

The Role of Humor, Irony & Satire in Literature

Adams, Douglas – Douglas Noel Adams (1952-2001) was an English author, scriptwriter, essayist, humorist, satirist and dramatist best known for *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, which began on radio and developed into a "trilogy" of five books (which sold more than fifteen million copies during his lifetime) as well as a television series, a comic book series, a computer game, and a feature film that was completed after Adams' death, as well as being adapted for live theatre.

Amis, Kingsley – Sir Kingsley William Amis, CBE (1922-1995) was an English novelist, poet, critic, and teacher. He wrote more than twenty novels, three collections of poetry, short stories, radio and television scripts, and books of social and literary criticism. His works include *The Folks That Live on the Hill*, *The King's English: A Guide to Modern Usage*, and *Lucky Jim*. More than just a merciless satire of cloistered college life and stuffy postwar manners, *Lucky Jim* is an attack on the forces of boredom, whatever form they may take, and a work of art that at once distills and extends an entire tradition of English comic writing, from Fielding and Dickens through Wodehouse and Waugh.

Aristophanes – Aristophanes (450?-388? BC) was a prolific and much acclaimed comic playwright of ancient Greece, sometimes referred to as the Father of Comedy. Eleven of his forty plays have come down to us virtually complete (along with up to with 1,000 brief fragments of other works) and are the only real examples we have of a genre of comic drama known as Old Comedy. Aristophanes' works recreate the life of ancient Athens perhaps more convincingly than those of any other author, although his biting satire and ridicule of his contemporaries often came close to slander. His works include *The Clouds*, *The Wasps*, *The Birds*, *Lysistrata*, and *Peace*.

Baker, Russell – Russell Baker (1925-) is an American journalist, humorist and biographer whose wit has been compared to that of Mark Twain. In 1979, Baker received his first Pulitzer Prize for distinguished commentary in his "Observer" column for the New York Times (1962 to 1998). His 1983 autobiography, *Growing Up*, earned him a second Pulitzer. In 1993, he began hosting the PBS television series, *Masterpiece Theatre*. Other works include *There's a Country in my Cellar* and *So This is Depravity*.

Beckett, Samuel – Samuel Barclay Beckett (1906-1989) was an Irish avant-garde novelist, playwright, theatre director, and poet, and winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1969. He lived in Paris for most of his adult life and wrote in both English and French. Beckett's work offers a tragicomic outlook on human existence, often coupled with black comedy and gallows humour. Beckett's first novel, *Murphy*, is a comic tale with a philosophical problem that Beckett was trying to solve. Beckett reached a much wider public through his plays, including *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame*, *Krapp's Last Tape*, and *Happy Days*. The same themes found in the novels appear in these plays in a more condensed and accessible form.

Bierce, Ambrose – Ambrose Gwinnett Bierce (1842-1914) was an American editorialist, journalist, short story writer, fabulist and satirist. He is most well-known for his wit and sardonic view of human nature, particularly in *The Devil's Dictionary*. His most famous and widely-read short story is *The Occurrence at Owl Creek*. He is also remembered because nobody knows what happened to him. He disappeared into the whirlpool of the Mexican Revolution in December 1913.

Bodett, Tom – Thomas Edward Bodett (1955-) is an American author, politician, voice actor, and radio host. He writes with honesty and good humor of ordinary, everyday events and made his national broadcasting debut in 1984 on NPR's evening news program *All Things Considered*. His works include *As Far as You Can Go Without a Passport: The View from the End of the Road* and *Small Comforts: More Comments and Comic Pieces*.

