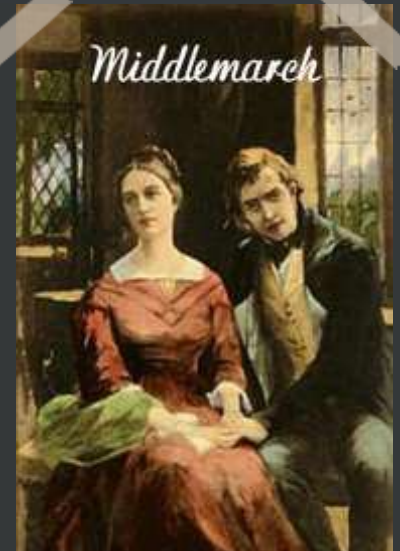
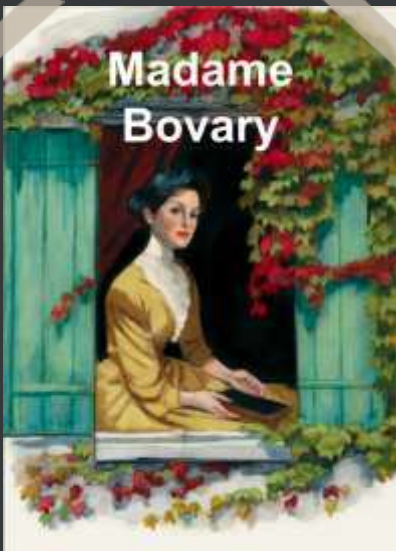




# Great Novels

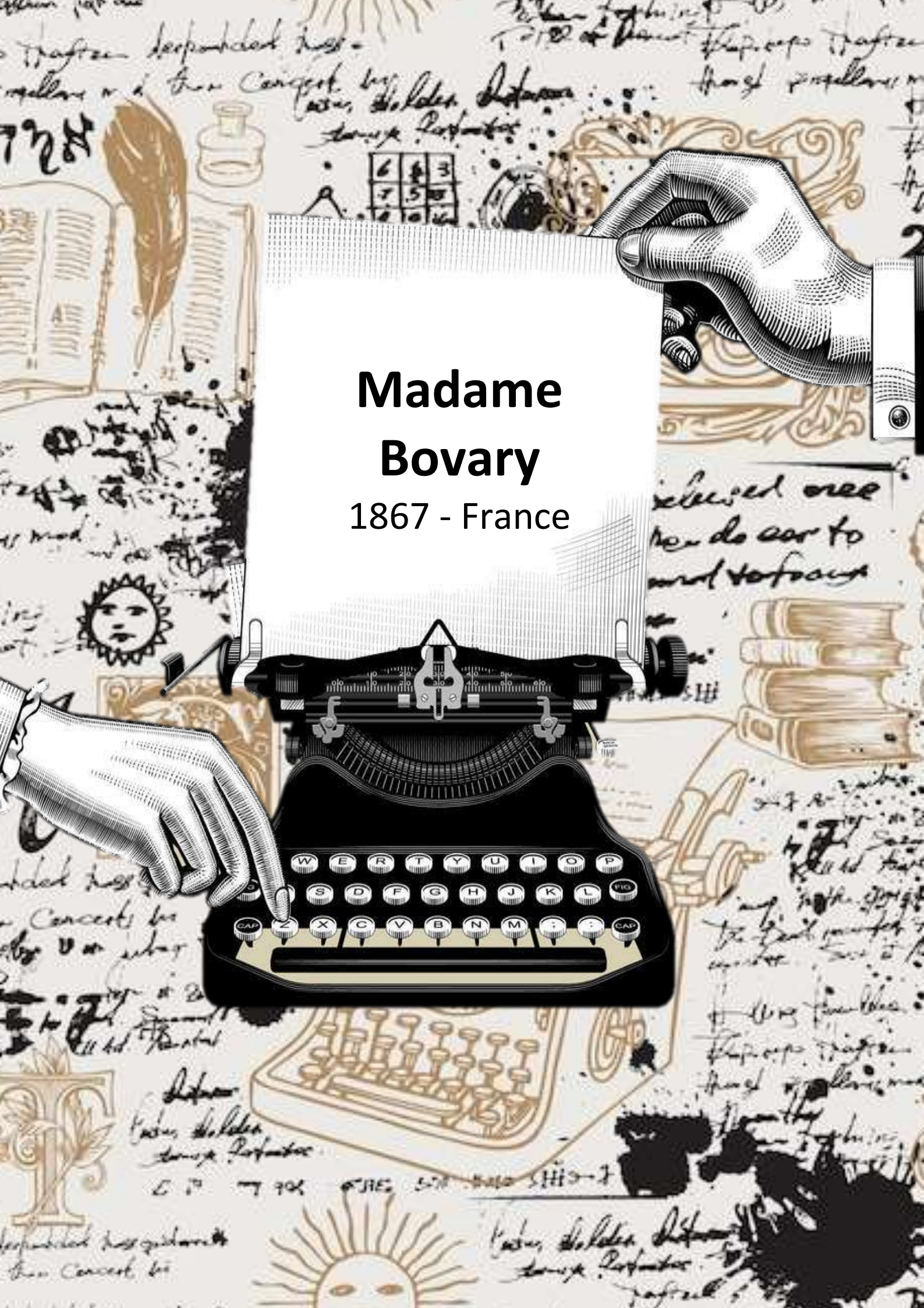
By DK Books



The World's Most Remarkable Fiction  
Explored and Explained

# Madame Bovary

1867 - France



6	4	3
7	5	8
9	10	11



# Gustave Flaubert

(1821 - 1880)



Madame Bovary was the first novel by Gustave Flaubert, a writer who became known for his dedication to an exacting literary style, in which the author's own beliefs and judgments cannot be detected.

He began Madame Bovary after friends insisted that he apply his evident talent as a writer to a contemporary subject. Flaubert, who was more interested in classical history and exotic settings, was initially reluctant, but he finally agreed to tackle the story of a provincial woman whose dreams lead her to descend into a downward spiral of debt, deception, and despair.

Madame Bovary set in Normandy, which Flaubert knew well, between the 1820s and 1840s, in a clinically detached style that is frequently unsettling, the narrative charts the struggles of a sensuous but also sadly self-deceiving young woman against suffocating bourgeois conventions.



The opening sections of the novel sketch the early life of Charles Bovary, a mediocre and unambitious provincial doctor. After meeting the beautiful daughter of a wealthy local farmer, he marries her and the novel shifts attention to the aspirations and perceptions of his new wife, Emma. Bored by married life and frustrated by the limitations of her dull-witted husband, Emma hungers for the kinds of experience that she has read about in novels.

