London citizenry. He soon began his collaboration with Fletcher. The production dates of nearly all the works they wrote jointly are uncertain.

Beaumont and Fletcher wrote popular comedies, including *The Captain* (1613), *The Coxcomb* (1612), and *The Scornful Lady* (1613?). The comedies exhibit a vein of comic burlesque characterized by exaggeration. There is also a romantic element to these works that anticipates the style of the duo’s later plays. The pair’s first attempt at tragedy was the play *Cupid's Revenge* (1611?). *Philaster*, a tragicomedy dated around 1609, was their first great success. Their two masterpieces are *The Maid's Tragedy* (1610?) and *A King and No King* (1611).
Aphra Behn

Aphra Behn (1640?-1689), English novelist and dramatist. It is thought that as a child she was taken to live in Suriname, West Indies, by a couple named Amis, who may have been her parents. In 1658, when England surrendered Suriname to the Dutch, she returned to England, where she married a merchant named Behn. Charles II, king of England, apparently employed Aphra as a spy in Antwerp during the war of 1665 to 1667 against the Dutch. She was not paid for her work and was jailed briefly for debt. She later turned to writing for a living and became probably the first professional female writer in England. In her time, perhaps only John Dryden, a friend, rivaled her versatility and productivity. She is acclaimed in this role by Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own*, though in her own time she suffered accusations of plagiarism and lewdness on account of her gender.

Among Behn's many works are poems and plays, the latter including her most popular play, *The Rover* (1677; second part, 1681); *The City Heiress* (1682), a satire of London life; and *The Lucky Chance* (1686), which explored one of Behn's favorite themes, the folly of arranged marriages. Her novel *Oroonoko* (1688?), the story of an African prince sold into slavery in Suriname, influenced the development of the English novel and is important for several reasons. It introduces the figure of the noble savage, later developed by Jean Jacques Rousseau, foreshadows later novels on the anticolonial theme, pioneers in the effort to depict a realistic background, and may be the first English philosophical novel. The novel formed the basis of a tragedy of the same name written by the English dramatist Thomas Southerne, produced in 1695.
Alan Bennett

Alan Bennett, born in 1934, English playwright and actor. Born in Leeds, England, Bennett studied history at Oxford University and received a B.A. degree in 1957. He first came to public attention in the revue *Beyond the Fringe*, which opened at the Edinburgh Festival in Scotland in 1960 and played before enthusiastic audiences in London and New York City in the early 1960s. Bennett coauthored and performed in the revue along with director Jonathan Miller, satirist Peter Cook, and actor Dudley Moore.

Bennett’s first stage play was *Forty Years On* (1968), an allegory about the decline of Britain set in an imaginary boys’ school called Albion House. Several stage plays followed, each stamped with Bennett’s idiosyncratic brand of gentle, self-mocking satire. They include *Getting On* (1971), *Habeas Corpus* (1973), *The Old Country* (1977), and *The Madness of George III* (1991), on which he based his screenplay for the motion picture *The Madness of King George* (1994). He returned to the boys’ school setting with *The History Boys* (2004), a play that raises questions about the meaning of education.

Bennett has also written plays for television, including *An Englishman Abroad* (1983) about Guy Burgess, a British diplomat and spy who fled to the Soviet Union. It was later staged as a double bill titled *Single Spies* (1988), along with *A Question of Attribution* about another spy, British art historian Anthony Blunt. With *Talking Heads* (1988) and *Talking Heads 2* (1998), Bennett created two series of tragicomic monologues in which the characters reveal their self-deceptions. Maggie Smith starred as an alcoholic vicar’s wife in the *Talking Heads* monologue “Bed Among the Lentils.”

*Writing Home* (1994), a witty collection of extracts from Bennett’s diaries, reached British bestseller lists soon after publication. At its core is “The Lady in the Van,” the story of an eccentric homeless woman who took up temporary residence in Bennett’s driveway and stayed there for 15 years. Bennett turned the story into a play titled *The Lady in the Van*, also starring Maggie Smith, in 1997. His satirical novel *The Laying on of Hands*, about the death of a celebrity masseur, was published in 2001.
Robert Bolt

Robert Bolt (1924–1995), English dramatist and screenwriter, known for writing historical plays, such as *A Man for All Seasons* (1960). Robert Oxton Bolt was born in Sale, Lancashire, attended Manchester University, and for several years taught English and history in secondary schools. He was 33 when the success of one of his earliest plays, *Flowering Cherry* (1957), persuaded him to become a full-time writer.

Widely considered his most important play, *A Man for All Seasons* deals with the tragic relationship between English king Henry VIII (1509-1547) and English statesman Sir Thomas More. The play illustrates Bolt's ability to dramatize political and moral issues using a clear dramatic structure, strong characterization, and expressive dialogue. Bolt’s later plays were less successful, though *Vivat! Vivat Regina!* (1970) also illustrates his ability to bring history vividly to life, and *Revolution* (1977), a critical but not popular success, shows Bolt's continued willingness to tackle intellectually ambitious works.

Edward Bulwer-Lytton (1803-1873), English novelist, dramatist, and politician. Edward George Earle Lytton, 1st Baron Bulwer-Lytton, was born in London and educated at the University of Cambridge. After graduation in 1826, he figured prominently in British and Continental social circles, which were intimately described in *Pelham* (1828), his first popular novel. From 1831 to 1841 he was a Liberal Party member of Parliament, where he supported the Reform Bill of 1832. He broke with the Liberal Party and in 1852 returned to Parliament as a Conservative. Lytton was appointed colonial secretary in 1858 and was created a baron in 1866. He displayed remarkable versatility as a writer, and he is remembered chiefly for his historical novels. Among the more notable of these are *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1834) and *Rienzi* (1835). Lytton was also the author of several successful plays, including *The Lady of Lyons* (1838) and *Richelieu* (1839). Among his other works are the novels *Falkland* (1827), *Eugene Aram* (1832), and *The Caxtons* (1849).
George Chapman

George Chapman (1559?-1634), English dramatist and translator of classical literature, born near Hitchin, Hertfordshire. He is most famous for his translations of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, which were printed together in 1616 and were followed by a collection of Homeric hymns in 1624. They were the inspiration for the poem “On First Looking into Chapman's Homer” by the English poet John Keats. Chapman's interest in the classics, particularly the philosophy of stoicism, had a great impact on his tragedies, including *Bussy D'Ambois* (1607), *The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Charles, Duke of Byron* (1608), and *Caesar and Pompey* (1631). His comedies, on the other hand, are lively and realistic; the most famous are *May Day* (1611), *The Widow's Tears* (1612), and *Eastward Ho!* (1605), which was written in collaboration with the English dramatists Ben Jonson and John Marston. Chapman also translated the poems of the Italian poet Petrarch in 1612, the *Works and Days* of the ancient Greek poet Hesiod in 1618, and a poem by the Roman satirist Juvenal in 1629.
Caryl Churchill, born in 1938, British playwright, whose political perspective and experimentation with theatrical forms made her one of the most important contemporary female playwrights in Britain. Churchill's writing focuses on issues of class and economics and their effect on women. She was born in London and lived in Montréal, Canada, from 1948 to 1955. Her first play was produced in 1958, while she was a student at the University of Oxford. While a homemaker, she wrote a series of radio plays for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in the 1960s. Her first professionally produced play was *Owners* (1972) at the Royal Court Theatre in London.

Churchill has written plays in extended workshop processes with the directors and actors of two British theater groups: Monstrous Regiment and Joint Stock. Her work with Monstrous Regiment resulted in *Vinegar Tom* (1976), a powerful play about the European burning of witches. Churchill's association with Joint Stock resulted in her most famous play, *Cloud 9* (1979), about the relationship of colonialism and gender oppression. Its off-Broadway staging by American theater director and choreographer Tommy Tune won Churchill an Obie Award (1980; the Obie Awards are off-Broadway honors given by the *Village Voice* newspaper).

Churchill's other plays include *Top Girls* (1982), about the choice for women between motherhood and business success; *Fen* (1983), about the working class in rural England; and *Serious Money* (1987), about greed in the stock market. Churchill also wrote *Mad Forest* (1991), about the 1989 overthrow of Romanian president Nicolae Ceauşescu; *The Skriker* (1994), about a malevolent, fairy-tale creature who preys on two women; and *Far Away* (2000), about the descent into barbarism in a bleak future world. She continued to probe moral issues in *A Number* (2002), which asks whether the personality derives more from nature or nurture, genetics or environment.
William Congreve

William Congreve (1670-1729), English dramatist and poet, regarded as the ablest writer of comedy of the Restoration period. He was born in Bardsey, near Leeds, and educated at Trinity College, Dublin. Later he studied law in London but soon abandoned it to pursue a literary career. He published a prose work, *Incognita* (1692), and a few poems, but did not achieve success until he turned to playwriting. With the production of his comedy *The Old Bachelor* in 1693, his talent was established. It was followed by *The Double Dealer* (1693) and *Love for Love* (1695). These plays were cynical comedies of manners, written with grace and wit but without profundity. They were designed for his close friend, the actor Anne Bracegirdle, who played the leading roles.

At this time Congreve became the manager of Lincoln's Inn, a new theater. He then wrote his only tragedy, *The Mourning Bride* (1697). When the work of Congreve and his colleagues was attacked by the clergyman Jeremy Collier as licentious, Congreve replied with *Amendments of Mr. Collier's False and Imperfect Citations* (1698). His last important play, *The Way of the World* (1700), met with little enthusiasm but is now considered a comic masterpiece. Congreve spent the rest of his life quietly, holding minor civil service posts. He published occasional verse and translations of ancient Roman and Greek poets and enjoyed the friendship of other men of letters, including Alexander Pope, Jonathan Swift, and Voltaire.
Noel Coward

Noel Coward (1899-1973), English playwright, actor, producer, and composer. Noel Pierce Coward was born in Teddington. He was noted particularly as a chronicler of British upper-class life. Coward wrote *The Vortex* in 1924, produced it in London with himself in the leading role, and in 1925 appeared in it in New York City. From then on his versatility was displayed throughout the English-speaking world.

Among Coward's two-score theatrical works, many of which he produced, directed, and appeared in, are the brilliant plays *Private Lives* (1930), *Design for Living* (1932), and *Blithe Spirit* (1941); the group of one-act plays *Tonight at 8:30* (1935); the review *Words and Music* (1932); and the musical comedy *Sail Away* (1961). He also appeared in a number of films, including *The Scoundrel* (1934). His other writings include the autobiographies *Present Indicative* (1937), *Middle East Diary* (1945), and *Future Indefinite* (1954). His writings and music formed the basis of a review staged in 1972, *Oh Coward!*

Although most of Coward's works are notable for their biting satire and sophisticated wit, they also prove him capable of moving and tender sentiment. His songs, noted for their melodies and clever lyrics, epitomize their era; among the most popular are “I'll See You Again” and “Some Day I'll Find You.” Several of his plays have entered the standard repertory, and *Brief Encounter* (1945), which he wrote and produced, is regarded as a film classic. Coward was knighted in 1970.
Richard Cumberland

Richard Cumberland (1732-1811), English dramatist, born in Cambridge, the son of a bishop, and educated at Westminster School and the University of Cambridge. He held minor government posts while he wrote plays. They include the successful sentimental comedies *Summer's Tale* (1765), *The Brothers* (1769), and *West Indian* (1771) and various tragedies, which failed. Cumberland was famous for his feud with the antisentimentalist Richard Brinsley Sheridan, who caricatured him as Sir Fretful Plagiary in his play *The Critic* (1779). Cumberland's memoirs were published in 1806 and 1807.
William Davenant

William Davenant (1606-1668), English dramatist and poet, born in Oxford. Davenant (or D'Avenant) claimed to be Shakespeare's son and Shakespeare may have been his godfather. His first play, *Albovine*, a tragedy, was written in 1628, and his best comedy, *The Wits*, in 1633. In 1638 he succeeded Ben Jonson as poet laureate. Davenant was an active supporter of Charles I against Parliament, and he was knighted by the king in 1643. He led an expedition to colonize Virginia, but was captured by Commonwealth forces in the English Channel and sentenced to death. He spent two years, from 1650 to 1652, in the Tower of London. His epic poem *Gondibert* was written during his imprisonment. Despite the Puritan ban on dramatic performances, Davenant produced performances in private houses in London in 1656. These included *The Siege of Rhodes*, reputedly the first English opera. After the Restoration he formed the Duke of York's Players, which performed his own works and adaptations of the works of Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and John Fletcher.
Thomas Dekker

Thomas Dekker (1572?-1632), English dramatist and pamphleteer, born in London. Dekker was exceedingly prolific, but his work was somewhat uneven in quality. Nonetheless, the best of his plays and pamphlets furnish valuable, and often comic, insights into Elizabethan London. He nearly always sympathized with the oppressed members of society. More than 40 of the plays that Dekker wrote alone or in collaboration survive, among them the comedies *The Shoemaker's Holiday* (1600), an amusing tale of a shoemaker who becomes lord mayor of London; *Old Fortunatus* (1600); *The Honest Whore, or a Converted Courtesan* (Part I, 1604, written with Thomas Middleton; Part II, 1630), an acute portrayal of contemporary London morals; *If It Be Not Good, the Devil Is in It* (1610?); and *The Witch of Edmonton* (1658), written in 1621 in collaboration with John Ford and William Rowley. The last-named play, which protested the persecution of witches, displays an enlightened viewpoint far in advance of Dekker's time. Among his pamphlets are *The Wonderful Year* (1603), a satirical but touching account of London life during the plague of that year.
John Dryden

John Dryden (1631-1700), English poet, dramatist, and critic, who was the leading literary figure of the Restoration.

Dryden was born to a Puritan family in Aldwinkle, Northamptonshire, and was educated at Westminster School and at the University of Cambridge. About 1657 he went to London as clerk to the chamberlain to the Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell. Dryden's first important poem, *Heroic Stanzas* (1659), was written in memory of Cromwell. After the Restoration, however, Dryden became a Royalist and celebrated the return of King Charles II in two poems, *Astraea Redux* (1660) and *Panegyric on the Coronation* (1661). In 1663 he married Lady Elizabeth Howard, sister of his patron, the courtier and playwright Sir Robert Howard.

In 1662 Dryden began to write plays as a source of income. His first attempts, including the comedy *The Wild Gallant* 1663, failed, but *The Rival Ladies*, a tragicomedy written in 1664, was a success. During the next 20 years, he became the most prominent dramatist in England. His comedies, including *An Evening's Love; or, the Mock Astrologer* (1668), *Ladies à la Mode* (1668), and *Marriage à la Mode* (1672), are broad and bawdy; one of them, *The Kind Keeper; or, Mr. Limberham* (1678), was banned as indecent, an unusual penalty during the morally permissive period of Restoration theater. His early heroic plays, written in rhymed couplets, are extravagant and full of pageantry. Among them are the semiopera *The Indian Queen* (written with Sir Robert Howard in 1664); this work contains some of the most famous music of his contemporary, the English composer Henry Purcell. Other works of this period are *The Indian Emperour; or, the Conquest of Mexico by the Spanish* (1665) and *The Conquest of Granada* (1670). One of his later tragedies in blank verse, *All for Love; or, the World Well Lost* (1678), a version of the story of Antony and Cleopatra, is considered his greatest play and one of the masterpieces of Restoration tragedy.

In his poem *Annus Mirabilis* (1667), Dryden wrote of the events in the “Wonderful Year”1666, chiefly of the English naval victory over the Dutch in July and of the Great Fire of London in September.
Sir George Etherege

Sir George Etherege (1635?-1691), English comic dramatist. He is believed to have spent a short time at the University of Cambridge and to have traveled on the Continent. His first comedy, *The Comical Revenge, or, Love in a Tub*, was produced in 1664 with remarkable success and gained its author the patronage of the court of Charles II. Its comic subplot, in prose, was developed in later works and laid a foundation for the English comedies of manners produced by William Congreve and Oliver Goldsmith. It was followed in 1668 by *She Would if She Could* and in 1676 by *The Man of Mode, or, Sir Fopling Flutter*, which is considered his best work. Etherege was one of the most notorious libertines of the time. About 1680 he was knighted. He is considered the inventor of the comedy of social life, with realistic portraits of the fops of his day.
John Fletcher

John Fletcher (1579-1625), English poet and playwright. Although he wrote many works alone and with several different dramatists, he is best known for his collaborations with fellow playwright Francis Beaumont. Fletcher was born in Rye, Sussex, England, and may have attended Corpus Christi College at the University of Cambridge.

Fletcher had an active career outside of his work with Beaumont. He succeeded Shakespeare as the chief dramatist for the King's Men, the principal acting company in London, and probably collaborated with Shakespeare on several works around the year 1613. Fletcher also wrote plays on his own and collaborated with several other dramatists to produce a series of highly successful plays. Fletcher’s solo works are some of the most admired dramas of the 17th century. They include *The Chances* (1617?), *The Wild Goose Chase* (1621?), *The Humourous Lieutenant* (1619?), and *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife* (1624).

Fletcher collaborated with Massinger on works such as *Sir John van Olden Barnavelt* (1619), *The Custom of the Country* (1619?), *The Beggar’s Bush* (1622), and *The Spanish Curate* (1622?). With Massinger and Nathan Field, Fletcher wrote three tragicomedies. He also collaborated with William Rowley in writing *The Maid in the Mill* (1623?) and apparently collaborated with Jonson and with English playwright George Chapman.
John Ford

John Ford (1586?-1640?), English dramatist, born in Ilsington, Devonshire, and educated at Exeter College. He began his literary career as a poet, writing *Fame's Memorial* (1606), an elegy on the death of Charles Blount, earl of Devonshire, as well as several poems commemorating court events. Turning to drama, he collaborated with the dramatist Thomas Dekker in writing *The Fairy Knight* and *The Bristowe Merchant* (1634?). Many consider his later plays works of the first rank. Among his dramas are *Love's Sacrifice* (1630), *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (1633), *Perkin Warbeck* (1634), *The Lady's Trial* (1638) and *The Witch of Edmonton* (1658), which he wrote in collaboration with Dekker and the English actor and dramatist William Rowley.
Christopher Fry

Christopher Fry (1907-2005), English dramatist, born in Bristol. His original name was Christopher Harris. Fry’s first major success, *The Lady’s Not for Burning* (first performed in 1948), a tragicomic fantasy in verse, was enthusiastically received both in London and New York City. In the same genre are *Venus Observed* (1950) and *Ring Round the Moon* (1950), a translation of *L’invitation au château* (Invitation to the Castle) by French playwright Jean Anouilh. Among Fry’s other works are the religious drama in verse *A Sleep of Prisoners* (1951) and the historical drama *The Dark Is Light Enough* (1954). *Tiger at the Gates* (1955), *Duel of Angels* (1960), and *Judith* (1962) are translations of plays by French dramatist Jean Giraudoux. Fry’s translations of Henrik Ibsen’s *Peer Gynt* and Edmond Rostand’s *Cyrano de Bergerac* were performed in the 1970s.
John Gay (1685-1732), English dramatist and poet, who was one of the outstanding writers of the neoclassical period in English literature. He was born in Barnstaple. His early poetry includes The Shepherd's Week (1714) and Trivia, or the Art of Walking the Streets of London (1716), the latter a studiedly artificial counterpart of Virgil's Georgics.

Gay is famous for his Fables (two series, 1727 and, posthumously, 1738), tales in verse considered the best of their kind in English. His fame as a playwright rests primarily on The Beggar's Opera (1728), a social satire that two centuries later inspired The Threepenny Opera (1928; trans. 1933) by the German dramatist Bertolt Brecht and the German-born American composer Kurt Weill. The Beggar's Opera, in various adaptations, is still popular. A sequel, entitled Polly (1729), was banned from the stage but was published and widely read. Gay composed the lyrics to many songs, including “’Twas When the Seas Were Roaring,” and he wrote many ballads, the most familiar of which is “Sweet William's Farewell to Black-eyed Susan.”
Oliver Goldsmith

Oliver Goldsmith (playwright and novelist) (1730-74), Anglo-Irish playwright, novelist, poet, and essayist, best known for his witty comedy *She Stoops to Conquer* and his novel *The Vicar of Wakefield*, an early example of the form.

Goldsmith was born November 10, 1730, in Pallas, Ireland, the son of an Anglican curate. He received a general education at Trinity College, Dublin, and studied medicine at the universities of Edinburgh and Leiden. He subsequently wandered through Europe, supporting himself by playing the flute and by begging. Later, in England, he practiced medicine, taught school, and eventually worked for various publishers, producing literary works to order. As a hack writer, he was the author of translations, books for children, and articles for newspapers and magazines. These anonymous potboilers were characterized by humor, picturesque descriptions, and a graceful style. Among them was a series of letters, supposedly written by a Chinese traveler, describing London, later reprinted as *A Citizen of the World* (1762). Once Goldsmith's authorship of this successful series became known in London literary circles, he made many influential friends, including Samuel Johnson, the foremost literary figure of the day; Sir Joshua Reynolds, the greatest English painter of the time; and the statesman and orator Edmund Burke. In 1763, Goldsmith became one of the original nine members of the celebrated literary society known as The Club, presided over by Johnson.

In 1764, Goldsmith's philosophic poem *The Traveller* was published and established him as an important writer. The publication of *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766) is believed to have been hastily arranged by Johnson in order to save Goldsmith from going to jail for debt. In 1770, Goldsmith published the poem *The Deserted Village*, distinguished for its pastoral atmosphere and felicity of phrasing; it marked the transition in English literature from neoclassicism to romanticism. Goldsmith also produced dramatic works at this time. His first play, the comedy *The Good Natur'd Man* (1768), was a failure, but *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773) was an immediate success; it remains one of the best-known comedies of the British drama.
Robert Greene

Robert Greene (1558?-1592), English dramatist and prose writer, born in Norwich and educated at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. After traveling in Europe between 1578 and 1583, he settled in London. Greene was a prolific and popular prose writer. Some of his prose romances were *Mamillia* (1583), written in imitation of *Euphuies*, by John Lyly; *The Myrrour of Modestie* (1584); *Perimedes the Blacke-Smith* (1588); and *Menaphon* (1589), written in imitation of *Arcadia*, by Sir Philip Sidney. Greene's *Pandosto, the Triumph of Time* (1588) provided William Shakespeare with a plot source for *The Winter's Tale*.

Greene also wrote verse and songs, which were incorporated into his drama and prose. He wrote many pamphlets, including a series on the London underworld. The autobiographical *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit Bought with a Million of Repentance*, which has an alleged allusion to Shakespeare as an “upstart crow,” and *The Repentance of Robert Greene, Master of Arts* were written in 1592. Greene's dramatic works include *The Honorable History of Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (1592) and *The Scottish History of James IV* (1592).
David Hare

David Hare, born in 1947, British dramatist, director, and screenwriter. Born in Sussex, England, he attended Cambridge University, where he began many years of activity in fringe theater. In 1974 he cofounded the theater company Joint Stock. Hare also served as resident dramatist and literary manager for the Royal Court Theatre in London from 1969 to 1971 and as an associate director of London’s Royal National Theatre from 1984 to 1987.

Hare’s early plays, which satirized the decadence of postwar Britain, include Slag (1970), Teeth 'n' Smiles (1975), Fanshen (1975), Plenty (1978), and Pravda (1985, written with Howard Brenton). A later trilogy of plays by Hare critically examines three establishment institutions in Britain: Racing Demon (1990) critiques the Church of England, Murmuring Judges (1991) looks at the legal system, and The Absence of War (1993) examines the military. The trilogy established Hare as one of Britain’s leading contemporary playwrights, along with Harold Pinter and Tom Stoppard. In the late 1990s Hare turned from the political to the personal in several plays that dealt with relationships, both sexual and familial. These plays include Skylight (1995), The Blue Room (1998), and Amy’s View (1999). The Breath of Life (2002), a play about deceit and the past, starred Maggie Smith and Judi Dench. He returned to the political with Stuff Happens (2004), a play about the political machinations that led to the U.S.-Iraq War in 2003.

Hare also has directed productions of many of his plays. Hare’s film scripts include Wetherby (1985), Plenty (1985), Paris by Night (1988), Damage (1992), The Absence of War (1994), and The Hours (2002).
John Heywood

John Heywood (1497?-1580?), English dramatist and epigrammatist, probably born in Hertfordshire. He was a friend of the statesman Sir Thomas More, through whom he was introduced to the courts of the English rulers Edward VI and Mary I. Shortly after the accession of the Protestant Elizabeth I to the English throne (1558), the Roman Catholic Heywood settled in Mechelen, Belgium, where he spent the rest of his life.

Heywood wrote several short dramatic pieces, known as interludes, to be performed at court, including *The Four P's* (printed 1569), *The Play of the Wether* (1533), and *The Play of Love* (1533). These satiric interludes are regarded as the precursors of English comedy. Heywood also wrote *Epigrammes* (1562), a collection of more than 600 epigrams and proverbs, several ballads, and a long allegorical poem entitled *The Spider and the Flie* (1556), which represented Roman Catholics as the flies, Protestants as the spiders, and Queen Mary as the maid destroying the spiders.
Thomas Heywood

Thomas Heywood (1574?-1641), English dramatist and writer, born in Lincolnshire and educated at the University of Cambridge. According to his own testimony, he wrote more than 220 plays for the English stage. Although not always tightly constructed and sometimes resorting to cliché, Heywood's plays exhibit a remarkable talent for dramatic and fanciful situations and pleasing an audience.

