

# 3

## **THE RESTORATION**

*(1660-1714)*

## **THE AUGUSTAN AGE**

*(1714-60)*

**Extra Material**

## William Congreve (1670-1729)



William Congreve was born in Yorkshire but educated in Ireland, where, both at school and Trinity College, Dublin, he studied alongside Johnathan Swift. He later moved to London to study law and literature and soon began to write plays which had an immediate success. He is best remembered as the dramatist who shaped the English comedy of manners through his brilliant comic dialogue, his satirical portrayal of the war of the sexes, and his ironic scrutiny of the affectations of his age.

### Main works

- *The Old Bachelor* (1693)
- *The Double-Dealer* (1694)
- *Love for Love* (1695)
- *The Way of the World* (1700)

### *The Way of the World*: the plot

Mirabell (male) and Millamant (female) would like to get married, but Millamant needs her aunt's consent to do so otherwise she will lose her fortune. Her aunt is Lady Wishfort, whom Mirabell has also courted as a way of getting close to Millamant. Mrs Marwood, having been offended by Mirabell in the past, tells Lady Wishfort what Mirabell is up to and as a result Lady Wishfort instantly denies her niece permission to marry him. However, Mrs Marwood herself is involved in a plot to try and get at the inheritance and blackmails Lady Wishfort. It is Mirabell who saves Lady Wishfort by exposing Mrs Marwood and in doing so gains permission to marry her niece. Finally Mirabell and Millamant are free to marry. But Millamant, before accepting, prepares a wedding contract whereby she lays down all her conditions.

### Stylistic features

Restoration drama, or comedy of manners, aimed at giving a satirical yet realistic view of upper-class society of the time and often mocked the rigid rules of Puritanism. The characters in the plays are often caricatures, their names revealing their personalities. In *The Way of the World*, for example, 'Millamant', means one who has a thousand lovers, and 'Mirabell' means one who appreciates beautiful things. The dialogues are full of witticisms and repartee and the plots are often complex and focused on gossip, fashion and sex, all being explicitly immoral. The complexities and complications used by Congreve were deliberate, for he wanted to give his Restoration audience a play that coincided artistically with the artificialities and complexities in the ways of his period. The chief aim of the dramatist was to demonstrate 'the way of the world'.

### The end of an era

It was at the time of *The Way of the World*, however, that the public, influenced by the critics of the period, began to demand higher moral standards in the theatre. It was

because of this that *The Way of the World* marked the beginning of Congreve's end as a playwright, at the age of only 30, and a decline in this type of play. Although he continued to shine as a literary figure of his age, having won the praise of John Dryden and Alexander Pope, he gradually moved away from the public eye and continued his working life with minor posts in government offices. *The Way of the World* has since been fully appreciated during the many revivals of this theatrical genre, at the end of the 18th century and with the 19th-century comedies of Oscar Wilde, whose most famous was *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

## The Way of the World (1700)



### BEFORE READING

In the following extract from the play *Mrs Marwood is walking in St James's Park with Mrs Fainfall (Lady Wishfort's daughter)*. Read the extract and answer the question below.

mrs marwood. ...'tis an unhappy circumstance of life that love should ever die before us; and that the man so often should outlive the lover. But say what you will, 'tis better to be left than never to have been loved.

1. What does Mrs Marwood mean when she says that 'the man so often should outlive the lover'?
2. How do you think Mrs Marwood would describe love? Choose from the following.
  - precious but ephemeral
  - waste of time
  - everlasting
3. Do you agree that 'tis better to be left than never to have been loved'?

### The Way of the World

*Millamant is with Mirabell discussing the possibilities of marrying him.*

MILLIAMANT. Ah, I'll never marry, unless I am first made sure of my will<sup>1</sup> and pleasure.

MIRABELL. Would you have 'em<sup>2</sup> both before marriage? Or will you be contented with the first now and stay for the other till after grace<sup>3</sup>?

MILLIAMANT. Ah, don't be impertinent. - My dear liberty, shall I leave thee<sup>4</sup>? My faithful solitude, my darling contemplation, must I bid<sup>5</sup> you then adieu? Ay-h, adieu - my morning thoughts, agreeable wakings, indolent slumbers<sup>6</sup>, all ye douceurs, ye sommeils du matin<sup>7</sup>, adieu. - I can't do't, 'tis more than impossible. Positively, Mirabell, I'll lie a bed in a morning as long as I please.

MIRABELL. Then I'll get up in a morning as early as I please.

MILLIAMANT. Ah! Idle<sup>8</sup> creature, get up when you will<sup>9</sup>. - And d'ye hear, I won't be called names after I'm married; positively I won't be called names.

1. **will**: volontà/ desiderii.
2. **'em**: abbreviazione di 'them'.
3. **grace**: cerimonia di nozze.
4. **thee**: [you].
5. **bid**: dire.
6. **slumbers**: dormite.
7. **douceurs, ye sommeils du matin**: dolci dormite mattutine.
8. **idle**: pigro.
9. **when you will**: quando vuoi.

10. **spouse:** moglie.
11. **cant:** cantilena.
12. **folks:** gente.
13. **well bred:** ben educati.
14. **hitherto:** finora.
15. **trifles:** sciocchezze.
16. **wry:** smorfie.
17. **wits:** intellettuali.
18. **closet inviolate:** non entrare nelle mie stanze private.
19. **presume:** osare.
20. **subscribed:** concordate.
21. **dwindle:** diventare progressivamente.