The first half of the book charts the mundane early years of Emma's disappointing marriage. It also describes her bedazzlement when she attends the ball of a local aristocrat; the birth of her child, Berthe; her initial foray into an affair with a young student named Leon; and her sudden repentance in a moment of seemingly religious transcendence when she believes she is dying.



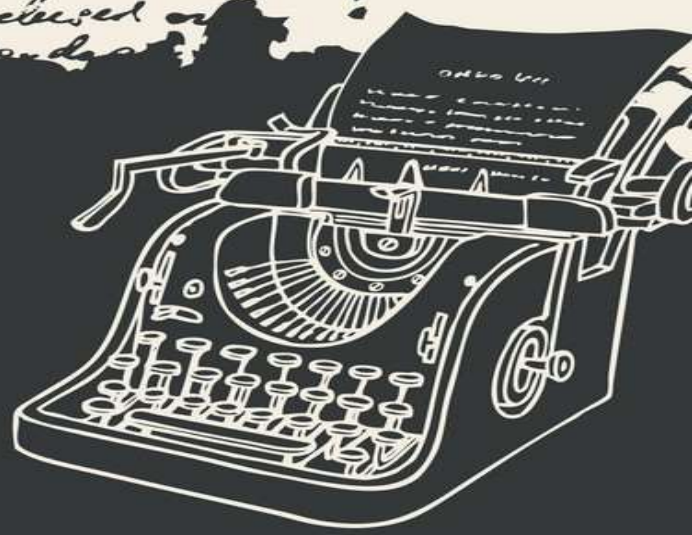
However, these are just a prelude to the unfolding drama of the second half of the novel, in which Emma embraces her desires and starts to live to the full, whatever the cost of to herself.





**Emma Bovary - The Novel's  
Eponymous Protagonist**

# The Detached Narrator



Flaubert famously stated that “The artist must be in his work as God is in creation, invisible and all-powerful; one must sense him everywhere but never see him.” Unlike Stendhal and Balzac, who often commented on what their characters did, and appeared to take an interest in what happened to them, Flaubert’s narrator retains a detached distance.

Although in *Madame Bovary*, Flaubert refines the realist novelists’ descriptive eye for the detail, his innovation lies in the cool, dispassionate way in which he depicts his characters, and his celebrated method of counterpoint – he sets on image of irony.

The clichés that Rodolphe trots out while seducing Emma, for example, are interleaved with the platitudes that local dignitaries use in their speeches.



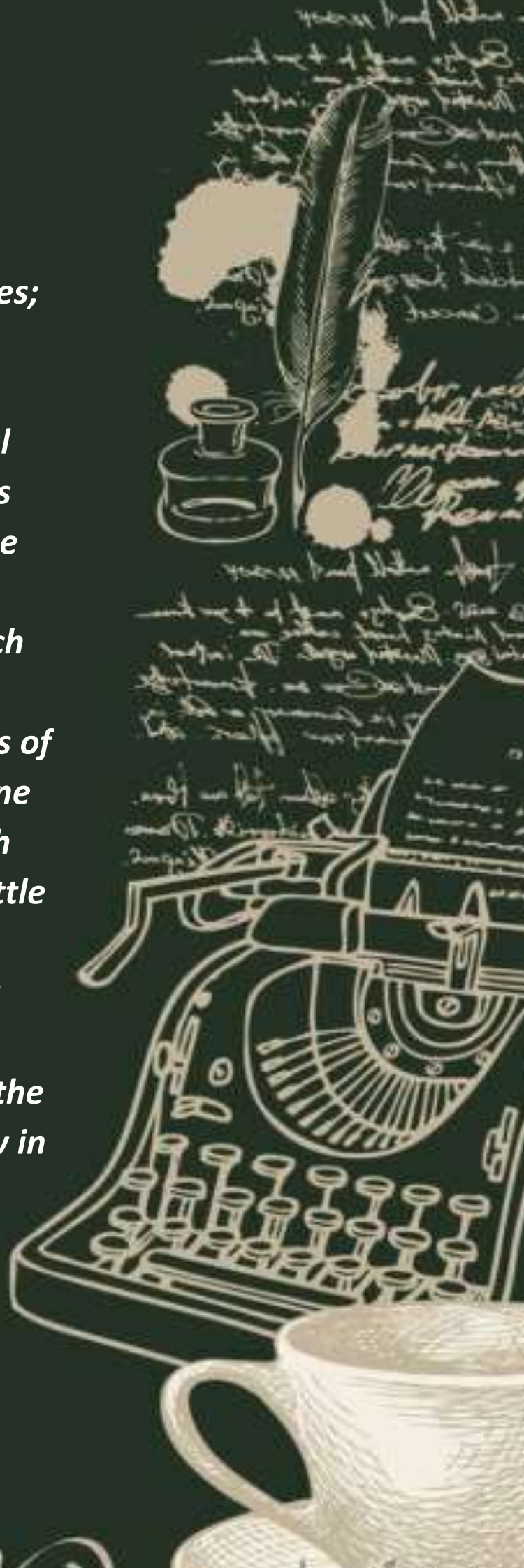
Juxtaposing the two ways of speaking highlights how contrived they both are. Flaubert does not use the narrator to tell the reader what to think, but uses his style of writing to convey his opinions more subtly.





**This realist painting by James Tissot depicts a scene similar to that in which Leon takes Emma for a carriage ride.**

*“Emma was like all his mistresses;  
and the charm of novelty,  
gradually falling away like a  
garment, laid bare the eternal  
monotony of passion, that has  
always the same forms and the  
same language. He did not  
distinguish, this man of so much  
experience, the difference of  
sentiment beneath the sameness of  
expression. Because lips libertine  
and venal had murmured such  
words to him, he believed but little  
in the candour of hers;  
exaggerated speeches hiding  
mediocre affections must be  
discounted; as if the fullness of the  
soul did not sometimes overflow in  
the emptiest metaphors ...”*



# The Manuscript



In the part of the manuscript shown on the next page, the narrator expresses Rodolphe's jaded view of love. Elsewhere, Flaubert records just how aware he was of the challenge of finding an original way to convey important personal thoughts and observations to the reader. He noted: "One must not always think that feeling is everything. Art is nothing without form."

— Madame Bovary. —  
Louis <sup>de</sup> Rougemont.  
Première partie

12 605/4  
L. 11111  
A. 11111

une heure et demie venant de donner à l'école de village  
grand le professeur cette dans l'été, puis d'un nouveau  
habitué en bourgeois et d'un garçon de classe qui portait un  
grand pupitre. Les qui dormaient, se recillaient et  
~~le maître par l'usage de son pupitre, et dans son~~  
~~travail, et dans son~~  
dans son travail.