- Bryson, Bill** – William McGuire "Bill" Bryson, OBE, HonFRS (1951-) is a best-selling Anglo-American author of books on travel, the English language, science, and other non-fiction topics. His works include *The Lost Continent*, his first travel book in which he chronicles a trip in his mother's Chevy around small-town America, *Neither Here nor There*, an account of his first trip around Europe, and *Notes from a Small Island*, which won the 2003 World Book Day National Poll to find the book which best represented modern England. He has also written several highly-praised books on the English language, including *Mother Tongue* and *Made in America*. When he turned his attention to science, the bestseller *A Short History of Nearly Everything* was lauded with critical acclaim and was shortlisted for the Samuel Johnson Prize, before going on to win the Aventis Prize for Science Books and the Descartes Science Communication Prize. His next book, *The Life and Times of the Thunderbolt Kid*, is a memoir of growing up in 1950s America.
- Byron, Lord** – George Gordon Byron (1788-1824) was an English Romantic poet and satirist whose poetry and personality captured the imagination of Europe. Renowned as the “gloomy egoist” of his autobiographical poem *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, he is now more generally esteemed for the satiric realism of *Don Juan*. He is known for his amorous lifestyle and his brilliant use of the English language.
- Buchwald, Art** – Art Buchwald (1925-2007) was an American humorist best known for his long-running column of political satire and commentary in *The Washington Post*, syndicated in over 500 newspapers. He also wrote more than 30 books and received the Pulitzer Prize for Outstanding Commentary in 1982. His works include *I'll Always Have Paris* and *Leaving Home: A Memoir*.
- Buckley, Christopher** – Christopher Buckley graduated cum laude from Yale University in 1976 and became managing editor of *Esquire* magazine at age 24. At 29, he became chief speechwriter to the Vice-President George H.W. Bush. Since 1989 he has been founder and editor-in-chief of *Forbes Life* magazine. He is the author of twelve books, most of them national bestsellers. His works include *The Relic Master* and *Thank You for Not Smoking*.
- Butler, Samuel** – Samuel Butler (1835-1902) was the iconoclastic English author of the Utopian satirical novel *Erewhon*, which foreshadowed the collapse of the Victorian illusion of eternal progress, and the semi-autobiographical *The Way of All Flesh*, published posthumously in 1903 and generally considered his masterpiece. *The Way of All Flesh* earned the praise of George Bernard Shaw who deemed Butler "the greatest English writer of the latter half of the nineteenth century." In other studies, he examined Christian orthodoxy, evolutionary thought, and Italian art.
- Carroll, Lewis** – Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (1832-1898), better known by his pen name Lewis Carroll, was an English writer, mathematician, logician, Anglican deacon, and photographer. Best known for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), Carroll published several other “nonsense” works and wrote a number of pamphlets satirizing university affairs.
- Chaucer, Geoffrey** – Geoffrey Chaucer (1343?-1400) was widely considered the greatest English poet of the Middle Age. He pioneered many recognizably “modern” novelistic techniques, including psychologically complex characters. Perhaps the chief characteristics of Chaucer's works are their variety in subject matter, genre, tone, and style and in the complexities presented concerning the human pursuit of a sensible existence. Yet his writings also consistently reflect an all-pervasive humour combined with serious and tolerant consideration of important philosophical questions. His works include *The Canterbury Tales*, *Troilus and Criseyde*, *Parlement of Foules*, and *The Legend of Good Women*.
- Clouston, Al** – Alwyn Vey Clouston (1910-2004) was born in St. John's, Newfoundland. His fifty years in business life and traveling about the island gave him ample opportunity to collect and retell a wealth of folklore humour. His works include *When I Grow Too Old to Laugh...Shoot Me* and *I'se The B'y: From Newfoundland with A New Catch of Yarns*.