Heywood's best plays are A Woman Killed with Kindness (performed 1603, printed 1607), The Fair Maid of the West (1631), both of which have been recently revived and performed, and The English Traveller (1633). He also wrote poems, including “Troia Britannica” (England's Troy, 1609) and “The Hierarchy of the Blessed Angel” (1635). His Apology for Actors (1612) is a witty and anecdotal defense of the theater.
Anthony Hope

Anthony Hope, pseudonym of Sir Anthony Hope Hawkins (1863-1933), English novelist and playwright, born in London, and educated at the University of Cambridge. He practiced law from 1887 to 1894 before turning to writing. Although he published several plays and over 20 novels, Hope's fame rests on his first work, *The Prisoner of Zenda* (1894), and its sequel, *Rupert of Hentzau* (1898). These light novels of adventure, intrigue, and romance set in a mythical European kingdom are typical of the literature popular before World War I. *The Prisoner of Zenda* was staged for the first time in 1891 and was filmed several times. Hawkins was knighted in 1918 for his services in the British ministry of information during World War I.
Laurence Housman

Laurence Housman (1865-1959), English author and illustrator, the brother of the poet A. E. Housman. Laurence was born in Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, and studied art in London. He wrote and often illustrated many kinds of books, ranging from fairy tales to biographies. He is best known for his plays, especially *Victoria Regina* (1934), banned because it dealt with living members of the royal family. His other dramas include *Little Plays of St. Francis* (1922-35), *Palace Plays* (1930-33), and *Old Testament Plays* (1951). Notable among his other works are the novel *An Englishwoman's Love Letters* (1900), his autobiography, *The Unexpected Years* (1936), and *A.E.H.* (1937).
Hanif Kureishi

Hanif Kureishi, born in 1954, English dramatist, filmmaker, and novelist. Kureishi was born in London to an English mother and Pakistani father, and many of his works concern interracial relationships and racial tensions in contemporary British urban life. He started writing at the age of 12. After studying philosophy at the University of London, he turned to playwriting while working as a typist at Riverside Studios, a performance center in London. Kureishi’s first full-length play, *Mother Country*, was produced in 1980, and the following year he became writer-in-residence at London’s Royal Court Theatre. His other early plays include *Outskirts* (1981) and *Birds of Passage* (1983). The later play *Sleep with Me* (1999) looked at the fate of two white perpetrators of a savage racial attack in South London.

Kureishi won international attention with his first screenplay, for the motion picture *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1984) directed by Stephen Frears. It was followed by *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* (1987), also directed by Frears, and *London Kills Me* (1991), which Kureishi directed. In these films Kureishi developed what became his characteristic themes: the difficulty of sustaining enduring relationships in the face of racial and cultural prejudice, the demoralizing effects of inner-city life, and the fleeting possibility of art, in one form or another, providing redemption for these ills.

Thomas Kyd

Thomas Kyd (1558-1594), English dramatist, born in London and educated at the Merchant Taylors' School, London. Kyd (or Kid) was one of the most important dramatists of the early Elizabethan period. His *Spanish Tragedy* (1589?) was one of the most popular plays of his day. His use of shocking and horrifying melodramatic situations was imitated by subsequent English dramatists, such as Shakespeare in his *Titus Andronicus*. Many experts believe that Shakespeare used a play (now lost) attributed to Kyd as a source for *Hamlet*; other plays sometimes attributed to Kyd are *The Tragedy of Solyman and Perseda* (1588?) and *The First Part of Jeronimo* (1605). Kyd was a close friend of Christopher Marlowe, with whom he was implicated in charges of heresy and atheism. Kyd was imprisoned and released shortly thereafter, but died in disgrace and poverty a year later.
Matthew Gregory Lewis (1775-1818), English novelist, playwright, and poet, born in London, and educated at the University of Oxford. He was nicknamed “Monk” Lewis from his novel *The Monk* (1796), which is filled with gruesome and supernatural incidents and is a famous example of the Gothic romance. Lewis wrote the musical drama *The Castle Spectre* (1798), the collection of poetry *Tales of Terror* (1799), and the ballad *Alonzo the Brave and the Fair Imogen*, which influenced the poetry of Sir Walter Scott.
Thomas Lodge

Thomas Lodge (1558?-1625), English poet and dramatist, born in Lincolnshire, and educated at the University of Oxford. He was an excellent lyric poet, and his *Scillaes Metamorphosis* (1589) is the first of many minor epics concerned with love that were popular during the Elizabethan period. He is also one of the lesser-known Elizabethan English dramatists. His best-known work, *Rosalynde, Euphues Golden Legacie* (1590), written in the course of a *freebooting* (pirating) expedition to the Canary Islands in 1588, was the basis for Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. 
John Lyly

John Lyly (1554?-1606), English dramatist, born in Kent, and educated at the University of Oxford. He was patronized by the English statesman William Cecil, 1st Baron Burghley, who gave him a post in his household. Lyly's most famous work, one of the best examples of 16th-century prose, is in two parts: *Euphues, or the Anatomy of Wit* (1578) and *Euphues and His England* (1580). The work is characterized by witty discourses on the subject of love and an affected, ornate style that was thenceforth known as “euphuism.” Among Lyly's plays are the prose comedy *Alexander and Campaspe* (1584), the allegorical play in prose *Endymion, the Man in the Moone* (1591), and the comedy *The Woman in the Moone* (1597).
Louis MacNeice

Louis MacNeice (1907-63), British poet and playwright, born in Belfast, Northern Ireland. He was a member in the 1930s—a group of “new” English poets committed to informal and socially relevant verse. MacNeice's poetry volumes include *Blind Fireworks* (1929), *Autumn Journal* (1939), and *The Burning Perch* (1963). With Auden, he produced the prose work *Letters from Iceland* (1937). He also wrote radio verse plays, notably *The Dark Tower* (1947) with music by the English composer Benjamin Britten.
Christopher Marlowe

Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593), English playwright and poet, considered the first great English dramatist and the most important Elizabethan dramatist before William Shakespeare, although his entire activity as a playwright lasted only six years. Earlier playwrights had concentrated on comedy; Marlowe worked on tragedy and advanced it considerably as a dramatic medium. His masterpiece is *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*.

Born in Canterbury on February 6, 1564, the son of a shoemaker, Marlowe was educated at the University of Cambridge. Going to London, he associated himself with the Admiral's Men, a company of actors for whom he wrote most of his plays. He was reputedly a secret agent for the government and numbered some prominent men, including Sir Walter Raleigh, among his friends, but he led an adventurous and dissolute life and held unorthodox religious views. In 1593 he was denounced as a heretic; before any action could be taken against him, in May of that year he was stabbed to death in a tavern brawl at Deptford over payment of a dinner bill.

By revealing the possibilities for strength and variety of expression in blank verse, Marlowe helped to establish the verse form as the predominant form in English drama. He wrote four principal plays: the heroic dramatic epic *Tamburlaine the Great*, Part I (1587), about the 14th-century Mongol conqueror; *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* (1588?), one of the earliest dramatizations of the Faust legend; the tragedy *The Jew of Malta* (1589?); and *Edward II* (1592?), which was one of the earliest successful English historical dramas and a model for Shakespeare's *Richard II* and *Richard III*. In each of these dramas one forceful protagonist with a single overriding passion dominates. Marlowe was also the author of two lesser plays: *Tragedy of Dido, Queen of Carthage*, completed by the English dramatist Thomas Nashe (1594); and *Massacre at Paris* (1600). Some authorities believe Marlowe also wrote parts of several of Shakespeare's plays. Each of Marlowe's important plays has as a central character a passionate man doomed to destruction by an inordinate desire for power. The plays are further characterized by beautiful, sonorous language and emotional vitality, which is, however, at times unrestrained to the point of bombast.
John Marston

John Marston (1576-1634), English dramatist, born in Coventry, and educated at the University of Oxford. His first works, under the pseudonym of W. Kinsayder, were the erotic poem *The Metamorphosis of Pigmalion's Image* and the collection of 12 bitter satires on the vice of the times, *The Scourge of Villanie*; both books were published in 1598. Among his other works are the melodrama *Antonio's Revenge* (1602) and the comedies *Dutch Courtezan* (1605) and *What You Will* (1607). Marston's exaggerated situations and bombastic diction were satirized by the playwright Ben Jonson; the literary quarrel was soon resolved and Marston dedicated his comedy *The Malcontent* (1604) to Jonson. In the comedy *Eastward Ho* (1605) Marston collaborated with Jonson and George Chapman. About 1609 he became an Anglican clergyman and from 1616 to 1631 was rector of Christchurch, Hampshire.
Philip Massinger

Philip Massinger (1583-1640), English playwright, born in Salisbury, and educated at the University of Oxford. He went to London in 1606 and collaborated successfully with the playwrights Nathaniel Field, Cyril Tourneur, Thomas Dekker, and John Fletcher (see Beaumont and Fletcher); with Fletcher he wrote regularly for the troupe The King's Players. In his works Massinger introduced many of his democratic ideas and often addressed political issues of his time. He also frequently caricatured such well-known people as the Duke of Buckingham. His plays, which include both comedy and tragedy, show skilled plot construction and expressiveness. He was the sole author of 15 plays, including *The Duke of Milan* (1623); *The Emperor of the East* (1631); *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* (1632), which was a mainstay of the late 18th- and 19th-century English stage repertoire, and is still revived, and *The Unnatural Combat* (1639). Massinger was prolific and successful, having written 40 to 55 plays (only half of which still exist).
Thomas Middleton (1580?-1627), English dramatist, probably born in London, and educated at the University of Oxford. Middleton began writing for the stage in the early 1600s. The plays that exist today were for the most part written in collaboration with Thomas Dekker, Michael Drayton, John Webster, and William Rowley. In 1604 Middleton contributed to Dekker's *The Honest Whore* and in 1610 worked with him on *The Roaring Girle*. Middleton's popular *A Trick to Catch the Old One* (1608) is a cynical comedy about middle-class life in London. His two most powerful plays, *The Changeling* (1621), written with Rowley, and *Women Beware Women*, were tragedies about the corruption of character. These two plays have been revived recently, strengthening critical interest in Middleton's work. T.S. Eliot applauded Middleton's political and tragic dramas in his essay on the playwright in 1927. *A Game at Chesse* (1624) was closed after nine performances because of its anti-Spanish content. Middleton was city chronologer of London (1620-1625?).
Hannah More

Hannah More (1745-1833), English writer and philanthropist, born in Stapleton, near Bristol. She wrote a pastoral drama, *The Search After Happiness*, at the age of 18. More became part of a London circle of eminent literary figures that included the actor David Garrick. He produced her two plays *Percy* (1777) and *The Fatal Falsehood* (1779). After Garrick's death in 1779 More's already strong religious and moral interests deepened. She wrote *Thoughts on the Importance of Manners of the Great to General Society* (1788) and *Village Politics* (1792). More also wrote moral tracts and established schools for the poor.
Thomas Nashe

Thomas Nashe (1567-1601), English novelist, satirist, and dramatist, born in Lowestoft, and educated at the University of Cambridge. He was considered a great wit and brilliant personality of his time.

Nashe was employed by the Church of England to answer the attacks made on it by a Puritan writer, or group of writers, known as Martin Marprelate (see Marprelate Controversy). Under the pen name of Pasquil, Nashe responded with satiric pamphlets, which may have included An Almond for a Parrat (1590). He also took part in a violent literary controversy against the poet Gabriel Harvey and his brother Richard Harvey, who had been extremely critical of the writings of Nashe and his friend Robert Greene. This feud came to an end by an order of the Church in 1599. Nashe's prose satire Pierce Penilesse, His Supplication to the Divell (1592) is in part an attack on the Harveys, and also on Nashe's opponents in the Marprelate controversy; it also protests against the public's neglect of worthy writers. Important among Nashe's other writings are the pamphlet Christs Teares over Jerusalem (1593), in which he satirizes the vices of the London of his time, and the satiric masque Summers Last Will and Testament (1600).

Nashe's best-known work, the novel The Unfortunate Traveller, or The Life of Jack Wilton (1594), greatly influenced English literature. It is the earliest example of picaresque fiction in English, predating the realistic adventure novels of Daniel Defoe and Tobias Smollett.
John Osborne

John Osborne (1929-1994), British playwright and motion picture screenwriter, known for his sharp criticism of modern British life. Osborne's play *Look Back in Anger* (1956), about rebellion against traditional mores, is regarded as a landmark in post-World War II British drama and made its author famous as the first of “the angry young men” (*see* English Literature). *The Entertainer* (1957), which originally featured the British actor Laurence Olivier, presents the decline of Britain's place in the world through the metaphor of the stage. *Luther* (1961) is a historical drama in which the title character is seen as a true rebel (*see* Martin Luther). *Inadmissible Evidence* (1964) resumes Osborne's attack on contemporary values, and *West of Suez* (1971) is a depiction of Britain's past imperial glories in which he shows sympathy for the colonizer. Osborne's screenplay for the 1963 film *Tom Jones* won an Academy Award. His autobiography, *A Better Class of Person* (1981), recalls with bitterness his mother and his lower middle-class origins. Osborne's second volume of autobiography, *Almost a Gentleman*, was published in 1991. His last play was *Deja vu* (1992).
Thomas Otway

Thomas Otway (1652-85), English dramatist, born in Trotton, and educated at the University of Oxford. His first play, the tragedy *Alcibiades*, was produced in 1675, and *Don Carlos* (1676) established his reputation as a dramatist. Otway's most important works are the tragedies *The Orphan* (1680) and *Venice Preserved* (1682). Both plays were immediately successful and were performed regularly for more than 200 years. Otway gave his characters emotional depth and intensity; his intricate plots are skilfully contrived, and his verse is natural and often extremely moving. Although a successful dramatist, he died in poverty.
Arthur Wing Pinero

Arthur Wing Pinero (1855-1934), British author of popular farces and social dramas, born in London. As a young man he studied law, but at the age of 19 he became an actor; he continued in that profession until 1882. Pinero began his career as dramatist with the farcical comedy £200 a Year (1877); he received wide acclaim with The Money Spinner (1881) and after 1882 devoted himself to writing plays. Pinero was a prolific writer of farces and comedies, but he also wrote melodramas dealing with ethical and social problems; the latter were characteristic of the movement in Victorian England away from plays intended merely to entertain toward those dealing seriously with life. Among Pinero's plays that are still performed are The Second Mrs. Tanqueray (1893), the best known of his plays and the first to win recognition outside England; Trelawney of the “Wells” (1898), about life in a theatrical company; and the farces The Magistrate (1885) and Dandy Dick (1887). Pinero was knighted in 1909.
Harold Pinter

Harold Pinter, born in 1930, English playwright, known for his so-called comedies of menace, which humorously and cynically depict people attempting to communicate as they react to an invasion or threat of an invasion of their lives. He is also noted for his unique use of dialogue, which exposes his characters’ alienation from each other and explores the layers of meaning produced by pauses and silence. In 2005 Pinter was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature.

Harold Pinter was born in London. Initially interested in acting, he appeared in school plays as a youth. He studied at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London in 1948 and for the next ten years acted with various repertory companies. Pinter’s first three plays debuted in 1957: The Room, The Dumbwaiter, and The Birthday Party. The Caretaker (1959), his play about two neurotic brothers whose fragile relationship is upset by a vagrant who forces himself into their lives, established Pinter’s reputation as an innovative playwright. This success brought renewed attention to The Birthday Party, which subsequently became one of his most popular plays.

Stephen Poliakoff

Stephen Poliakoff, born in 1952, English playwright, screenwriter, and motion-picture director, who achieved recognition at an early age with *Hitting Town* (1975) and *City Sugar* (1976), two plays about disaffected youth in grim, soulless, suburban settings, a subject that recurs throughout his work. Born in London, Poliakoff was educated at the Westminster School and then at King's College at the University of Cambridge, which he left after two years. The first of his plays to be performed was *Granny* (1969), followed by *Lay By* (1971) and *Pretty Boy* (1971). His play *Hitting Town*, in which a brother and sister enter into an incestuous relationship, supplied parts of the plot for Poliakoff's motion picture *Close My Eyes* (1991).

Poliakoff's other stage plays include *Strawberry Fields* (1977), which suggests terrorism and fascism lurking in 1970s Britain; and *Shout Across the River* (1978), a piece in which a mother and her disturbed daughter negotiate their relationship. In the 1980s Poliakoff turned his attention to Eastern Europe, producing a play on the Russian Revolution (1917), called *Breaking the Silence* (1984), a play on the entry of a Polish refugee to Britain, *Coming Into Land* (1987), and the television play *Caught on a Train* (1980), in which a man becomes involved in a strange alliance with an old woman in his railway carriage as they travel across Europe. Poliakoff also wrote and directed *Century* (1993), a motion picture about a young medical researcher.
Dennis Potter


Potter was born at the Forest of Dean in Gloucestershire, a remote coal-mining area that would figure prominently in his work. Moving to London in his early years, he attended the University of Oxford, edited a magazine, campaigned for the Labour Party, and wrote 'The Glittering Coffin,' a provocative essay on Britain's decline.

During an unsuccessful run for Parliament on the Labour ticket in 1964, Potter developed psoriatic arthropathy, a crippling combination of psoriasis and arthritis. The affliction, which took the form of periodic 'visitations' that wracked his limbs and infested his skin, had a profound effect on Potter's writing. He began to explore themes of sexuality and death, public and personal betrayal, God, and what he called 'the sovereignty of self.” He viewed the latter as being “all that we have and you're bumping up against the very rim of communication in trying to talk about it.'

Cradling his trademark anger in irony, Potter tackled everything from the tribal passions of childhood in “Blue Remembered Hills” (1979), with adult actors playing the children, to the unsettling subject of treason in “Blade on the Feather” (1980). Then, out of a body of remarkably gifted work, there emerged what critics hailed as two television masterpieces. The eight-part “Pennies From Heaven” is about a nondescript man named Arthur, a sheet-music salesman in the Depression era. Arthur shuttles between his frigid wife and a loving girlfriend who teaches children in the Forest of Dean. With characters frequently lip-synching the words to recordings of popular period songs, “Pennies” creates a world as enchanting, terrifying, and magical as a fairy tale.

Working almost to the day he died, Potter left behind two series, “Karaoke” (1996) and “Cold Lazarus” (1996) both produced posthumously for British television.
J. B. Priestley

J. B. Priestley (1894-1984), English writer, born in Bradford. He served in the infantry during World War I, after which he attended the University of Cambridge. A newspaper essayist and critic, he wrote on a variety of subjects and often revealed his opposition to materialism and mechanization in society. The publication of *The Good Companions* (1929) and *Angel Pavement* (1930) established him as a successful popular novelist. Whereas his novels were traditional in form, his plays, beginning with *Dangerous Corner* (1932), were experimental, particularly in their treatment of time and of past and future events. Priestley's major plays include *When We Are Married* (1938), *An Inspector Calls* (1946), and *Dragon's Mouth* (1952); on the latter, he collaborated with his wife, the English archaeologist and writer Jacquetta Hawkes. Later books include the autobiographical *Margin Released* (1962), *Man and Time* (1964), *Essays of Two Decades* (1968), *The Edwardians* (1970), and *The English* (1973). Priestley was director of the influential journal *New Statesman and Nation* and, after declining a knighthood and a peerage, accepted the Order of Merit from Queen Elizabeth II in 1977.
Terence Rattigan

Terence Rattigan (1911-77), English playwright. Terence Mervyn Rattigan was born in London and educated at Harrow School and the University of Oxford. After 1936, when he achieved his first London success as a playwright with *French Without Tears*, Rattigan had a new play produced virtually every season for 20 years. Rattigan's urbane, literate plays are deftly conceived. *The Winslow Boy* (1947) won the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award for best foreign play of the year. Other dramas include *The Browning Version* (1949), *Separate Tables* (1956), and *Ross* (1961). Rattigan also wrote many screenplays, among them *The Yellow Rolls Royce* (1964). His *Collected Plays* was published in 1954. He was knighted in 1971.
Charles Reade

Charles Reade (1814-84), English novelist and playwright, born in Ipsden, Oxfordshire. In 1852 his play *Masks and Faces*, written with the English dramatist Tom Taylor, was produced. Reade used the play as the basis for the novel *Peg Woffington* (1853). In 1856 he wrote *It Is Never Too Late to Mend*, the first of a series of novels of social criticism, exposing the cruelty of prison discipline. Other novels in the same vein include *Hard Cash* (1863), dealing with conditions in insane asylums; *Griffith Gaunt* (1866), on jealousy in marriage; and *Put Yourself in His Place* (1870), on the terrorism of trade unions.

Reade customarily accumulated an immense bulk of documentary material on which he based his books. His masterpiece, *The Cloister and the Hearth* (1861), is a historical romance based on the life of the father of the Dutch humanist Desiderius Erasmus.
Thomas Shadwell (1642?-1692), English dramatist and poet, born in Norfolk, and educated at the University of Cambridge. He practiced law until the successful production of his comedy *The Sullen Lovers* (1668), after which he devoted himself entirely to writing. Shadwell produced mainly comedies in which he criticized the manners of the period. Best known are *Epsom Wells* (1672) and *The Squire of Alsatia* (1688). Late in his life, Shadwell openly acknowledged his literary feud with the English poet John Dryden. His satire *The Medal of John Bayes* (1682) contains his strongest attack against Dryden, who counteracted with *Mac Flecknoe, or a Satire on the True Blue Protestant Poet, T.S.* (1682). Shadwell succeeded Dryden as poet laureate in 1688.
Peter Shaffer

Peter Shaffer, born in 1926, British playwright, best known for psychological plays that often focus on relationships between people of seemingly opposite natures with some shared bond. Peter Levin Shaffer was born in Liverpool, England, and educated at Saint Paul's School in London, graduating in 1944. From 1944 to 1947 he worked as a coal miner, and then attended Trinity College at the University of Cambridge, where he received his B.A. degree in 1950. Shaffer subsequently lived in New York City, working at various jobs until he returned to London in 1954. From 1956 to 1957 he was literary critic for the British journal Truth, and then music critic for another British journal, Time and Tide, from 1961 to 1962.

Shaffer began writing novels with his twin brother Anthony when they were in their mid-twenties, but it was Shaffer's play Five Finger Exercise (1958) that first brought him critical acclaim, in the form of the Evening Standard Drama Award (sponsored annually by that British newspaper) and the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award for best foreign play. The Royal Hunt of the Sun (1964), about the Spanish destruction of the Inca civilization of Peru, premiered at the British National Theatre in London, moved to New York, and was made into a motion picture in 1969. Equus (1973), the story of a psychoanalyst's attempt to understand the mysterious faith of a troubled young stable-boy, won the New York Drama Critics' Circle and Antoinette Perry (Tony) awards, and was filmed in 1979. Another critical success followed in 1979 with Amadeus, about the 18th-century rivalry between Austrian composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Italian composer Antonio Salieri. In 1984 the motion-picture adaptation won a Golden Globe Award and eight Academy Awards, including best film. Other major dramatic works by Shaffer that have enjoyed critical acclaim and successful runs in London's West End theater district are Lettice and Lovage (1987), winner of the Evening Standard Award for best comedy, and The Gift of the Gorgon (1992). Shaffer has also written plays for television and radio, including The Salt Land (1955), Balance of Terror (1957), and Whom Do I Have the Honour of Addressing? (1989).
William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare (1564-1616), English playwright and poet, recognized in much of the world as the greatest of all dramatists. Hundreds of editions of his plays have been published, including translations in all major languages. Scholars have written thousands of books and articles about his plots, characters, themes, and language. He is the most widely quoted author in history, and his plays have probably been performed more times than those of any other dramatist.

There is no simple explanation for Shakespeare’s unrivaled popularity, but he remains our greatest entertainer and perhaps our most profound thinker. He had a remarkable knowledge of human behavior, which he was able to communicate through his portrayal of a wide variety of characters. He was able to enter fully into the point of view of each of his characters and to create vivid dramatic situations in which to explore human motivations and behavior. His mastery of poetic language and of the techniques of drama enabled him to combine these multiple viewpoints, human motives, and actions to produce a uniquely compelling theatrical experience.
Richard Brinsley Sheridan

Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751-1816), British dramatist and politician, whose work is considered the finest development of the comedy of manners in 18th-century England.

Sheridan was born in Dublin, Ireland and educated at the University of Oxford. In 1775 three of his comic works; a drama, *The Rivals*; a farce, *St. Patrick's Day*; and an opera, *The Duenna*, were produced with great success at Covent Garden, London. The score for the opera was written by his father-in-law, the composer Thomas Linley, with whom Sheridan purchased the Drury Lane Theatre in London. From 1776, Sheridan served as manager of the theater and produced there several of his other witty satires on fashionable society, quite different from the sentimental comedies then popular. Among his works are *The School for Scandal* (1777) and *The Critic* (1779). *The School for Scandal* is considered his masterpiece: a series of gossipy but polished, fast-paced scenes exposing contemporary foibles through the actions of the vigorously drawn characters. *The Critic*, an afterpiece designed to be presented after a full-length play, is the work of a writer thoroughly familiar with the theater world; it is a broad satire on contemporary playwrights and their critics. Sheridan's two major trademarks are his incisively exaggerated characters and amusing twists of plot. From the name of Mrs. Malaprop, a humorous character in the early play *The Rivals*, derives the widely used term *malapropism*, meaning the absurd misapplication of a long word.

Sheridan became a member of Parliament in 1780, undersecretary for foreign affairs in 1782, secretary to the treasury in 1783, and treasurer of the navy and a member of the Privy Council in 1806. He later became a leader of society and a close adviser to the Prince of Wales, later George IV. The playwright's parliamentary career was notable for his eloquent speeches made in opposition to the British war against the American colonies, in support of the new French Republic, and in denunciation of the British colonial administrator Warren Hastings.

Sheridan died in London on July 7, 1816, his last years having been shadowed by financial ruin after the burning of the Drury Lane Theatre in 1809.
James Shirley

James Shirley (1596-1666), English dramatist, born in London and educated at the University of Cambridge. He was a schoolmaster from 1623 until the success of his first play *Love Tricks, or the School of Compliment* in 1625. His output until 1642, when the Puritan suppression of the theater ended his career, came to about 40 plays. They are considered a link between Renaissance drama and Restoration drama. Shirley's best works are his comedies, which are noted for their fantasy and clever satire. They include *The Witty Fair One* (1628) and *The Lady of Pleasure* (1635). He also wrote *The Cardinal* (1641), a tragedy; and *The Triumph of Peace* (1634), a masque, which was performed at the Inns of Court with scenery by Inigo Jones and music by William Lawes.
Richard Steele

Richard Steele (1672-1729), English essayist, playwright, and statesman, who founded and contributed frequently to the influential 18th-century journal the *Spectator*.