Le bourgeois non fit signe de nous regarder et se  
tenant ces de venir l'étude. Il fut brylé, puis dit :  
à deux heures, puis au lieu que je vous le communique  
entre en acquisition. Et son travail de sa volonté sont  
accusés, il passera dans les yeux, en l'après-midi.

Est dans l'après-midi, le nouveau était un garçon de la  
forte attention, à bien que l'ancien et le  
campagne, d'une jeunesse d'ancien environ, et plus  
haut détail, qu'aucun de son tour. Il avait les cheveux  
couverts sur le front, comme un chapeau de village  
l'air raisonnable de tout embrouillé, les lèvres  
fines qui se balançaient à l'usage de son pupitre.

Il avait une robe de chambre, et ses pantalons, et son  
chemise de nuit en blanc, et ses chaussures, qui qu'il  
se fit par large les épaules, son habit-ent de  
drap vert, à boutons noirs, devant le genre aux  
entourées.

The Manuscript

# Rouen



As the capital of Normandy, Rouen, pictured on the next page by J.M.W Turner in 1834, is the equivalent of Paris for Emma. It is where she and Leon meet at a night at the Opera, and is the setting for one of the novel's most famous sequences: a black horse and carriage is seen crisscrossing the streets of the city as it carries Leon and Emma in the throes of passion.



**Rouen Cathedral**  
**By J.M.W Turner**

## Bourgeois Social Status



In the 19th century, securing middle-class status was an obsession for many Europeans. In France, as elsewhere, status was shown by acquiring and displaying fashionable goods. Emma, portrayed on the next page by Albert Fourie in 1885, embraces a lavish lifestyle, but soon falls into debt.

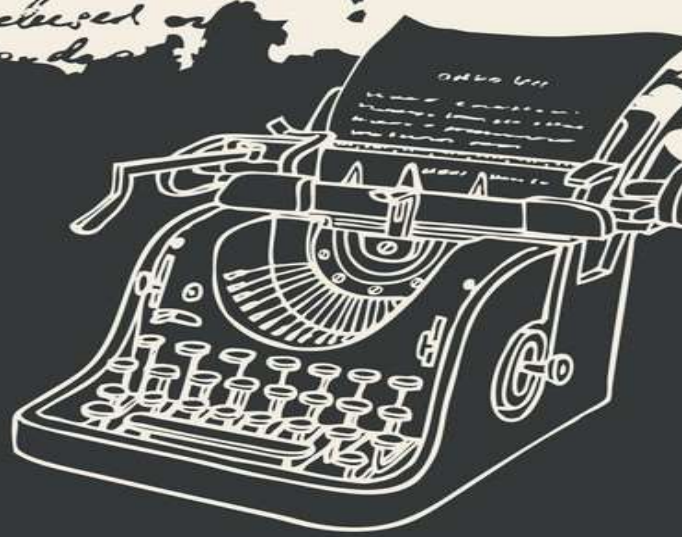
“So at last she was to know those joys of love, that fever of happiness of which she had despaired!”





**Madame Bovary**  
**By Albert Fourie**

# The Influence of Novels



Emma reads a variety of French and English novels that shape her view of the world. Indeed, the very language of these works alters how she sees things.

The novelist Vladimir Nabokov noted that Emma's fate is sealed less by what she reads than by the fact that she is a poor reader, unable to distinguish weaknesses and excesses of literary style.

Georges Croegaert's painting *Reading* (1890) captures the abandon of novel-reading in Flaubert's time.



**Reading**

**By Georges Croegaert**

## Emma's Love Affairs



Emma's love affairs make up much of the plot *Madame Bovary*, and Flaubert's language makes it clear that Emma's romantic ideas, which she believes to be exceptional, are in fact all too conventional.

Nevertheless, we are invited to sympathize with Emma's yearnings for something beyond the banality of bourgeois life. Her plight is accentuated by the gallery of small-town characters who shape her life.

These include Monsieur Homais, a purveyor of medicines and poisons, and Monsieur Lheureux, who sells luxury items from the finest boutiques, and is eager to ensnare clients in a web of credit. *Madame Bovary* closely observes the language and sometimes absurd customs of provincial life.

The subtitle of the book is “Moeurs de province” (Provincial manners), and these manners are revealed in a series of grotesquely comic sense that display the self-interested aspirations and behaviour of the characters.

With detached irony, Flaubert relishes showing the limits of Charles Bovary’s abilities, as he botches a medical operation that Emma and Monsieur Homais have encouraged him to perform – she in an attempt to boost her husband’s standing, and Homais to promote the reputation of the town.

Meanwhile, the novel outlines the main drama of Emma’s affair with a local cad named Rodolphe. Having been deceived from the start by this experienced and cynical seducer, Emma is abandoned once again and loses hope, until she re-encounters her now more worldly former lover Leon, leading the novel to its tragic conclusion.



# French Provincial Life



In *Madame Bovary*, Flaubert painted a detailed portrait of 19th-century French provincial life, which he claimed to despise for all its commonplace pettiness and squalor.

Yet his descriptions of that life – its weddings, balls and country fairs, its self-satisfied citizens and self-important priests and doctors – are vividly observed as well as satirical.

Flaubert's minor characters give us the sense of a whole society, various and alive even in its prejudices.

In the person of Emma Bovary, he created a protagonist who, by design, provokes contradictory responses in the reader. As her impossible dreams give way to tragic reality, we sympathize with her desperation and yet flinch at her deludedness.



**Madame Bovary**  
**By Albert Fourie**

# The Obscenity Trial



The Revue de Paris serialised Madame Bovary in late 1856, and as a result was put on trial for obscenity in January 1857. Later the same year, Charles Baudelaire was also taken to court over his collection of poetry Les Fleurs de Mal. Although some of Baudelaire's verse was judged obscene, Madame Bovary escaped prosecution after a brief trial.

The prosecutor, Ernest Pinard, stated that the novel was an "offence to public and religious morality and to good morals", arguing that it encouraged adulterous conduct while ridiculing the established pillars of bourgeois society.

The defence countered that Emma's fate ruled out such a reading. The notoriety created by the trial undoubtedly contributed to the novel's success.