- Cutler, Ivor** – Ivor Cutler (1923-2006) was a Scottish poet, songwriter and humorist. He became known for his regular performances on BBC radio in the Beatles' *Magical Mystery Tour* film in 1967. Cutler was an anti-intellectual and noted eccentric. His works include *Life in a Scotch Sitting Room* and *Befriend a Bacterium*, a collection of the sticky labels he used to communicate, including "kindly disregard," reserved for official correspondence, and "to remove this label take it off," designed to confuse pedants.
- Dahl, Roald** – Roald Dahl (1916-1990) was a British novelist, short story writer and screenwriter of Norwegian descent who rose to prominence in the 1940's. In addition to his children's stories, such as *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and *Matilda*, he had a successful parallel career as the writer of macabre adult short stories, usually with a dark sense of humour and a surprise ending. *The Way Up to Heaven* tells the story of a put-upon wife leaves her husband stuck between floors in the elevator of their Manhattan townhouse while she goes to Paris for six weeks. *The Lamb to the Slaughter* is the story of a wife who kills her unfaithful husband by beating him over the head with a frozen leg of lamb, which she then offers to the police detectives who come to investigate.
- Dickens, Charles** – Charles John Huffam Dickens (1812-1870) was an English writer of novels, short stories, plays, and several non-fiction books. He created some of the world's best-known fictional characters and was regarded by many as the greatest novelist of the Victorian era. Dickens' comedy rests on his freshness of observation. When the talentless Infant Phenomenon (*Nicholas Nickleby*) is reported to have "been grinning through artificial flowers at five people and a baby in the pit, and two boys in the gallery, every night" for years, and, moreover, has "been kept up late every night, and put upon an unlimited allowance of gin-and-water from infancy, to prevent her growing tall," we know that we are in the company of someone who sees things clearly.
- Ephron, Nora** – Nora Ephron (1941-2012), born in New York City and raised in Los Angeles, was a talented writer and director. Gifted with a sharp wit, Ephron first made her mark as an essayist before transitioning into screenwriting, earning her an Academy Award nomination for *Silkwood* (1983). She also wrote the screenplay for the romantic comedy classic *When Harry Met Sally*. Later, she wrote and directed *Sleepless in Seattle*, *You've Got Mail*, and *Julie & Julia*. Her "wickedly funny" books include *I Feel Bad About My Neck* and *I Remember Nothing (and Other Reflections)*.
- Ferris, Joshua** – Joshua Ferris (1974-) is the author of *Then We Came to the End*, a comedy about the American workplace told in the first-person plural, *To Rise Again at a Decent Hour*, and *The Unnamed*, as well as a story collection, *The Dinner Party*, on topics such as the modern tribulations of marriage, ambition, and the fear of missing out. He was a finalist for the National Book Award, winner of the Barnes and Noble Discover Award and the PEN/Hemingway Award, short-listed for the Man Booker Prize, and winner of the International Dylan Thomas Prize. He was named one of *The New Yorker's* "20 Under 40" writers in 2010.
- Fry, Stephen** – Stephen John Fry (1957-) is an English comedian, writer, actor, humourist, novelist, poet, columnist, filmmaker, television personality and technophile. His works include *The Ode Less Travelled: Unlocking the Poet Within*, *Moab Is My Washpot* (the first of three memoirs), and *Stephen Fry in America*.
- Gilbert, William S.** – Sir William Schwenck Gilbert (1836-1911) was an English playwright and humorist best known for his 25-year collaboration with Sir Arthur Sullivan in comic operas. The most famous of these include *H.M.S. Pinafore*, *The Pirates of Penzance*, and one of the most frequently performed works in the history of musical theatre, *The Mikado*. Lines from these works have become part of the English language. Gilbert's plays inspired other dramatists, including Oscar Wilde and George Bernard Shaw, and his comic operas with Sullivan inspired the later development of American musical theatre, especially influencing Broadway librettists and lyricists.

Goldman, William – William Goldman (1931) is an American novelist, playwright, and screenwriter. He came to prominence in the 1950s as a novelist before turning to writing for film. At our 2017 Spring Luncheon, Shelley Youngblut strongly recommended *The Princess Bride*. He has won two Academy Awards for his screenplays, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* and *All the President's Men*.

Heller, Joseph – Joseph Heller (1923-1999), the son of poor Jewish parents from Russia, was an American author of novels, short stories, plays and screenplays. His best-known work is the novel *Catch-22*, a satire on war and bureaucracy, whose title has become a synonym for an absurd or contradictory choice. Among his other works are *Good as Gold* (a comic novel), *Closing Time*, and *Picture This* (a satirical look at the world of art and museums).

Huxley, Aldous – Aldous Leonard Huxley (1894-1963) was an English novelist and critic gifted with an acute and far-ranging intelligence. His works are notable for their wit and pessimistic satire, though he remains best known for one novel, *Brave New World*, a model for much dystopian science fiction that followed.