MIRABELL. Names?

MILLIAMANT. Ay, as wife, spouse<sup>10</sup>, my dear, joy, jewel, love, sweet heart, and the rest of that nauseous cant<sup>11</sup> in which men and their wives are so fulsomely familiar - I shall never bear that. - Good Mirabell, don't let us be familiar or fond, nor kiss before folks<sup>12</sup>, like my Lady Fadler and Sir Francis; nor go to Hyde Park together the first Sunday in a new chariot to provoke eyes and whispers, and then never be seen there together again, as if we were proud of one another the first week and ashamed of one another ever after. Let us never visit together nor go to a play together, but let us be very strange and well bred<sup>13</sup>. Let us be as strange as if we had been married a great while, and as well bred as if we were not married at all.

MIRABELL. Have you any more conditions to offer? Hitherto<sup>14</sup> your demands are pretty reasonable.

MILLIAMANT. Trifles<sup>15</sup>, - as liberty to pay and receive visits to and from whom I please; to write and receive letters, without interrogatories or wry<sup>16</sup> faces on your part. To wear what I please, and choose conversation with regard only to my own taste; to have no obligation upon me to converse with wits<sup>17</sup> that I don't like, because they are your acquaintance; or to be intimate with fools because they may be your relations. Come to dinner when I please, dine in my dressing-room when I'm out of humour, without giving a reason. To have my closet inviolate<sup>18</sup>; to be sole empress of my tea-table, which you must never presume<sup>19</sup> to approach without first asking leave. And lastly, wherever I am, you shall always knock at the door before you come in. These articles subscribed<sup>20</sup>, if I continue to endure you a little longer, I may by degrees dwindle<sup>21</sup> into a wife.



#### OVER TO YOU

- 1 In lines 1-10 what is Millamant afraid of losing if she gets married?
- 2 Make a list of the things she does not want to do with Mirabell as outlined in lines 13-29.
- 3 How does she want to behave with Mirabell (ll. 29-30)?
- 4 Match the verbs in list A to their partners in list B expressing Millamant's conditions (from lines 33).
 

A	B
1. to pay and receive visits	<input type="checkbox"/> anything I like
2. to write and receive letters	<input type="checkbox"/> whoever I want to talk to
3. to wear	<input type="checkbox"/> from anyone I like
4. to choose	<input type="checkbox"/> without being questioned about it
5. to have no obligation	<input type="checkbox"/> before you enter my private rooms
6. to dine	<input type="checkbox"/> when I like and in my own rooms if I like
7. to knock at the door	<input type="checkbox"/> to speak to your boring relatives
- 5 What do you think of Mirabell's reactions to Millamant's requests (ll. 31-32)?
- 6 How would you define Millamant? (You may choose more than one answer.)
 

<input type="checkbox"/> sensitive	<input type="checkbox"/> omantic
<input type="checkbox"/> pragmatic	<input type="checkbox"/> liberated

- 7 How do you personally view Millamant's attitude to marriage and Mirabell's reaction? Do you think their relationship will last? Discuss in class.
- 8 The Way of the World was written in 1700. Bearing this in mind does anything surprise you about Millamant's attitude towards marriage?
- 9 In this age of ever-increasing divorce rates marriage contracts, or pre-nuptial agreements, are becoming more popular, especially among celebrities. For example, Catherine Zeta-Jones insisted on such an agreement before marrying Michael Douglas in 2000. The agreement stated that Catherine would get so many millions (the exact figure was never revealed) if they separated. On the other hand, Heather Mills was probably very angry with herself for not having arranged a pre-nuptial agreement when she married ex-Beatle Paul McCartney. When they split up in 2006, after four years of marriage, she had to accept 'only' £24.3 million pounds instead of the £125 million she had asked for at the beginning of their divorce proceedings.
1. Do you think these agreements take the romance out of marriage?
  2. Why marry in the first place?
  3. Do you think you would like a pre-nuptial agreement? Why? Why not?
  4. Think of the title of Congreve's work, *The Way of the World*. What conclusions can we come to about the year in which it was written and today?

#### REVIEW

1 Choose the best option.

1. The main theme of *The Way of the World* is marriage / class.
2. Millamant's idea of love is romantic / based on common sense.
3. Mirabell is a dominating / agreeable character.

2 Answer the following questions.

1. What were the characteristics of Restoration drama?
2. Why were these plays becoming unpopular by the end of the 1700s?
3. What effect did this have on William Congreve?

# Daniel Defoe

## *Robinson Crusoe* (1719)



### *Robinson Crusoe*



*The story so far. Robinson has saved Friday and now he is living with him.*

1. **joyned the rock:** si congiungeva con la roccia.
2. **earthen pots:** vasi di terra.
3. **bushels:** misure per il grano (36, 37 litri).
4. **ear:** spiga.
5. **straw:** paglia.
6. **rubbed out:** estratto (il chicco di grano dalla spiga).
7. **sullenness:** scontrosità, cupezza.
8. **perfectly obliged:** completamente sottomesso.
9. **ty'd:** tied.
10. **on his account:** sul suo conto.
11. **handy:** abile.
12. **spake:** spoke.
13. **the aptest scholar:** il migliore scolaro.
14. **cou'd:** could.