# Great Expectations

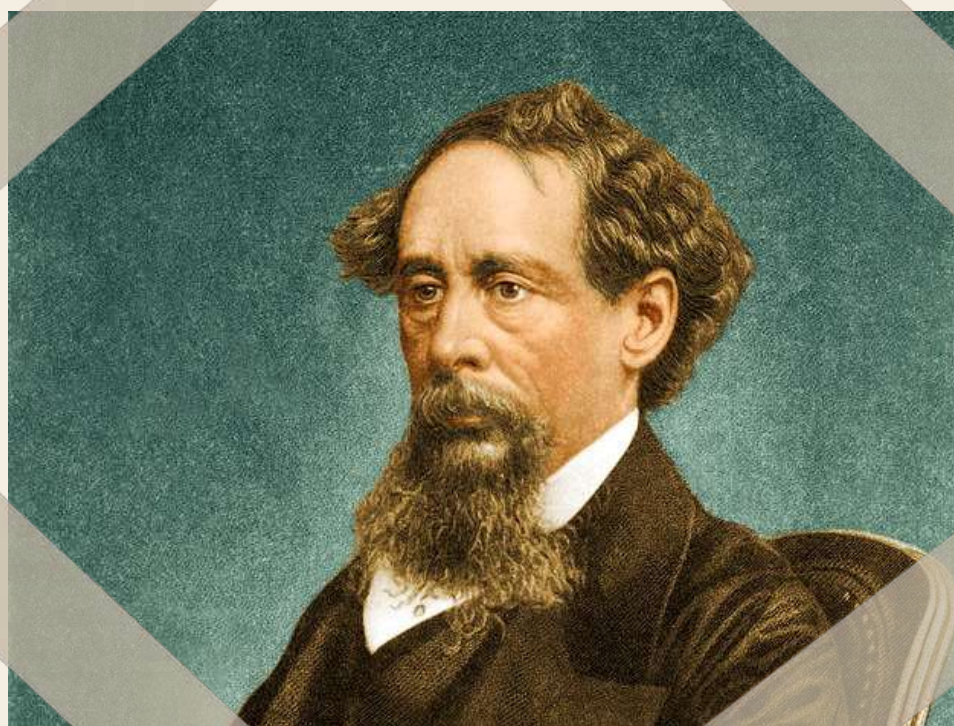
1861 - UK





# Charles Dickens

(1812 - 1870)



Great Expectations was first published in instalments in Dicken's weekly journal All the Year Round. It was only the second of his novels (after David Copperfield) to be written entirely in the first person.

Its protagonist, Pip, is an orphan who has been brought up by his harsh, ill-natured sister and her kindly husband, Joe Gargery, who is a blacksmith. Pip's story begins with one of the most arresting opening chapters in all fiction.

On "a memorable raw afternoon towards evening", he is visiting the churchyard at the edge of the marshes where his parents and five dead brothers are buried, when an escaped convict confronts him. He helps the man with food and a file to remove his leg iron, little knowing how much the encounter will shape his life.



Years pass and Pip becomes obsessed with the idea of bettering himself. An opportunity seems to present itself when he begins to be cultivated by the wealthy recluse, Miss Havisham, who lives with her ward, Estella, in Satis House.

Oblivious to the affection of Biddy, a local girl, Pip grows to love Estella, who is beautiful but cold-hearted. He also meets Herbert Pocket, a boy of his own age, who is related to Miss Havisham.

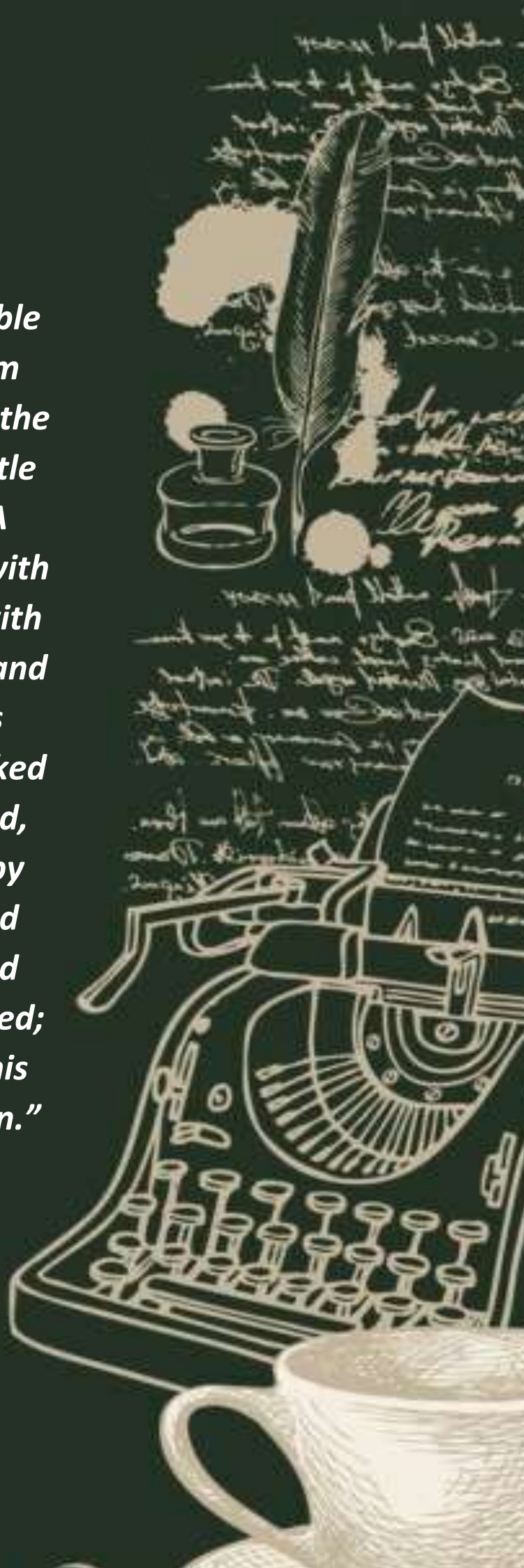
Pip becomes Joe's apprentice at the blacksmith's forge, but Mr Jaggers, an intimidating London lawyer, arrives to tell him that a nameless patron has provided money for him to move to London and what he thinks will be a brighter future. Yet his aspirations will be frustrated, as the past, in the form of the convict, Magwitch, returns to claim him.





**Illustration of Pip**  
**By Historic Illustrations**

*“ ‘Hold your noise!’ cried a terrible voice, as a man started up from among the graves at the side of the church porch. ‘Keep still, you little devil, or I’ll cut your throat!’ A fearful man, all in coarse grey, with a great iron on his leg. A man with no hat, and with broken shoes, and with an old rag tied round his head. A man who had been soaked in water, and smothered in mud, and lamed by stones, and cut by flints, and stung by nettles, and torn by briars; who limped, and shivered, and glared, and growled; and whose teeth chattered in his head as he seized me by the chin.”*



# The Manuscript



Dickens never made fair copies of the manuscripts of his novels: the one shown on the next page is the copy that went to the printer. Once he has finished an instalment, it was despatched there, even though he had not yet written the novel's future instalments. Dicken's friend, Chauncey Hare Townshed, gave this manuscript to the Wisbech and Fenland Museum.