Steele was born in March 1672 in Dublin and educated at the University of Oxford. He entered the army in 1694 and during his term of military service wrote three witty comic dramas, *The Funeral* (1701), *The Lying Lover* (1703), and *The Tender Husband* (1705). In 1707 Steele was appointed by the English statesman Robert Harley, 1st earl of Oxford, to edit the *London Gazette*, an official government publication.

On April 12, 1709, Steele brought out, under the pseudonym of Isaac Bickerstaff, the first issue of the *Tatler*, a triweekly journal featuring essays and brief sketches on politics and society. In addition to his own essays, Steele published in the *Tatler* a number of papers by the English essayist Joseph Addison, whom he had met during his school days and who became an important colleague and friend. This publication was succeeded on March 1, 1711, by the more famous *Spectator* with both Steele and Addison as contributors. Many of the ideas for articles were Steele's, with Addison filling in the details and polishing the prose. Perhaps the best-known portion of the *Spectator* comprises a series of essays known as the Sir Roger de Coverley papers, which, in the person of a kindly and eccentric old country gentleman, present an idealized portrait of the 18th-century English squire. This character was conceived by Steele and named for an old English dance. When the last issue of the *Spectator* appeared on December 6, 1712, Steele had contributed 236 papers and Addison 274. Steele's next journalistic venture, the *Guardian*, started in 1713, lasted for 176 issues, and was succeeded by several periodicals, notably the *Englishman* (1713).

In these later undertakings, Steele, an ardent Whig, involved himself in violent controversy with the Tories, who then controlled the government. He entered Parliament as a Whig but was expelled in 1714 on the charge of having committed seditious libel in his pamphlet *The Crisis*, in which he advocated the succession to the British throne of the pro-Whig elector of Hannover, later King George I. Political disagreements tore apart the friendship of Addison and Steele in 1718.
Tom Stoppard

Tom Stoppard, born in 1937, English playwright, noted for his ingenious use of language and ironic political metaphors. Stoppard was associated with the continental European theater of the absurd, a movement that lamented the senselessness of the human condition. He fused the English tradition of the “comedy of manners” (a play that satirizes the customs of the upper classes) with contemporary social concerns by concentrating on the intricate and comical duplicities of everyday conversation within a wider, and often menacing, historical perspective.

Born Tomas Straussler in Zlín, Czechoslovakia (now in the Czech Republic), the son of a physician who was later killed by the Nazis (see National Socialism), Stoppard was educated in India and England. He worked as a journalist and as a writer for radio and television before coming into prominence with the production of his play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 1966. Conceived as a satirical meditation on *Hamlet*, by English playwright William Shakespeare, Stoppard's play focuses on the sadly existential but frivolous meanderings of two of *Hamlet's* marginal characters, a pair of quarrelsome courtiers.

John Vanbrugh (1664-1726), British dramatist and one of the great architects of the baroque style in England. Born in London and apparently educated in Cheshire, he began a military career and, while imprisoned by the French, began writing. His first and most famous plays, *The Relapse* (1696) and *The Provok'd Wife* (1697), were highly successful examples of the Restoration comedy. He subsequently wrote adaptations of French plays. The first edition of his collected works appeared in 1893.

Vanbrugh was drawn away from the stage by his growing reputation as an architect. He worked on a grand scale, usually in collaboration with the British architect Nicholas Hawksmoor, producing buildings such as Castle Howard (1702) in Yorkshire, the Queen's Theatre (1705) in London, and the magnificent Blenheim Palace (1705, completed 1724) near Woodstock. His houses after about 1715, designed without Hawksmoor, are smaller and less ornate, although bold in their conception and use of mass. Of these the masterpiece is probably Seaton Delaval (1720) in Northumberland.
John Webster

John Webster (1580?-1632?), English playwright. Shortly after 1600 he worked as one of a group of dramatists writing plays for the London theater manager Philip Henslowe. The group included many gifted playwrights, among them Thomas Dekker, John Marston, and Thomas Heywood, with each of whom Webster collaborated occasionally. Webster's genius as a writer was first fully revealed in his great tragedies *The White Devil*, produced in 1612, and *The Duchess of Malfi*, staged about 1614. Both plays depict a world of extravagant passions, dark intrigue, and fratricidal violence. Both plays ensured Webster's long-lasting critical acclaim and both are still produced. Despite their melodramatic themes, Webster's plays are redeemed by his soaring poetic dialogue and his grasp of human psychology.
Oscar Wilde

Oscar Wilde (1854-1900), Irish-born writer and wit, who was the chief proponent of the aesthetic movement, based on the principle of art for art’s sake. Wilde was a novelist, playwright, poet, and critic. He was born Oscar Fingal O’Flahertie Wills Wilde on October 16, 1854, in Dublin, and educated at Trinity College, Dublin. As a youngster he was exposed to the brilliant literary talk of the day at his mother’s Dublin salon. Later, as a student at the University of Oxford, he excelled in classics, wrote poetry, and incorporated the Bohemian life-style of his youth into a unique way of life. At Oxford Wilde came under the influence of aesthetic innovators such as English writers Walter Pater and John Ruskin. As an aesthete, the eccentric young Wilde wore long hair and velvet knee breeches. His rooms were filled with various objets d’art such as sunflowers, peacock feathers, and blue china; Wilde claimed to aspire to the perfection of the china. His attitudes and manners were ridiculed in the comic periodical *Punch* and satirized in the Gilbert and Sullivan comic opera *Patience* (1881). Nonetheless, his wit, brilliance, and flair won him many devotees.
William Wycherley

William Wycherley (1640-1716), English dramatist, known as a master of Restoration comedy. He was born in Clive, Shropshire. After early schooling in France, he studied briefly at the University of Oxford and at the Inner Temple, London, where his interests were more literary than legal. His first comedy, *Love in a Wood* (1671), won him the patronage of the duchess of Cleveland, mistress of Charles II. He then wrote three more scandalous comedies: *The Gentleman Dancing-Master* (1672), *The Country Wife* (1675), and *The Plain Dealer* (1676). All his plays reflect the ruthless mores of a profligate age and are characterized by exuberant, often bawdy, humor, witty dialogue, and solid construction. The earlier plays are stylized, somewhat artificial portraits of foppish London gallants and ladies of fashion; *The Plain Dealer* introduces a serious, satirical view of London society that verges on puritanism. Wycherley lost court patronage in 1680 when he married a rich Puritan widow. Ruined by litigation over her estate after her death, he spent seven years in debtors' prison. He was released and pensioned by James II.
Israel Zangwill

Israel Zangwill (1864-1926), English writer, born in London of Russian parents, and educated at the Jews' Free School in London. He established a reputation as a novelist in 1892, with *Children of the Ghetto*, which concerned life among poor London Jews. This work was followed by *Ghetto Tragedies* (1893), *The King of Schnorrers* (1894), *Ghetto Comedies* (1907), and other novels about Jewish life, as well as by stories, plays, essays, and poems. His best-known play is *The Melting Pot* (1908). Other plays include *Plaster Saints* (1914) and *We Moderns* (1924). He is especially noted for portraying modern Jewish life with sympathy and humor, neither stereotyping nor idealizing it. Zangwill was an early leader of modern Zionism. In 1905 he founded the Jewish Territorial Organization, which sought unsuccessfully for land where Jews might be able to make an autonomous settlement.
Jean Anouilh

Jean Anouilh (1910-1987), French playwright, director, and producer, known for well-crafted and provocative plays. Born near Bordeaux, Anouilh spent most of his life immersed in the theater world of Paris. After studying law and working briefly at an advertising agency, in 1931 he became secretary to actor, director, and producer Louis Jouvet. Anouilh’s first plays, written during the 1930s, were strongly influenced by the theatrical performance styles embraced by Jouvet and by Jacques Copeau, an experimental director and producer. During and after World War II (1939-1945), Anouilh wrote plays praised for their theatrical virtuosity, although some critics felt they lacked substance. After 1948 he worked closely with director Roland Piètri, with whom he codirected several of his own plays. In later years he adapted the works of others for the stage and worked on a number of motion-picture scripts.

Anouilh’s career reflects a sustained search for an explanation of the failure of idealism in the real world. His earliest plays, including Le voyageur sans bagage (1937; translated as Traveller Without Luggage, 1959) and La sauvage (1938; Restless Heart, 1957), seek this explanation in the nature of society, emphasizing its imperfections and the limitations imposed on it by the past. Anouilh termed these plays piècesnoires (black plays) because of their relatively pessimistic tone. He later sought an explanation in the individual, emphasizing individual psychology and memory as reasons for the failure of idealism. Plays such as Le bal des voleurs (1938; Thieves’ Carnival, 1952) are more poetic and optimistic than his black plays, and the author termed them piècesroses (rose-colored plays).

During and after World War II Anouilh turned to Greek mythology for an explanation for the failure of idealism. The plays from this period include Eurydice (1942; Point of Departure, 1951) and Médée (first performed in 1937; published 1946; Medea, 1967). Antigone (1942; translated 1946), often considered to be his masterpiece, combines an interest in the personality of the individual with a new curiosity about the role of destiny prominent in myth. The play revolves around a conflict between the idealist Antigone and her realist uncle Creon over the burial of Polynices, her brother and his nephew.
Guillaume Apollinaire

Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918), French poet, novelist, dramatist, and art and literary critic. He became a leader of the avant-garde in Paris in the early 20th century and is believed to have coined the term *surrealist*.

Wilhelm Albert Wladimir Alexander Apollinaris de Kostrowitzky was born in Rome to a Polish mother and an Italian father. He was educated at the Lycée Saint-Charles in Monaco. After youthful travels in Europe, he settled in Paris, France, in 1902 and quickly became a leader of the literary avant-garde under the pseudonym Guillaume Apollinaire. He was an advocate of symbolism and a friend of symbolist writers (*see Symbolist Movement*). This late 19th-century movement rejected its predecessors’ rules for poetic style and proclaimed the imagination to be the source of all ideas. Apollinaire also championed cubist painters and Cubism, a revolutionary style of the early 20th century that marked the beginning of abstraction in painting. He was wounded in 1916 while fighting in World War I and died in the great influenza epidemic of 1918.

Apollinaire was fascinated by the relationships between the arts, especially between poetry and painting, and his own poems are very pictorial. *Calligrammes: poèmes de la paix et de la guerre* (1918; translated as *Calligrammes*, 1980) contains poems whose printed shapes visually imitate the subjects of the poems. For example, a poem about a fountain is shaped on the page like a fountain.
Émile Augier (1820-89), French dramatist, born in Valence. His early work, typified by *The Adventuress* (1848; trans. 1888), contains graceful and witty glorifications of romantic love. With *Gabrielle* (1849), however, he began his mature career, characterized by satirical comedies of manners revealing the corruption of contemporary French domestic life. His masterpiece is *Le gendre de M. Poirier* (Monsieur Poirier's Son-in-Law, 1854), which he wrote with the French playwright Jules Sandeau. Other plays, such as *Les effrontés* (The Shameless, 1861) and *Le fils de Giboyer* (Giboyer's Son, 1862), deal with the social corruption caused by the struggle for wealth.
Henri Bataille (1872-1922), French dramatist and poet. From about 1900 to the outbreak of World War I he was regarded as the foremost French dramatist. Among his plays, which are psychological studies of passion as a motivating force in human behavior, are \textit{L'enchantement} (Enchantment, 1900), \textit{Maman Colibri} (Mother Colibri, 1904), and \textit{La femme nue} (The Naked Woman, 1908). His verse includes the book of war poems \textit{La divine tragédie} (1917).
Pierre de Beaumarchais

Pierre de Beaumarchais (1732-99), French playwright. Pierre Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais was born in Paris. The son of a watchmaker, he became watchmaker to Louis XV and a court favorite. Young Caron married the widow of a court official in 1756 and took the name Beaumarchais. He bought the office of secretary to the king, which made him a nobleman. Subsequently he was employed in confidential missions by Louis XV and Louis XVI. During the American Revolution, Beaumarchais sold arms to the American colonies.

His literary fame rests on his two comedies, *Le barbier de Seville* (1775) and *Le mariage de Figaro* (1784). In these plays Beaumarchais satirized the French ruling class, reflecting the growing dissatisfaction with the nobility in the years preceding the French Revolution. The plays were made into popular operas, *Le nozze di Figaro* (The Marriage of Figaro, 1786) by Mozart and *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (The Barber of Seville, 1816) by the Italian composer Gioacchino Rossini.
Samuel Beckett

Samuel Beckett (1906-1989), Irish-born poet, novelist, and playwright, who won international fame with his play *En attendant Godot (Waiting for Godot)*, which premiered in 1953. He won the Nobel Prize in 1969 and influenced a generation of dramatists, including English playwrights Harold Pinter and Tom Stoppard and American playwrights Edward Albee and Sam Shepard.

Born in the Dublin suburb of Foxrock, Beckett attended the prestigious Portora Royal School in Enniskillen, in what became Northern Ireland, and Trinity College in Dublin. After graduating with a degree in Romance languages in 1927, he lectured at the École Normale Supérieure in Paris from 1928 to 1930. During this time he befriended Irish author James Joyce, who was to have a profound effect on his writing. Much of Beckett’s early poetry and fiction, including the collection of short stories *More Pricks than Kicks* (1934) and his first published novel, *Murphy* (1938), was written with Joyce’s works as the literary model.

Having studied the works of French philosopher René Descartes and written a book on French novelist Marcel Proust, published in 1931 during his tenure in Paris, Beckett returned to Dublin in 1930 to complete his M.A. degree and to accept a lectureship in French at Trinity College. But the formal academic life held little appeal, and in December 1931 he resigned from Trinity with no better prospects than a vague hope for his writing. This difficult period is described in some of his earliest writing: *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, an unfinished novel written in English shortly after his resignation but published in 1992, and the three-act play *Eleutheria* (Greek for “freedom”), written in French in 1947 and published in 1995.
Henry François Becque

Henry François Becque (1837-1899), French playwright, born in Paris. His first play, *L'enfant prodigue* (The Prodigal Son, 1867), a light comedy, was well received. His masterpieces, however, are *The Vultures* (1882; translated 1913, also known as *The Crows*) and *The Woman of Paris* (1885; translated 1913), both naturalistic portrayals of French bourgeois life. Becque was one of the first French playwrights to break with classical formalism and the emotionalism of romantic drama. His dialogue, with its revolutionary use of slang and colloquialisms, contributed as much as the themes to the realistic effect of his plays.
Eugène Brieux (1858-1932), French dramatist, born in Paris. His first success was *Artists' Families* (1890; trans. 1918). He became one of the most prolific French dramatists, dealing always with social abuses. Among his plays are *The Red Robe* (1900; trans. 1915), about injustice under the law; *Damaged Goods* (1902; produced in New York City in 1913); *L'Avocat* (The Lawyer, 1922); and *La famille Lavolette* (The Lavolette Family, 1926).
Albert Camus

Albert Camus (1913-1960), French-Algerian novelist, essayist, dramatist, and journalist, a Nobel laureate whose concepts of the absurd and of human revolt address and suggest solutions to the problem of meaninglessness in modern human life.
Paul Louis Charles Marie Claudel

Paul Louis Charles Marie Claudel (1868-1955), French writer and diplomat, born in Villeneuve-sur-Fère. During most of his life he served in the French diplomatic corps, but he is best known as one of the most distinguished and prolific 20th-century French men of letters.

Claudel's volumes of poetry, plays, religious prose, travel writing, and literary criticism express his ardent faith in Roman Catholicism. He frequently used themes relating to spiritual conflict and the salvation of the soul. His poetry, possibly the greatest of which is found in his *Five Great Odes* (1910; trans. 1967), was influenced by that of the symbolists; their influence can be seen also in the poetic drama *La ville* (The City, 1890) (*see* Symbolist Movement). Among his other plays are *L'annonce faite à Marie* (The Tidings Brought to Mary, 1910) and *Le soulier de satin* (The Satin Slipper, 1928-29). Claudel also wrote the dramatic oratorio *Le livre de Christophe Colomb* (The Book of Christopher Columbus, 1930), set to music by the French composer Darius Milhaud. Claudel was elected to the French Academy in 1946. His correspondence (1899-1926) with the French writer André Gide was published in 1952.
Jean Cocteau (1889-1963), French poet, novelist, dramatist, designer, and filmmaker, whose versatility, unconventionality, and enormous output brought him international acclaim. Despite his achievements in virtually all literary and artistic fields, Cocteau insisted that he was primarily a poet and that all his work was poetry. As a leading member of the surrealist movement, which emphasized the role of the unconscious in artistic creation (see Surrealism), he had great influence on the work of others.

Cocteau was born at Maisons-Laffitte, near Paris. Overindulged by his mother (his father committed suicide in 1898), he was a poor student, and his lack of motivation overshadowed his intellect. He eventually dropped out of school. At the age of 16, Cocteau met actor Edouard de Max, who launched him as a poet. At de Max's invitation, a fashionable audience attended a reading of Cocteau's poems in April 1908. His first volume of verse, La lampe d'Aladin, appeared in 1909 and quickly established him as an important writer.

In 1909 Cocteau met Russian impresario Sergey Diaghilev, who had moved to Paris with the Ballets Russes. Inspired and encouraged by Diaghilev, Cocteau began creating ballet scenarios. Diaghilev later produced Cocteau's scenarios Parade (1917, music by French composer Erik Satie) and Le boeuf sur le toit (The Nothing-Doing Bar, 1920, music by French composer Darius Milhaud).

During World War I (1914-1918) Cocteau served in the Red Cross as an ambulance driver. During that period he met French writer Guillaume Apollinaire, Spanish artist Pablo Picasso, Italian artist Amedeo Modigliani, and many other writers and artists with whom he later collaborated or who influenced his work. In 1923 Cocteau became addicted to opium after the tragic death of his companion, Raymond Radiguet. He described his recovery in Opium: journal d'un désintoxication (1930; Opium: The Diary of an Addict, 1932). During his recuperation he produced some of his major works: the plays Orphée (1926; Orpheus, 1933) an adaptation of Cocteau's favorite Greek myth (see Orpheus), and La machine infernale (1934; The Infernal Machine, 1936); the novel Les
enfants terribles (1929; Children of the Game, 1955); and his first motion picture, Le sang d'un poète (Blood of a Poet, 1930).

Cocteau's films, most of which he both wrote and directed, were especially important in introducing surrealism into French cinema. Several of them—particularly La belle et la bête (Beauty and the Beast, 1946), Orphée (1950), and Les enfants terribles (1950)—have come to be regarded as modern film classics.

Pierre Corneille

Pierre Corneille (1606-84), French dramatist, whose plays are masterpieces of classical French literature.

Corneille was born on June 8, 1606, in Rouen, Normandy (Normandie), the son of a government official. Educated in Jesuit schools and in law, he held minor public offices in Rouen from 1629 to 1650. His career as a dramatist began when Mélite, a comedy of love, was successfully produced in Paris in 1630. The tragicomedy Clitandre (1631), as well as other comedies and his tragedy Médée (1635), an adaptation of classical Greek and Roman plays, followed.

In 1636 or 1637 Corneille produced the tragedy Le Cid, based on a Spanish play about the legendary medieval hero. Although critics bitterly condemned the play because it did not adhere strictly to the classical rules of construction that require unity of time, place, and action, it was a triumph. The theme, the conflict between love and duty, characterizes many of Corneille's subsequent tragedies. In them, however, he observed the classical unities.
Prosper Jolyot de Crébillon

Prosper Jolyot de Crébillon, originally Crais-Billon (1674-1762), French writer of tragedy, born in Dijon, and educated in Paris. He wrote the well-received plays, *Idoménée* (1705), *Atrée et Thyeste* (1707), *Électre* (1708), and his masterpiece *Rhadamiste et Zenobie* (1711). They have classical themes and stress violence and horror. Later works failed, and the unambitious Crébillon stopped writing. Then, with the encouragement of Louis XV's mistress Madame de Pompadour, he wrote *Catalina* (1748), which was successful and brought him a royal pension. He lived in close accord with his son, Claude Prosper Jolyot de Crébillon, known as Crébillon fils, who wrote light novels.
Cyrano de Bergerac (1619-1655), French writer, whose many duels and other escapades gained him a reputation as a romantic hero. He also became known for his prominent nose, though this characteristic may have been invented by a later writer. Savinien Cyrano de Bergerac was born in Paris. He became a soldier but soon abandoned this career because of a battle wound. He wrote several tragedies and then turned his attention to satirical comedies in which he lampooned his associates. Cyrano's most famous works are two prose fantasies, *L'Histoire comique des états et empires de la lune* (1656) and *L'Histoire comique des états et empires du soleil* (1662), which in 1923 were combined and translated by English writer Richard Aldington as *Voyages to the Moon and Sun*. The works are considered precursors to modern science-fiction writing. A fictional verse drama by French author Edmond Rostand concerning Cyrano was first performed in 1897.
Georges Duhamel (1884-1966), French writer, born in Paris. He was educated in medicine, and his first published fiction was based on his experience as a surgeon in the French army in World War I. *The New Book of Martyrs* (1917; trans. 1918) and *Civilization* (1918; trans. 1919) were collections of short war stories. For *Civilization*, written under the pseudonym Denis Thévenin, Duhamel was awarded the Goncourt Prize. During his long career Duhamel wrote novels, plays, poetry, and criticism and works on philosophy, medicine, and travel. His major works were two cycles of novels, plays, poetry, and criticism and works on philosophy, medicine, and travel. His major works were two cycles of novels, *Salavin* (5 volumes, 1920-32; trans. 1936) and *The Pasquier Chronicles* (10 volumes, 1933-45; trans. 1937-46). *Salavin* deals with a man determined to achieve sainthood; the *Chronicles* concerns several generations of a Parisian family. Duhamel, elected to the French Academy in 1935, wrote in a lucid, sympathetic style about the freedom of the individual and the basic dignity and goodness of human beings.
Alexandre Dumas

Alexandre Dumas (1802-1870), French novelist and playwright of the romantic period, known as Dumas père. Dumas, the most widely read of all French writers, is best remembered for his historical novels *The Three Musketeers* (1844; trans. 1846) and *The Count of Monte-Cristo* (1844; trans. 1846).

Dumas was born in Villers-Cotterêts, Aisne, July 24, 1802. He was the son of a general and the grandson of a nobleman who had settled in Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic) and married a black woman there. He had little formal education but read voraciously and was especially attracted to 16th- and 17th-century adventure stories. While working as a clerk, he attended performances of an English Shakespearean company and was inspired to write drama. The Comédie Française produced his play *Henri III et sa cour* (Henry III and His Court) in 1829 and the romantic drama *Christine* in 1830; both were resounding successes.

Dumas was a prolific writer; about 1200 volumes were published under his name. Although many were the result of collaboration or the production of a “fiction factory” in which hired writers executed his ideas, almost all the writing bears the unmistakable imprint of his personal genius and inventiveness.

Dumas's earnings were enormous but scarcely sufficient in his later years to sustain his extravagant style of living. He spent great sums of money in maintaining his estate outside Paris (Monte-Cristo), supporting numerous mistresses (one of whom was the mother of his son Alexandre), purchasing artworks, and making up the losses incurred by numerous business ventures. At his death, on December 5, 1870, he was virtually bankrupt.
Alexandre Dumas

Alexandre Dumas (1824-1895), French playwright and novelist, who wrote realistic plays about the problems of the middle class. He was born in Paris, the natural son of the writer Alexandre Dumas père. Dumas fils, as he was known, had an unhappy childhood because his schoolmates constantly taunted him about his illegitimacy. His first literary work was a volume of poetry, Péchés de jeunesse (Sins of Youth, 1847). The following year his first novel, Camille (1848; trans. 1856), appeared, and his subsequent dramatization of this work, produced in 1852, established him as a success in the theater. The play, about a courtesan who sacrifices her happiness for her lover's good, has served as a vehicle for many great actors, including Sarah Bernhardt and, in a film version, Greta Garbo. The story was immortalized by Giuseppe Verdi in his opera La Traviata.

Dumas continued to write novels, but he was far more successful as a dramatist. In his view the playwright's function is essentially moralistic, and nearly all of his plays are concerned with social and moral problems, such as marital infidelity and prostitution. Despite his dramatic ingenuity and his gift for dialogue, his plays are somewhat marred for the modern spectator by their tendency to preach. Dumas was elected to the French Academy in 1874. Among his other plays are Le demi-monde (1855), The Money Question (1857; trans. 1915), and Un père prodigue (A Prodigal Father, 1859).
Marguerite Duras

Marguerite Duras (1914-1996), French novelist, playwright, motion-picture director, and screenwriter, who first achieved international fame for her screenplay *Hiroshima mon amour* (Hiroshima My Love, 1959). She was born Marguerite Donnadieu in Saigon, Indochina (now Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam). Her father died when she was four, and her family lived in poverty as her mother struggled to support them. Duras’s works often build on her memories of her childhood experiences in Asia.

Duras moved to Paris in the early 1930s to study law and politics. She published her first novel in 1943. The first novel to bring her critical acclaim, *Un barrage contre le Pacifique* (1950; translated as The Sea Wall, 1952), describes an impoverished French family in Indochina. It also reflected the influence of American writers then popular in France, including John Steinbeck and Ernest Hemingway. Several other novels followed. Duras’s characteristic style, which dispensed with traditional narrative structures such as plot and focused instead on silences and ambiguity, emerged in *Moderato cantabile* (1958; translated 1960), a work that firmly established her literary reputation.