You are to understand that now I had, as I may call it, two plantations in the island - one my little fortification or tent, with the wall about it, under the rock, with the cave behind me, which by this time I had enlarged into several apartments or caves, one within another. One of these, which was the driest and largest, and had a door out beyond my wall or fortification - that is to say, beyond where my wall joyned to the rock<sup>1</sup> - was all filled up with the large earthen pots<sup>2</sup> of which I have given an account, and with fourteen or fifteen great baskets, which would hold five or six bushels<sup>3</sup> each, where I laid up my stores of provisions, especially my corn, some in the ear<sup>4</sup>, cut off short from the straw<sup>5</sup>, and the other rubbed out<sup>6</sup> with my hand.

Never man had a more faithful, loving, sincere servant, than Friday was to me; without passion, sullenness<sup>7</sup>, or designs, perfectly obliged<sup>8</sup> and engaged; his very affections were ty'd<sup>9</sup> to me, like those of a child to a father; and I dare say he would have sacrificed his life for saving mine upon any occasion whatsoever; the many testimonies he gave me of this, put it out of doubt, and soon convinced me that I needed to use no precautions as to my safety on his account<sup>10</sup>. But to return to my new companion; I was greatly delighted with him, and made business to teach him every thing that was proper to make him useful, handy<sup>11</sup>, and helpful; but especially to make him speak, and understand when I spake<sup>12</sup>, and he was the aptest scholar<sup>13</sup> that ever was, and particularly so merry, so constantly diligent, and so pleased, when he cou'd<sup>14</sup> but understand me, or make me understand him, that it was very pleasant to me to talk to him; and now my life began to be so easy, that I began to say to my self, that could I but have been safe from more savages, I cared not if I was never to remove from the place while I lived.



## OVER TO YOU

- 1** The passage is divided into three paragraphs. Write the topic contained in each paragraph. Choose from the list below.
1. ....
  2. ....
  3. ....
- a. description of the place where he lives
  - b. recollection of past memories
  - c. description of Friday's abilities
  - d. description of the island
  - e. description of his relationship with Friday
- 2** In the second long paragraph Robinson speaks about Friday. How is he described?
- 3** In the second paragraph underline the words that Robinson uses to describe Friday.
- 4** The words Robinson uses emphasize one main aspect of Friday's personality. Which one? (Choose.)
- his dignity and worth
  - his intelligence
  - his devotion to Robinson
  - his sensitivity
- 5** Focus on the third paragraph in which Robinson is still speaking about Friday. What makes him particularly happy about his 'servant'?
- 6** In which paragraph can you notice Defoe's concern for realism, i.e. an accurate and detailed description of reality?
- 7** Robinson Crusoe is an ordinary middle-class man. On the island he attempts to recreate the society he left behind with its values and rules. This is shown also in his relationship with Friday. How?

# Daniel Defoe

## *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722)

This novel is a chronological account of what happened in 1665 when the Great Plague - reaching England from Holland - struck the city of London.

Although Defoe was only six or seven years old when the plague struck London, his journalistic writing skills enable him to recreate the scenes as though he were writing from first hand experience.

With a visually detailed language and a journalistic style Defoe recreates the terrible atmosphere of the time.

To make his account even more realistic he identifies specific houses, gives precise data and figures and reports specific stories about people and events. His aim was to give an unusual, more life-like feel to a topic which had already been exploited by writers and in this way shock public imagination.

Like all his novels, *A Journal of the Plague Year* is written in the first person, as a kind of memoir; it closes, in fact, with the initials H.F., a signature that may stand for Henry Foe, Defoe's uncle on whose journal he based his narration. But H.F., who gives the reader very little information about himself, his family, his background, is not the real protagonist of this story: the real protagonist is London itself, shown from its many different perspectives as it battles with this terrible epidemic.



### BEFORE READING

- 1 Think of the various epidemics that have stricken Europe from the Middle Ages till Defoe's time (the 18th century). Write the names in Italian and then translate them into English. Which has been the most common and lethal one?

# A Journal of the Plague Year

## TEXT 1 , London and the plague

The face of London was now indeed strangely altered: I mean the whole mass of buildings, city, liberties, suburbs, Westminster, Southwark, and altogether<sup>1</sup>; for as to the particular part called the city, or within the walls, that was not yet much infected. But in the whole the face of things, I say, was much altered; sorrow<sup>2</sup> and sadness sat upon every face; and though some parts were not yet overwhelmed<sup>3</sup>, yet all looked deeply concerned<sup>4</sup>; and, as we saw it apparently coming on, so every one looked on himself and his family as in the utmost<sup>5</sup> danger. (...)

London might well be said to be all in tears; the mourners<sup>6</sup> did not go about the streets indeed, for<sup>7</sup> nobody put on black or made a formal dress of mourning<sup>8</sup> for their nearest friends; but the voice of mourners was truly heard in the streets. The shrieks<sup>9</sup> of women and children at the windows and doors of their houses, where their dearest relations were perhaps dying, or just dead, were so frequent to be heard as we passed the streets, that it was enough to pierce<sup>10</sup> the stoutest<sup>11</sup> heart in the world to hear them. Tears and lamentations were seen almost in every house, especially in the first part of the visitation; for towards the latter end<sup>12</sup> men's hearts were hardened, and death was so always before their eyes, that they did not so much concern themselves for the loss of their friends, expecting that themselves should be summoned<sup>13</sup> the next hour..