## In Context



Pip feels unable to escape the “taint of crime”. Mr Jaggers, the lawyer who looks after him when he goes to London, deals with criminals and has premises conveniently close to the walls of Newgate Prison, shown shown on the next page in an 1888 engraving. Jaggers’ clerk, Wemmick, takes Pip to Newgate, to meet his many “clients”.



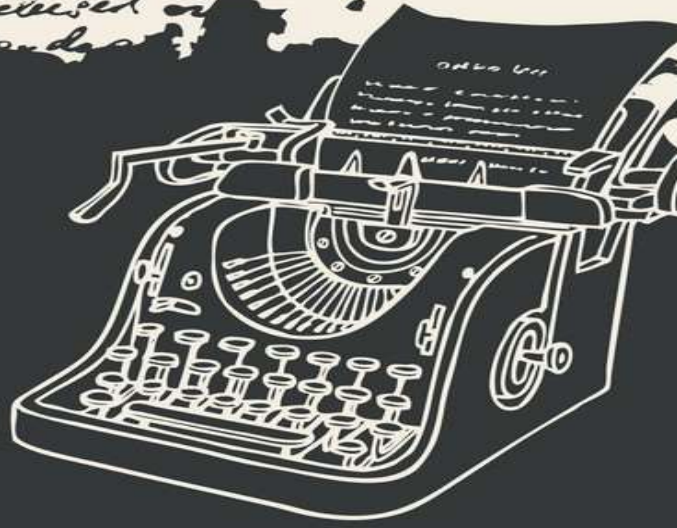
**Newgate Prison**

Haunting marshes. “Ours was the marsh country, down by the river”, Pip tells us, in the opening chapter of the novel. Dickens based the haunting landscape on the North Kent marshes near what had been his own childhood home, in Chatham, on the River Medway. He lived there between the ages of 5 and 10.

The special quality of Pip’s narration comes from the regret and self-criticism with which he recalls his past. His life of “great expectations” has been one of self-delusion. Dickens gives us a painful sense of Pip’s failure to understand the feelings of those who really love him – Biddy and Joe. Thinking that he is better than Joe, an illiterate working man, Pip behaves condescendingly towards him. When Estella, destined to break his heart, gets married, Pip realizes that he should have chosen Biddy. He returns to tell her so, only to find that she has married Joe, who became a single man after Mrs Joe’s death.



# Comedy Versus Darkness



Although *Great Expectations* is sometimes melancholy, Dicken's art is to mingle comedy with darkness. Pip's life is influenced by absurd as well as frightening characters.

There is the ridiculous parish clerk, Mr Wopsle, who has theatrical ambitions and reappears in London as a hilariously bad Shakespearean actor, and the fatuously self-important Mr Pumblechook, a local corn chandler, who bullies the young Pip, and then insists on befriending him once Pip has come into money.

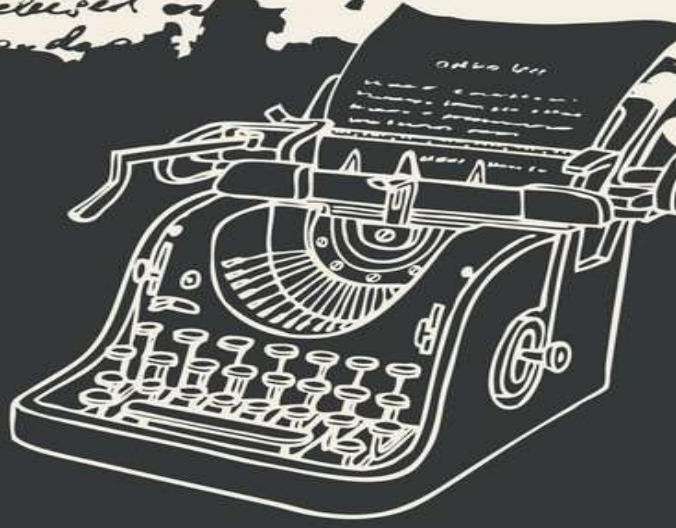
Later, Wemmick, Mr Jagger's worldly clerk, becomes Pip's comic as well as pragmatic guide to the ways of the city. Each character also has their own distinctive way of speaking, which is often highly comic.

Dickens originally gave the novel an unhappy ending, in which Pip, now older and wiser, meets Estella again, but only to part from her forever. Estella's first husband, the brutish Bentley Drummle, has been killed by a horse that he was mistreating, and Estella has married again. Pip himself remains single.

However, Dickens' friend Bulwer Lytton, a far lesser novelist, persuaded him that this ending would outrage his loyal readers. Dickens followed Lytton's advice and wrote a new ending – the only one that was ever published – in which Pip and Estella, now a widow, meet again in the ruins of Satis House. This time, in an equivocal phrase, Pip sees “the shadow of not parting from her”.