Duras’s career took a new direction in 1959, when French director Alain Resnais invited her to write the screenplay for his film *Hiroshima mon amour*. The film was similar in style and theme to *Moderato cantabile*; it centered on a love affair between a French woman and a Japanese man. Duras was nominated for an Academy Award for her work, and she continued writing screenplays, including *Une aussi longue absence* (1961; also released as The Long Absence), *Nathalie Granger* (1972), *India Song* (1973), and *Le Navire Night* (1978). She also began writing plays in the 1960s, often adapting or reworking her novels, and directing films.
Georges Feydeau

Georges Feydeau (1862-1921), French dramatist known for his farces with elaborate plot lines, often dealing with cases of marital infidelity or mistaken identity. Feydeau's matchless perception of the frailty of end-of-the-century respectability and his superb economy in writing reveal his skill as not simply a light entertainer but an accomplished writer of satire. Feydeau's plays do not lend themselves well to reading but rely on the dynamics of the visual dramatic mechanism consisting of impossible coincidences, complicated stage directions, and failures of communication.

Born in Paris, France, the son of the novelist Ernest Feydeau, he was attracted very early both by acting and writing for the theater. He neglected his studies in order to compose short plays and monologues. His comedy *Tailleur pour dames* (1886; *Fitting for Ladies*, 1974) gained him an audience, but it was not until 1892, with the staging of his vaudeville *Monsieur chasse* (Monsieur is Hunting, 1976), that he gained wide popular success. This play and those that followed were to bring the farce, a genre initiated by late-19th-century French playwright Eugène Labiche, to perfection: their humor relies on complex and highly efficient plots, usually improbable and contrived, in which the slightest threat to the middle-class order can give way to an unstoppable series of mishaps, leading to a disastrous conclusion. Feydeau himself regarded his comedies as so-called reverse tragedies. After his major works, such as *La dame de chez Maxim's* (The Lady from Maxim's, 1889), *La puce à l'oreille* (The Flea in Her Ear, 1907), and *Occupe-toi d'Amélie* (Keep an Eye on Amelie, 1908), he took to writing ferocious farces dealing with matrimonial difficulties, including *Feu la mère de Madame* (The Former Mother of Madame, 1908), *Le dindon* (1910; *Sauce for the Goose*, 1974), *On purge bébé* (1910; *The Purging*, 1977), and *Hortense dit: “J'm'en fous”* (1916; *Hortense says, “I Don't Give a Damn,”* 1979). His complete works appeared in nine volumes (1948-1956). Feydeau's plays have continued to be performed into the 1990s in both French and English.
Bernard de Fontenelle (1657-1757), French writer and scientist. Bernard le Bovier, Sieur de Fontenelle, was born in Rouen. He was educated at the college of the Jesuits at Rouen and studied law but chose a literary career. At age 30, he had already written dramas, operas, dialogues, short stories, and dissertations on science. The philosophical work *Dialogues des morts* (Dialogues of the Dead, 1683) established his reputation as a man of letters, and in 1691 he was admitted to the French Academy.

From 1699 until 1739 Fontenelle served as secretary of the Academy of Sciences, writing during that time several works dealing with the history of the academy. He became particularly well known for these and other writings on science. His most important works attempted to popularize the scientific learning of his age. In his greatest work, *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes* (Discourses on the Plurality of Worlds, 1686), he presented the astronomical principles of the Copernican system in a clever literary form. In other writings he attacked religious superstition. Fontenelle's questioning attitude predated the inquiring spirit of the 18th-century Enlightenment.
Jean Genet (1910-1986), French novelist and dramatist, whose writings, dwelling upon bizarre and grotesque aspects of human existence, express profound rebellion against society and its conventions. Born in Paris, Genet was the illegitimate child of a prostitute. He was caught stealing at the age of ten and by early adolescence had begun to serve a series of sentences, spanning nearly 30 years, for theft and homosexual prostitution. In 1947, following his tenth conviction for theft, he was sentenced to life imprisonment. While he was in prison Genet had been writing and publishing, and his growing literary reputation induced a group of leading French authors to petition for his pardon, which was granted in 1948 by the president of France.

Genet's first novel, an autobiographical work about homosexuality and life in the prison underworld, was *Notre-Dame des fleurs* (1943; translated as *Our Lady of the Flowers*, 1963). His later novels include *Le journal du voleur* (1949; *The Thief's Journal*, 1961), *Miracle de la rose* (1946; *The Miracle of the Rose*, 1965), and *Pompes funèbres* (1947; *Funeral Rites*, 1969). Lyric imagery and use of underworld jargon are characteristic of his prose.

In 1947 Genet turned to drama, the medium in which he made his greatest impact. His first play, *Les bonnes* (1947; *The Maids*, 1954), one of his most successful, marked his entry into the movement known as the theater of the absurd. In the play two maids take turns at playing the role of their mistress, seeking their identities amid ever-shifting reality and illusion. In the plays *Haute surveillance* (1949; *Deathwatch*, 1954), *Le balcon* (1956; *The Balcony*, 1958), *Les nègres* (1958; *The Blacks*, 1960), and *Les paravents* (1961; *The Screens*, 1962), Genet often used role playing and the inversion of good and evil as techniques for commenting on the hypocrisy and absurdity of social and political values.
André Gide

André Gide (1869-1951), French writer, whose novels, plays, and autobiographical works are distinguished for their exhaustive analysis of individual efforts at self-realization and Protestant ethical concepts; together with his critical works they had a profound influence on French writing and philosophy.

Gide was born November 22, 1869, in Paris into a strict Protestant family and educated at the École Alsacienne and the Lycée Henri IV. In his first book, Les cahiers d’André Walter (The Notebooks of André Walter, 1891), Gide described the religious and romantic idealism of an unhappy young man. He then became associated with the Symbolists, but in 1894 began to develop an individualistic approach and style. In Les nourritures terrestres (The Fruits of the Earth, 1897) he preached the doctrine of active hedonism. Thereafter his works were devoted to examining the problems of individual freedom and responsibility, from many points of view. The Immoralist (1902; trans. 1930) and Strait Is the Gate (1909; trans. 1924) are studies of individual ethical concepts in conflict with conventional morality. The Caves of the Vatican (trans. 1927 and also published in English as Lafcadio’s Adventures), in which Gide ridiculed the possibility of complete personal independence, appeared in 1914. The idyll La symphonie pastorale (The Pastoral Symphony, 1919; produced as a motion picture, 1947) dealt with love and responsibility. Gide examined the problems of middle-class families and of adolescence in If It Die (1920; trans. 1935) and in the popular novel of youth in Paris, The Counterfeiters (1926; trans. 1928).

Gide’s preoccupation with individual moral responsibility led him to seek public office. After filling municipal positions in Normandy (Normandie), he became a special envoy of the colonial ministry in 1925-26 and wrote two books describing conditions in the French African colonies. These reports, Voyage au Congo (1927) and Retour du Tchad (1927), were instrumental in bringing about reforms in French colonial law. They were published together in English as Travels in the Congo (1929). In the early 1930s Gide had expressed his admiration and hope for the “experiment” in the USSR, but after a journey in the Soviet Union he reported his disillusionment in Return from the U.S.S.R. (1936; trans. 1937).
Jean Giraudoux

Jean Giraudoux (1882-1944), French playwright, novelist, and diplomat, whose witty, originally expressed works in an impressionistic style helped free French theater from the restrictions of realism. Giraudoux was born in Bellac and educated at the École Normale Supérieure in Paris, the University of Munich, and Harvard University. In 1910 he entered the French foreign service. He became director of information of France in 1929 and held a similar post under the government of Marshal Henri Philippe Pétain, the so-called Vichy regime.

Giraudoux first won literary acclaim for several novels that appeared shortly after World War I, including My Friend from Limousin (1922; trans. 1923) and Églantine (1927). These were followed by such internationally successful plays as Siegfried (1928; trans. 1930), Amphitryon 38 (1929; trans. 1938), Intermezzo (1933), Tiger at the Gates (1935; trans. 1955), Électre (1937), and Ondine (1939; trans. 1954). Many of these were modern treatments of ancient Greek stories. In 1943 he completed his last play, the satirical La folle de Chaillot, produced posthumously in 1945 and produced in the U.S. in 1947 as The Madwoman of Chaillot. A novel, La menteuse, was discovered in 1968 and published in English as The Lying Woman in 1972.
Victor Hugo

Victor Hugo (1802-1885), French poet, novelist, and playwright, whose voluminous works provided the single greatest impetus to the romantic movement.

Hugo was born on February 26, 1802, in Besançon, and was educated both privately and in Paris schools. He was a precocious child, deciding at an early age to become a writer. In 1817 he was honored by the French Academy for a poem, and five years later, he published his first volume of poetry, *Odes et poésies diverses* (Miscellaneous Odes and Poems). This was followed by the novels *Han d'Islande* (Han of Iceland, 1823) and *Bug-Jargal* (1824), and the poems *Odes et ballades* (Odes and Ballads, 1826). In the preface to his long historical drama *Cromwell* (1827), Hugo made a plea for freedom from the classical restrictions. The plea quickly became the manifesto of the romantic school. Censors banned Hugo's second drama, *Marion de Lorme* (1829; trans. 1872), based on the life of a 17th-century French courtesan. Hugo answered the ban on February 25, 1830, when his poetic drama, *Hernani*, had a tumultuous premiere that ensured the success of romanticism. *Hernani* was adapted by the Italian composer Giuseppe Verdi for his opera *Ernani* (1844).

The period 1829-1843 was the most productive of Hugo's career. His great historical novel *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1831; trans. 1833), a tale set in 15th-century Paris, made him popular and brought him, in 1841, election to the French Academy. In another novel of this period, *Claude Gueux* (1834), he eloquently indicted the French penal and social systems. He wrote several well-received volumes of lyric poetry, including *Les Orientales* (1829), *Les feuilles d'automne* (Autumn Leaves, 1831), *Les chants du crépuscule* (Songs of Twilight, 1835), *Les voix intérieures* (Inner Voices, 1837), and *Les rayons et les ombres* (Sunbeams and Shadows, 1840). His dramatic successes included *Le roi s'amuse* (The King Amuses Himself, 1832), adapted by Verdi for the opera *Rigoletto* (1851); the prose drama *Lucrèce Borgia* (1833).
Alfred Jarry (1873-1907), French playwright and poet, born in Laval. His savagely funny dramas as well as his dissolute and eccentric way of life won him much notice. *Ubu roi* (1896; trans. 1951), Jarry's first play, lambastes traditional views of authority by presenting the rise to power of a grotesque and pompous king, Ubu, who symbolizes greed, ignorance, and the bourgeois attitudes that Jarry found ridiculous. The farce, which caused a scandal at its opening, is considered the first work of the theater of the absurd; it was followed by two sequels. Jarry also wrote symbolist poetry and a surrealistic novel, *The Supermale* (1902; trans. 1968).
Alain René Lesage

Alain René Lesage (1668-1747), French novelist and playwright, whose picaresque novel *L'histoire de Gil Blas de Santillane* (The Story of Gil Blas of Santillane, 1715-1735) had a strong influence on subsequent European fiction. His name is also spelled Le Sage. Born in Sarzeau, Brittany, Lesage studied law and was admitted to the bar in Paris in 1692. He decided, however, to devote himself to writing. His first successful works included the dramatic comedy *Crispin, rival de son maître* (Crispin, His Master's Rival, 1707), the novel *Le diable boiteaux* (The Devil with a Limp, 1707), and the play *Turcaret* (1709), a satire remarking on financial greed. He later wrote about 100 comedies for the Théâtre de la Foire, the name given to the comic operas that were held in booths during festivals. Lesage's most important work is *L'histoire de Gil Blas de Santillane*, the satirical tale of the adventures of a Spanish rogue, which Lesage wrote in the style of the Spanish picaresque romances of the 16th and 17th centuries. The considerable influence of the book, one of the earliest significant realistic novels in European fiction, can be seen particularly in the works of English novelists Tobias Smollett and Henry Fielding.
Maurice Maeterlinck

Maurice Maeterlinck (1862-1949), Belgian author, the outstanding exponent of symbolist drama and the author of *The Blue Bird* and *Pelléas and Mélisande*.

Maeterlinck was born August 29, 1862, in Ghent (Gent) and educated in law at the university there. He abandoned the legal profession when he moved to Paris in 1886 and came under the influence of the symbolist poets. Reacting against the prevailing naturalism of French literature, Maeterlinck wrote some symbolist poetry, notably *Les serres chaudes* (Hothouses, 1889). He is known principally for his plays, for which he received the 1911 Nobel Prize. He lectured in the U.S. in 1921 and spent World War II there. Maeterlinck returned to Europe following the war and died May 6, 1949, in Nice, France.

Maeterlinck's plays are characterized by clear and simple writing, by a dreamlike atmosphere, and by the suggestion rather than the direct expression of ideas and emotions. His early plays are marked by an attitude of profound melancholy and pessimism in the face of evil and death; in his later plays this attitude gives way to a belief in the redeeming power of love and in the reality of human happiness. His plays include *The Princess Maleine* (1889; trans. 1892); the melancholy fantasy masterpiece *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1892; trans. 1892), made into an opera (1902) by the French composer Claude Debussy; and *The Blue Bird* (1909; trans. 1909), which has become a classic for children. Less popular are *Monna Vanna* (1902; trans. 1904) and *The Burgomaster of Stilmonde* (1918; trans. 1918). Maeterlinck was also the author of many works in prose that deal with philosophic questions and with nature; they include *The Treasure of the Humble* (1896; trans. 1897), *The Life of the Bee* (1901; trans. 1901), and *The Intelligence of Flowers* (1907; trans. 1907).
Pierre Carlet de Chamblain de Marivaux

Pierre Carlet de Chamblain de Marivaux (1688-1763), French dramatist and novelist, whose distinctive manner of writing came to be called marivaudage. Born in Paris, Pierre Carlet de Chamblain de Marivaux trained as a lawyer but as a young man began a writing career. In the early 1720s he founded his own magazine, *Le spectateur français* (The French Spectator), which was inspired by the English publication *The Spectator* (edited by writers Joseph Addison and Sir Richard Steele). Marivaux later became a member of various Parisian literary salons (private gatherings of writers and intellectuals), and in 1742 he was elected a member of the French Academy.

Marivaux is well known for his comedies, which usually focus on aspects of love. They include *La surprise de l'amour* (The Surprise of Love, 1722), *Le jeu de l'amour et du hasard* (The Game of Love and Chance, 1730), and *Le legs* (The Legacy, 1736). In writing his comedies he developed a unique tone of language, called marivaudage, characterized by a strong sense of human emotion and a sophisticated attention to linguistic detail. Marivaudage was criticized by many writers of the time as an affected and artificial language. In addition to his many plays, Marivaux also wrote two unfinished novels, *La vie de Marianne* (The Life of Marianne, 1731-1741) and *Le paysan parvenu* (The Successful Peasant, 1734-1735). They are considered realistic treatments of 18th-century middle-class French life.
Jean François Marmontel

Jean François Marmontel (1723–1799), French novelist and dramatist. He wrote tragedies and librettos (texts) for several light operas, and he contributed articles on literature to the famous *Encyclopédie*, which contained the most advanced opinions of the day on a broad range of academic subjects. These articles were later republished as *Eléments de littérature* (Elements of Literature, 1787). In 1758 Marmontel obtained control of the journal *Le Mercure* (The Mercury), in which his *Contes moraux* (Moral Studies, 1761) appeared. Other works include the historical romances *Bélisaire* (Belisarius, 1767) and *Les Incas* (The Incas, 1777). Marmontel was appointed historiographer of France in 1771 and secretary to the Académie Française in 1783. He retired in 1792 to write his *Mémoires d'un père* (Memoirs of a Father, 1804).
Roger Martin du Gard

Roger Martin du Gard (1881-1958), French novelist, playwright, and Nobel Prize winner, whose works address the daily challenges and perplexing moral dilemmas facing ordinary people.

Martin du Gard was trained as an archivist at the École de Chartres, in Chartres, France, graduating in 1906. He studied under several psychiatrists in Paris before publishing his novel *Devenir!* (Becoming, 1908). His first successful novel, however, was *Jean Barois* (1913; translated into English in 1949), a dialogue that traces a young man's moral and intellectual conflicts regarding science and religion.

Martin du Gard's most ambitious work is the eight-volume *Les Thibault* (1922-1940; translated as *The World of the Thibaults*, 1939-1941), a complex epic novel that examines conflicting ideas viewed from multiple perspectives, contrasting the lives of the brothers Jacques and Antoine Thibault—one a revolutionary, the other a social conservative. Martin du Gard, who had a lifelong friendship with French novelist Andre Gide, edited the leading French literary journal *Nouvelle Revue Francaise* (New French Review). He received the Grand Prix Littéraire de la Ville de Paris for *L’été* (1936; part seven of *Les Thibault: Summer 1914, 1940*), and, in 1937 the Nobel Prize for Literature.
Molière

Molière (1622-1673), France’s greatest comic dramatist, who produced, directed, and acted in the plays he wrote. Many of his comedies addressed serious themes and pointed the way to modern drama and experimental theater. Molière’s works reveal an evolution from farce to more serious comedies of manners and character. In terms of form, *Les précieuses ridicules* is important because, although a one-act play written in prose, it is nonetheless a sophisticated comedy of manners. Similarly, *L’école des maris* (1661; *School for Husbands*, 1739) is significant because it addresses a more serious subject than earlier works and takes a more sophisticated form, a five-act social comedy written in verse in a meter known as alexandrine. *Tartuffe* and *Le misanthrope*, five-act plays in verse, mark the height of Molière’s career in the perfection of their poetry and the subtlety and complexity of their themes. Later plays innovated through their form; *Le bourgeois gentilhomme*, for example, was a comedy-ballet that paved the way for opera.
Jean Racine

Jean Racine (1639-1699), French dramatist, considered the greatest writer of French classical tragedy.

Jean Baptiste Racine was born December 22, 1639, in La Ferté-Milon, the son of a tax official. He was educated at the Collège de Beauvais, the Jansenist Convent at Port Royal, and the Collège d'Harcourt in Paris. The intellectual, rigorously moralistic Jansenist philosophy became one of the greatest influences in Racine's life. Another influence was the Greek and Latin classics; he was able to read fluently and annotate his favorite authors, Euripides and Sophocles, in the original Greek.

While a student in Paris after 1658, Racine composed conventional poetry and became friendly with important literary figures, among whom was the French poet Jean de La Fontaine. Under pressure from his family, Racine left Paris in 1661 and began to study for the priesthood in the town of Uzès. He returned to Paris in 1662 or 1663 to resume his literary career and soon gained a place among the most famous French writers of the time, including Molière, Pierre Corneille, and Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux; the last particularly influenced his work. Racine's first play, La Thébaïde (The Thebaid), was performed at the Palais-Royal by members of Molière's company in 1664, and his second, Alexandre, was performed the following year. Convinced that his second work had been badly presented, Racine transferred the play to the rival company at the Hôtel de Burgund, which thereafter produced all his plays.

During the next ten years, Racine wrote seven great tragedies that are considered masterpieces, the themes all adapted from Greek and Roman literature. These tragedies are Andromaque (1667), Britannicus (1669), Bérénice (1670), Bajazet (1672), Mithridate (1673), Iphigenie (1674), and Phèdre (1677). The success of Phèdre was marred by Racine's enemies, who commissioned a lesser French poet, Nicolas Pradon, to write a rival Phèdre that met with greater success than Racine's version.
Romain Rolland

Romain Rolland (1866-1944), French author and Nobel laureate, born in Clamecy, and educated at the École Normale Supérieure, where he later taught the history of art. He also taught the history of music at the Sorbonne. His most famous work is Jean Christophe (10 volumes, 1904-12; trans. 1910-13), a partly autobiographical novel about a German composer that criticized the society of his time; it won him the 1915 Nobel Prize in literature. As a pacifist, he exiled himself to Switzerland (1914-37), where he wrote the controversial essay Above the Battle (1915; trans. 1916) during World War I. His other works include the play The Wolves (1898; trans. 1937), based on the Dreyfus affair; the biography Vie de Beethoven (1903; trans. 1907); and the political novel series The Soul Enchanted (1922-33; trans. 1925-34). His Memoires (1956) and letters reveal him as a mystic and idealist dedicated to the causes of intellectual freedom and world peace.
Edmond Rostand (1868-1918), French author of romantic plays, mostly in verse, that provided strong roles for several generations of actors. He was born in Marseille. His first drama, *Les romanesques* (The Romantics), was produced in Paris in 1894, and its story of innocent young love was adapted in *The Fantasticks* (1960), an American musical with the longest run in theatrical history.

Rostand achieved international fame with *Cyrano de Bergerac* (1897), a brilliant verse play based on the life of an actual person. *Cyrano* has become a theatrical classic. The title role—that of a long-nosed, star-crossed poet—has been performed by many famous actors, including Benoît Constant Coquelin (1898) and Gérard Depardieu (1990), from France; and Richard Mansfield (1898), Walter Hampden (1923), and José Ferrer (1946), from the United States. Rostand's next play, *L'aiglon* (The Eaglet, 1900), had for its hero the unhappy son of Napoleon. The role was first played by the French actor Sarah Bernhardt. In 1910 the fantasy *Chantecler*, Rostand's last play, was performed with French actor Sacha Guitry in the title part, and the role was played in the original English production by American actor Maude Adams.
Françoise Sagan

Françoise Sagan (1935-2004), French writer whose glamorous lifestyle and elegant novels and plays made her a bestselling author and fashionable public figure.

Born Françoise Quoirez in the village of Cajarc, Sagan was a very bright but unruly student who was expelled from several schools. In 1953 she attended the Sorbonne (University of Paris) but failed her exams, chiefly because of her active nightlife in the clubs of Paris. Shortly after leaving the university that year, she wrote her first novel at age 18.

The book, Bonjour tristesse (Hello Sadness, 1954; translated 1955), catapulted Sagan to celebrity and won the coveted Prix des Critiques. The novel’s 17-year-old female protagonist, who relishes the experience of losing her virginity and has a questionable relationship with her playboy father, shocked middle-class French society. The story enthralled a younger generation of readers, who were searching for a way to live with a feeling of emptiness brought on by the hardships of World War II (1939-1945). The breathless pleasure-seeking of Sagan’s own life and that of her characters met this need.

Sagan’s fiction revolves around upper-middle-class French society and its sexual life, leisure activities, and hypocrisies. Her distinctive style displays a sweet, melancholic, detached tone evident in the novels Un certain sourire (1956; A Certain Smile, 1956) and Aimez-vous Brahms? (1959; translated 1960). She was also known for the wit of her theatrical dialogue, as in her best-known play, Château en Suède (Chateau in Sweden, 1960). Sagan also wrote song lyrics and screenplays. Her works inspired several motion pictures, including Goodbye Again (1961), based on Aimez-vous Brahms?. Sagan took her pseudonym from a character created by French novelist Marcel Proust. She discussed her personal views and problems (including her addiction to drugs) in numerous interviews and three autobiographical works, Toxique (1964; translated 1964), Des bleus à l’âme (1972; Scars on the Soul, 1974), and Avec mon meilleur souvenir (1984; With Fondest Regards, 1985).
Victorien Sardou

Victorien Sardou (1831-1908), French dramatist and creator of the “well-made” play, born in Paris. Sardou studied medicine for a brief time at a Paris hospital. He turned to writing and quickly gained enormous popularity. Today his contrived melodramas are admired much less than they were in his lifetime. He wrote about 70 plays, including *Madame Devil-May-Care* (1893; trans. 1901) and *Robespierre* (1899; trans. 1899). For the French actor Sarah Bernhardt, he wrote the well-known *Fedora* (1882; trans. 1883) and *La Tosca* (1887; trans. 1925), both of which were adapted for opera librettos.
Nathalie Sarraute

Nathalie Sarraute (1900-1999), French novelist, essayist, and playwright, best known for innovations associated with the nouveau roman (new novel) in France. Sarraute and other practitioners of the nouveau roman challenged the traditional form of the realistic novel; her writings considerably influenced the conception and craft of the modern novel.

Born Nathalie Tcherniak in Ivanovo-Voznesensk (now Ivanovo), Russia, Sarraute lived the first eight years of her life in Russia, Switzerland, and France, with one or the other of her divorced parents. After university study in France, England, and Germany, Sarraute received a law degree from the University of Paris (where she met and married fellow student Raymond Sarraute) and was admitted to the bar in 1925. She practiced law for several years before becoming a full-time writer.


*Tropism* is the key concept underlying all of Sarraute’s works. In biology, this term refers to the involuntary tendency of an organism to react to an external stimulus, as a sunflower, for example, turns toward light. The reaction can be attraction or repulsion. Sarraute used the term to refer to “the secret throbbing” of inner human experience. Tropisms are the inner movements of fear, dread, anger, yearning, nostalgia, joy, and other basic emotions underlying everyday human relationships.