1. **altogether**: tutto il resto.
2. **sorrow**: dolore.
3. **overwhelmed**: sopraffatti.
4. **concerned**: preoccupati, afflitti.
5. **utmost**: massimo.
6. **mourners**: i dolenti.
7. **for**: perchè.
8. **mourning**: lutto.
9. **shrieks**: urla.
10. **pierce**: commuovere.
11. **stoutest**: il più duro.
12. **latter end**: la fine.
13. **summoned**: chiamati.



### OVER TO YOU

- 1 The face of London was 'indeed strangely altered', states the writer. What does this change consist in?
- 2 How was the 'mourning' of people expressed?
- 3 Why were 'tears and lamentations no more seen and heard' toward the end of the epidemic?
- 4 What image of London does the writer give in this first description?
- 5 Does he use a realistic, literary or poetic way of describing the scene?
- 6 Does he focus on any single character or person? Why not in your opinion?

# Daniel Defoe

## *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722)

### *A Journal of the Plague Year*

#### TEXT 2 , The pits of death

*In spite of the spreading of the epidemic the narrator goes around London and sees 'terrible things', like the pits.*

- dug (present: dig):** scavare.
- pits:** pozzo, fossa.
- distemper:** epidemia.
- dead-carts:** carri della morte.
- parish:** parrocchia.
- the plague raging in a dreadful manner:** mentre l'epidemia imperversava in modo terribile.
- this dreadful gulf to be dug:** (ordinarono) che fosse scavato questo terribile abisso.
- would have supplied:** sarebbe stato sufficiente.
- some blamed the churchwardens:** alcuni davano la colpa ai custodi della chiesa.
- fill it up:** riempirlo.
- surface:** superficie.
- loose (earth):** la terra smossa.
- wrapt in blankets or rugs:** avvolti in coperte o (coperti di) stracci.
- tongue:** lingua.

I say they had dug<sup>1</sup> several pits<sup>2</sup> in another ground, when the distemper<sup>3</sup> began to spread in our parish, and especially when the dead-carts<sup>4</sup> began to go about, which was not, in our parish<sup>5</sup>, till the beginning of August. Into these pits they had put perhaps fifty or sixty bodies each. [...]. But now, at the beginning of September, the plague raging in a dreadful manner<sup>6</sup>, and the number of burials in our parish increasing to more than was ever buried in any parish about London of no larger extent, they ordered this dreadful gulf to be dug<sup>7</sup> - for such it was, rather than a pit. They had supposed this pit would have supplied<sup>8</sup> them for a month or more when they dug it, and some blamed the churchwardens<sup>9</sup> for suffering such a frightful thing, telling them they were making preparations to bury the whole parish, and the like; but time made it appear the churchwardens knew the condition of the parish better than they did: for, the pit being finished the 4th of September, I think, they began to bury in it the 6th, and by the 20th, which was just two weeks, they had thrown into it 1114 bodies when they were obliged to fill it up<sup>10</sup>, the bodies being then come to lie within six feet of the surface<sup>11</sup>. It was about the 10th of September that my curiosity led, or rather drove, me to go and see this pit again, when there had been near 400 people buried in it; and I was not content to see it in the day-time, as I had done before, for then there would have been nothing to have been seen but the loose<sup>12</sup> earth; for all the bodies that were thrown in were immediately covered with earth by those they called the buriers, which at other times were called bearers; but I resolved to go in the night and see some of them thrown in. There was a strict order to prevent people coming to those pits, and that was only to prevent infection. But after some time that order was more necessary, for people that were infected and near their end, and delirious also, would run to those pits, wrapt in blankets or rugs<sup>13</sup>, and throw themselves in, and, as they said, bury themselves. I cannot say that the officers suffered any willingly to lie there; but I have heard that in a great pit in Finsbury, in the parish of Cripplegate, it lying open then to the fields, for it was not then walled about, [many] came and threw themselves in, and expired there, before they threw any earth upon them; and that when they came to bury others and found them there, they were quite dead, though not cold. This may serve a little to describe the dreadful condition of that day, though it is impossible to say anything that is able to give a true idea of it to those who did not see it, other than this, that it was indeed very, very, very dreadful, and such as no tongue<sup>14</sup> can express.



## OVER TO YOU

### 1 Defoe is very precise when reporting. Write the following information.

1. What is the function of the dead-carts
2. How many 'bodies' were buried in the pits in the second part of the month of August?
3. Why was the 'dreadful gulf' dug?

### 2 Answer true or false.

1. People thought 'the dreadful gulf' was too big.  T  F
2. The churchwardens buried there people still alive.  T  F
3. One night the narrator went to see one of these pits.  T  F
4. He had to do it at night otherwise the churchwardens would have thrown him into the pit, too.  T  F
5. People were forbidden to approach the pit because they could get infected.  T  F

### 3 In the text it is said that the people threw themselves voluntarily into the pits. Why do you think they did this?

### 4 What is the role of the author/narrator? Why can we say that it is similar to the roles of:

1. a writer?
2. a poet?
3. a journalist?

### 5 At the time of the plague Defoe was five, six years old. He was therefore too young to remember what happened. But his narration is in the first person. What effect does the use of the first person have?