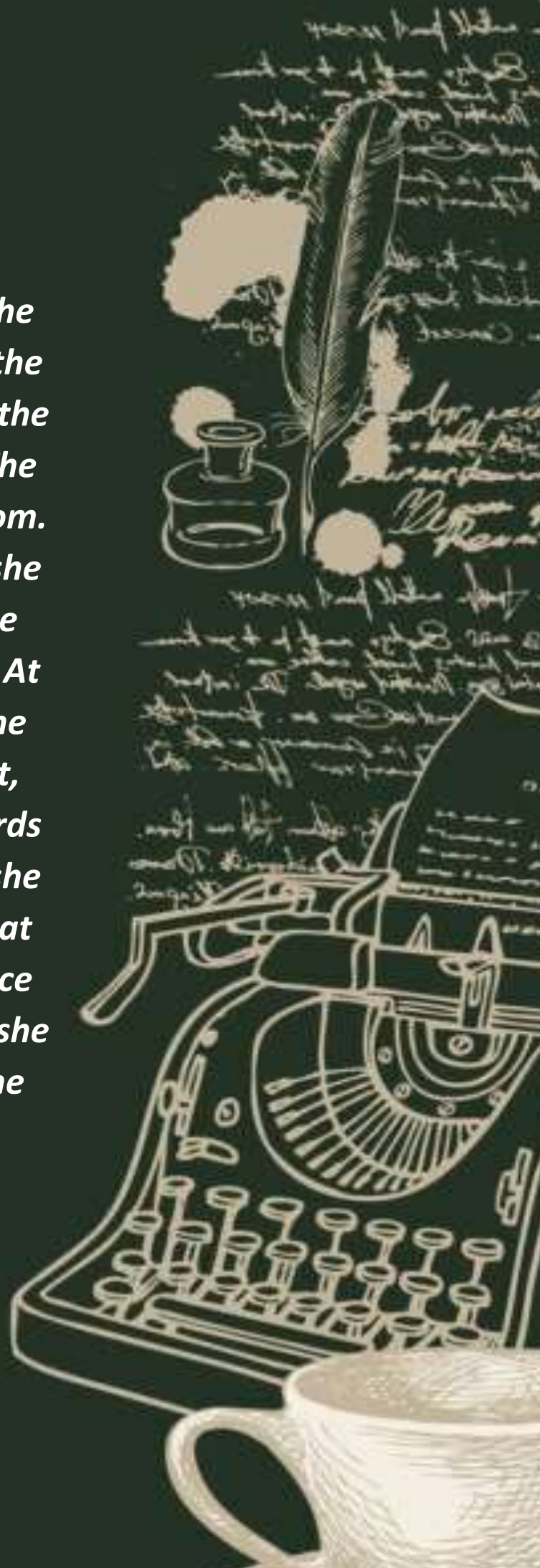
## Dicken's Other Works



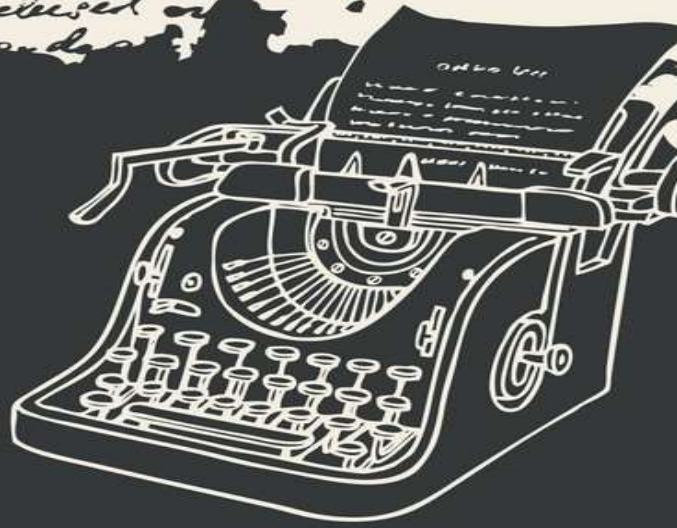
Dickens began his first novel, *The Pickwick*, in 1836, when he was 24 years old. It was soon followed by *Oliver Twist* and then *Nicholas Nickleby*, which were hugely popular. By the time he was 30, he had completed two more, *The Old Curiosity Shop* and *Barnaby Rudge*, and had established himself as the bestselling novelist of the age. In total, Dickens wrote 15 novels and one novella, *A Christmas Carol*.

Each novel was written and first published in serial form – some, such as *David Copperfield* and *Bleak House*, monthly and others, such as *A Tale of Two Cities* and *Great Expectations*, weekly. He was just halfway through his last novel, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, when he died in 1870. Dickens also wrote the travel books, short stories, comic “sketches” and a great deal of including “A visit to Newgate”, describing the horrors of Newgate Prison, which also features in *Great Expectations*.

*“The marriage day was fixed, the wedding dresses were bought, the wedding tour was planned out, the wedding guests were invited. The day came, but not the bridegroom. He wrote her a letter – ‘Which she received’, I struck in, ‘when she was dressing for her marriage? At twenty minutes to nine?’ ‘At the hour and minute,’ said Herbert, nodding, ‘at which she afterwards stopped all the clocks ... When she recovered from a bad illness that she had, she laid the whole place waste, as you have seen it, and she has never since looked upon the light of day.”*



# Miss Havisham



For much of the novel, Pip believes that his benefactor is the rich and reclusive Miss Havisham. Abandoned on her wedding day by the man she was going to marry, she still wears her wedding dress in bitter memory of the fact. She has not allowed anything in her house to be changed since that day. She was portrayed by Helena Bonham Carter in the 2012 film of the book (next page).





**Miss Havisham**

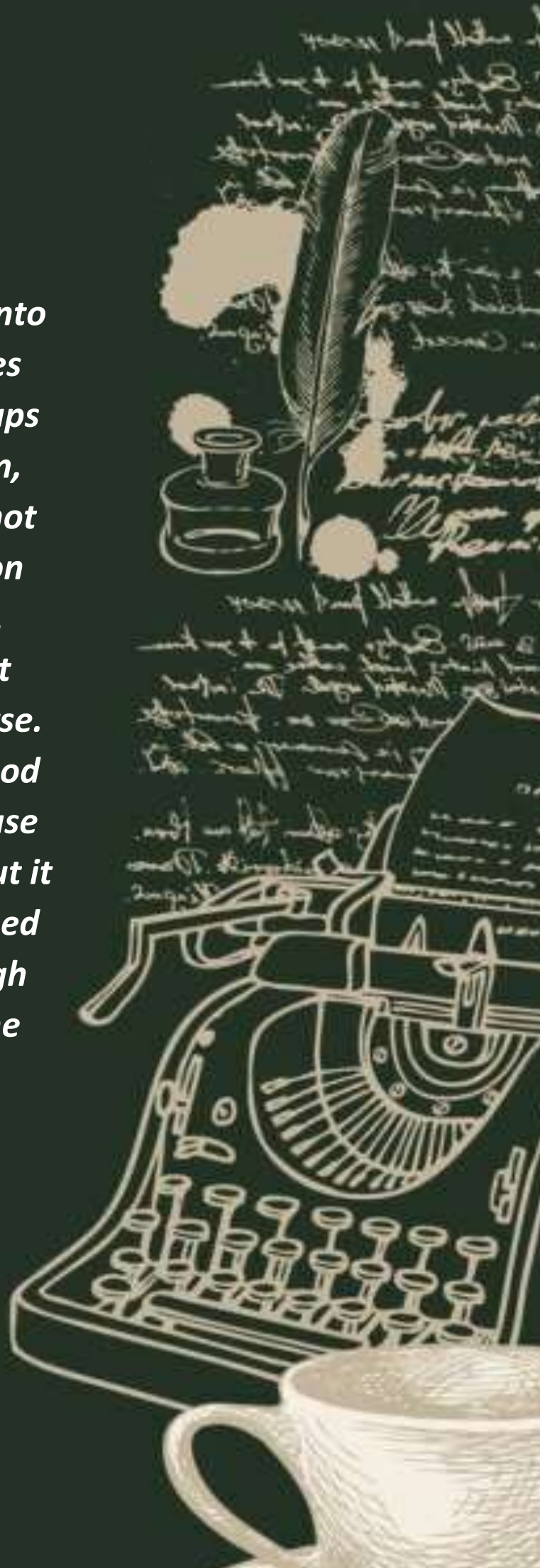
In the passage of the novel shown on the next page, Herbert Pocket tells Pip Miss Havisham's story. She was deserted on her wedding day by the man she loved, who was in league with her own half-brother to trick her out of her money. This man, Compeyson, a "gentleman" con man, turns out to have an important role in the novel, as Magwitch's former accomplice and now deadly enemy.