Traditional novelists whose work is termed “realistic” take as their subject matter the real world (people, places, and things); believe that an objective picture of that world can be represented with words; and typically use devices such as plot, third-person narration, and description to accomplish their task. Sarraute, on the other hand, abandoned the notions of plot and third-person narration and took tropisms as her subject matter. The belief that these subjective experiences of the outer world constitute reality dictated how Sarraute represented them. Thus the narrative voice and point of view come from inside the human mind and sensibility, and what is represented are the fleeting and powerful emotions that human consciousness experiences as it reacts to the world and other humans. In *Le planétarium*, for example, the double desire of one character to acquire the apartment of his aunt and to impress a well-known writer drives the meager plot. We enter the consciousness of each character and come to understand that truth is entirely subjective. Just as the author and her characters create by interpreting experience differently, so too do her readers create.
Paul Scarron

Paul Scarron (1610-1660), French writer, whose works directly influenced French dramatist Molière. Born in Paris, Scarron originally studied for a career in the church, but a nervous disease made him an invalid at the age of 27. Scarron's most famous work is a picaresque novel, Le roman comique (The Comic Novel, 1651-1657). He also wrote short stories; plays; satires, including a parody of the Aeneid, by Roman poet Virgil; and burlesque poems. In 1651 Scarron married Françoise d'Aubigné, who later, as Madame de Maintenon, became mistress and wife of French king Louis XIV.
Eugène Scribe

Eugène Scribe (1791-1861), French playwright. Scribe enjoyed great popularity in his time, producing about 350 plays and opera librettos, many of which were written with collaborators. Although he was criticized for a lack of taste and originality, he was acknowledged to be a master of craft. His best-known plays include *Adrienne Lecouvreur* (1849)—written with Ernest Legouvé—a vehicle for the famous French actor Rachel. Among his librettos are those for *Fra Diavolo* (1830), music by the French composer Daniel François Esprit Auber, and *Les Huguenots* (1836), music by the German composer Giacomo Meyerbeer.
Alfred de Vigny

Alfred de Vigny (1797-1863), French poet, novelist, and dramatist, born in Loches, in Touraine, and educated in Paris. He entered the military at the age of 17 and after 12 years as an officer in the French army became a man of letters, associating himself with the literary movement known as romanticism. He established his reputation with his collected *Poèmes antiques et modernes* (1826). Although later eclipsed by his contemporaries, the poets Victor Hugo and Alfred de Musset, Vigny was regarded as the leader of the early years of romanticism. He was an intellectual and philosophical writer, and his work—the best of which appears in the poems of *Les Destinées* (pub. posthumously 1864)—expresses a deep spiritual isolation and a corresponding stress on human values. His works include the historical novel *Cinq Mars* (1826; trans. 1847) and the romantic drama *Chatterton* (1835; trans. 1908), based on the life of the British poet Thomas Chatterton. *Journal d'un poète* (pub. posthumously 1867) is a collection of his *pensées*, or thoughts, which inform much of his writing.
Jean Marie Mathias

Jean Marie Mathias Philippe Auguste Villers de l’Isle-Adam (1838-1889), French writer, one of the forerunners of the symbolist movement. He was born into a noble family in Saint-Brieuc, Brittany, lived a precarious Bohemian life in Paris, and died in poverty. He is best known for his collection of short stories *Sardonic Tales* (1883; trans. 1927) and for the drama *Axel* (final form 1890; trans. 1925). His works, rejecting the prevailing naturalism and materialism of the day, reflect the romantic and symbolist interest in fantasy, the supernatural, and even the horrifying and shocking. They serve chiefly to express his idiosyncratic philosophical ideas.
Voltaire

Voltaire, assumed name of François Marie Arouet (1694-1778), French writer and philosopher, who was one of the leaders of the Enlightenment.

Voltaire quickly chose literature as a career. He began moving in aristocratic circles and soon became known in Paris salons as a brilliant and sarcastic wit. A number of his writings, particularly a lampoon accusing the French regent Philippe II, duc d'Orléans of heinous crimes, resulted in his imprisonment in the Bastille. During his 11-month detention, Voltaire completed his first tragedy, *Œdipe*, which was based upon the *Œdipus tyrannus* of the ancient Greek dramatist Sophocles, and commenced an epic poem on Henry IV of France. *Œdipe* was given its initial performance at the Théâtre-Français in 1718 and received with great enthusiasm. The work on Henry IV was printed anonymously in Geneva under the title of *Poème de la ligue* (Poem of the League, 1723). In his first philosophical poem, *Le pour et le contre* (For and Against), Voltaire gave eloquent expression to both his anti-Christian views and his rationalist, deist creed.

A quarrel with a member of an illustrious French family, the chevalier de Rohan, resulted in Voltaire's second incarceration in the Bastille, from which he was released within two weeks on his promise to quit France and proceed to England. Accordingly he spent about two years in London. Voltaire soon mastered the English language, and in order to prepare the British public for an enlarged edition of his *Poème de la ligue*, he wrote in English two remarkable essays, one on epic poetry and the other on the history of civil wars in France. For a few years the Catholic, autocratic French government prevented the publication of the enlarged edition of *Poème de la ligue*, which was retitled *La Henriade* (The Henriad). The government finally allowed the poem to be published in 1728. This work, an eloquent defense of religious toleration, achieved an almost unprecedented success, not only in Voltaire's native France but throughout all of the continent of Europe as well.
Wolfgang Borchert (1921–1947), German dramatist and prose writer, who wrote about his experiences in the German army during World War II (1939-1945). He was wounded during World War II while serving on the Russian front, where he had been sent for making anti-Nazi comments. *Draussen vor der Tür* (The Outsider, 1947) is a surreal play about the chaotic conditions a German soldier finds when he returns to Germany after walking home from the Russian front.

Prose pieces such as the posthumously published 'Die traurigen Geranien und andere Geschichten' (The Mournful Geraniums and Other Stories, 1962) display Borchert's great linguistic vitality while showing his attempts to come to terms with the terrible anguish and guilt he felt. His work is characterized by a mood of postwar hopelessness, and he lost favor as this pessimistic outlook became outmoded.
Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956), the most influential German dramatist and theoretician of the theater in the 20th century. Also a poet of formidable gifts and considerable output, Brecht first attracted attention in the Berlin of the 1920s as the author of provocative plays that challenged the tenets of traditional theater. In the 1950s he became an internationally acclaimed playwright and director through productions of his plays by the Berliner Ensemble, a company based in East Berlin and headed by his wife, actor Helene Weigel.

Eugen Berthold Friedrich Brecht was born in Augsburg, Bavaria. Raised in a comfortable middle-class home, he attended secondary school in Augsburg and studied briefly at the University of Munich. In 1924 he gained a foothold in the cultural metropolis of Berlin as an assistant dramaturge (drama specialist) at the Deutsches Theater. He achieved enormous popular success following the 1928 premiere of his collaborative effort with German composer Kurt Weill, Die Dreigroschenoper (published 1928; translated as The Threepenny Opera, 1964). Forced to flee Germany in 1933 because of his leftist political beliefs (he had become a convert to the socioeconomic theories of Karl Marx) and opposition to the Nazi regime of Adolf Hitler, Brecht and his family spent 14 years in exile in Scandinavia and the United States. Although he tried hard to become established in the United States, Brecht failed to make a breakthrough either as a scriptwriter in Hollywood, California, or as a playwright on Broadway. He returned to Europe in 1947. Two years later he moved to East Berlin and remained there until his death.

Brecht's first major play, Baal (1922; translated 1964), features a materialistic and promiscuous poet, the opposite of the view then in vogue of the artist as a visionary. Baal and his next play, Trommeln in der Nacht (1922; Drums in the Night, 1966), reject idealism in favor of crass individualism. Brecht’s turn to Marxism resulted in plays that indicted capitalism. In Die heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe (1932; St. Joan of the Stockyards, 1956), a modern-day Joan of Arc advocates the use of force in the fight against exploitation of workers. The austere and controversial Lehrstück (learning play) titled Die Maßnahme (1930-1931; The Measures Taken, 1960) appeals to the spectators' reasoning faculties rather than to their emotions.
Clemens Maria Brentano

Clemens Maria Brentano (1778-1842), German writer, born in Ehrenbreitstein (now part of Koblenz), and educated at the universities of Halle and Jena. A romantic, he wrote poetry, fiction, and plays that abound in fantastic images and unusual expressions. With his brother-in-law, Achim von Armin, he edited a compilation of German folk poems, Des Knaben Wunderhorn (The Boy's Magic Horn, 3 volumes, 1805-1808), which provided the texts for a song cycle by Gustav Mahler. Brentano wrote many short stories, including the notable Story of the Just Caspar and Fair Annie (1817; trans. 1927). In 1817 he became a devout Roman Catholic. In later life, especially in his collection of romantic tales, Romanzen vom Rosenkranz (Romances of the Rosary, published posthumously, 1852), Brentano devoted his literary talents to propagating the Roman Catholic faith.
Georg Büchner

Georg Büchner (1813-1837), German dramatist, whose plays show the extreme emotion that in the late 19th century developed into expressionism. Büchner was born in Goddelau and studied medicine at the universities of Strasbourg and Giessen. In the 1830s Büchner was forced to flee to Switzerland because of his radical political activities. There he taught comparative anatomy and wrote.

Büchner’s first play, Dantons Tod (1835; translated as Danton’s Death, 1927), is a pessimistic commentary on the accomplishments of French revolutionary Georges Jacques Danton. Woyzeck (written 1836; published 1879; translated 1927) tells the story of a humble, obscure figure, a poor man who kills his wife because he cannot cope with society’s injustices. Incomplete at Büchner’s death, this play reveals the author at his most pessimistic but also displays his concern for the poor. It formed the libretto for the opera Wozzeck (1925) by Austrian composer Alban Berg. Büchner’s one comedy, Leonce und Lena (1836; Leonce and Lena, 1927), is a satire on contemporary political conditions. Never performed in his lifetime, these three plays exerted great influence on later German drama.
Elias Canetti

Elias Canetti (1905-1994), Bulgarian-born novelist, dramatist, and essayist, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1981. Canetti published exclusively in German. The dominant theme of his works is the powerful effect of mass behavior in the modern world.

Born to a multilingual family of Sephardic Jews in Ruse, Bulgaria, Canetti emigrated to England with his family in 1911. After the death of his father in 1912, Canetti's mother moved the family to Vienna, Austria, where her sons were educated. In 1929 Canetti earned a Ph.D. in chemistry from Vienna University, but he never worked as a chemist. Instead, he turned notes he had made on linguistic patterns into his only novel, Die Blendung (1936; translated as Auto-da-Fé, 1946), in which he described a society plagued by expressions of mass consciousness. At the time of its publication, the novel was hailed as a masterpiece by critics but was censored by the Nazi government of Austria (see National Socialism).

Canetti wrote two of his three plays in the 1930s: Hochzeit (The Wedding, written 1931-1932; first performed in 1965) and Komödie der Eitelkeit (Comedy of Vanity, written 1933-1934; first performed 1965). His third play, Die Befristeten (1952; The Numbered; 1984), depicts a society in which everyone's date of death is decided at one's birth. His masterwork, Masse und Macht (1960; translated as Crowds and Power, 1962, 1978), is a general study of mass psychology. Canetti's subsequent works, which include studies in literature, psychology, sociology, philosophy, and anthropology, expand on the ideas of both Masse und Macht and Die Blendung.

Canetti received several awards throughout his career, including the Nobel Prize for Literature.
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), German poet, dramatist, novelist, and scientist. Goethe’s poetry expresses a modern view of humanity’s relationship to nature, history, and society; his plays and novels reflect a profound understanding of human individuality. Goethe’s importance can be judged by the influence of his critical writings, his vast correspondence, and his poetry, dramas, and novels upon the writers of his own time and upon the literary movements which he inaugurated and of which he was the chief figure. According to the 19th-century English critic Matthew Arnold, Goethe must be considered not only “the manifest center of German literature” but one of the most versatile figures in all world literature.

Goethe was born August 28, 1749, in Frankfurt am Main, the son of a government official. From 1765 to 1768 he studied law at Leipzig; there he first developed an interest in literature and painting and became acquainted with the dramatic works of his contemporaries Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. Their influence and his own attachment to the daughter of a wine merchant at whose tavern he dined are reflected in his earliest poetry and in his first dramatic works. These early plays included a one-act comedy in verse, Die Laune des Verliebten (The Lover’s Caprice, 1767), and a tragedy in verse, Die Mitschuldigen (The Fellow-Culprits, 1768). Goethe’s health broke down in Leipzig and he returned to Frankfurt, where, during his convalescence, he studied occult philosophy, astrology, and alchemy. Through the influence of a friend of his mother, Susanne Katharina von Klettenberg, who was a member of the Lutheran reform movement known as Pietism, Goethe gained some insight into religious mysticism. From 1770 to 1771 he was in Strasbourg to continue his study of law; in addition, he took up the study of music, art, anatomy, and chemistry.
Günter Grass

Günter Grass, born in 1927, German writer, a leading figure in German literature after World War II (1939-1945). Grass received the Nobel Prize in literature in 1999 in recognition of his role in revitalizing postwar German literature and probing the history of the 20th century (see Nobel Prizes).

Grass was born in Danzig (now Gdańsk, Poland) and was deeply affected by the Nazi takeover of that city at the beginning of World War II. After wartime service he was held in a prisoner-of-war camp. He went on to study at the Academy of Art in Düsseldorf and at the Academy of Fine Arts in Berlin. Although he settled in Germany after the war, he remained a constant critic of the German state and its history of war and genocide. A pacifist, Grass opposed the 1990 reunification of Germany, arguing that a united Germany poses a threat to peace. Much of his writing is about Germany’s turbulent history in the 20th century. The takeover of Danzig and the horrors of life under the Nazis lie at the core of Die Blechtrommel (1959; The Tin Drum, 1962), the work for which Grass is best known. These events reappear in Katz und Maus (1961; Cat and Mouse, 1963) and Hundejahre (1963; Dog Years, 1965), which together with The Tin Drum form the so-called Danzig Trilogy. Grass continued his efforts to come to term with Germany’s past in Im Krebsgang (2002; Crabwalk, 2003), which centers on the sinking of a ship of German refugees by a Soviet submarine in the last days of World War II. In the novel Grass examines the consequences of the disaster, in which 9,000 lives were lost, for the lives of his characters. In his late 70s, Grass’s reputation was somewhat compromised when it emerged that as a teenager during World War II he had served with the Waffen-SS. Grass made the revelation in his autobiography Beim Häuten der Zwiebel (2006, Peeling the Onion) and for many in Germany the author’s failure to disclose the fact earlier raised uncomfortable questions about his integrity.

Grass began writing poetry and plays in the 1950s. His plays Hochwasser (1956; Flood), Onkel, Onkel (1958; Mister, Mister), Noch zehn Minuten bis Buffalo (1958; Only Ten Minutes to Buffalo), and Die bösen Köche (1961; The Wicked Cooks) were published in English in Four Plays (1967).

The Tin Drum, Grass’s first novel, was also his first great success and was later made into a motion picture (1979). In addition to the Danzig Trilogy, Grass's novels include Der Butt (1977; The Flounder, 1978), Kopfgeburten: oder die Deutschen sterben aus (1980; Headbirths: or, the Germans Are Dying Out, 1982), and Unkenrufe (1992; The Call of the Toad, 1992). Mein Jahrhundert (1999; My Century, 1999).
Andreas Gryphiuss (1616-1664), German poet and dramatist, one of the leading figures in German baroque literature. Originally surnamed Grief, he was born in Glogau (now Głogów, Poland) and studied and taught at the Leiden University. His poetry is marked by morbidness and indignation, reflecting the turmoil of the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648); many poems in the collection *Kirchhofsgedanken* (Thoughts of a Cemetery, 1656) deal with the theme of human vanity.

Unlike his verse, Gryphiuss's plays have much charm and humor; perhaps best known is *Peter Squenz* (1663), based on the farcical episode of Pyramus and Thisbe in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Among his other plays are *Die geliebte Dornrose* (The Thorny Rose, 1660), a pastoral written in his native Silesian dialect, and the satirical play *Horribilicrifax* (1663). His tragedies, in the bombastic style of the Roman poet Seneca and the Dutch playwright Joost van den Vondel, include *Leo Armenius* (1646); *Carolus Stuardus* (1649), on Charles I of England; and *Cardenio und Celinde* (1657).
Gerhart Hauptmann (1862-1946), German dramatist, novelist, and poet, who became the principal interpreter of the naturalist movement in German literature.

He was born on November 15, 1862, in Obersalzbrunn (now Szczawno-Zdrój, Poland). After spending a short time studying sculpture in Breslau (now Wrocław, Poland) and Jena, he turned to writing. Hauptmann was greatly influenced by the realist works of the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen, and after experimenting with various literary forms, he also adopted the drama as his prime medium of expression. In his first play, Before Dawn, (1889; trans. 1909), Hauptmann shares Ibsen's concern for social problems by realistically portraying the problems of the working class. The play traces the moral disintegration of a group of peasant families who have suddenly become wealthy when coal is discovered on their land. In its concern for the environmental and hereditary factors that shape the life of the individual, the play is the first example of naturalistic drama in Germany. Hauptmann continued to show a deep concern for the life of the lower classes. The fate of a group of Silesian weavers is depicted in his greatest work, The Weavers (1892; trans. 1899). In this drama of social protest, Hauptmann introduces a new literary vehicle: he portrays conflict by making the class of peasants, rather than an individual, the protagonist of the play.

Hauptmann soon abandoned the purely naturalistic drama. In Hannele (1893; trans. 1894), he combines naturalistic elements with a more romantic and highly symbolic verse form. This trend toward romanticism is fully realized in his verse play, The Sunken Bell (1896; trans. 1898), an almost mystical and symbolic fantasy of the struggles of an artist. In the same year, Hauptmann turned again to the realistic drama, but instead of emphasizing social issues he traces the effects of moral corruption in the individual. In Drayman Henschel (1898; trans. 1913) and in Rose Bernd (1903; trans. 1913), he traces the tragic theme of an individual who is destined to be destroyed by his own innate shortcomings. Hauptmann gives his fullest treatment to the problem of fate and free will in a series of plays based on the ancient Greek legend of the doomed House of Atreus, The Tetralogy of the Atrids (1941-1945).
Friedrich Hebbel

Friedrich Hebbel (1813-1863), German dramatist, born in Wesselburen, Schleswig-Holstein. He studied law, literature, and philosophy at the University of Heidelberg. As a young man, Hebbel lectured and wrote in Hamburg, Heidelberg, and Munich, but received little recognition until 1845, when he moved to Vienna. In 1849 he married the Austrian actor Christina Enghausen, who appeared in many of his plays.

Among Hebbel's earlier plays is the prose tragedy *Mary Magdalene* (1844; trans. 1914), which in its realism was the forerunner of the problem plays of the Norwegian dramatist Henrik Ibsen. Hebbel's reputation, however, rests chiefly on the dramas he wrote after 1845, including the blank-verse tragedy *Herod and Mariamne* (1848; trans. 1912), the prose tragedy *Agnes Bernauer* (1851; trans. 1909), the verse tragedy *Gyges and His Ring* (1854; trans. 1914), and the trilogy *The Nibelungs* (1862; trans. 1903), based on an old German legend.
Paul Johann Ludwig von Heyse

Paul Johann Ludwig von Heyse (1830-1914), German novelist, poet, and dramatist, who was noted for the realism and structural perfection of his writings. He was born in Berlin and educated at the University of Berlin. For most of his career he was under the patronage of the Bavarian kings Maximilian II and Ludwig II. The most famous of his prose novelettes is *The Fury* (1855; trans. 1855); others are *The Maiden of Treppi* (1858; trans. 1874) and *Andrea Delfin* (1859; trans. 1864). His novels include *Children of the World* (1873; trans. 1882).

Heyse wrote numerous poems and about 60 plays. He was a conservative opponent of the naturalistic and impressionistic movements in German literature of the late 19th century; the counterattacks upon him by members of these schools caused him to lose considerable literary prestige in Germany. Heyse was awarded the 1910 Nobel Prize in literature, the first German writer to receive this honor.
Hrosvitha

Hrosvitha (935?-1002?), also called Roswitha, German poet and chronicler. As a young woman she entered the Benedictine convent of Gandersheim, near Göttingen. Her works, all in Latin, comprise eight religious poems; two historical chronicles in verse, one on the deeds of Holy Roman Emperor Otto I and the other a history of the convent of Gandersheim; and six moral comedies written in imitation of the six comedies of the Roman dramatist Terence. These plays are unique in the literature of the Middle Ages, representing a link between classical drama and the medieval mystery play (see Miracle, Mystery, and Morality Plays). In place of the love adventures recounted by Terence, Hrosvitha substituted religious themes, treated with humor, portraying the victory of Christian virtues over paganism.
Georg Kaiser (1878-1945), German dramatist, born in Magdeburg. His first successful work was The Citizens of Calais (1914; trans. 1946). It was followed by plays in the expressionist style, dealing with the impact of the modern machine age, such as From Morn to Midnight (1916; trans. 1922) and Der Silbersee (The Silver Lake, 1933), which had music by the German American composer Kurt Weill. Many of Kaiser's later plays were written in Switzerland, in exile from the Nazi regime. His final work was a trilogy, Zweimal Amphitryon (Amphitryon Retold), Pygmalion, and Bellerophon (published posthumously in 1948).
Heinrich Wilhelm von Kleist

Heinrich Wilhelm von Kleist (1777-1811), German dramatist, whose depiction of humanity's torment by incompatible demands and concise, polished style won him recognition as one of the foremost German dramatists, despite his short career. He was born in Frankfurt into a military family. After seven years in the Prussian army, Kleist spent the period 1799-1810 studying law and philosophy in Frankfurt, serving as a minor official in Berlin and Königsberg, and traveling through Europe. He was also writing. His important plays include the tragedy *Die Familie Schroffenstein* (1803), the popular romantic drama *Käthchen von Heilbronn* (1810), the comedy *The Broken Pitcher* (1806; pub. 1811?; trans. 1961), and the patriotic play *The Prince of Homburg* (1811; pub. 1821, trans. 1956), which no one in a Germany occupied by Napoleonic armies would produce. He published some poems, the tragedy *Penthesilea* (1808), and the novella *Michael Kohlhass* (1808; trans. 1967) in *Phöbus*, a literary periodical he cofounded. His eight masterly works in the novella form—which also include *The Marquise of O.* ...—were published in *Tales* (1810-1811; trans. 1960). He founded a patriotic newspaper, *Berliner Abendblätter*, in 1810, but it was suppressed in 1811. Lacking a job, a publisher, or a producer, and depressed by the French occupation, Kleist shot himself and his mistress in 1811 near Berlin.
Gotthold Ephraim Lessing

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781), German dramatist and critic, who was one of the leaders of the Enlightenment.

Lessing was born January 22, 1729, in Kamenz, the son of a Protestant minister, and was educated at the universities of Leipzig and Wittenberg, where he studied theology, philosophy, and medicine. While in Leipzig, he became interested in drama and wrote his first play, Der Junge Gelehrte (The Young Scholar, 1748). From 1748 to 1755 he lived in Berlin, where he was a drama and literary critic and wrote several plays, including Der Freigeist (The Freethinker, 1749) and Die Juden (The Jews, 1749). From 1755 to 1758 Lessing lived in Leipzig, where he formed a strong friendship with the poet Ewald Christian von Kleist. In 1758 he returned to Berlin and in 1759, with the philosopher Moses Mendelssohn and the critic Christoph Friedrich Nicolai, he founded the critical journal Briefe, die Neueste Literatur Betreffend (Letters on the Latest in Literature, 1759-1765). Lessing contributed a notable series of essays to this periodical, contending that Shakespeare would be a better model for German dramatists than the classical French dramatists. The essays were instrumental in ridding German literature of French influence. From 1760 to 1765 Lessing was secretary to the governor of Breslau (now Wrocław, Poland). In 1767, after two years in Berlin, he helped establish a national theater in Hamburg that proved to be unsuccessful; from 1770 until his death on February 15, 1781, he was librarian of the Brunswick ducal library at Wolfenbüttel.

Lessing’s dramatic and critical work established new standards in German literature and profoundly influenced the work of later German writers. His play Miss Sara Sampson (1755; trans. 1789) is notable as the first tragedy of middle-class life in German drama. The comedy The Disbanded Officer (1767; trans. 1786) and the blank-verse drama Nathan the Wise (1779; trans. 1781) are major classics of the German stage.
Friedrich von Schiller

Friedrich von Schiller (1759-1805), German poet, dramatist, philosopher, and historian, who is regarded as the greatest dramatist in the history of the German theater and one of the greatest in European literature.

During the next ten years, Schiller lived and wrote, often under assumed names to avoid discovery and possible extradition to Württemberg, in various parts of Germany, including Mannheim, Leipzig, Dresden, and Weimar. He completed the tragedy *Intrigue and Love* (1783; trans. 1849) and began work on the drama *Don Carlos* (1787; trans. 1795) in 1783 at Mannheim, where for the next year he was official dramatist for the Mannheim theater. These early plays belonged to the Sturm und Drang movement in their stress on personal liberty and morality and their great dramatic power. The idealistic *Don Carlos*, the first of his plays to be written in blank verse, which also deals with the struggle against official oppression, marks the transition to a more classical style of writing.
Hermann Sudermann

Hermann Sudermann (1857-1928), German novelist and playwright, born in Matziken, East Prussia (now in Poland), and educated at the University of Königsberg. His early novel *Dame Care* (1887; trans. 1891) became a model for the social novel of his time. As one of the first naturalistic playwrights, Sudermann scored a success with the play *Sodoms Ende* (The End of Sodom, 1891) and *Heimat* (The Homeland, 1893). The drama *Magda* (1893; trans. 1896) became a famous vehicle for the French actor Sarah Bernhardt, the British actor Mrs. Patrick Campbell, and the Italian actor Eleonora Duse. Of Sudermann's other works, the best known are the play *The Joy of Living* (1902; trans. 1902) and the novel *The Song of Songs* (1908; trans. 1909).
Ludwig Tieck

Ludwig Tieck (1773-1853), German writer, who was one of the leaders of German romanticism. He was born in Berlin and educated at the universities of Halle, Göttingen, and Erlangen. Although he produced a great many poems, plays, and novels, and translated *Don Quixote* and many of Shakespeare's works, Tieck's fame today rests on his folktales and his satirical theater versions of fairy stories, such as the still popular *Der Gestiefelte Kater* (Puss in Boots, 1797). His novels, which tended toward the morbid and fantastical, include *William Lovell* (3 volumes, 1795-1796), written in the epistolary form; *A Poet's Life* (1826; trans. 1830); and *Der Junge Tischlermeister* (The Young Cabinetmaker, 1836). The most familiar of Tieck's many folktales, *Der Blonde Eckbert* (The Fair-Haired Eckbert, 1796), was translated by the Scottish essayist and historian Thomas Carlyle and published in his *German Romance* (1827).
Ernst Toller (1893-1939), German playwright, born in Samotschin (now Szamocin, Poland), and educated at the universities of Heidelberg and Munich. After World War I he became a political activist. From 1919 to 1924 he was imprisoned for participating in the 1919 Communist uprising in Bavaria. After being forced by the Nazi regime to leave Germany in 1933, Toller lived mostly in the United States, where he committed suicide in 1939. He wrote plays of social protest in the style of German expressionism; his most successful, *Masses and Man* (1920; translated 1923), was produced throughout Europe and the U.S. Other plays include *Brokenbow* (1924; translated 1926), *Hoppla! Such Is Life!* (1927; translated 1928), and *Pastor Hall* (1939).
Fritz von Unruh (1885-1970), German writer, born in Koblenz, the son of a general. His first play was the successful *Offiziere* (Officers, 1911). Unruh served as a captain in World War I; his war diary, *The Way of Sacrifice* (1916; trans. 1928), describes the Battle of Verdun and the pacifist feelings he had developed. He became a leading proponent of expressionism as a literary style. In 1933 Unruh went to France; during World War II he escaped from a French concentration camp and went to the United States; he eventually returned to West Germany (now part of the united Federal Republic of Germany).