Jerome, Jerome K. – Jerome Klapka Jerome (1859-1927) was an English journalist, playwright, and author best known for the humorous travelogue *Three Men in a Boat*, a comic masterpiece that has never been out of print since it was first published in 1889. Other works include *Diary of a Pilgrimage* and *Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow*.

Keillor, Garrison – Gary Edward Keillor (1942-) is an American author, storyteller, humorist, columnist, musician, satirist, and radio personality (host *A Prairie Home Companion*). His works include *Leaving Home* and *Lake Wobegon Days*.

Laskas, Jeanne Marie – Jeanne Marie Laskas (1958-) is an American writer, journalist, and professor. According to the Lyceum Agency, she is one of the most incisive, wide-ranging, and appealing voices in contemporary journalism. Some readers know her from her trilogy of funny, intensely relatable memoirs: *Fifty Acres and a Poodle*, *The Exact Same Moon*, and *Growing Girls*, which chronicle her move from the city to a 50-acre sheep farm and the growth of her family as she and her husband travel to China to adopt their two daughters. Garnering comparisons to the work of Studs Terkel, *Hidden America: From Coal Miners to Cowboys, an Extraordinary Exploration of the Unseen People Who Make This Country Work* is infused with Laskas's trademark wit and sparkling sense of humor, making it an engrossing and deeply affecting read.

Leacock, Stephen – Born in England, Stephen P. H Butler Leacock, FRSC (1869-1944) moved to Canada at age 6 and became a teacher, political scientist, writer, and humorist. Between the years 1915 and 1925, he was the best-known English-speaking humorist in the world. His works include *Literary Lapses*, *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*, and *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich*.

Lebowitz, Fran – Frances Ann Lebowitz (1950-) is an American author and public speaker. She is known for her sardonic social commentary on American life as filtered through her New York City sensibilities. Some reviewers have called her a modern-day Dorothy Parker. Her works include *Metropolitan Life* and *Social Studies*.

Lodge, David – Professor David Lodge (1935-), author, playwright and screenwriter, is a graduate and Honorary Fellow of University College London. He is Emeritus Professor of English Literature at the University of Birmingham, where he taught from 1960 until 1987, when he retired to write full-time. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, was Chairman of the Judges for the Booker Prize for Fiction in 1989, and is the author of numerous works of literary criticism, mainly about the English and American novel, and literary theory. Among his books are *The Art of Fiction*, *Paradise News*, *The British Museum is Falling Down*, and *The Campus Trilogy*.

Mencken, H.L. – H. L. Mencken (1880-1956) was an American journalist and author. Skilled in satire, he was famous for the pungent criticism he aimed at all complacent attitudes and for his vigorous attacks on the shams and stuffiness of his day. His range and Mark Twain-like skepticism leave the reader sometimes convulsed with laughter, sometimes completely enraged, but always transfixed with admiration. Among his works are *Treatise on the Gods*, *In Defense of Woman*, and his autobiography, *Happy Days*.

Meredith, George – George Meredith (1828-1909) was an English novelist and poet during the Victorian Era. As an advisor to publishers, Meredith is credited with helping Thomas Hardy start his literary career, and was an early associate of J. M. Barrie. Meredith defines “comedy” primarily by its rarity in British and continental literature, accounting for this absence in part by explaining that comedy demands a particular sociocultural setting. Meredith’s ideal comedy is intellectual; it is “the humour of the mind,” and therefore requires a society “wherein ideas are current and the perceptions quick.” For him, the “thoughtful laughter” of comedy was to serve as a corrective to the “unreason and sentimentalism” that permeated British society; its goal was to create a more rational, balanced, and progressive culture while avoiding the emotionally loaded extremes of satire (which Meredith viewed as meanspirited) and of conciliatory humor. His works include *The Egoist*, “An Essay on Comedy,” *The Shaving of Shagpat*, and *Diana of the Crossways*.