Musings pages from the notebooks that Dostoevsky kept in late 1865 provide an insight into his creative process as he worked out his ideas for *Crime and Punishment*. The text on this page summarizes various events involving Raskolnikov, and his good friend Razumikhin.





*“Here a strange thought came into his head: perhaps all his clothes were covered with blood, perhaps there were stains all over them, and he simply did not see, did not notice them, because his reason was falling, going to pieces ... Suddenly he remembered that there was also blood on the purse. ‘Bah! So then there must be blood inside the pocket as well, because the purse was still wet when I put it in my pocket!’ He instantly turned the pocket out and, sure enough there were traces, stains on the lining.”*



# Middlemarch

1871-72 - UK





# George Eliot

(1818 - 1880)



George Eliot's most complex novel is "A Study of Provincial Life", as its subtitle proclaims. It braid together the different, but connected, stories of many characters, to give a rich understanding of how a whole society, centred on the town of Middlemarch, functions.

Minutely anatomizing its many characters' marriages, family quarrels, and professional fortunes, it shows how they cope with social and economic changes. (The novel is particularly astute about how characters manage to make or lose money.)

Eliot's two leading characters, Dorothea and Lydgate, are both idealists. Dorothea wants to use the money she has inherited to do good. Having rejected the marriage proposal of Sir James Chettam, a local squire, she is drawn to Edward Casaubon, whom she believes to be a man "whose work would reconcile complete knowledge with devoted piety."



Alas! Casaubon is neither so brilliant nor so saintly. During the months after their marriage, Dorothea realises that his supposed masterwork, “A Key to All Mythologies”, is not only significant, it will never be completed. Lydgate, on the other hand, is a young doctor who arrives in Middlemarch with ideas about using the latest medical knowledge to improve the lives of its inhabitants.

In order to put his ideas into practice, he has to enter into an uneasy alliance with the powerful local banker, Bulstrode. He is also compromised by love and finds himself marrying the beautiful but spoilt Rosamond Vincy, whose material expectations he cannot meet. “Poor Lydgate! Or shall it say, Poor Rosamond! Each lived in a world of which the other knew nothing.” Eliot says this even as the two are falling in love with each other.

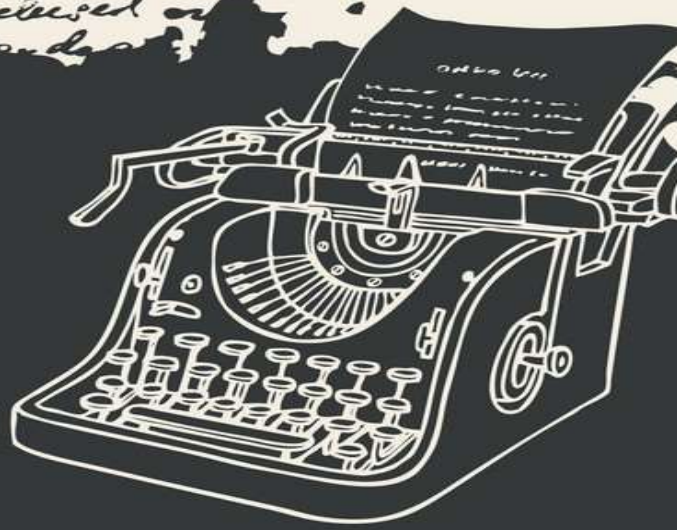




These are private dramas, intimately explored by Eliot, yet they take place under the eyes of neighbours and relations, in a novel in which no character can quite escape the opinions and the gossip that circulate in Middlemarch.



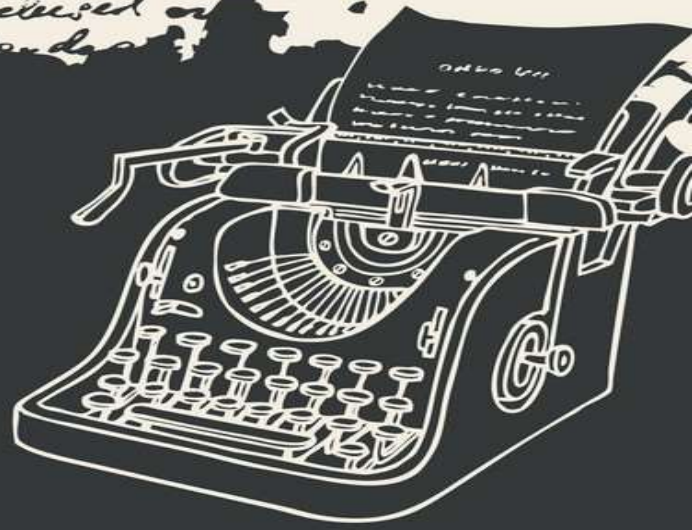
# The Omniscient Narrator



The narrator is always present in *Middlemarch*, sometimes speaking directly to the reader in the first person. Although she is often ironical, her voice seems to be that of George Eliot herself, reflecting sympathetically on the complexities of human psychology, as demonstrated by her characters. To give us a picture of a whole community, *Middlemarch* interweaves different stories and moves between different points of view.

A famous example of this is the passage (quoted opposite) in which, while exploring Dorothea's feelings about her still-recent marriage, Eliot suddenly interrupts herself to ask: "Was her point of view the only possible one with regards to this marriage?" in *Middlemarch*, every character has their own "intense consciousness". Eliot seems to understand human nature well enough to know how the world looks through the eyes of each different character.

## In Context



Mary Ann Evans (Eliot's real name) was born in Warwickshire and went to schools in Nuneaton and Coventry. Later, she lived in Coventry, shown here in a contemporary painting, where she found a circle of progressive, intellectual friends. The society of Middlemarch is based on the Midlands world in which she grew up.

Arrival of the railway. Although written and published at the beginning of the 1870s, Middlemarch is set some 40 years earlier. Late in the novel we hear that "one form of business which was beginning to breed just then was the construction of railways." Some of the characters are fearful of it, and hostile.

# The Manuscript



The page shown on the next page is from one of the four notebooks in which Eliot wrote her final draft of *Middlemarch*. There are few alterations, because she based it on an earlier story, *Miss Brooke*, the manuscript of which is lost. She combined this with an entirely separate fragment, also lost, of a work about a provincial town to make *Middlemarch*.

Chapter I.