Frank Wedekind (1864-1918), German playwright, whose experiments with unusual themes and stage effects made him an important forerunner of expressionism in Germany. He was born in Hannover and educated at the universities of Munich and Zürich. He came under the influence of the German playwright Gerhart Hauptmann for a short while in the late 1880s. Later he rejected Hauptmann's naturalism in favor of styles developed by the Swedish dramatist August Strindberg and the German poet Georg Büchner. Wedekind led a wandering Bohemian life in Munich, Zürich, London, and Paris. In the 1890s, lack of money forced him to sing his own ballads in cabarets and to act on the stage. Finally he joined the staff of the satirical magazine Simplicissimus. After his marriage in 1908, he settled in Munich.

Wedekind's first plays, Die junge Welt (The Young World, 1890) and The Awakening of Spring (1891; translated 1909), depict frankly the sexual maturing of adolescents in a world of unsympathetic adults. These works and Der Erdgeist (The Earth Spirit, 1895) established his reputation but were financially unsuccessful. In other plays, notably Pandora's Box, (1904; trans. 1918), he portrayed the depraved conduct that arises, in his view, from society's attempt to suppress the sex drive. His works were often censored because of their attacks on middle-class morality.
Christoph Martin Wieland

Christoph Martin Wieland (1733-1813), German writer, born in Oberholzheim, Württemberg, and educated at the University of Tübingen. His early works consist mainly of fervently religious poetry. In 1760 he abandoned his intense piety and became an outspoken freethinker. He then wrote a play, *Lady Johanna Gray* (1758), the first German drama in blank verse, and ridiculed his early faith in the romance *Die Abenteuer des Don Sylvio von Rosalva* (Adventure of Don Sylvio of Rosalva, 1764). Between 1762 and 1766 Wieland translated 22 plays by Shakespeare, which made Shakespeare better known in Germany. His novel *The History of Agathon* (1766-67; trans. 1773), an account of a young man's education, is a forerunner of the modern psychological novel.

In 1769 Wieland became professor of philosophy at the University of Erfurt. His outstanding work while at Erfurt was *Der goldene Spiegel* (The Golden Mirror, 1772), a cycle of tales about an enlightened ruler. He founded and edited *Der Teutsche Merkur* (The German Mercury, 1773-1810), which became a leading literary journal, and *Das attische Museum* (The Attic Museum, 1796-1809), in which he published his translations of Greek and Latin classics. Among the works of this period are *The Republic of Fools* (1774; trans. 1861), a satire of provincial life; and *Oberon* (1780; trans. 1798), a witty and sophisticated verse romance, generally considered his masterpiece.
Arnold Zweig

Arnold Zweig (1887-1968), German novelist, playwright, and essayist, born in Glogau (now Glogów, Poland), and educated at various German universities. Out of his experiences as a private in the German army in World War I came the novel *The Case of Sergeant Grischa* (1927; trans. 1927), considered one of the greatest of all war novels. It is the story of a Russian soldier who, taken prisoner by the Germans, becomes a victim of their bureaucratic military machinery. Some of the characters in the novel reappear in Zweig's later books. His work combines a broad humanity with objective realism and a subtle irony. He wrote extensively about the Jews and Zionism, including the novel *De Vriendt Goes Home* (1932; trans. 1933) and the essay collection *Insulted and Exiled* (1934; trans. 1937). His reminiscences were published in 1967.

In 1933 when Adolf Hitler came to power, Zweig, as a Jew, fled to Palestine. In 1948 he returned to East Germany (now part of the united Federal Republic of Germany). Zweig was president of the East German Academy of Letters from 1950 to 1953.
Aeschylus

Aeschylus (525?-456 BC), Greek dramatist, the earliest of the great tragic poets of Athens. As the predecessor of Sophocles and Euripides, he is called the father of Greek tragedy. Aeschylus is said to have written about 90 plays. We know the titles of about 80 of these plays, but only seven complete plays by Aeschylus have survived.

Our knowledge of Aeschylus’s life comes mainly from prefatory material attached to an 11th-century manuscript of his work. Aeschylus was born in Eleusis, near Athens. His father was a member of the Athenian nobility. Aeschylus fought successfully against the Persian armies at the Battle of Marathon in 490 BC, a fact that was noted with pride on his tombstone. He probably also fought in 480 BC at the Battle of Salamís, of which his play *The Persians* contains an eyewitness account, and possibly at Plataea the following year. He made at least two trips, perhaps three, to Sicily to produce his plays. During his final visit he died at Gela, where a monument was later erected in his memory.
Aristophanes

Aristophanes (448?-385 BC), Athenian playwright, considered one of the greatest writers of comedy in literary history. His plays have been produced through the centuries and have remained popular because of their wit, comic invention, and poetic language.

Aristophanes is believed to have been born in Athens, Greece, in the deme, or township, of Cydathenaeum. Presumably, he was well educated and may have had property on the island of Aegina. He had three sons—Philippos, Araros, and Nikostratos—all of whom were comic poets.

Aristophanes was first and foremost a satirist. During his lifetime Athens underwent a period of convulsive cultural and social change, and he found a ready target in the politicians, poets, and philosophers of his day. It would nevertheless be misleading to describe Aristophanes as a reactionary or a conservative, since his works show no sympathy for the aristocratic party in Athenian politics. No class, age, or profession was exempt from his satire. Aristophanes wrote more than 40 plays, of which 11 are extant. His first three plays were produced under pseudonyms, including The Acharnians (425 BC), a plea for ending the war with Sparta. The Knights (424 BC), the first of the plays of Aristophanes to be presented under his own name, is a devastating satire about Athenian politician and military leader Cleon, champion of the democratic forces and leader of the war party. The Clouds (423 BC) satirizes Greek philosopher Socrates, whose penetrating analysis of established values Aristophanes considered opposed to the interests of the state. In The Wasps (422 BC) Aristophanes satirized the courts of justice of the day, and in The Peace (421 BC) he again argued for peace between Athens and Sparta. The Birds (414 BC) is a fantasy in which an Athenian persuades the birds to build a city in the clouds and then imposes his own terms on the gods. Lysistrata (411 BC), another satire on war, in which women strike for peace by practicing celibacy, is his most famous work. Thesmophoriazusae (411 BC) and The Frogs (405 BC) include attacks on Athenian playwright Euripides. Ecclesiazusa (393 BC) is a satire on the idea of communal ownership of property, and Plutus (388 BC) reduced to absurdity the concept of redistribution of wealth in Athens.
Cratinus

Cratinus (lived 5th century BC), ancient Greek dramatist, regarded, with Eupolis and Aristophanes, as one of the greatest exponents of Athenian Old Comedy. Of his works, only 27 titles and about 460 fragments survive. They were said to be forceful and satirical. He won first prize nine times in the competition for comedy at the Athenian festivals. In 423 BC his play *The Bottle* won the prize over *The Clouds* by Aristophanes. After Aristophanes, Cratinus was the best-known dramatist identified with the Old Comedy of Athens. See Drama and Dramatic Arts.
Epicharmus

Epicharmus (lived early 5th century BC), Greek dramatist, born on the island of Kos and raised in Megara, Sicily. After 484 BC he lived in Syracuse, Sicily, where he enjoyed the successive patronage of the two tyrants Gelon and Hiero I. Epicharmus was one of the first dramatists to give artistic form to comedy. The surviving fragments of his plays contain burlesque elements and stock characters seen in later Attic comedy.
Euripides

Euripides (480?-406? BC), Greek dramatist, ranking with Aeschylus and Sophocles as one of the three great tragic poets of ancient Greece. Euripides wrote nearly 90 plays, of which 18 survive today. His work had a great influence on Roman drama, later English and German drama, and especially 17th-century French dramatic poets Pierre Corneille and Jean Baptiste Racine.

In contrast to Aeschylus and Sophocles, Euripides represented the new moral, social, and political movements that were taking place in Athens toward the end of the 5th century BC. It was a period of enormous intellectual discovery, in which wisdom ranked as the highest earthly accomplishment. New truths were being established in all branches of knowledge, and Euripides, reacting to them, brought a new kind of consciousness to the writing of tragedy. His interest lay in the thought and experience of the ordinary individual rather than in the experiences of legendary figures from the epics of Homer.

Although Euripides drew on Greek legends, he treated its characters in a realistic fashion: They were no longer idealized symbols remote from commonplace life, but contemporary Athenians. Euripides shared in the intellectual skepticism of the day, and his plays challenged long-accepted religious and moral dogmas. His attitudes shifted between extremes, sometimes within the boundaries of the same play. He was capable of bitter, realistic observation of human weaknesses and corruption, and yet just as often his work reflected respect for human heroism, dignity, and more tender sentiments.
Menander

Menander (342?-291?BC), foremost Greek dramatist of the genre known as New Comedy (see Drama and Dramatic Arts). He wrote more than 100 comedies, many of which continued to be performed in Athens after his death. Latin adaptations of Menander's plays by Roman playwrights Plautus and Terence have survived. Fragments of seven original plays were found in Egypt, including long sections of *The Arbitration*, *The Rape of the Ringlets*, and *Samia*, and in 1957 archaeologists recovered, also in Egypt, the first complete text of a play by Menander, *The Curmudgeon*. Menander's plays involve complex love situations that are marked by sharp character delineation and an elegant style. Through the work of Plautus and Terence, Menandrian comedy, which provides social insights into human weaknesses and the complications of everyday life, greatly influenced later dramatists, particularly those of 17th-century England.
Sophocles

Sophocles (496?-406? BC), Athenian dramatist, ranking with Aeschylus and Euripides as one of the three great tragic dramatists of ancient Greece. His best-known plays are *Antigone* and *Oedipus Rex* (*Oedipus Tyrannus* in Greek).

Sophocles composed more than 120 plays. Of these, 7 complete tragedies and fragments of 80 or 90 others are preserved. The seven surviving plays are *Antigone*, *Oedipus Rex* or *Oedipus Tyrannus* (*Oedipus the King*), *Electra*, *Ajax*, *Trachiniae* (*Maidens of Trachis*), *Philoctetes*, and *Oedipus at Colonus*. Also preserved is a large fragment of the *Ichneutae* (*Investigators*), a satiric drama discovered on papyrus in Egypt in 1907. The earliest of the surviving tragedies is thought to be *Ajax* (approximately 451-444 BC). The next are probably *Antigone* and *Trachiniae* (both after 441). *Oedipus Rex* is generally dated shortly after 430 because of a probable reference to a plague in Athens that year. Most experts consider *Electra* a late play, dating as late as 410 BC. *Philoctetes* is known to date from 409 BC. *Oedipus at Colonus* was first produced posthumously in 401 BC.
Thespis

Thespis (flourished mid-6th century BC), Greek poet, who, according to tradition, is the founder of drama. Born in Attica, he wrote plays and won a prize for a tragedy about 534 BC. He is believed to have been the first playwright to introduce an actor, independent of the chorus, who delivered monologues and also engaged in dialogues with the leader of the chorus. The birth of drama is generally dated from this innovation. Thespis is also said to have introduced the use of pigments and masks to disguise the performers. The word *thespian*, meaning “actor,” is derived from his name.
Mór Jókai

Mór Jókai (1825-1904), Hungarian writer, born in Komárom, and educated at the College of Pápá. He took part in the Revolution of 1848 and, although granted amnesty, he was long considered a political suspect by the Austrian authorities. After the reestablishment of the Hungarian constitution in 1867, he became a member of Parliament and served until 1897, when he was appointed to the upper house. Jókai edited several periodicals, both literary and political, the most important being the influential political newspaper Hon (Nation), which he founded in 1863. He wrote more than 100 volumes of fiction, poetry, and drama. His novels, such as Black Diamonds (1870; trans. 1896), were very popular.
Károly Kisfaludy

Károly Kisfaludy (1788-1830), Hungarian dramatist, born in Tét. After serving in the Napoleonic Wars from 1804 to 1811, he turned to painting and writing. His play *The Tatars in Hungary* (1819) was the first popularly successful Hungarian national historical drama. Kisfaludy wrote other historical dramas; tragedies, such as *Irene* (1820); and comedies, such as *The Suitors* (1817)—all based on Hungarian life. In 1822, with his brother, the poet Sándor Kisfaludy, he began to edit a literary review, *Aurora*, which published the Hungarian romantics.
Ferenc Molnár

Ferenc Molnár (1878-1952), Hungarian playwright and novelist, born in Budapest. Several of his plays were presented on the New York City stage, and all were successes, including *The Guardsman, Liliom, The Swan, The Glass Slipper,* and *The Play's the Thing.* In 1928 English translations of his *Twenty-five Plays* were published. A musical comedy, *Carousel,* presented in New York City in 1945, was based on Molnár's *Liliom.* His plays are characterized by graceful romantic situations and amusing dialogue.
Mihály Vörösmarty

Mihály Vörösmarty (1800-1855), Hungarian poet and playwright. His work is marked by nationalism, and, as a literary critic, Vörösmarty sought to eliminate foreign, especially German, influences and neoclassical traditions from Hungarian literature. The drama *Csongor és Tünde* (Csongor and Tünde, 1831), his first important work, is a romantic fantasy. Vörösmarty wrote a series of love poems and, after the political upheavals of the late 1840s, a few somber poems that reflect his personal problems and the misfortunes of his country.
Samuel Beckett

Samuel Beckett (1906-1989), Irish-born poet, novelist, and playwright, who won international fame with his play *En attendant Godot* (*Waiting for Godot*), which premiered in 1953. He won the Nobel Prize in 1969 and influenced a generation of dramatists, including English playwrights Harold Pinter and Tom Stoppard and American playwrights Edward Albee and Sam Shepard.

Born in the Dublin suburb of Foxrock, Beckett attended the prestigious Portora Royal School in Enniskillen, in what became Northern Ireland, and Trinity College in Dublin. After graduating with a degree in Romance languages in 1927, he lectured at the École Normale Supérieure in Paris from 1928 to 1930. During this time he befriended Irish author James Joyce, who was to have a profound effect on his writing. Much of Beckett’s early poetry and fiction, including the collection of short stories *More Pricks than Kicks* (1934) and his first published novel, *Murphy* (1938), was written with Joyce’s works as the literary model.

Having studied the works of French philosopher René Descartes and written a book on French novelist Marcel Proust, published in 1931 during his tenure in Paris, Beckett returned to Dublin in 1930 to complete his M.A. degree and to accept a lectureship in French at Trinity College. But the formal academic life held little appeal, and in December 1931 he resigned from Trinity with no better prospects than a vague hope for his writing. This difficult period is described in some of his earliest writing: *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, an unfinished novel written in English shortly after his resignation but published in 1992, and the three-act play *Eleutheria* (Greek for “freedom”), written in French in 1947 and published in 1995.

Beckett went through a period of family conflict and self-doubt, especially after his father’s death in June 1933, which further strained Beckett’s difficult relationship with his mother. From 1934 to 1936 he underwent psychoanalysis in London. He then spent a year traveling in Germany, witnessing firsthand the rise of German dictator Adolf Hitler and Nazism. In October 1937 he settled in Paris more or less permanently. A few months later he was inexplicably stabbed on a Paris street.
Brendan Behan (1923-1964), Irish playwright and poet, remembered as a great wit and entertainer. He was born on Dublin's north side to a family of storytellers and singers. Behan left school at age 13 to apprentice as a house painter. The following year he joined the outlawed Irish Republican Army (IRA), in which his father had also been active. He was arrested in 1939 when he was found with bomb-making equipment and spent three years in a reform school in England. Behan was released in 1941 and deported to Ireland. Shortly after his release, he was sent to prison on an attempted murder charge. Five years later he was released.

Behan then returned to painting houses and began writing. Two of his lyric poems appeared in *Nuabhéarsaíocht* (New Verse, 1950), a collection of the most important Irish-language poems written between 1939 and 1949. He also wrote radio plays and produced sketches for the *Irish Press* between 1954 and 1956.

Behan's first success as a playwright came with the premiere of *The Quare Fellow* (1954), the title of which refers to prison slang for a condemned man. He began the play in Irish while in prison but completed it in English after his release. *The Quare Fellow* was produced first at the Pike Theatre in Dublin, but it was the 1956 production directed by Joan Littlewood in Stratford, England, and later in London, England, that established Behan's reputation as a dramatist. His public appearances in connection with the play branded him as a showman notorious for his unpredictable and outrageous behavior.

Behan's second major play, *The Hostage* (1958), was also written first in Irish (as *An Giall*). It is based on a short story about an English soldier held hostage by the IRA. Set in a brothel, *The Hostage* is a vehicle for songs and stories. It, like *The Quare Fellow*, is less concerned with plot than with character and dialogue. Behan published his reform-school autobiography, *Borstal Boy*, in 1958. Written in the tradition of Irish political prison literature, the book is considered his masterpiece.
Padraic Colum (1881-1972), Irish poet, playwright, and folklorist, whose work celebrates Irish culture. He was born in Longford and spent his early years among the country people of the Irish midlands, who furnished the subjects, characters, themes, and language for his work. Although Colum spent most of his adult life in the United States, his writing returned to his Longford roots over and over again.

When Colum was in his teens, his family moved to Dublin. Irish writer George Russell (who went by the pseudonym AE) read his first poems and pronounced him a genius. He included some of Colum's poetry in the collection *New Songs* (1904). Colum's early poems, which include 'A Drover,' 'The Plougher,' 'An Old Woman of the Roads,' and 'A Poor Scholar of the Forties,' use regular meter, strong rhymes, and an authentic Irish language. His ballad 'She Moved Through the Fair,' which is sung to a haunting air, has passed into Irish folk song tradition.

Colum's earliest realistic peasant plays are set in the Irish countryside and are his most popular dramas. He wrote the 1905 play *Land* shortly after the Wyndham Act provided for state-assisted land purchase. *Land* examines the consequences of tenant ownership and the responsibilities that the younger generation assumed with the newly acquired land. Colum's *The Fiddler's House* (1907), a reworking of his earlier *Broken Soil* (1903), celebrates a musician who gives up a secure life on the land to play music for a living. *Thomas Muskerry* (1910) is a tragedy about a poorhouse warden who is betrayed by his family and left in the poorhouse as an inmate.
George Farquhar

George Farquhar (1677 or 1678-1707), Irish dramatist, born in Londonderry (Derry), and educated at Trinity College, Dublin. At the start of his acting career he accidentally wounded a fellow performer in a fencing scene, whereupon he abandoned acting for playwriting. About 1697 he left Dublin for London. His first play, *Love and a Bottle* (1699), was favorably received. His plays display the urbanity and satirical wit of other restoration comedies, but are marked by an atmosphere of good humor and reality. *The Recruiting Officer* (1706) and *The Beaux’ Stratagem* (1707) are considered his best plays and are still regularly performed. *The Recruiting Officer* was based on Farquhar's experiences and was used by Bertolt Brecht as the basis of his play *Pauken und Trompeten*, and by Timberlake Wertenbaker for her play *Our Country's Good* (1988). Farquhar's other works include *The Constant Couple* (1700) and *The Inconstant* (1702), based on *The Wild Goose Chase*, a play by John Fletcher.
Brian Friel

Brian Friel, born in 1929, Irish playwright and short-story writer, best known for addressing Irish themes, including rural magic and the visionary; violence, republicanism, and political engagement; British influence on Ireland; and, more generally, the interplay of identity and territory in the conflict between Northern Ireland and Ireland.

Born in Omagh, County Tyrone, Northern Ireland, and brought up in Londonderry (Derry), also in Northern Ireland, beginning in 1939, Friel received his bachelor of arts degree from Saint Patrick’s College, Maynooth, Ireland, in 1948, and did a year of postgraduate work at Saint Joseph's Teachers Training College in Belfast, Northern Ireland, from 1949 to 1950. From 1950 to 1960 Friel worked as a teacher at various schools in the Londonderry area.

Friel secured a contract to write short stories for the New Yorker magazine at the age of 21 but did not become a full-time writer until 1960. He has published the collections of short stories A Saucer of Larks (1962) and The Gold in the Sea (1966), and also, in 1994, Selected Stories. It is, however, Friel's plays that have brought him widespread acclaim. In 1963 he spent six months studying at the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and thereafter his dramas began to command attention. The first performance of Philadelphia, Here I Come! was given at the Gaiety Theatre, Dublin, in 1964, and the play was subsequently produced at the Helen Hayes Theatre, New York City, in 1966, and at the Lyric Theatre, London, in 1967. The Loves of Cass McGuire followed in 1966, Lovers in 1967, Crystal and Fox in 1968, The Mundy Scheme in 1969, and The Gentle Island two years later. During the 1970s, The Freedom of the City opened simultaneously at the Royal Court in London and at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin. It was followed by Volunteers (1975), Living Quarters (1977), and Aristocrats (1979); the latter won the Best Foreign Play Award from the New York Drama Critics Circle in 1989. The extremely successful Faith Healer was first produced on Broadway, in New York City, in 1979; equally acclaimed were Translations (1980); Dancing at Lughnasa (1990), which in 1992 won a Tony Award for best play; and Molly Sweeney (1994).
Isabella Augusta Gregory

Isabella Augusta Gregory, née Persse (1852-1932), Irish playwright, who was a leader of the Irish Renaissance. She was born in Rosborough, county Galway, into an aristocratic family. After the death of her husband, Sir William Gregory, in 1892, she became involved in the effort to arouse Irish nationalism through an appreciation of Irish literature and speech. With the poet and dramatist William Butler Yeats she founded what became the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, which she directed and for which she wrote many plays. Lady Gregory collaborated with Yeats on Cathleen ni Houlihan (1902) and provided him with material for other plays. She wrote several one-act plays concerning contemporary Irish peasant life, including Spreading the News (1904), The Rising of the Moon (1907), The Workhouse Ward (1908), and MacDonough's Wife (1913). Several are written in Kiltartan, the Anglo-Irish dialect of western Ireland, as are many of her sketches, stories, and retellings of old Gaelic sagas, such as Cuchulain of Muirthemne (1902). Lady Gregory's estate, Coole Park, inspired Yeats, and she actively helped other Irish writers, including John Millington Synge, George Moore, and Sean O'Casey.
Sean O’Casey

Sean O’Casey (1880-1964), Irish dramatist, whose successful Dublin trilogy rescued the Abbey Theatre from financial ruin in the 1920s. He was born in Dublin's inner city, one of the worst slums in Europe at the time, and his father died in 1886. His mother then supported the large family, and she later became the model for O'Casey's tenement heroines. O'Casey suffered from a painful eye condition that afflicted him all his life, but he read voraciously to make up for missed schooling. He began working at age 14, primarily for the railroads, and was active for several years in the labor movement and in the nationalist struggle against Britain’s rule of Ireland.

O'Casey's early plays were rejected by the Abbey Theatre, a national repertory company in Dublin that specialized in producing Irish works. But Lady Gregory, one of the Abbey’s directors, encouraged him to continue submitting his work. In 1923 the Abbey accepted *The Shadow of a Gunman*, the first play of O'Casey's Dublin trilogy. The play is based on his experience living in a house that was raided by British forces. It contrasts Donal Davoren, who pretends to be a gunman and is the prototype for O'Casey's romantic heroes, with the true hero of the story, Minnie Powell. *The Shadow of a Gunman* introduced a gallery of characters from the slums whose rich, witty conversation enabled them to transcend their impoverished lives. It was an instant success.

*Juno and the Paycock* (1924), second in the trilogy, followed a similar formula, depicting a braggart (the Captain), a heroic woman (Juno), tenement characters, and Dublin during Ireland’s 'troubles' (its fight for independence during the early 20th century). The Boyle family expects an inheritance that will change their lives. When it proves to be worthless, the gallant Juno gathers her daughter, who has been seduced and abandoned, and leaves to start a new life. *Juno and the Paycock*, like *The Shadow of a Gunman*, was enormously successful. The final play of O’Casey’s trilogy, *The Plough and the Stars* (1926), is set in a Dublin tenement during the 1916 Easter Rebellion (an Irish uprising against the British). Again there is a contrast between romantic idealism, embodied here by Irish Citizen Army officer Jack Clitheroe, and the real heroism and suffering of the poor civilians of the city. Written just ten years after the Rebellion, the play's criticism of nationalistic idealism caused a riot.
Lennox Robinson

Lennox Robinson (1886-1958), Irish dramatist, born in Douglas, county Cork. One of the younger writers of the Irish literary revival, at the request of William Butler Yeats he was manager of the Abbey Theatre in Dublin from 1910 to 1914 and 1919 to 1923. His plays are interpretations of the Irish character, the most successful being *The White-Headed Boy* (1916). Of his political plays, *The Dreamers* (1915), based on an unsuccessful uprising in 1803, became the best known. *The Big House* (1926) marked Robinson as one of the first Irish playwrights to address the changing state of Ireland. His other plays include *The Lost Leader* (1918).
John Millington Synge (1871-1909), Irish dramatist and dominant figure of the Irish Renaissance, a literary revival of the last years of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century. Synge's great achievement was his unusually musical and poetic dialogue, which created a dramatic effect when coming from the mouths of his peasant characters. His humor, while occasionally ironic and bitter, was pronounced and at times boisterous. Synge’s plays were produced at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, which was established to perform plays about Irish subjects written by Irish playwrights.