Milne, A.A. – Alan Alexander Milne (1882-1956) was an English novelist, poet and playwright. He began writing for the literary magazine *Punch* in 1906, and his essays and humorous poetry were published in the magazine through 1914. During his military service, Milne wrote his first play, a one-act farce entitled *Wurzel-Flummery*. His comedies of the early 1920s, including *Mr. Pim Passes By* (1921) and *The Dover Road* (1921), were enthusiastically received by critics and audiences. He also penned a detective novel entitled *The Red House Mystery*, published in 1922. In his later years, he returned to writing for adults, publishing novels, short-story collections and a non-fiction, anti-war book entitled *Peace with Honour*. He wrote his autobiography, *It's Too Late Now*, in 1939. Milne's greatest and enduring successes, however, were his books *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926) and *The House at Pooh Corner* (1928).

Mitford, Nancy – Nancy Freeman-Mitford, CBE (1904-1973) was an English novelist, biographer and journalist. One of the renowned/controversial Mitford sisters and one of the "Bright Young Things/People" on the London social scene in the inter-war years, she is best remembered for her novels about upper-class life in England and France and for her sharp and often provocative wit. She also established a reputation for herself as a writer of popular historical biographies. She matched wits and exchanged insults in more than 500 letters with Evelyn Waugh, a continuous irreverent dialogue that stretched for twenty-two years. Her works include *The Pursuit of Love*, *Love in a Cold Climate*, *Don't Tell Alfred*, *Wigs on the Green*, and *Pigeon Pie*.

Nicholls, David – David Nicholls (1966-) is an English author, screenwriter, and actor. While script-editing at London Weekend Television and Tiger Aspect Productions, he began to write, developing an adaptation of Sam Shepard’s stage-play, *Simpatico*. He also wrote his first original script, a situation comedy about frustrated waiters, *Waiting*, which was later optioned by the BBC. *Simpatico* was turned into a feature film in 1999, and this allowed David to start writing full-time. He has been twice nominated for BAFTA awards and his first novel, *Starter for Ten*, was featured on the first Richard and Judy Book Club. An article in *The Telegraph* says, “The novelist has an uncanny ability to make us laugh out loud, but also care passionately about his characters” and calls him “a writer who gets to the heart of who we are.”

- Parker, Dorothy** – Dorothy Parker (1893-1967) was an American writer and poet best known for her caustic wit, wisecracks, and sharp eye for 20th century urban foibles. She rose to acclaim for her literary output in such venues as *The New Yorker* and as a founding member of the Algonquin Round Table. Following the breakup of the circle, Parker traveled to Hollywood to pursue screenwriting. Her successes there, including two Academy Award nominations, were curtailed as her involvement in left-wing politics led to a place on the Hollywood blacklist. Her works include *The Ladies of the Corridor* and *Here We Are*.
- Perelmen, S. J.** – Sidney Joseph Perelman (1904-1979) was a Jewish-American humorist, author, and screenwriter best known for his humorous short pieces in *The New Yorker*. He also wrote for several other magazines, as well as books, scripts, and screenplays. His works include *Acres and Pains*, his unique testament to the joys and tribulations of country living, and *The Swiss Family Perelman*, an unforgettable account of his trip around the world with his wife, son, daughter, and a cello.
- Pratchett, Terry** – Sir Terence David John "Terry" Pratchett, OBE (1948-2015) was an English author of fantasy novels, especially comical works. He is best known for his global bestselling Discworld series, the first of which, *The Colour of Magic*, was published in 1983. His profoundly irreverent, bestselling novels have garnered him a revered position in the halls of parody next to the likes of Mark Twain, Kurt Vonnegut, Douglas Adams, and Carl Hiaasen. His books have been widely adapted for stage and screen, and he was the winner of multiple prizes as well as being awarded a knighthood for services to literature.
- Rakoff, David** – David Rakoff (1964-2012) was an essayist, journalist, and actor. Originally from Canada, he obtained dual citizenship and resided for much of his life in New York City. His essays have been collected in the books *Fraud* and *Don't Get Too Comfortable* and are largely autobiographical and humorous, often weaving in his Oscar Wilde-worthy cultural criticism.
- Roth, Philip** – Philip Milton Roth (1933-) is an American novelist. He gained early literary fame with *Goodbye, Columbus* (winner of 1960's National Book Award), cemented it with his 1969 bestseller *Portnoy's Complaint*, and has continued to write critically-acclaimed works, many of which feature his fictional alter ego, Nathan Zuckerman. The Zuckerman novels began with *The Ghost Writer* in 1979, and include *American Pastoral* (winner of the Pulitzer Prize). In May 2011, he won the Man Booker International Prize for lifetime achievement in fiction.
- Rowland, Helen** – Helen Rowland (1875–1950) was an American journalist and humorist. For many years she wrote a column in the *New York World* newspaper called "Reflections of a Bachelor Girl." Many of her pithy insights from these columns were published in book form, including *Reflections of a Bachelor Girl*, *The Rubáiyát of a Bachelor*, and *A Guide to Men*.
- Saunders, George** – Before receiving an MA with an emphasis in creative writing in 1988, George Saunders worked in Rochester, NY for an environmental engineering firm as a technical writer and geophysical engineer, in Sumatra on an oil exploration geophysics crew, as a doorman in Beverly Hills, a roofer in Chicago, a convenience store clerk, a guitarist in a Texas country-and-western band, and a knuckle-puller in a West Texas slaughterhouse. He has been an Assistant Professor, Syracuse University Creative Writing Program, since 1997. His works include *Pastoralia*, *In Persuasion Nation*, and *The Braindead Megaphone*.
- Sedaris, David** – David Sedaris (1956-) is a Grammy Award-nominated American humorist and radio contributor. He published his first collection of essays and short stories, *Barrel Fever*, in 1994. Each of his four subsequent essay collections have become *New York Times* Best Sellers. Much of Sedaris' humor is autobiographical and self-deprecating, and it often concerns his family life, his middle-class upbringing in the suburbs of Raleigh, North Carolina, Greek heritage, various jobs, education, drug use, homosexuality, and his life in France.