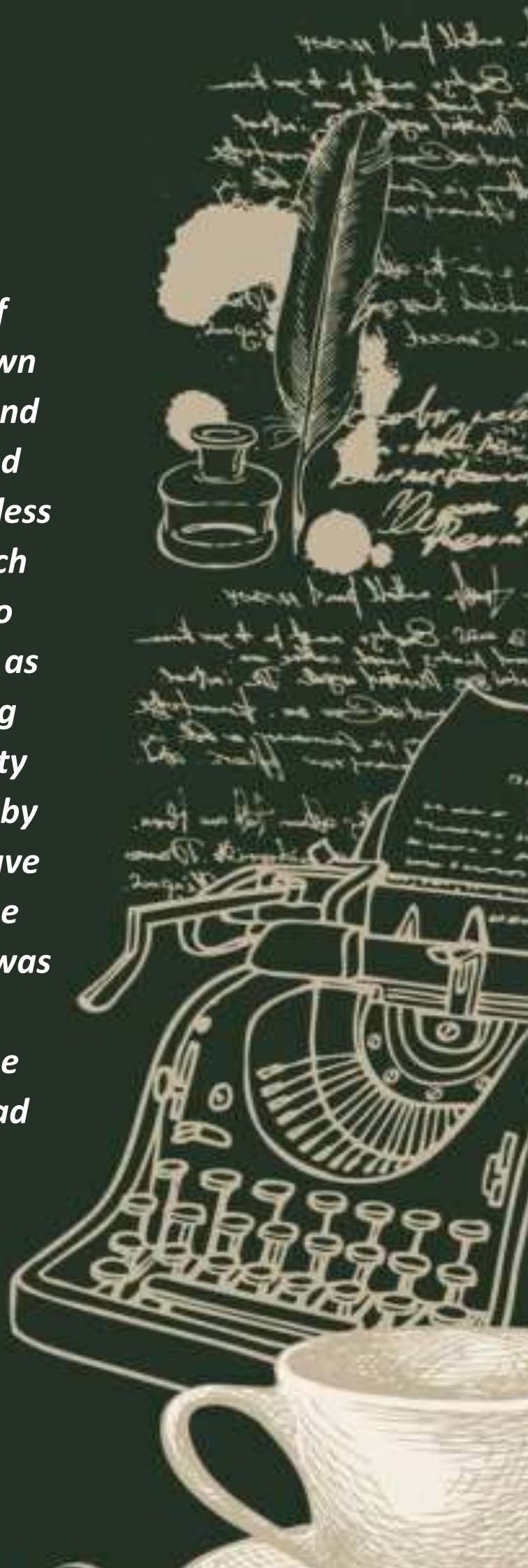
"Since I can do no good because a woman,  
Reach constantly at something that is near it."  
The Maid's Tragedy: Beaumont & Fletcher

Miss Brooke had that kind of beauty which seems to be thrown into relief by poor dress. Her hand & wrist were so finely formed that she could wear sleeves not less bare of style than those in which the Blessed Virgin appeared to Italian painters, & her profile as well as her stature & bearing seemed to gain <sup>the more</sup> dignity from her plain garments, which by the side of provincial fashionables gave her the impression of a fine quotation from the Bible, or from one of our elder poets, in a paragraph of today's newspaper. She was usually spoken of as being remarkably clever, but with the addition that her sister Celia had more common sense. Nevertheless, Celia wore ~~plenty of~~ <sup>scarcely more</sup> trimming. Mrs. Brooke's plain dressing was due to mixed conditions, in most of which her sister shared. The pride of being ladies had something to do with it: the Brooke connections though not exactly aristocratic, were unquestionably "good": if you inquired backward for a generation or two you would not find any yard-measuring or parcel-tying forefathers; nothing lower than an Admiral or a clergyman; & there was even an ancestor discernible as a Puritan gentleman who served under Cromwell, but had afterwards conformed, <sup>and had</sup> becoming manager of a respectable ~~little~~ family estate. Young women of good birth, living in a quiet country town,

It was only  
to clear matters  
that her dress  
differed from her  
sister's, & had  
a shade of  
aquaintance in  
its management

Extract from the Manuscript

*“Miss Brooke had that kind of beauty which seems to be thrown into relief by poor dress. Her hand and wrist were so finely formed that she could wear sleeves not less bare of style than those in which the Blessed Virgin appeared to Italian painters; and her profile as well as her stature and bearing seemed to gain the more dignity from her plain garments, which by the side of provincial fashion gave her the impressiveness of a fine quotation from the Bible ... She was usually spoken of as being remarkably clever, but with the addition that her sister Celia had more common sense.”*



# Intellectual Influences



By the time she wrote *Middlemarch*, Eliot was in her fifties and a famous woman of letters. She had been a translator, reviewer, and essayist before she published her first novel, *Adam Bede*, when she was 39. The book was a success, and she published four more novels before writing *Middlemarch*. She challenged Victorian conventions by living openly with a married man, George Henry Lewes, a fellow writer and a great support in her own literary career. Despite this, she had become widely admired as an intellectual and a moral guide, as well as a novelist.

*Middlemarch* carries the influence of Eliot's intellectual interests. Characters discuss the role of women in society, while the narrator sometimes comments satirically on male expectations of women.

Different kinds of religious belief (and unbelief) come into conflict in ways that shape the fortunes of various characters. Eliot herself rejected religious belief, but as a novelist remained fascinated by its social importance. The novel also has a complex plot.

This involves the unearthing of actions hidden in the past, revealing that respectability can cloak larceny and conspiracy. It brings blackmail and worse into the sometimes complacent world of Middlemarch.

The odiously self-righteous banker Bulstrode will get his comeuppance, and yet, just at the moment when he is revealed to be a hypocrite, Eliot makes him a surprising object of sympathy. It is typical of this most humane of novels.







**Dorothea and Casaubon in the Movie  
Based on the Novel**

Dorothea and Casaubon in the first book of Middlemarch, Dorothea becomes engaged to the dry scholar and clergyman Edward Casaubon, portrayed here in 1994 BBC adaptation. She is 19 and he is in his forties. Although others are appalled at the match, Eliot is careful to show how Dorothea and Casaubon are led by their own deluded ideals to believe that they are made for each other.





## Politics

The novel opens at the end of the 1820s, as debates about the reform of Britain's corrupt political system are becoming widespread.

These arguments reverberate through the provincial community of Middlemarch. It is characteristic of Eliot that her focus on the influence of contemporary politics on her characters is, in part, comic.

For example, Dorothea's uncle, Mr Brooke, develops an enthusiasm for political change, and decides to stand as a reforming candidate for parliament. However, his campaign ends in failure, when his empty-headedness is exposed at the town hustings, in a scene that is both funny and painful.



# THINK

DIGITAL ACADEMY