Synge was born in Rathfarnham, a village near Dublin. He was a sickly, solitary boy who pursed his interest in languages at Trinity College, Dublin, where he won prizes for Hebrew and Irish and earned his B.A. degree in 1892. After graduation Synge studied music in Germany, then made his way to Paris, where he attended lectures on modern languages and on Celtic, a language group that includes Irish, the ancient language of Ireland. In 1896 Synge met Irish poet William Butler Yeats, who encouraged him to travel to the isolated Aran Islands off the west coast of Ireland, where he could study the language and ways of life of people who still spoke Irish. Synge made the first of five visits to the Aran Islands in 1898, spending most of his time on Inishmaan, the most remote of the islands. His experience provided him with sketches for the book *The Aran Islands* (1907), with plots for the plays *Riders to the Sea* (1904) and *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907), and especially with exposure to a distinctive dialect called Hiberno-English. This dialect, which he used in his writings, combines English vocabulary with Irish syntax (sentence structure) and inflection.
Vittorio Alfieri (1749-1803), Italian dramatist and poet, who was one of the leading literary and patriotic figures of modern Italian history.

Alfieri was born in Asti, Piedmont (Piemonte), on January 16, 1749, and educated at a military academy in Turin. He inherited a fortune and at the age of 17 set out on travels throughout Europe. In 1772 he returned to Turin, and in 1775 he wrote a tragic drama, Cleopatra, which was enthusiastically received. He then devoted himself to writing tragic dramas and patriotic poems. Alfieri moved to Florence in 1776 to study the purer Italian spoken in the province of Tuscany (Toscana). While living in Florence he fell in love with Louise de Stolberg, the countess of Albany, who became his mistress. She encouraged his writing and became a stabilizing influence in his hitherto erratic life.

During the next 13 years he produced 19 tragic dramas; Saul (1783), the most notable, is based on the biblical account of the destruction of Saul because of his jealousy of David. His other tragic dramas of this period include Agamemnon (1783), Philip the Second (1781), Antigone (1786), and Sophonisba (1788). In his most important prose writings of these years, On Tyranny (1789) and The Prince and Literature (1801), he argued that honest literature could be created only in a free society. In five odes, published from 1776 to 1783, he celebrated American independence. He died in Florence on October 8, 1803.

The whole body of Alfieri's writings, inspired by his own love of freedom, awakened the national pride of Italians and helped promote the Italian independence movement known as the Risorgimento.
Ugo Betti (1892-1953), Italian writer, born in Camerino. A judge by profession, he wrote several plays, as well as poetry and fiction in his free time. A volume of verse, *Il re pensieroso* (The Thoughtful King), written while he was a prisoner of war (1917-18), was published in 1922. It is for his plays, however, that Betti is best known. Most of them are concerned with the themes of responsibility and guilt, justice and compassion. Occasionally he displayed a talent for comedy, as in *Summertime* (1937; trans. 1957). Scrutinizing his own profession, he wrote what is considered his major work, *Corruption in the Palace of Justice* (1944; trans. 1962), a drama in the form of a judicial inquiry.
Gabriele D’Annunzio

Gabriele D’Annunzio (1863-1938), Italian novelist, poet, and playwright. Although present-day critics find little of permanent value in his works, his extraordinary ability to translate sensations into language is undeniable. His florid style mirrored the romantic, flamboyant quality of his career and personality.

D'Annunzio was born in Pescara, Abruzzi, on March 12, 1863, and educated in Florence and at the University of Rome. He left Abruzzi in 1881 for Rome. There he wrote essays for the newspaper Tribuna. A year later he won fame with Canto nuovo (New Song, 1882), a volume of poems that dealt with the joy of living. D'Annunzio then turned to the novel, producing The Triumph of Death (1894; trans. 1896), which has colorful descriptions of Abruzzi life.

After 1898, the theater held D'Annunzio's attention. During a love affair with the Italian actor Eleonora Duse, which lasted from 1897 to 1902, he wrote several plays for her, including Gioconda (1898; trans. 1902) and Francesca da Rimini (1902; trans. 1902). The novel The Flame of Life (1900; trans. 1900) is a candid and cruel account of their relationship. The Daughter of Jorio (1904; trans. 1907), widely regarded as his most vital play, was drawn from Abruzzi peasant life.

In 1912 D'Annunzio was left bankrupt and fled to France to escape his creditors. While in France he wrote several works in French; the most famous is Le martyre de Saint Sébastien (The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian, 1911), a play in verse, to which the French composer Claude Debussy set incidental music.

D'Annunzio served with distinction in the Italian armed forces during World War I. Immediately after the war he won notoriety by leading soldiers to occupy Fiume (now Rijeka, Croatia) in defiance of the Allied powers. After he was forced to leave the city he retired to his estate on Lake Garda, where he lived until his death on March 1, 1938. He was an outspoken supporter of Italian fascism.
Dario Fo

Dario Fo, born in 1926, Italian playwright and actor, who won the 1997 Nobel Prize for literature. He has received both criticism and wide popular acclaim for comedies that satirize such authorities as the Roman Catholic Church and the Italian government. As a performer, Fo has helped revive and revitalize the theatrical traditions of medieval and Renaissance Europe.

Fo was born into a working-class family in Sangiano, a small town on Lake Maggiore in northern Italy. He attended Milan’s Academy of Fine Arts, the Brera Art Academy, and a polytechnic institute in Milan. In 1950 he joined a theater troupe, where he began writing and performing his own semi-improvised scenes. Three years later Fo joined a comedy revue and began performing satirical sketches, many of which lampooned political figures. One of the performers in the cast, Franca Rame, became Fo’s wife the following year, and the two later collaborated on many plays and sketches. The revue met with popular and critical success, but the government closely monitored their performances, due to Italy’s rigid libel laws.

During the late 1950s and the 1960s Fo and Rame led their own performance group. They mainly produced satires examining government bureaucracy, the Roman Catholic priesthood, and social issues such as divorce (then illegal in Italy). Fo used his gifts for clowning and mime to mock long-held Italian beliefs about history, religion, and middle-class values.

In 1969 Fo developed what is generally considered his masterpiece, *Mistero buffo* (translated as *Comic Mysteries*, 1988). The one-man show is essentially a retelling of the Gospels (the biblical accounts of the life of Jesus Christ), into which Fo inserts his own improvised commentary on religious tradition and contemporary issues. He drew inspiration from the comic techniques of medieval and Renaissance traveling performers, who used stock characters and improvised plots in their shows, and from medieval mystery plays, which provided moral and religious teaching (*see Miracle, Mystery, and Morality Plays*). *Mistero buffo* also introduced *grammelot*, a sort of gibberish that Fo invented by combining the sounds of several European languages.
Carlo Goldoni (1707-93), Italian playwright, considered the founder of modern Italian comedy. He was born in Venice. At the age of 14 he joined a group of traveling players, and during the next ten years he acquired an education, including a degree in law from the University of Padua. In 1731 he returned to Venice and began practicing law and writing plays. The first of these were tragedies, at that time the only form for dramatic composition regarded seriously.

Although his tragedies met with some success, he was dissatisfied with this medium. He conceived the idea of reforming the Italian stage by eliminating the masques and buffooneries with which it abounded and by writing comedies in the manner of the 17th-century French dramatist Molière, but based on Italian characters and life. Between 1738 and 1763 Goldoni wrote about 150 comedies, including *The Mistress of the Inn* (1753; trans. 1856) and *The Fan* (1763; trans. 1911).

In 1761 Goldoni left Venice to manage the Italian theater in Paris. In 1770 he composed a comedy in French, *The Beneficent Bear* (trans. 1849), for the wedding of the future king Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette. In retirement at Versailles he wrote his *Memoirs* (1787; trans. 1877). A royal pension granted in 1787 was revoked during the French Revolution, and Goldoni died in poverty.
Alessandro Manzoni

Alessandro Manzoni (1785-1873), Italian novelist, poet, and playwright. Alessandro Francesco Tommaso Antonio Manzoni was born in Milan. As a young man he espoused the rationalism and skepticism prevailing in French literature of the Enlightenment. After 1808 his position was that which generally characterized romantic Italian literature of the first half of the 19th century: a combination of ardent patriotism and devout Roman Catholicism. He took part in the unsuccessful Milanese revolt of 1848 against Austrian rule and in 1860 became a senator in the legislative body of the new kingdom of Italy. Before 1825 he was known as a poet and playwright. Among his writings of this period were an ode on Napoleon's death, *Il Cinque Maggio* (The Fifth of May, 1822), the volume of religious lyrics *Inni Sacri* (Sacred Hymns, 1810), and the romantic tragedies *Count of Carmagnola* (1820, trans. 1868) and *Adelchi* (1822, trans. 1868). Manzoni is best known for *The Betrothed* (1825-27, trans. 1834), a romantic historical novel of life in Milan under Spanish rule in the 17th century. The work, a classic of world literature, set a standard for modern Italian prose and influenced later novelists. It has been translated into many languages. The Italian composer Giuseppe Verdi wrote (1874) his *Requiem* to honor Manzoni's memory and it is sometimes called the “Manzoni Requiem.”
Luigi Pirandello

Luigi Pirandello (1867-1936), Italian writer, who is considered the most important Italian dramatist of the period between World War I (1914-1918) and World War II (1939-1945). He won the 1934 Nobel Prize in literature.

Pirandello was born in Agrigento, Sicily, and educated at the Universities of Rome and Bonn. He taught Italian literature at the Normal College for Women in Rome from 1897 to 1921, when his growing reputation as a writer enabled him to devote himself entirely to a literary career. Pirandello became internationally known in 1921 through his play *Sei personaggi in cerca d’autore* (1921; *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, 1922), about six fictional characters who appear on stage, unfinished by their creator yet desiring to be real.

Pirandello's writings deal mainly with people of the lower middle class and are concerned with philosophical ideas such as the human conflict between instinct and reason, which often leads to an existence full of inconsistencies. Pirandello also asserts that specific actions are not right or wrong in themselves, but only in the way that humans regard them, and that an individual has not one definite personality but many, depending on how that person appears to the people with whom he or she comes in contact. Without faith in any fixed standards of ethics, morality, politics, or religion, characters in Pirandello's tales and plays find reality only in themselves, and then discover that they themselves are unstable and inexplicable beings.

Pirandello expressed in humorous terms his deep pessimism and his pity for the confusion and suffering of the human condition. The humor is, however, grim and disturbing, and it explores the embarrassing and sometimes painful recognition of the absurdities of human existence. Pirandello was also an important innovator in stage technique, avoiding the limitations of realism by using elements of fantasy to create the effect he wanted.

Pirandello's other plays include *Il piacere dellonestà* (1917; *The Pleasures of Honesty*, 1923), *Così è (se vi pare)* (1917; *Right You Are If You Think So*, 1922), *Enrico IV* (1922; *Henry IV*, 1922), and *Come tu mi vuoi* (1930, *As You Desire Me*, 1931).
Giovanni Verga

Giovanni Verga (1840-1922), Italian novelist, short-story writer, and playwright, who was a leader of the verismo (realist) movement and one of Italy's most influential writers. He was born into a landowning family in Catania, Sicily, and lived in Florence and Milan before returning to Catania. He first wrote fashionable romances; not until he began writing about Sicilian farmers and fishers did his true genius become apparent. In his short stories and in his novels Cavalleria Rusticana (1880; trans., with other stories in the same volume, by D. H. Lawrence), I malavoglia (1881; The House by the Medlar Tree, 1890), and Mastro-Don Gesualdo (1889; trans. 1923), Verga depicted the life and customs of the Sicilian peasantry in a detailed, dramatic, and starkly realistic manner. His verismo style of writing, based on keen observation, strongly influenced the realist approach of post-World War II writers and film-makers. Verga wrote a stage version of Cavalleria Rusticana (produced 1884), which was the basis of Pietro Mascagni’s opera (1890). I malavoglia is the source of the film Terra Trema (1948) of Luchino Visconti.
Ivar Andreas Aasen (1813–1896), Norwegian philologist, poet, and dramatist. Through a study of rural dialects, connecting them with Old Norwegian, Aasen evolved a native country language. He called this language *Landsmål* (“country speech,” now known as Nynorsk or New Norwegian) and intended it to replace literary Dano-Norwegian.

*Landsmål* was recognized in 1885 alongside Riksmål, or Bokmål, which is a development of Danish (at one time the official and literary language of Norway). Aasen published a grammar, *Det norske folkesprogs grammatik* (A Grammar of the Norwegian Folk Language, 1948), and a dictionary, *Ordbog over det norsk folkesprog* (Dictionary of the Norwegian Folk Language, 1850). He also wrote plays and poems in Landsmål.
Bjørnstjerne Martinius Bjørnson

Bjørnstjerne Martinius Bjørnson (1832-1910), Norwegian writer, Nobel laureate, and political leader, born in Kvikne. His plays rank among the earliest and most important examples of native Norwegian dramatic literature.

Bjørnson wrote voluminously on the social, political, moral, and aesthetic questions of the time. He was influential in the creation of an indigenous Norwegian literature and a typically Norwegian school of writers, with roots in the early culture of Norway. Bjørnson's first novel, *Sunny Hill* (1857; trans. 1931), was a realistic treatment of peasant life. Among his numerous works are the dramatic trilogy *Sigurd Slembe* (1862; trans. 1888) and the plays *Marie Stuart Skotland* (1864; trans. 1912), *The Bankrupt* (1875; trans. 1914), and the two-part *Beyond Our Power* (1883-95; trans. 1893, 1914); the novel *The Fisher Girl* (1868; trans. 1871); and the cycle of epic poems *Arnljot Gelline* (1870; trans. 1917). In 1903 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature.

Bjørnson was also a leader in the political struggle that led to the establishment of Norway as an independent country in 1905.
Henrik Ibsen

Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906), Norwegian dramatist, whose well-constructed plays dealing realistically with psychological and social problems won him recognition as the father of modern drama.

Ibsen was born on March 20, 1828, and schooled in Skien. He briefly assisted an apothecary and began medical studies before beginning a lifetime association with the theater. He was stage manager-playwright at the National Theater at Bergen from 1851 to 1857 and later director of the theater at Christiania (now Oslo) from 1857 to 1862. During these years of practical theater work he wrote his first plays. From 1863 to 1891 Ibsen lived chiefly in Italy and Germany. He subsisted first on a traveling scholarship and later on an annual pension, granted by the Storting, the Norwegian parliament. In 1891 he returned to Christiania; he died there May 23, 1906.

Ibsen's early work included two verse dramas. The first, *Brand* (1866; first produced in 1885), dramatized the tragedy of blind devotion to a false sense of duty; the second, *Peer Gynt* (1867), related, in allegorical terms, the adventures of a charming opportunist. With *Pillars of Society* (1877), the story of an unscrupulous businessman, Ibsen began the series of plays that brought him worldwide fame. *A Doll's House* (1879), *Ghosts* (1881), and *Hedda Gabler* (1890) have probably been the most frequently performed of his plays. The first tells of a loveless marriage and an overprotected wife; the second deals with hereditary insanity and the conflict of generations; the third portrays the relationships of a strong-willed woman with those around her. Among the other plays written by Ibsen are *An Enemy of the People* (1882),
The Wild Duck (1884), Rosmersholm (1886), The Lady from the Sea (1888), The Master Builder (1892), and When We Dead Awaken (1900).
João Baptista da Silva Leitão Almeida Garrett (1799-1854), Portuguese poet, dramatist, and statesman, the founder of the romantic movement in Portuguese literature, born in Porto (Oporto). As a political exile in England and France between 1823 and 1832, he came under the influence of the Scottish novelist and poet Sir Walter Scott and the French romanticists. This influence is reflected in his epics *Camões* (1825), the theme of which is the poet's longing for home, and *Dona Branca* (1826), a long satire on monastic life. In 1832 Almeida Garrett returned to Portugal and became active in political life. In 1833 he was made minister of the interior, and he subsequently became a member of the legislature. He interested himself especially in the founding of a national theater and a conservatory of dramatic art and wrote several plays on national characters, one of the greatest of which is *Brother Luis de Sousa* (1844; trans. 1909). *Viagens na minha terra* (Journeys in My Native Land, 1846) is a freewheeling commentary on his own life and age. One of his most important contributions to literature is his *Romanceiro* (1851-53), a collection of early Portuguese ballads and romances. His last work, published in 1853, was a collection of sensual, melancholy love poems, *Fólihas caídas* (Fallen Leaves).
Gil Vicente (1470?-1536?), Portuguese dramatist, who is considered the founder of Portuguese drama. It is assumed that he was born in Lisbon and became court dramatist to the Portuguese kings John II, Manuel, and John III. Vicente wrote 44 plays. Of these, 11 were written in Spanish, 15 in Portuguese, and 18 in a combination of both languages. They include religious plays, comedies, tragicomedies, and farces, all of which present a wide range of Portuguese life. Some show the critical satirical spirit inspired by Renaissance humanism and were therefore banned by the authorities of the Inquisition. Three short morality plays, *The Ship of Hell* (1516; trans. 1929), *Auto da barca do purgatorio* (The Ship of Purgatory, 1518), and *Auto da barca do gloria* (The Ship of Glory, 1519), are considered his best works.
Lucius Livius Andronicus (284?-204 BC), Roman dramatist and epic poet, who gave Romans their first chance to read Greek classics in their own language. He was probably born in the Greek colony of Tarentum (now Taranto, Italy), taken as a captive to Rome, and later freed. He is regarded as the father of Roman dramatic and epic poetry. His translations of Greek drama were first presented in Rome in 240 BC. He also translated Homer's *Odyssey* into Latin verse.
Plautus

Plautus, full name Titus Maccius Plautus (254?-184 BC), Roman comic dramatist, who enjoyed immense popularity among the Romans and greatly influenced post-Renaissance European dramatic literature.

Plautus was born in Sarsina, Umbria. According to legend he went to Rome as a youth, made money doing backstage work, lost it in business, and began to write comedies while employed in a mill. More than 100 comedies were ascribed to him, but of these only 20 and the very fragmentary *Vidularia* have been preserved; almost all were composed in the last 20 years of his life. The extant comedies of Plautus are all plays with costumes, characters, plots, and settings modeled upon original comedies written by Menander, Philemon, Diphilus, and other playwrights of the Greek New Comedy. Plautus added numerous local allusions, introduced the elements of song and dance, and, with his broad sense of humor and his mastery of colloquial Latin, produced farces that, although less polished, were often more amusing than the plays of the Greek New Comedy. The plots were usually based upon love affairs, with complications arising from deception or mistaken identity, and the characters were the standard types inherited from Greek comedies, such as parasites and braggart warriors. The comedies of Plautus, however, display variety and inventiveness in the treatment of both theme and character, and range from mythological parody (Amphitruo) to romance (Rudens), and from burlesque (Casina) and farce (Menaechmi) to refined comedy (Captivi and Trinummus).
Seneca

Seneca (4? BC-AD 65), Roman philosopher, dramatist, and statesman, who was one of the most eminent writers of the Silver Age of Latin literature. He was born Lucius Annaeus Seneca in Córdoba, Spain, the son of the Roman rhetorician Marcus (Lucius) Annaeus Seneca known as Seneca the Elder. Receiving thorough training in rhetoric and philosophy in Rome, Seneca the Younger, as he was known, was deeply influenced by the teachings of the Stoics, whose doctrines he later developed. In AD 49 Seneca was made a praetor and appointed tutor to Nero, the adopted son of the Emperor Claudius. Upon the death of Claudius in 54, Nero became emperor. Much of the decency and moderation of the first five years of his rule was the result of the sane guidance of Seneca and Sextus Afranius Burrus (died AD 62), Roman commander of the Praetorian Guard. By 62, however, Seneca had lost all control over the emperor. The great wealth that Seneca had amassed aroused the jealousy of Nero, who attempted unsuccessfully to have him poisoned. Seneca, by this time in retirement, devoted himself to philosophical study and writing. In 65, however, he was implicated in a conspiracy to kill Nero, led by the plebeian Gaius Calpurnius Piso (died AD 65), and he committed suicide by imperial order.
Terence

Terence (190?-159 BC), Roman playwright, whose plays were forerunners of the modern comedy of manners. Terence was born in Carthage and taken to Rome as the slave of senator Publius Terentius Lucanus, who educated him and later freed him. After gaining his freedom, he assumed the name Publius Terentius Afer, after his patron. His first play was the Andria, produced in 166 BC. With its immediate success, Terence, who had an engaging personality, soon became a favorite in Roman literary circles. He is said to have been an intimate friend of Roman general Scipio Africanus the Younger, who associated with statesmen and men of letters concerned with improving the Latin language. Terence's six comedies, produced between 166 and 160 BC, are all based upon original Greek dramas. Of these, The Woman of Andros, The Self-Tormentor, The Eunuch, and The Brothers are based on comedies by Greek playwright Menander, and Phormio and The Mother-in-Law are modeled on originals by Greek playwright Apollodorus of Carystus. In 160 BC Terence traveled to Greece to search for additional plays by Menander, and he died the following year while on his homeward journey.

Terence's plays are light, witty dramas satirizing life among the wealthy and sophisticated classes of society. Unlike the comedies of his predecessor Plautus, the satires of Terence contain little song and dance. They also lack the broad farce of Plautus's works, and their humor—rather than being derived from puns and wordplay, exaggerated characterization, and laughable situations—arises out of subtle handling of both plot and character. Terence employed trickery less often in his works than did Plautus, and he placed a greater emphasis on mistaken identity and recognition. With the exception of the Hecyra, all Terence's plays have double plots, with two love affairs being interwoven and the happy solution of one usually dependent upon the outcome of the other. The works of Terence had a great influence on the comedy of the Renaissance (14th century to 17th century), on 17th-century French dramatist Molière, and through Molière on English playwrights of the 17th and 18th centuries.
Friedrich Dürrenmatt

Friedrich Dürrenmatt (1921-1990), Swiss author of essays, avant-garde plays, and existentialist detective novels. He was born in Konolfingen, the son of a clergyman, and educated at the universities of Zürich and Bern. His playwriting was influenced by German dramatist Bertolt Brecht. Dürrenmatt's early plays, such as *Es steht geschrieben* (It Is Written, 1947), dealing with the Anabaptists in 16th-century Münster, and *Romulus der Grosse* (1947; *Romulus the Great*, 1964), about the fall of Rome, distort historical facts in comic, ironic, and sometimes grotesque ways. In *Romulus der Grosse*, for example, Emperor Romulus is portrayed as a man who cares more about poultry farming than about ruling the Roman empire. Dürrenmatt's best-known plays, *Der Besuch der alten Dame* (1956; *The Visit*, 1958) and *Die Physiker* (1962; *The Physicists*, 1963), deal with justice, guilt, and revenge and the helplessness and corruptibility of the individual in mass society, especially when confronted with the forces of finance and technology. *Der Besuch der alten Dame* was made into an opera in 1971 by Austrian composer Gottfried von Einem. Dürrenmatt's later dramas include *Porträt eines Planeten* (1970; *Portrait of a Planet*, 1973) and *Achterloo* (1983), a comedy. His popular detective fiction includes *Der Richter und sein Henker* (1952; *The Judge and His Hangman*, 1955), *Der Verdacht* (1953; *The Quarry*, 1962), and *Das Versprechen* (1958; *The Pledge*, 1959).
Max Rudolf Frisch

Max Rudolf Frisch (1911-1991), Swiss playwright and novelist, one of the most prominent contemporary German-language writers. Born May 15, 1911, in Zürich, Frisch studied at the University of Zürich and then worked as a journalist and an architect.


Frisch died in Zürich, April 4, 1991.
Carl Jonas Love Almqvist

Carl Jonas Love Almqvist (1793-1866), Swedish writer, born in Stockholm, and educated at the University of Uppsala. His novels, short stories, poems, and verse dramas were collected in *Törnrosens Bok* (The Book of the Thorn Rose, 14 volumes, 1832-51). Almqvist's work marks the transition from romanticism to realism in Swedish literature. His most important single work is *Sara Videbeck* (1839; trans. 1919), a realistic story dealing with love and marriage. In 1851 Almqvist was charged with forgery and murder. He fled first to the United States and later to Bremen, Germany, where he lived under the name of Professor Westermann.
Pär Fabian Lagerkvist

Pär Fabian Lagerkvist (1891-1974), Swedish writer and Nobel laureate; regarded as a highly creative writer, he was concerned with political and social issues and, above all, with the problem of good and evil in humans. Lagerkvist was born in Växjö and educated at the University of Uppsala. His first works, including some poetry, were published in 1912. The following year he went to Paris, where he was influenced by expressionism in modern art. In 1917 he wrote his first play and two years later became the theater critic for a Stockholm newspaper. He had profound influence on modern Swedish poetry; in 1940 he was elected to the Swedish Academy. He received the 1951 Nobel Prize in literature.

In spite of Lagerkvist's productivity, little of his writing has been published in English. This is especially true of his plays and poetry. Two dramatic works, with the dates of their publication in English, are *The Man Without a Soul* (1944) and *Let Man Live* (1951). Among his novels are *The Dwarf* (1945) and *Barabbas* (1951); *Barabbas* was translated into ten languages and adapted as a motion picture in 1962. Three of his stories, originally written in 1934 and 1936, appeared in English in *The Eternal Smile* (1971).
August Strindberg

August Strindberg (1849-1912), Swedish dramatist, who is often considered the greatest figure in Swedish literature.

Strindberg was born in Stockholm on January 22, 1849, the son of an impoverished gentleman and a servant. After five years of intermittent attendance at the University of Uppsala, Strindberg was variously employed in Stockholm as schoolteacher, tutor, actor, newspaperman, and librarian. His literary output is usually separated by critics into two categories, the naturalistic and the expressionistic, just as his life was divided by an unproductive so-called Inferno period (1894-1896) during which the author lived in Paris, suffered mental illness, and experienced the end of two of his three unhappy marriages.