Shakespeare, William – William Shakespeare (1564-1616) wrote plays that capture the complete range of human emotion and conflict. During his early period, he wrote several comedies – the witty romance *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the romantic *Merchant of Venice*, the witty *Much Ado About Nothing*, the charming *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*. Other plays, possibly written before 1600, include *Titus Andronicus*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. In his final period, he wrote several tragicomedies, including *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*. Though graver in tone than the comedies, they are not the dark tragedies of *King Lear* or *Macbeth* because they end with reconciliation and forgiveness. The English language is littered with quotes and phrases that originated from his work, and he introduced upwards of 1,700 original words to the English language, as well as inventing the poetic device, iambic pentameter.

Shaw, George Bernard – George Bernard Shaw, (1856- 1950) was an Irish comic dramatist, literary critic, socialist propagandist, and winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1925. His works include *Pygmalion*, *Heartbreak House*, *Major Barbara*, *Saint Joan*, and *Man and Superman*.

Skelton, John – John Skelton (1460-1529) was a Tudor poet and satirist of both political and religious subjects whose individual poetic style of short rhyming lines, based on natural speech rhythms, has been given the name of “Skeltonics.” He was a tutor to King Henry VIII in the 1490s. His works include *The Book of Phillip Sparrow*, *From Colin Clout*, *A Prayer to the Father of Heaven*, and *To Mistress Margaret Hussey*.

Swift, Jonathan – Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) was an Anglo-Irish satirist, essayist, political pamphleteer, poet and cleric. *Gulliver Travels* (first published under the pseudonym Lemuel Gulliver) is one the finest satirical works in English literature. Isaac Bickerstaff was another pseudonym used as part of a hoax to predict the death of then famous Almanac-maker and astrologer John Partridge.

Thackeray, W. M. - William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863) was an English novelist who created unrivaled panoramas of English upper-middle-class life, crowded with memorable characters displaying the realistic mixture of virtue, vanity, and vice. His writing was filled with wit, humor, satire, and pathos. His works include *The Memoirs of Barry Lyndon*, *Vanity Fair*, *Pendennis*, *The History of Henry Esmond*, *The Newcomers*, and *The Virginians*.

Thurber, James – James Grover Thurber (1894-1961) was an American cartoonist, author, humorist, journalist, playwright, and celebrated wit, whose well-known and highly acclaimed writings and drawings picture the urban man as one who escapes into fantasy because he is befuddled and beset by a world that he neither created nor understands. A number of his short stories were made into movies, including *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* (1947), which is also regarded as one of the best short stories written in the twentieth century.

