

Conversely, an anonymous reviewer for the *Times Literary Supplement* offered the thought that “beset by this central blankness, several of the poems stagger to a halt, lapse into broken phrases or totter finally into silence; but there is no doubting the control with which these effects are brought off.” The book also called forth one of the best pieces of Kinsella criticism to date, a long review by Vernon Young in *Parnassus* that is perhaps still the fullest and most knowing individual treatment of Kinsella’s work.

Responses to Literature

1. Kinsella was influenced by the writings of psychologist Carl Jung, particularly what he had to say about universal archetypes. Research Jungian archetypes and explore their role in Kinsella’s poetry. How is Kinsella relying on this concept? In what ways might his poetry challenge the idea? Support your thesis with detailed analysis of segments from the poems themselves.
2. Both Kinsella’s poem “Butcher’s Dozen” and the Irish band U2’s song “Sunday Bloody Sunday” discuss the 1972 shooting of Irish marchers by British soldiers. How do the two works differ in their discussion of the event? How are they similar? Research the actual historical event and then discuss how the lyric descriptions reflect and/or distort the differing accounts of it.
3. Kinsella’s translation of the *Táin* remains the standard today. Select a passage from Kinsella’s translation and compare it to the same passages in other translations of the *Táin*. How do the translations differ? Which do you prefer and why?
4. It has been said that Kinsella was not able to write about Ireland until he left it. This phenomenon has been observed in other Irish writers as well. Research some of these other Irish expatriates and their experiences. Why do you think so many Irish artists require distance from their homeland before they can describe it? Is there something specifically Irish about this, or is it reflective of a phenomenon that would be true for many cultures?

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▣ Rudyard Kipling

BORN: 1865, Bombay (now Mumbai), India

DIED: 1936, London, England

NATIONALITY: British

GENRE: Fiction, short stories, poetry

MAJOR WORKS:

“Gunga Din” (1892)

The Jungle Book (1894)

Captains Courageous (1897)

Kim (1901)

Just So Stories for Little Children (1902)

Overview

It is easy to underestimate the variety, complexity, and subtlety of British author Rudyard Kipling’s writing. He became an extraordinarily popular writer in the 1890s with short stories and poems enlivened by strange and interesting settings, a brisk narrative, and the fresh energy of the voices that told his tales. Credited with popularizing the short-fiction genre in England, Kipling is perhaps most famous for his insightful stories of Indian culture and Anglo-Indian society and for his masterly, widely read stories for children.

Works in Biographical and Historical Context

Born in British Colony Kipling was born on December 30, 1865, in Bombay, India, where his father was professor of architectural sculpture in the School of Art. At the time, India was a colony of Great Britain, as at least parts of it had been since the early seventeenth century when the British East India Company gained control of some of its territory. Resentment of British authority and British disregard for Indian religious law led to the first open demonstration for independence in 1857. Though the rebellion was suppressed, the Government of India Act of 1858 gave India some rights, improved the country’s administration, and gave Indians the right to serve as counselors to the viceroy (the person appointed by the British monarch to govern India). Despite these small measures, India remained firmly in



Rudyard Kipling Kipling, Rudyard, photograph. Source unknown.

British control and economic exploitation had only increased by the time Kipling was born.

Educated in England In 1871, Kipling was sent to England for his education. He entered the United Services College at Westward Ho!—a boarding school in Devon—in 1878. There, young “Gigger” endured bullying and harsh discipline but also enjoyed the close friendships, practical jokes, and merry pranks he later recorded in *Stalky & Co.* (1899). Headmaster Price encouraged Kipling’s literary ambitions by having him edit the school paper and praising the poems Kipling wrote for it. When Kipling sent some of these to India, his father had them privately printed as *Schoolboy Lyrics* (1881), Kipling’s first published work.

In 1882, Kipling rejoined his parents in Lahore, a Muslim city in what would later become Pakistan, and became a subeditor for the *Civil and Military Gazette*. In 1887, he moved to the *Allahabad Pioneer*, a better paper that gave him greater liberty in his writing. The result was a flood of satirical verses, published as *Departmental Ditties* in 1886, and over seventy short stories published in 1888 in seven paperback volumes. In style, the stories showed the influence of Edgar Allan Poe, Bret Harte, and Guy de

Maupassant, but the subjects were Kipling’s own. His stories focused on Anglo-Indian society, which he readily criticized with an acid pen, and the life of the common British soldier and the Indian native, which he portrayed accurately and sympathetically.

In the 1880s, there was an increased call for Indian independence. Because the colonial overlords turned over large areas of India from rice cultivation to cotton farming in this period, the Indian food supply was endangered, but British factories had more raw materials for their textile factories. The British further impoverished India by destroying its native textile industry by flooding the market with cheaper, tariff-free British products. Because of such situations, Indians founded the Indian National Congress in 1885 to express their desires and to make plans for achieving independence.

