

Henry Fielding

He is the first English theorist of the novel. He was born in Somerset in 1707 and went for some time to university even if he had to stop soon for money problems. He wrote satirical plays but he had to stop because the main beneficiary of his satire, Sir Robert Walpole, decided to make all the plays controlled by Lord Chamberlain (and he influenced him). Henry became a barrister, a political journalist and Justice of the Peace for Westminster and Middlesex.

He wrote many satirical plays in which he portrayed the corruption of his age (for example in *Shamela*, parody of *Romela*). The satire can be seen also in his first novel *Joseph Andrews*, a comic work which follows the picaresque tradition. His best novel "*Tom Jones*" has a different tone from the other works: this was due to

the death of his wife and his experiences as a magistrate.

He died in 1754 in Lisbon, where he had gone to recover his precarious health.

The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling

It's Fielding's masterpiece written in 1749. Tom Jones is a foundling grown by Mr Allworthy, a country gentleman. But he is sent away because of Blifil's malice. Blifil is Mr Allworthy's nephew. After many adventures Tom can go back home and his true identity is discovered: he is Mr Allworthy's sister's illegitimate son and can marry his beloved Sophie.

In the novel we can find all the social classes represented by the characters.

There are many comic elements, but Fielding's purpose is moral: he wants to present the evil aspects of his time.

and to exalt the good ones.

Even if Tom is impulsive and passionate, he is a very good character with kind heart. He is a common man, the "unheroic hero". This is an element of originality in Twelving's story.

Another unusual aspect is the omniscient narrator in the text. The narrator is also obtrusive and gives clues which appear clear only at the end when the reader discovers the real identity of Tom.

With this omniscient narrator he can connect various adventures and make comments on the story. In fact we have a lot of digressions throughout the novel. They also comment the English society of the time.

The novel, despite the omniscience and the digressions, is not didactic. The tone is tempered with irony and humor.

The theatre also influenced Twelving in

writing his novel. We have some round characters like Tom and Lophis, but there are also stocks taken from the drama.