Toole, John Kennedy – John Kennedy Toole (1937-1969) was an American novelist from New Orleans best known for his novel, *A Confederacy of Dunces*. His novels remained unpublished during his lifetime. Some years after his death by suicide, Toole's mother brought it to the attention of the novelist Walker Percy, who ushered the book into print. In 1981, Toole was posthumously awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. He wrote *The Neon Bible* for a literary contest at the age of sixteen. The manuscript languished in a drawer and became the subject of a legal battle among Toole's heirs. It was only in 1989, thirty-five years after it was written and twenty years after Toole's suicide, that this amazingly accomplished and evocative novel was freed for publication.

Twain, Mark – Mark Twain is the pseudonym of Samuel Langhorne Clemens (1835-1910), American writer and humorist, whose best work is characterized by broad, often irreverent humor or biting social satire. Twain's writing is also known for realism of place and language, memorable characters, and hatred of hypocrisy and oppression.

Vonnegut, Kurt – Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. (1922-2007) was an American novelist, satirist, graphic artist, and a self-proclaimed humanist and socialist. He is known for works blending satire, black comedy and science fiction, such as *Slaughterhouse-Five*, *Cat's Cradle*, and *Breakfast of Champions*.

Vowell, Sarah – Sarah Jane Vowell (1969-) is an American author, journalist, humorist, and commentator, often referred to as a "social observer." Five nonfiction books on American history and culture have been on the *New York Times*' bestselling list. Her works include *Unfamiliar Fishes*, *Take the Cannoli*, and *Assassination Vacation*.

Waterhouse, Keith – Keith Spencer Waterhouse, CBE (1929-2009) was a British novelist, newspaper columnist, and the writer of many television series. He grew up in poverty on a council estate on the outskirts of Hunslet, Leeds, but he loved books and fiddled extra tickets at various public libraries so that he could exceed the weekly borrowing quota. He campaigned mightily to preserve the correct usage of the apostrophe. His works include *Billy Liar*, which captures brilliantly the claustrophobic atmosphere of a small town, and *Soho*, a fast, funny and superbly crafted novel about London's liveliest quarter, past and present, and of its eccentric inhabitants.

Waugh, Evelyn – Arthur Evelyn St. John Waugh (1903-1966) was an English writer of novels, biographies, and travel books. He was also a prolific journalist and reviewer of books. Waugh is recognized as one of the great prose stylists of the English language in the 20th century and is regarded by many as the most brilliant satirical novelist of his day. His works include *Brideshead Revisited*, *Vile Bodies*, *Scoop*, *A Handful of Dust*, and *Black Mischief*.

White, E. B. – E. B. White (1899-1985) was one of the most influential modern American essayists, largely through his work for the *New Yorker* magazine. He also wrote two children's classics and revised William S. Strunk's *The Elements of Style*, widely used in college English courses. He was offered a teaching position at the University of Minnesota but turned it down because his goal was to become a writer. His works include *Here is Manhattan*, a perceptive, funny, and nostalgic stroll around Manhattan, and *One Man's Meat*.

Wilde, Oscar – Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde (1854 1900) was born and raised in Dublin, Ireland. Wilde studied at Trinity College in Dublin and at Magdalen College in Oxford, England, before settling down in London and having a long, successful career as a poet, playwright, and author. Wilde is best known for his novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and for his satirical play *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

Wodehouse, P.G. – Sir Pelham Grenville Wodehouse, KBE (1881-1975) was a comic writer who enjoyed enormous popular success during a career of more than seventy years and continues to be widely read. Despite the political and social upheavals that occurred during his life, much of which was spent in France and the United States, Wodehouse's main canvas remained that of prewar English upper-class society, reflecting his birth, education, and youthful writing career. He is best known for the *Jeeves* and *Blandings Castle* novels and short stories.

Additional suggestions:

- <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2009/jan/19/1000-novels-comedy-part-one>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2009/jan/19/1000-novels-comedy-part-two>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2009/jan/19/1000-novels-comedy-part-three>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2009/jan/19/1000-novels-comedy-part-four>