Fame in England and America In 1889, Kipling took a long voyage through China, Japan, and the United States. When he reached London, he found that his stories had preceded him and established him as a brilliant new author. He was readily accepted into the circle of leading writers, including William Ernest Henley, Thomas Hardy, George Saintsbury, and Andrew Lang. For Henley’s *Scots Observer*, he wrote a number of stories and some of his best-remembered poems: “A Ballad of East and West,” “Mandalay,” and “The English Flag.” He also introduced English readers to a “new genre” of serious poems in Cockney dialect: “Danny Deever,” “Tommy,” “Fuzzy-Wuzzy,” and “Gunga Din.” Kipling’s first novel, *The Light That Failed* (1891), was unsuccessful. But when his stories were collected as *Life’s Handicap* (1891) and poems as *Barrackroom Ballads* (1892), Kipling replaced Lord Tennyson as the most popular English author.

In 1892, Kipling married Caroline Balestier, an American. They settled on the Balestier estate near Brattleboro, Vermont, and began four of the happiest years of Kipling’s life, during which he wrote some of his best work, including *Many Inventions* (1893), perhaps his best volume of short stories; *The Jungle Book* (1894), and *The Second Jungle Book* (1895). These works not only assured Kipling’s lasting fame as a serious writer but also made him a rich man.

His Imperialism In 1897 the Kiplings settled in Rottingdean, a village on the English coast near Brighton. The outbreak of the Spanish-American War (fought to free Cuba from Spanish colonial rule as well as to assert the growing power of the United States) in 1898 and the Boer War (a conflict in South Africa between British colonial rule and Dutch settlers for control of the country) in 1899 turned Kipling’s attention to colonial affairs. He began to publish a number of solemn poems in the *London Times*. The most famous of these, “Recessional” (1897), issued a warning to Englishmen to consider their accomplishments in the Diamond Jubilee year of Queen

LITERARY AND HISTORICAL CONTEMPORARIES

Kipling's famous contemporaries include:

Edward VII (1841–1910): The British monarch who gave his name to the brief Edwardian period, at the turn of the twentieth century.

Lillie Langtry (1853–1929): A successful British actress (a sometime mistress to the future King Edward VII), Langtry made a wildly successful dramatic tour of America in 1882.

Theodore Roosevelt (1858–1919): Naturalist, explorer, hunter, governor of New York, and twenty-sixth president of the United States, Roosevelt was a firm believer in “gunboat diplomacy” and overseas adventures. He and Kipling met at the White House on several occasions.

W. E. B. DuBois (1868–1963): An African-American civil rights activist, author of *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) and one of the founders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

Victoria's reign with humility and awe rather than pride and arrogance.

The equally well-known “White Man's Burden” (1899) clearly expressed the attitudes toward empire implicit in the stories in *The Day's Work* (1898) and *A Fleet in Being* (1898). He referred to less highly developed peoples as “lesser breeds” and considered order, discipline, sacrifice, and humility to be the essential qualities of colonial rulers. These views have been denounced as racist, elitist, and jingoistic. For Kipling, the term “white man” indicated citizens of the more highly developed nations, whose duty it was to spread law, literacy, and morality throughout the world.

Commented on Spanish-American War The Spanish-American War provoked Kipling to write for vice president Theodore Roosevelt a poem with the now offensive title “The White Man's Burden.” Its message was typical for Kipling. Seeing that America suddenly had acquired vast new colonial possessions from its defeat of Spain, thus joining the European powers in their race to colonize the rest of the world, Kipling argued that it was the responsibility of the United States to care for its new subjects liberally and humanely, if also as effective owners or wardens. Roosevelt reportedly responded, though not to Kipling, “Rather poor poetry, but good sense from the expansionist viewpoint.”

During the Boer War, Kipling spent several months in South Africa, where he raised funds for soldiers' relief and worked on an army newspaper, the *Friend*. In 1901, Kipling published *Kim*, the last and most charming of his

portrayals of Indian life. But anti-imperialist reaction following the end of the Boer War caused a decline in Kipling's popularity. When he published *The Five Nations*, a book of South African verse, in 1903, he was attacked in parodies, caricatures, and serious protests as the opponent of a growing spirit of peace and democratic equality. Kipling then retired to “Bateman's,” a house near Burwash, a secluded village in Essex, England.

Later Works Kipling now turned from the wide empire as subject to England itself. In 1902, he published *Just So Stories for Little Children*. He also issued two books of stories of England's past, intended, like the *Jungle Books*, for young readers but suitable for adults as well: *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906) and *Rewards and Fairies* (1910).