### 6 What elements make the description realistic?

## COMPARE AND CONTRAST

### 7 A *Journal of the Plague Year* contains a very effective description of an epidemic. Do you know any other descriptions of epidemics? (Think of a famous Italian writer.)

### 8 In the western world the plague has been eliminated for many centuries but in the 1980s a new disease began to spread. What is this disease? What are the differences and the similarities between this disease and the great plague in Defoe's novel? Discuss in class.

# Jonathan Swift

## *A Modest Proposal* (1729)

### Why A Modest Proposal

*A Modest Proposal* was first published as a pamphlet<sup>1</sup>. Swift, who was Irish and had lived in Ireland till adulthood, knew the situation of Ireland at that time. It was not an independent country and was much poorer than England. The majority of the people born there were Roman Catholic but the ruling class was made up of Protestants, many of whom did not live in Ireland. There was no welfare state at that time and many people were at the mercy of the English landowners, paying high rents for land and living a life of subsistence. A bad harvest would mean that thousands would starve to death.

### What Swift proposes

Swift begins by describing the situation of the poor in Ireland. The detailed information he provides leads to but one conclusion, that a large number of children cannot be fed if the present circumstances prevail. He then begins to unveil his 'proposal': to breed children with the sole purpose of feeding the rest of the population, that is, they will be served as food! He also justifies his well-thought-out plan with a series of explanations.

### A satire

*A Modest Proposal* is one of the best examples of Swift's satire. Here the narrator, following his grotesque logic, recommends that poor children should become food for the rich. He uses dramatic irony to get his message across: what he seems to say is different from what he really thinks and the reader or audience is expected to understand it. He combines his powerful satire with a simple style and direct language to reach the widest possible audience.

### Swift's targets

Swift's targets are not only the English ruling class in Ireland. His criticism also turns to the Irish themselves who did not react to try and change the situation and had rejected many proposals put forward to solve their problems.

In context we must remember that Swift was writing in the age of logic and reason. These were the most highly regarded tenets. But Swift wanted to illustrate that any theory, no matter how rational, cannot prosper on logic alone. One cannot rely solely on reason to solve man's problems nor treat people as numbers rather than human beings. To do this would deprive man of all feelings and compassion. It would be the easiest way of solving problems but the least humane. He ironically fills his essay with calculations and equations to emphasize this point but his overriding message is that decisions cannot be made for human beings without treating them as such.



#### BEFORE READING

*A Modest Proposal* has been defined as the most famous satirical essay in the English language. Which of these words are synonyms for satirical?

- funny
- serious
- ironical
- comic

Do you think that satirical works are still relevant today or that they are out of fashion?

1. pamphlet: opuscolo, trattato.

## A Modest Proposal

*For preventing the children of poor people in Ireland from being a burden to their parents or country, and for making them beneficial to the public*

It is a melancholy object to those who walk through this great town or travel in the country, when they see the streets, the roads, and cabin doors, crowded with beggars<sup>2</sup> of the female sex, followed by three, four, or six children, all in rags<sup>3</sup> and importuning every passenger for an alms<sup>4</sup>. These mothers, instead of being able to work for their honest livelihood, are forced to employ all their time in strolling to beg sustenance<sup>5</sup> for their helpless infants: who as they grow up either turn thieves for want of work, or leave their dear native country to fight for the Pretender in Spain, or sell themselves to the Barbadoes<sup>6</sup>.

I think it is agreed by all parties that this prodigious number of children in the arms, or on the backs, or at the heels<sup>7</sup> of their mothers, and frequently of their fathers, is in the present deplorable state of the kingdom a very great additional grievance<sup>8</sup>; and, therefore, whoever could find out a fair, cheap, and easy method of making these children sound<sup>9</sup>, useful members of the commonwealth, would deserve so well of the public as to have his statue set up for a preserver of the nation. [...]

As to my own part, having turned my thoughts for many years upon this important subject, and maturely weighed<sup>10</sup> the several schemes of other projectors<sup>11</sup>, I have always found them grossly mistaken in the computation<sup>12</sup>. It is true, a child just dropped from its dam<sup>13</sup> may be supported by her milk for a solar year, with little other nourishment<sup>14</sup>; at most not above the value of 2 shillings, which the mother may certainly get, or the value in scraps<sup>15</sup>, by her lawful occupation of begging<sup>16</sup>; and it is exactly at one year old that I propose to provide for them in such a manner as instead of being a charge<sup>17</sup> upon their parents or the parish<sup>18</sup>, or wanting food and raiment<sup>19</sup> for the rest of their lives, they shall on the contrary contribute to the feeding, and partly to the clothing, of many thousands.

There is likewise<sup>20</sup> another great advantage in my scheme, that it will prevent those voluntary abortions, and that horrid practice of women murdering their bastard children, alas<sup>21</sup>! too frequent among us! sacrificing the poor innocent babes I doubt more to avoid the expense than the shame<sup>22</sup>, which would move tears and pity in the most savage and inhuman breast<sup>23</sup>. [...]

I shall now therefore humbly propose my own thoughts, which I hope will not be liable<sup>24</sup> to the least objection.

I have been assured by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London, that a young healthy child well nursed is at a year old a most delicious, nourishing, and wholesome<sup>25</sup> food, whether stewed, roasted, baked<sup>26</sup>, or boiled; and I make no doubt that it will equally serve in fricassee<sup>27</sup> or a ragout.

