

## ***Traversing the Centuries. A Lively and Entertaining Students' Guide to English and American Literature***

The principle which underlies the writing of this *Guide* - a collection of biographical outlines, summaries and critical comments on many novels, plays and poems of British and American writers - is the grounded manifest necessity of *High school, College* and first-year *University* students (when they approach English Literature for the first time or must proceed to textual interpretations or difficult decoding analyses) to have a basic essential knowledge of the English-language writers and the historical backgrounds in which they lived and worked. Frequently they also express the need to have theoretical frameworks, detailed forewords, wide and rich comments on literary works, which can highlight the contents and the forms that typify those texts as literary models inside the tradition which they belong to, or which (on the contrary) contribute to make them original and well-distinguished outcomes in the mainstream literary production of their age.

This *Guide*, written in a clear and polished style, in an accessible and didactic language, offers for each writer: a suitable introduction, a biography card which points up the steps that have dotted his (or her) life, the literary influences and the education received, the historical and cultural backgrounds, the stylistic peculiarities of his (or her) works, and the *Fortleben*. The choice and selection of the writers (presented chronologically by the author of the book) has not been guided, nor influenced by any personal preference, but it was driven by a twofold orientation: many of the chosen writers of the past centuries are generally considered indeed as the most representative of their time or literary season by the most recent and updated criticism; conversely, others (the modernists, post-modernists and contemporaries, both British and American) have been widely anthologized in the most adopted text-books as literary models for the present generation of students. These writers are certainly not "the only pebbles on the beach" but merely a significant though limiting representation of the plurality of voices, thoughts, ideas of their time, and of the literary, social and cultural trends which marked out significantly their historical age.

The summaries and comments on the novels, plays and poems are always preceded by an introductory card that includes: the date of publication, the *genre*, the type of plot, the setting, a brief outline of the characters involved in the stories, and (when possible) also the original sources of the text.

In the closing section of each volume a *fill in the blanks* test with keys is also offered to the students by the author of this experienced and qualified handbook which, for the richness of its materials, for the completeness of its observations and the ease of its consultation, is to be regarded from a certain point of view as a text unique in the current publishing world.

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