His most significant work was a number of volumes of short stories written in a new style: *Traffics and Discoveries* (1904), *Actions and Reactions* (1904), *A Diversity of Creatures* (1917), *Debts and Credits* (1926), and *Limits and Renewals* (1932). These later stories treat more complex, subtle, and somber subjects in a style more compressed, allusive, and elliptical. Consequently, these stories have never been as popular as his earlier work. But modern critics, in reevaluating Kipling, have found a greater power and depth that make them his best work.

In 1907, Kipling became the first English writer to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature. He died on January 18, 1936, and is buried in Westminster Abbey. His autobiography, *Something of Myself*, was published posthumously in 1937.

Works in Literary Context

Primarily influenced by his life experiences in India and England, Kipling also wrote about what he observed about conflicts such as the Boer War and the Spanish-American War. His experiences as a newspaperman greatly affected his style and interests. Spending many years in the British colony of India, Kipling experienced and expressed firsthand knowledge of the Indian people, Anglo-Indian culture, and the effects of colonial rule. His belief in the superiority of white people and colonial overlords is generally not embraced by early twenty-first century readers, but is reflective of attitudes of the time.

Modernism The years 1890–1932, during which Kipling's books were published in London and New York, coincided with the development of modernism and its establishment as the dominant literary style of the twentieth century. Modernism was a movement in twentieth-century literature that represented a self-conscious break with traditional forms and subject matter while searching for a distinctly contemporary mode of expression. Kipling's immense body of writing—five novels, approximately 250 short stories, more than eight hundred pages of verse, and a number of books of nonfiction prose—seems to have little obvious relationship to

modernism. Yet his books were extremely popular; 15 million volumes of his collected stories alone were sold.

Kipling's work, particularly his poetry, has received far less scholarly and critical attention than the efforts of major modernist writers, and he has not had as great an influence as such writers as William Butler Yeats, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, or Wallace Stevens on generations of successive writers. Both Kipling's inability to inspire the most intense kinds of critical interest and literary imitation seem due equally to his literary style and his subject matter.

Nevertheless, such a characterization of Kipling's poetry, although justified and clearly recognized by most of its admirers, is superficial. In his verse one can also find many of the great qualities of the best modernist poetry: plainness, conciseness, passionate utterance instead of worn-out poetic diction, conviction, sharp images, a revitalized sense of history, great artistic craft, and originality.

Imperialist Poetry Upon returning to England in 1896, Kipling became an "unofficial laureate" of the British Empire and its people. From a not-at-all high-minded viewpoint, he wrote in verse of imperialist triumphs and defeats, illusions of peace, realities of war (particularly the conflict with the Boers of South Africa), local yet ancient history, and finally of World War I and its legacy.

Also contrary to most twentieth-century taste—which has been primarily formed by modernism—are Kipling's characteristically rhyming, rhythmically regular, formal stanzas. He was also intent on writing clear, matter-of-fact statements expressed by a voice certain about a particular point of view: again, rather the antithesis of a modernist persona.

Use of Rhythm One of the key elements of Kipling's poetry is its sound. He wrote many of his poems to be read aloud. For Kipling, this criterion required consistent use of regular rhythm, rhymes of all kinds, formal stanzas, the ballad, and forms of popular song. By the same measure, Kipling would avoid using free verse, which he likened to "fishing with barbless hooks." In his autobiography, Kipling remembers how, when writing his poems in India, "I made my own experiments in the weights, colours, perfumes, and attributes of words in relation to other words, either as read aloud so that they may hold the ear or, scattered over the page, draw the eye. There is no line of my verse or prose which has not been mouthed till the tongue has made all smooth, and memory, after many recitals, has mechanically skipped the grosser superfluities."

Works in Critical Context

From the 1890s to the 1920s, the most popular writer in the English-speaking world was Rudyard Kipling. He won at the outset of his career the favorable attention of writers and critics, and in 1907, he received the first Nobel Prize for Literature given to an author writing in

COMMON HUMAN EXPERIENCE

Kipling wrote during a time when the powers of Europe were establishing vast colonial possessions in Africa and Asia, and he often wrote about colonialism. Other writers touched on this theme as well, especially once those colonies began moving toward independence in the twentieth century. Here are some books that deal with this topic:

Heart of Darkness (1902), a novel by Joseph Conrad. This tale of an ivory dealer in the Congo and his pursuit of the madman Kurtz paints a dark picture of European colonialism and would inspire the movie *Apocalypse Now* (1979).

A Passage to India (1924), a novel by E. M. Forster. Like several of Kipling's works, this book deals with the British presence in India, albeit at a later date: the 1920s, when the Indian independence movement was heating up.