I do therefore humbly offer it to public consideration that of the hundred and twenty thousand children already computed, twenty thousand may be reserved for breed<sup>28</sup>, whereof only one-fourth part to be males; which is more than we allow to sheep, black cattle or swine<sup>29</sup>; and my reason is, that these children are seldom the fruits of marriage, a circumstance not much regarded by our savages<sup>30</sup>, therefore one male will be sufficient to serve four females. That the remaining hundred thousand may, at a year old, be offered in the sale to the persons of quality and fortune through the kingdom; always advising the mother to let them suck plentifully<sup>31</sup> in the last month, so as to render

1. **a burden:** un peso.
2. **beggars:** mendicanti.
3. **rags:** stracci.
4. **alms:** elemosine.
5. **in strolling to beg sustenance:** a vagabondare per chiedere aiuto.
6. **Barbadoes:** isole verso cui emigravano molti irlandesi.
7. **at the heels:** alle calcagna.
8. **additional grievance:** causa di ulteriore malcontento.
9. **sound:** sani.
10. **weighed:** valutato.
11. **projectors:** lett. progettatori (coloro che fanno progetti di carattere governativo).
12. **grossly mistaken in the computation:** che si sbagliavano grossolanamente nel calcolo.
13. **just dropped from its dam:** appena partorito (caduto dal grembo materno).
14. **nourishment:** nutrimento.
15. **scraps:** avanzi di cibo.
16. **by her lawful occupation of begging:** con la sua occupazione legale di elemosinare.
17. **charge:** peso.
18. **parish:** parrocchia.
19. **raiment:** vestiario.
20. **likewise:** similmente.
21. **alas:** purtroppo.
22. **shame:** vergogna.
23. **breast:** cuore.
24. **liable:** soggetto.
25. **wholesome:** sano.
26. **stewed, roasted, baked:** stufato, arrostito, cotto al forno.
27. **fricassee:** fricassee.
28. **breed:** allevato per procreare.
29. **black cattle or swine:** buoi o maiali.
30. **savages:** selvaggi (si riferisce ai suoi connazionali).
31. **to let them suck plentifully:** permettere che poppino in abbondanza.

32. **plump**: grassoccio.  
 33. **the fore or hind quarter**: il quarto anteriore o posteriore.  
 34. **seasoned**: condito.  
 35. **I have reckoned**: ho calcolato.  
 36. **I grant**: ammetto.  
 37. **cottagers, laborers**: gente che lavora in casa, manovali.  
 38. **would repine**: gli dispiacerebbe.  
 39. **squire**: signore.  
 40. **his tenants**: affittuari.

them plump<sup>32</sup> and fat for a good table. A child will make two dishes at an entertainment for friends; and when the family dines alone, the fore or hind quarter<sup>33</sup> will make a reasonable dish, and seasoned<sup>34</sup> with a little pepper or salt will be very good boiled on the fourth day, especially in winter.

I have reckoned<sup>35</sup> upon a medium that a child just born will weigh 12 pounds, and in a solar year, if tolerably nursed, increaseth to 28 pounds.

I grant<sup>36</sup> this food will be somewhat dear, and therefore very proper for landlords, who, as they have already devoured most of the parents, seem to have the best title to the children.

I have already computed the charge of nursing a beggar's child (in which list I reckon all cottagers, laborers<sup>37</sup>, and four-fifths of the farmers) to be about two shillings per annum, rags included; and I believe no gentleman would repine<sup>38</sup> to give ten shillings for the carcass of a good fat child, which, as I have said, will make four dishes of excellent nutritive meat, when he hath only some particular friend or his own family to dine with him. Thus the squire<sup>39</sup> will learn to be a good landlord, and grow popular among his tenants<sup>40</sup>; the mother will have eight shillings net profit, and be fit for work till she produces another child.



### OVER TO YOU

#### 1 Make a short summary of the passage focusing on:

1. the situation described (the poor people)
2. the proposal in detail (who it regards, what problem it aims to solve)
3. the behaviour of the ruling class
4. Swift's irony

#### 2 Who is the narrator?

#### 3 Choose the correct answer.

1. Swift manages to capture the reader's attention by:
  - exposing positions which are morally indefensible
  - describing a terrible situation
  - urging the reader to intervene
2. The essay presents a series of:
  - realistic and effective details and data
  - invented, unrealistic details and data
3. The aim of the author is:
  - to shock the reader into criticizing this reality
  - to amuse and entertain the reader
  - to inform the reader about the situation

#### 4 Distinguish between surface meaning (what the author says) and the deeper meaning (what he wants the reader to understand).

#### 5 Who is Swift really attacking, in your opinion, in his Modest Proposal?

#### Discussion

#### 6 What do you think Swift's real views are on how to relieve poverty?

#### 7 Could Swift's writing, in your opinion, have any relevance in the modern world?

# Samuel Richardson

## *Pamela* (1740-42)



### *Pamela*

#### TEXT 2

*This extract is taken from the end of the novel.*

'If you are the generous Pamela I imagine you to be, (for hitherto<sup>1</sup> you have been all unmerited goodness to me) let me see, by your compliance<sup>2</sup>, the further excellency of your disposition. Let me see you can forgive the repeated attempts of a man who loves you more than he loves himself. Let me see by it, that you are not prepossessed in any other person's favour. [...] You may assure the good man<sup>3</sup> from me, that all must and shall end happily.