Strindberg's early works, mostly novels and plays, are strongly naturalistic, written in revolt against the prevailing romanticism of Swedish literature. Although plays by Strindberg were produced in the early 1870s, it was not until the publication of the novel *Röda rummet* (1879; *The Red Room*, translated 1913) that he achieved fame. The work trenchantly satirizes the institutions and conditions of Sweden in the late 1870s. The most important plays of Strindberg's early naturalistic period are *Fadren* (1887; *The Father*, 1907), a domestic tragedy detailing one of Strindberg's favorite themes, the inherent cruelty of the marriage relationship; *Fröken Julie* (1888; *Miss Julie*, 1913), a poignant study of the ill-fated sexual encounter between an ambitious footman and a neurotic count's daughter; and *Den Starkare* (1889; *The Stronger*, 1912), a one-act play about two women, one of whom silently listens to the other's compulsive confession. *Miss Julie* was made into a successful motion picture (1951) by the Swedish director Alf Sjöberg, an opera (1965) by the American composer Ned Rorem, and a ballet (1950) by the Swedish choreographer Birgit Cullberg.
Jacinto Benavente y Martínez

Jacinto Benavente y Martínez (1866-1954), Spanish playwright, critic and Nobel laureate, born in Madrid, and educated at the University of Madrid. He attracted attention with a critical work, *Cartas de mujeres* (The Letters of Women, 1893), and a comedy, *El nido ajeno* (Other Birds' Nests, 1894). Social climbers, the wealthy, and feudal institutions are among the subjects he attacked in his plays. In 1922 he was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature; subsequently he toured Latin America and the United States with a company performing his works. In addition to plays for children, he wrote many comedies and tragedies, including *The Bonds of Interest* (1907; trans. 1917) and *The Passion Flower* (1913; trans. 1917).
Pedro Calderón de la Barca y Henao (1600-81), Spanish dramatist and poet, the last prominent figure of the golden age of Spanish literature.

Calderón was born in Madrid, on January 7, 1600, and educated at the Jesuit college in Madrid and at the University of Salamanca. At the age of 23 he became a playwright and competed successfully in a poetry contest held in honor of St. Isidore, the patron saint of Madrid. His reputation as a playwright grew rapidly, and upon the death of the Spanish dramatist Lope de Vega in 1635, Calderón was recognized as the foremost dramatist of the period. In 1636 his brother José edited a volume of his plays that contained *Life Is a Dream* (1635; trans. 1925), generally regarded as his masterpiece and as one of the greatest of European dramas. The drama is outstanding for its high moral concepts and philosophic symbolism. The thesis expressed by the title is convincingly unfolded in religious terms.

In 1636 King Philip IV, who had commissioned Calderón to write a series of plays for the royal theater, made him a knight of the Order of Santiago. He joined (1640) in a military campaign to suppress the Catalan revolt against the Crown. During the following decade of his life, it is known only that he was ordained in 1651.

Calderón took up residence as a prebendary of Toledo Cathedral in 1653 and was appointed honorary chaplain to the king in 1666. Subsequently, he devoted himself chiefly to writing *autos sacramentales*, allegorical plays that emphasized the moral aspects of life and dramatized in an original way the mystery of the Holy Eucharist. He died in Madrid on May 25, 1681.
Guillén de Castro y Bellvíís

Guillén de Castro y Bellvíís (1569-1631), Spanish dramatist, born in Valencia of a distinguished family. He enjoyed the friendship of many celebrated and powerful personages and was a captain in the military forces of Valencia. Like his friend the renowned Spanish dramatist Lope de Vega, Castro was a well-known playwright of the Golden Age of Spanish literature. Castro's most celebrated play is *The Youthful Deeds of the Cid* (1618; trans. 1969), from which French dramatist Pierre Corneille derived his masterpiece *Le Cid*. Most of the approximately 50 dramas written by Castro deal with the legendary deeds of El Cid.
Juan de la Cueva de Garoza (1550?-1610), Spanish dramatist and poet, born in Seville (Seville). He is best remembered for *The Poetic Exemplar* (1606), an exposition in rhyme of his theories on the art of composing dramas, and for the comedy *The Scoundrel* (1581). These theories exercised a profound influence on Spanish drama, notably on the work of Lope de Vega. Cueva was the innovator, in Spain, of the historical drama, of new metrical forms, and of stage adaptations of romantic ballads.
José Echegaray y Eizaguirre

José Echegaray y Eizaguirre (1832-1916), Spanish playwright and statesman, born in Madrid. He was a professor of mathematics and physics at the Madrid engineering school from 1854 to 1868. From 1868 to 1874 he served in several Spanish cabinets as minister of commerce, education, and finance; he served as finance minister again in 1905. He first began writing plays in 1874 and wrote more than 60 dramas in prose and verse, most of them dealing with romantic melancholy. In 1904 Echegaray shared the Nobel Prize in literature with Frédéric Mistral. Plays by Echegaray include Madman or Saint (1876; trans. 1912), The World and His Wife (1881; U.S. production, 1908), and Mariana (1892).
Juan del Encina

Juan del Encina (1469?-1529?), Spanish dramatist, poet, and composer, known as the father of Spanish drama. He was born near Salamanca and educated at the University of Salamanca. He was a member of the household of the duke of Alba, musical director for Pope Leo X at Rome, and after his ordination as a priest in 1519, prior at León. He wrote 14 plays, 8 of which are églogas (“eclogues”) or pastoral plays that include music and dance. His églogas were the first secular plays written in Spain. He was considered a master of the villancico (a poetic form typically having a three- or four-voice musical setting). Much of his poetry and music is collected in the monumental *Cancionero de palacio* (Palace Songbook, c. 1500) of the Spanish monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella.
Federico García Lorca

Federico García Lorca (1898-1936), Spanish writer, the most popular poet of the Spanish-speaking world and one of the most powerful dramatists in the modern theater. García Lorca was assassinated in August 1936 by Francisco Franco’s Nationalists during the Spanish Civil War.

García Lorca was born on June 5, 1898, in Fuente Vaqueros, the son of a well-to-do Andalucían family. He studied law at the University of Granada and literature at the University of Madrid. During his youth he wrote poetry and developed an interest in music, a field in which he received encouragement from Spanish composer Manuel de Falla. De Falla introduced García Lorca to the cante jondo, or deep song, an ancient type of Andalucian Romani (Gypsy) song. The cante jondo influenced García Lorca’s poetry considerably, and in 1922 he organized the first festival devoted to it.

From 1919 to 1934 García Lorca lived principally in Madrid, where he organized theatrical performances and gave readings of his poems, which were first collected in Libro de poemas (Book of Poems, 1921). The poems in this book show the influence of two leaders of 20th-century Spanish poetry, Rubén Darío and Juan Ramón Jiménez, but even here two of García Lorca’s basic and distinctive characteristics are evident: the musical quality of his verse and its popular inspiration. While he took his inspiration from the themes of popular songs, he gave them a new poetic value both in subject matter and in form.

After the publication of Primer romancero gitano (First Book of Gypsy Ballads, 1928), on Andalucían Romani (Gypsy) themes, García Lorca became renowned among both the intelligentsia and the common people of Spain. In both the Primer romancero gitano and El poema del cante jondo (1931), there is a vision of humankind dominated by the fatal destiny of death and of passion. The poet alludes to objects and scenes common to the daily life of Andalucía, describes the elements of nature, and at the same time transforms all this into a fantastic and unreal world in which the forces of nature take charge of the human tragedy they witness and become active agents in the drama.
Tirso de Molina, pseudonym of Gabriel Téllez (1571?-1648), Spanish dramatist of the Golden Age. He was born in Madrid and educated at the University of Alcalá. He joined the Mercedarian order in 1601 and subsequently became a respected theologian and historian of his order and prior of a monastery in Soria. In part inspired by his friend the Spanish dramatist Lope de Vega, Tirso wrote several hundred plays, 80 of which were published. He imitated in particular Lope's comedia, a blend of tragedy and comedy. Perhaps his best-known work is the comedia The Trickster of Seville and His Guest of Stone (1630; trans. 1959) in which the legendary hero Don Juan appears formally as a literary character for the first time. Other plays include Condenado por desconfiado (Condemned for Being Untrusting); the historical dramas Antona Garcia and La prudencia en la mujer (Prudence in Woman, 1633); and the comedy Don Gil de las calzas verdes (Don Gil of the Green Pants). Tirso's works have wit and natural speech and show excellent psychological understanding of his characters.
Benito Pérez Galdós

Benito Pérez Galdós (1843-1920), Spanish novelist and playwright, who is considered one of the greatest authors of Spain. He was born at Las Palmas in the Canary Islands, and educated at the University of Madrid. He wrote five series of historical novels—46 volumes with the general title *Episodios nacionales* (1873-79 and 1898-1912). They were distinguished for their careful documentation and vivid re-creation of Spanish history. His novels of Spanish society include *Fortunata y Jacinta* (1886-87). The novels *Doña Perfecta* (1876; trans. 1880) and *Marianela* (1878; trans. 1883) and the plays *La loca de la casa* (1893), *Electra* (1900), and *Mariucha* (1903) deal with contemporary social and religious problems. Great interest attended the discovery in 1983 of his previously unknown novel, *Rosalia* (1872).
Juan Ruiz de Alarcón y Mendoza

Juan Ruiz de Alarcón y Mendoza (circa 1581-1639), Spanish dramatist of the Golden Age. He was born in Mexico, studied law in Spain, and in 1626 became a member of the governing body for the Spanish colonies. He wrote about 20 plays; but his main contributions to Spanish literature are the so-called comedies of ethics, plays with a moral purpose. He showed how lying and slander bring disaster to sinners in his best-known plays *Las paredes oyen* (Walls Have Ears) and *La verdad sospechosa* (The Suspicious Truth). The latter play inspired *Le menteur* (The Liar) by the French dramatist Pierre Corneille.
Manuel Tamayo y Baus (1829-98), Spanish dramatist, considered one of the foremost of 19th-century Spain. Tamayo was born in Madrid of a family of distinguished actors. His early life was spent traveling with the theatrical company to which his parents belonged. In 1858 he was elected to the Royal Spanish Academy. The author of more than 50 plays, Tamayo ceased to write in 1870, when he became director of the National Library and permanent secretary of the Spanish Royal Academy. His most famous play is *La locura de amor* (The Madness of Love, 1855), a study of jealousy set in 16th-century Castile. Critics consider Tamayo's masterpiece *A New Drama* (1867; trans. 1915), a prose tragedy set in 16th-century England that effectively uses the device of a play within a play.
Ramon María del Valle-Inclán (1866-1936), Spanish novelist, playwright, and poet, whose satirical works criticized Spanish society of his time. He was born Ramón Valle y Villanueva de Arosa, in the Galicia region of Spain. He studied law at the University of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia but broke off his studies in 1892 to visit Mexico, where he worked as a journalist.

Valle-Inclán was still pursuing journalism when he returned to Galicia in 1893. His first book of short stories, *Femeninas. Seis historias amorosas* (Of Women. Six Amorous Tales), was published in 1895. The following year Valle-Inclán moved to Madrid, Spain, where he focused efforts on his literary career and adopted a trademark Bohemian appearance—distinguished by a flowing purple cape and long beard—to parallel his avant-garde approach to literature. At this time he began writing his *Sonatas*, semi-autobiographical novellas that were published between 1902 and 1905. The *Sonatas* are named after the four seasons and describe the adventures of a Galician Don Juan figure. In 1904, Valle-Inclán published *Flor de santidad* (Flower of Sainthood), a novel about peasants and religious pilgrims in Galicia. *La Guerra Carlista* (The Carlist Wars, 1908-1909) concerns the 19th-century dispute over the succession of Isabella II to the throne of Spain.

Valle-Inclán wrote 23 plays in a variety of styles and genres. In two of his farces, *La cabeza del dragón* (1910; translated as *The Dragon's Head*, 1918) and *La Marquesa Rosalinda* (The Marquise Rosalinda, 1912), Valle-Inclán introduced a literary genre called *esperpento*, characterized by the use of stylized portrayals of physically distorted characters to ridicule Spanish institutions.
Lope de Vega (1562-1635), Spanish playwright and poet, one of the most prolific and gifted writers of the Golden Age of Spanish literature (16th and 17th centuries). Born Lope Felix de Vega Carpio in Madrid, he was educated at the University of Alcalá (now University of Madrid). In 1588, having been banished from Madrid earlier that year on a charge of libel, he served in the Spanish Armada, the fleet of ships that attempted an invasion of England. In 1614, following the death of his second wife, Lope became a priest. He continued, however, his ambitious literary life, eventually amassing great wealth and fame.

Lope is considered the founder of the Spanish national drama. While it has been estimated that he wrote more than 2000 plays, including about 400 *autos sacramentales* (one-act religious dramas), many consider this figure to be too large. The texts of more than 400 of his plays survive. In his dramas Lope combined elements of comedy and tragedy, developing a form called the *comedia*. He wrote expressly to please audiences, and his works, notable for their graceful and witty style, were extremely popular during his lifetime. His works were often filled with intrigue, highly dramatic situations, and plot complications that were resolved only near the end of the play, and they came to be called cloak-and-sword dramas. These dramas, which are frequently concerned with the theme of honor, generally portray the social life of members of the upper and middle classes, who are often motivated by love. Many of his plays reveal his disregard for the classical unities of time, place, and action. Lope also wrote historical dramas, melodramas, and one-act farces.

Lope's plays include *El perro del hortelano* (The Dog in the Manger, 1613?), *La dama boba* (The Foolish Lady, 1613), *Peribañež* (1610?), *El mejor alcalde, el rey* (The Best Magistrate, the King, 1620?-1623?), and *El caballero de Olmedo* (The Knight of Olmedo, 1615?-1626?).
José Zorrilla y Moral

Zorrilla y Moral (1817-1893), Spanish playwright and poet, who was an outstanding figure of the romantic movement. He was born in Valladolid and educated at the universities of Toledo and Valladolid. A prolific writer, he published 40 plays, largely national histories, between 1839 and 1849. He also completed *Cantos del trovador* (Songs of the Troubadour, 3 volumes, 1840-1841), Spanish legends told in verse. In 1850 he moved to France and in 1855 to Mexico. Returning to Spain in 1866, he found that, although his plays had become extremely popular, he could not collect royalties. He was impoverished until he was finally granted a small government pension. In 1889 he was made poet laureate of Spain.

Zorrilla's genius as a poet of this era is best exhibited in his legends and in his epic *Granada* (1852). His most important dramatic works include *Don Juan Tenorio* (1844; trans. 1944), which remains the most popular of all Hispanic plays, and *Traidor, incofeso y mártir* (Traitor, Sinner, and Martyr, 1849). Zorrilla's autobiography, *Recuerdos del tiempo viejo* (Recollections of Times Past), appeared in 1880.
Gil Vicente

Gil Vicente (1470?-1536?), Portuguese dramatist, who is considered the founder of Portuguese drama. It is assumed that he was born in Lisbon and became court dramatist to the Portuguese kings John II, Manuel, and John III. Vicente wrote 44 plays. Of these, 11 were written in Spanish, 15 in Portuguese, and 18 in a combination of both languages. They include religious plays, comedies, tragicomedies, and farces, all of which present a wide range of Portuguese life. Some show the critical satirical spirit inspired by Renaissance humanism and were therefore banned by the authorities of the Inquisition. Three short morality plays, *The Ship of Hell* (1516; trans. 1929), *Auto da barca do purgatorio* (The Ship of Purgatory, 1518), and *Auto da barca do gloria* (The Ship of Glory, 1519), are considered his best works.
João Baptista da Silva Leitão Almeida Garrett

João Baptista da Silva Leitão Almeida Garrett (1799–1854), Portuguese poet, dramatist, and statesman, the founder of the romantic movement in Portuguese literature, born in Porto (Oporto). As a political exile in England and France between 1823 and 1832, he came under the influence of the Scottish novelist and poet Sir Walter Scott and the French romanticists. This influence is reflected in his epics *Camões* (1825), the theme of which is the poet's longing for home, and *Dona Branca* (1826), a long satire on monastic life. In 1832 Almeida Garrett returned to Portugal and became active in political life. In 1833 he was made minister of the interior, and he subsequently became a member of the legislature. He interested himself especially in the founding of a national theater and a conservatory of dramatic art and wrote several plays on national characters, one of the greatest of which is *Brother Luis de Sousa* (1844; trans. 1909). *Viagens na minha terra* (Journeys in My Native Land, 1846) is a freewheeling commentary on his own life and age. One of his most important contributions to literature is his *Romanceiro* (1851-53), a collection of early Portuguese ballads and romances. His last work, published in 1853, was a collection of sensual, melancholy love poems, *Fólhas caídas* (Fallen Leaves).
Leonid Nikolayevich Andreyev (1871-1919), Russian writer, born in Orël, and educated in law at the universities of Moscow and Saint Petersburg. Finding his law practice unremunerative, he became a reporter for a Moscow newspaper. In about 1900, when his early short stories were enthusiastically reviewed by the writer Maksim Gorky, Andreyev's literary career really began. From that time until his death he was one of the most prolific writers in Russia, producing many short stories, sketches, and dramas. English translations of his fiction include *The Red Laugh* (1905), *The Seven Who Were Hanged* (1909), and *The Little Angel and Other Stories* (1916). His plays include *The Life of Man* (1906), *Anathema* (1909), *The Sabine Women* (1912), and *He Who Gets Slapped* (1915).
Mikhail Bulgakov

Mikhail Bulgakov (1891-1940), Russian novelist and playwright, who gained international fame after the posthumous publication of his novel *Master i Margarita* (1966-1967; *The Master and Margarita*, 1967). Born in Kyiv, Ukraine, Bulgakov was educated to be a physician but gave up medicine for writing. His early works are satirical stories, such as *Dvavoliyada* (1925; *Diaboliad*, 1972), and comedies, such as *Zoyinka kvartira* (1926; *Zoe's Apartment*, 1972). The long novel *Belaya Gvardiya* (1925; *The White Guard*, 1971) is set in Kyiv during the Russian Revolution (1917) and was dramatized as *Dni Turbinykh* (1926; *Days of the Turbins*, 1934). *Master i Margarita* was written between 1929 and 1940 but was not published until 1966 to 1967.
Anton Chekhov

Anton Chekhov (1860-1904), Russian writer, who brought both the short story and the drama to new prominence in Russia and eventually in the Western world. Taking a cool, objective stance toward his characters, Chekhov conveys their inner lives and feelings indirectly, by suggestion rather than statement. His plots are usually simple, and the endings of both his stories and his plays tend toward openess rather than finality. Chekhov’s works create the effect of profound experience taking place beneath the surface in the ordinary lives of unexceptional people.

Chekhov wrote his early comic stories for distinctly lowbrow humor magazines, which insisted on stories of about 1000 words and aimed only at amusing their readers. Although many of these writings from the early 1880s have little literary value, Chekhov developed his ability to say a great deal in a few words by working within the constraints imposed by these magazines. At the same time, he began to explore serious themes that figure in his later work, such as human isolation and the difficulty of communication.

The period from 1886 to 1888 was a time of transition during which Chekhov moved toward publishing longer, more serious, and more technically accomplished stories. “Step” (“The Steppe,” 1888), his first work to be published in a major literary magazine, tells of a young boy’s journey across the steppe (vast, grassy plain) of southern Russia. Chekhov’s so-called clinical studies from the late 1880s and early 1890s, including “Imeniny” (“The Name-Day Party,” 1888), “Pripadok” (“An Attack of Nerves,” 1889), and “Skuchnaia istoriia” (“A Dreary Story,” 1889), are written with the sympathetic yet detached attitude of a doctor and deal with the effects of illness, fatigue, or old age on human behavior. “Duel” (“The Duel,” 1891), one of Chekhov’s so-called problem stories that examined social and philosophical issues, portrays the conflict of sharply different philosophies of life.
Maksim Gorky

Maksim Gorky, also Gor’kiy, pseudonym of Aleksei Maksimovich Peshkov (1868-1936), Soviet novelist, playwright, and essayist, who was a founder of socialist realism. Although known principally as a writer, he was also prominent in the Russian revolutionary movement.

Gorky was born in Nizhniy Novgorod (renamed Gorky in his honor from 1932 to 1991), into a peasant family. He was self-educated. Compelled to earn his own living from the age of nine, Gorky worked for many years at menial jobs and tramped over a great part of European Russia. During this time he shot himself through a lung in an attempted suicide, later developing tuberculosis, which left him in ill health for the rest of his life. His pen name means “the bitter one” in Russian.

Gorky's first short story was published in a Tbilisi newspaper in 1892, and thereafter he wrote stories and sketches frequently for publication in various newspapers. His collected Sketches and Stories (1898) was an instantaneous success and made him famous throughout Russia. He had thrown off his earlier romanticism and wrote realistically although optimistically of the harshness of the life of the lower classes in Russia. He was the first Russian author to write knowledgeably and sympathetically about workers and such people as tramps and thieves, emphasizing their courageous fight against overwhelming odds. “Twenty-Six Men and a Girl” (1899; translated 1902), a tale of sweatshop conditions in a bakery, is considered by many his finest short story.

In 1899 Gorky became associated with the revolutionary activities of the Marxists, and in 1906 he went abroad to raise funds for the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party. In 1907, because of failing health, he settled on the Italian island of Capri. He returned to Russia in 1915.

Gorky supported the Russian Revolution of 1917 and was active in literary organizations in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Compelled by illness to leave the country in 1922, Gorky spent six years in Sorrento, Italy. On his return to the USSR, he was received with official honors. He died in 1936 after suffering from chronic health problems for many years. Many historians believe that Soviet ruler Joseph Stalin may have ordered Gorky killed.

Gorky's novels include Mother (1907; translated 1929), an influential piece of propaganda about the revolutionary spirit of an old peasant, and the tetralogy The Life of Klim Samgin (1927-1936; translated 1930-1938), a series on Russian history from 1880 to 1917. His best-known play is The Lower Depths (1902; translated 1912), which depicts men reduced to the ultimate depths of degradation but retaining positive qualities.

Among Gorky's best works are his autobiographical and literary memoirs. The trilogy consisting of Childhood (1913-1914; translated 1915), In the World (1915-1916; translated 1917), and the ironically titled My University Days (1923; translated as Reminiscences of My Youth, 1952), is considered a major artistic achievement because it lacks the excessive philosophizing of his earlier works and because it contains numerous memorable characterizations.
Ivan Turgenev

Ivan Turgenev (1818-1883), Russian author, considered the foremost stylist in Russian literature; his novels, poems, and plays are characterized by elegant craftsmanship, lucidity, and a liberal, balanced point of view.

Ivan Sergeyevich Turgenev was born November 9, 1818, in Orël in central Russia and educated at the universities of Saint Petersburg and Berlin. On his family estates, while still a child, he first witnessed the mistreatment and suffering of the serf class; such abuse, widespread in the Russian economic system, eventually became a recurrent theme in his writings. Before turning to a literary career, Turgenev worked for a short time as a minor civil servant in Saint Petersburg. His first published work, the long poem *Parasha* (1843), was well received by literary critics. Through the next few years the publication of several of his short stories established Turgenev as a significant Russian writer. He became involved in the ideological controversy between two groups of intellectuals known as the Westernizers and the Slavophiles. The Westernizers urged Russians to better their lives by incorporating into them the best aspects of European culture. The Slavophiles, rigidly Orthodox, championed native Russian customs and believed that they should remain untainted by foreign influences. Turgenev sided with the Westernizers. Later, he spent long periods of time outside Russia, often mainly to be near the celebrated opera singer Pauline Viardot-Garcia, whom he loved. After 1871 he remained in Paris. He died near there, at Bougival, September 3, 1883.

Turgenev wrote plays, stories, novels, and nonfiction sketches. He had published several poems and prose sketches before the appearance of his first book, *A Sportsman's Sketches* (1852), a collection of stories of Russian peasant life. Of the many plays he wrote early in his career, the finest is probably *A Month in the Country* (1850), a gentle but penetrating study of aristocratic life still frequently performed. Of his stories or short novels, *First Love* (1860) and *Torrents of Spring* (1872) are notable as lyric, beautifully realized evocations of love. His longer novels include *On the Eve* (1860) and *Smoke* (1867), both portraits of passionate young girls and their stormy love affairs. In his masterpiece, *Fathers and Sons* (1862), Turgenev names, defines, and analyzes the philosophy of nihilism; Bazarov, the hero of the novel, is an idealistic young radical, a commoner and a university student, dedicated to universal freedom and destined for tragedy in his own life. Turgenev believed in the goals of his hero, but he also believed that they could be achieved only through a long period of gradual change rather than by revolution. Turgenev's complete works have been translated into English.
William Archer

William Archer (1856-1924), Scottish playwright and drama critic, born in Perth. Archer went to school in Edinburgh and spent much of his boyhood in Norway. He helped to bring contemporary achievements in Continental drama to the British theater. His translation of *The Pillars of Society*, by the Norwegian dramatist Henrik Johan Ibsen, was produced in London in 1880, the first of Ibsen's dramas to be staged in England. Subsequently Archer translated and edited Ibsen's *Prose Dramas* (5 volumes, 1890-1891). Archer also wrote several plays, notably *The Green Goddess* (1923).
James Bridie

James Bridie (1888–1951), pen name of Osborne Henry Mavor, Scottish dramatist and professor of medicine. He was a founder of the Glasgow Citizens' Theatre, and his plays include the comedies *Tobias and the Angel* and *The Anatomist* (both 1930). Bridie was born in Glasgow, Scotland, studied there, practiced medicine there until 1938, and was for a time professor of medicine at Anderson College.

Bridie’s plays show a richness of imagination and outstanding theatrical technique, although the problems set out in the first acts are not always satisfactorily resolved. Other plays by Bridie include *A Sleeping Clergyman* (1933), *Susannah and the Elders* (1937), *Mr. Bolfry* (1943), *Dr. Angelus* (1947), *The Queen's Comedy* (1950), and *The Baikie Charivari* (1951).