Midnight's Children (1981), a novel by Salman Rushdie. An Indian Muslim, Rushdie secured his literary reputation with this tale of postcolonial India. The main character, born at the moment of India's partition (midnight on August 15, 1947), serves as an embodiment of Indian history since independence.

Orientalism (1978), a nonfiction work by Edward Said. This book is a milestone in postcolonial studies, the discipline of examining the impact of European colonialism on those regions that suffered under it, and how they are moving into their own identities, as well as the lingering prejudices that persist both in the former colonies and in Europe and America.

the English language. He published hundreds of short stories and poems, four novels, and volumes of pamphlets, speeches, and journalistic pieces. Yet, of his vast body of work, only his novel *Kim* and his other writing for children have kept Kipling popular. His children's books have remained in print while his tales for adults of ethics, aesthetics, and empire have gone out of fashion—though they are receiving renewed attention in the wake of recent critical interest in imperialism.

The Novels Of Kipling's four novel-length works, only *Kim* was critically well-received. Critics attributed the poor plotting and weak characterization of his first novel, *The Light That Failed*, to his youth and inexperience. His second novel, *The Naulahka*, exhibits the same shortcomings. In his last two novels, *Captains Courageous* (1897) and *Kim*, these weaknesses were turned to Kipling's advantage, for both share an essentially plotless, wandering structure that contributed to their effect. While some critics contend that a lack of introspection

on the part of the protagonist of *Kim* forms the primary fault in a potentially great work, others hold that Kipling's penetrating scrutiny of his dual attachments, as well as his sympathetic depiction of the Indian people, place this novel among the masterpieces of English literature.

Poetry Ann Parry writes in *The Poetry of Rudyard Kipling* that the question of whether Kipling was truly a poet has been "perpetually debated." She quotes writer T. R. Henn's answer to this question: "When his technical mastery, variety and craftsmanship have all been recognized, it has to be said that 'Kipling, nearly, but never wholly achieved greatness . . . the ultimate depth was lacking.'" An increasing number of readers since World War I have neither enjoyed nor felt instructed by poetry which often is, quite blatantly, politically imperialist and socially reactionary—sounding like and appealing to, in George Orwell's words, a "gutter patriot."

Responses to Literature

1. Look at several of Kipling's poems of your choosing, and discuss the following in an essay: Do you agree that Kipling's work shows "technical mastery"? Why or why not? Do you agree with the assessment that Kipling's work lacks "ultimate depth"? Why or why not? Use examples to support your opinions.
2. The poem "If—" was originally published in Kipling's collection of children's stories, *Rewards and Fairies*, as a companion piece to the story "Brother Square-Toes," which features George Washington as a character. Read "Brother Square-Toes." Write a brief essay showing how "If—" serves to complement the short story.
3. In the late nineteenth century, Britain was a major empire, with colonies all over the world. Research the Boer War (1899–1902) using history textbooks or historical accounts in your library. In what ways did that war affect the British Empire? Create a presentation with your findings.
4. The characters of Nag and Nagaina are portrayed as villains in the story "Rikki-Tikki-Tavi." The use of snakes as a symbol of evil is common in Western civilization. Can you think of other stories, myths, or folktales that use this motif? Research the folktales and mythologies of another, non-Western culture, such as the Chinese culture or the Hindu culture. Are snakes used as symbols in these cultures and, if so, what do they represent? Write a paper that outlines your conclusions.
5. Much of *Kim* is set along the Grand Trunk Road, which was a main highway that crossed the Indian subcontinent. This highway has played a major role in the history of India. Research the history of the Grand Trunk Road. Where did it come from? What importance has it played over the centuries? Create a

presentation for the class that displays your findings and conclusions.

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▣ A. M. Klein

BORN: 1909, Ratno, Ukraine

DIED: 1972, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

NATIONALITY: Canadian

GENRE: Fiction, poetry, nonfiction

MAJOR WORKS:

Hath Not a Jew... (1940)

Poems (1944)

The Hitleriad (1944)

The Rocking Chair, and Other Poems (1948)

The Second Scroll (1951)

Overview

Regarded as one of Canada's foremost literary figures of the first half of the twentieth century, Klein is primarily known as a poet of the Jewish experience. While capturing the unique flavor of Jewish life in Montreal, Klein's poetry also illuminates the catastrophic history of the Jews. In addition to poetry celebrating his heritage, exemplified by the collection *Hath Not a Jew...* (1940), Klein addressed the various fundamental questions related to human existence in his collection *The Rocking Chair, and Other Poems* (1948). He also depicted humankind's universal quest for freedom in his acclaimed novel *The Second Scroll* (1951).

Works in Biographical and Historical Context

Jewish Life and Commitment Abraham Moses Klein was born in Ratno, Ukraine, on February 14, 1909, to Colman and Yetta Morantz Klein. The family immigrated soon thereafter to Canada. Klein was