1. **hitherto**: fino a questo momento.
2. **compliance**: accondiscendenza.
3. **good man**: (qui) il padre di Pamela.



#### OVER TO YOU

- 1 Who, in your opinion, has written this letter?
- 2 What does he mean by the last sentence 'all must and shall end happily'?
- 3 One dominant theme of the novel, as the subtitle suggests, is 'virtue rewarded'. In what sense is Pamela's virtue rewarded?
- 4 Pamela's story has been compared to a famous fairy tale, 'Cinderella'. What aspects have the two stories in common, in your opinion?
- 5 Why are stories like these so popular, do you think?

#### WRITER'S CORNER

- 6 Writing letters is generally seen as old-fashioned these days. Now we write to each other with other means: emails and text messages with our computers and mobile phones. In this email you will describe an event that has happened to you. Remember to:
  1. relate an interesting but short event. It doesn't have to be true. It can be completely fictional!
  2. identify the addressee (it can be a friend, relative, etc.)
  3. choose the tone you want to use for your story. (serious, dramatic, ironic, witty, etc.)
  4. choose the style you want to adopt for your story. You can include: dialogues, memories, descriptions.

**Write no more than 200 words.**

**Some help needed? No imagination, no ideas? Here are some suggestions about the content.**

1. A quarrel between you and your girlfriend/boyfriend.
2. You meet someone interesting at a party.
3. An argument with one or both of your parents.
4. Something great that happened to you at school.

**7 Is there any way in which the old form of letter writing is better than the new forms of communication listed previously?**

# Laurence Sterne

## *Tristram Shandy* (1759-67)



### BEFORE READING

**1** Read the paragraph below and chose the correct alternative.

1. The narrator expresses a wish regarding
  - his birth
  - his life
  - his future
2. He underlines the importance of
  - the moment of conception
  - education
  - the role of parents in a child's life
3. Can you describe the narrator's tone?
  - serious
  - humorous and witty
  - light and easy-going

**2** An Italian translation has been given. What makes this passage so difficult in your opinion?

I wish either my father or my mother, or indeed both of them, as they were in duty both equally bound to it, had minded what they were about when they begot me; had they duly considered how much depended upon what they were then doing; - that not only the production of a rational Being was concerned in it, but that possibly the happy formation and temperature of his body, perhaps his genius and the very cast of his mind; - and, for aught they knew to the contrary, even the fortunes of his whole house might take their turn from the humours and dispositions which were then uppermost: - Had they duly weighed and considered all this, and proceeded accordingly, - I am verily persuaded I should have made a quite different figure in the world, from that, in which the reader is likely to see me.

Vorrei che mio padre e mia madre, o meglio, tutti e due, come era loro dovere, avessero pensato a quello che facevano, allorché mi misero al mondo. Diamine! Avrebbero dovuto considerare le conseguenze di certi loro atti! Poiché non si trattava soltanto di produrre un Essere pensante, ma di occuparsi della buona formazione del suo corpo, forse, e fors'anche della sua intelligenza e del suo carattere; e per quanto essi ne sapevano, fino a prova contraria, il destino stesso di tutta la sua famiglia poteva dipendere dalle condizioni di spirito in cui si trovavano nel momento culminante. Se i miei genitori avessero opportunamente valutato e ponderato tutto ciò e avessero agito in conseguenza, io ho la certezza che avrei fatto nel mondo ben altra figura di quella che il lettore mi vedrà fare.

Traduzione di Giuliana Aldi

## Tristram Shandy

### TEXT 3

*Here we learn all about uncle Toby's hobby-horse.*

If I was not morally sure that the reader must be out of all patience for my uncle Toby's character, - I would here previously have convinced him, that there is no instrument so fit to draw such a thing with, as that which I have pitched upon.

A man and his HOBBY-HORSE, though I cannot say that they act and re-act exactly after the same manner in which the soul and body do upon each other: Yet doubtless there is a communication between them of some kind, and my opinion rather is, that there is something in it more of the manner of electrified bodies, - and that, by means of the heated parts of the rider, which come immediately into contact with the back of the HOBBY-HORSE, - By long journeys and much friction, it so happens, that the body of the rider is at length filled as full of HOBBY-HORSICAL matter as it can hold; - so that if you are able to give but a clear description of the nature of the one, you may form a pretty exact notion of the genius and character of the other.

Now the HOBBY-HORSE which my uncle Toby always rode upon, was in my opinion an HOBBY-HORSE well worth giving a description of, if it was only upon the score of his great singularity; - for you might have travelled from York to Dover, - from Dover to Penzance in Cornwall, and from Penzance to York back again, and not have seen such another upon the road; or if you had seen such a one, whatever haste you had been in, you must infallibly have stopped to have taken a view of him. Indeed, the gait and figure of him was so strange, and so utterly unlike was he, from his head to his tail, to any one of the whole species, that it was now and then made a matter of dispute, - whether he was really a HOBBY-HORSE or no: but as the Philosopher would use no other argument to the Sceptic, who disputed with him against the reality of motion, save that of rising up upon his legs, and walking across the room; - so would my uncle Toby use no other argument to prove his HOBBY-HORSE was a HOBBY-HORSE indeed, but by getting upon his back and riding him about; - leaving the world, after that, to determine the point as it thought fit.

In good truth, my uncle Toby mounted him with so much pleasure, and he carried my uncle Toby so well, - that he troubled his head very little with what the world either said or thought about it.

It is now high time, however, that I give you a description of him: - But to go on regularly, I only beg you will give me leave to acquaint you first, how my uncle Toby came by him.

Se non fossi più che certo che il lettore muore dalla voglia di conoscere il carattere di zio Tobia, l'avrei persuaso qui che non esiste mezzo migliore per rappresentarlo di quello cui ho accennato poco fa.

Fra un uomo e il suo HOBBY, quantunque non sappia se essi reagiscono allo stesso modo dell'anima col corpo, esiste un certo qual rapporto; e la mia opinione in proposito è che questo rapporto è simile a quello esistente tra un corpo che elettrizza e un altro che viene elettrizzato. Cioè le parti del cavaliere che sono a diretto contatto col dorso del FANTASTICO DESTRIERO, dopo lunghi e numerosi viaggi, sfregandosi contro di esso, si riscaldano e cominciano a ricevere, anzi si imbevono, della sostanza stessa di cui è fatto il CAVALLO DELLA FANTASIA che diventa, in altre parole, il suo sogno realizzato.

Cossiché, se sei capace di fornire una chiara descrizione della natura dell'uno, puoi benissimo avere una nozione quasi esatta della qualità e del carattere dell'altro.

Ora, il DESTRIERO che zio Tobia aveva sempre montato, è a mio parere ben degno d'una descrizione, non fosse altro che per la sua singolare natura. Infatti, potete forse aver viaggiato da York a Dover, da Dover a Penzance in Cornovaglia e poi indietro da Penzance a York, ma non avrete mai trovato un cavallo uguale al vostro cammino, perché se l'aveste incontrato, anche se lanciati a forte velocità, vi sareste fermati per conoscerlo.

E, in verità, la sua andatura e il suo aspetto erano così strani, così fuori del commune, che veniva sinceramente il dubbio se si trattasse proprio di un CAVALLO; insomma, era o no una fissazione? Ma come quel filosofo, allo scettico che discuteva contro l'esistenza del movimento mise di fronte un unico inconfutabile argomento,

si alzò cioè sulle proprie gambe e si mise a passeggiare su e giù per la stanza, così lo zio Tobia non avrebbe potuto usare, per dimostrare che il suo CAVALLO era veramente un CAVALLO DELLA FANTASIA, altro argomento che quello di montargli in sella e cavalcare tutt'attorno; lasciando poi al mondo di risolvere la questione come riteneva meglio.

A dire il vero, lo zio Tobia lo montava con una tale disinvoltura e il destriero gli si confaceva così bene, che egli non stava certo ad affaticarsi il cervello, fantasticando su quello che il mondo avrebbe potuto dire o pensare di lui.

Crede che sia ormai giunto il solenne momento della descrizione di questa sua innocente mania. Ma per procedere regolarmente, vi prego, permettetemi di informarvi in primo luogo di come lo zio Tobia ne era giunto in possesso.

Traduzione di Giuliana Aldi



## OVER TO YOU

- 1 How would you define the word 'hobby-horse'?
- 2 'A man and his HOBBY-HORSE' (l. 7). The author tries to explain the nature of the relationship between a man and his hobby-horse. What comparison does he make to explain the nature of the relationship? Quote from the text.
- 3 'If you are able to give but a clear description of the nature of the one, you may form a pretty exact notion of the genius and character of the other.' (ll. 21-24) What does this sentence mean?
  - the man and the 'hobby-horse' are the same thing
  - the 'hobby-horse' suggests the nature of the man
  - the man can describe his 'hobby-horse' better than anyone else.
- 4 In the 3rd paragraph ('Now the...') the author speaks about uncle Toby's hobby-horse. How does he define it? Choose from the following.
  - particular
  - banal
  - original
  - interesting
  - fantastic
  - useful
  - useless
- 5 He speaks about the hobby-horse as though he was speaking about a person (or a real animal). Underline the part which tells us this.
- 6 Does uncle Toby care about what people think or say about his hobby-horse?
- 7 Consider the narrator's explanation of the relationship between a man and his hobby-horse. Do you find it eccentric, obvious, easy or difficult to understand?
- 8 What kind of narrator is used here?
  - first person, non intrusive
  - first person, intrusive
  - omniscient narrator, non intrusive
  - omniscient narrator, intrusive
- 9 Find examples of the use of the narrator in this passage. Focus on:
  1. what the narrator says about the reader
  2. the narrator's way of formulating theories
- 10 When the philosophers are quoted, the narrator's tone is
  - serious
  - ironic
  - humorous
  - satirical
  - neutral
  - critical
  - aggressive

Give reasons for your choice.
- 11 What do you think of this kind of text? Did you enjoy reading it? If so, what do you like about it in particular? Have you ever read any other similar kind of literature? Discuss in class.

# Laurence Sterne

## *Tristram Shandy* (1759-67)



### *Tristram Shandy*

#### TEXT 3

*This page is even more 'experimental'.*

Chapter Eighteen

Capitolo Diciottesimo

Chapter Nineteen

Capitolo Diciannovesimo

(vedi vecchia edizione pagina 247 come riferimento)



#### OVER TO YOU

- 1 What do you think this blank white page means?