

## Six writers who had a considerable impact on Jane Austen's writing

**Samuel Richardson** (1689-1751) wrote *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* in 1754. This was one of Jane Austen's favourite novels. She began work on a little comic play to amuse friends and family - *Sir Charles Grandison* - when she was about 18 years old.

**Observation** made by a character in Richardson's *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* Vol 3, l. 27: "Women do not often fall in love with philosophers."

**Samuel (Dr) Johnson** (1709-84) wrote *A Dictionary of the English Language* in 1755. Jane Austen also admired him for his many other literary accomplishments as a biographer, literary critic, poet, novelist and an enthusiastic contributor to Anthologies of Essays.

**Observation** made in E. 67, *The Adventurer* (1753): "Thus..... our desires always increase with our possessions; the knowledge that something remains yet unenjoyed, impairs our enjoyment of the good before us."

**Frances Burney** (1752-1840) wrote *Evelina* (1778), *Cecilia* (1782) and *Camilla* (1796), among other works. She lived her young days in London and mixed with intellectuals and high society, using her experience of a complex social life in her fiction as well as in her letters and journals. Her novels were much admired by Jane Austen.

**Observation** made by a character in *Cecilia*: "The whole of this unfortunate business..... has been the result of Pride and Prejudice."

**George Crabbe** (1754-1832) wrote realistic portraits of country life in the poetic style of the Augustan Age. One of his most famous poems is *The Borough* (1810). He was Jane Austen's favourite poet and she followed his literary example in focusing on two or three families in a country village.

**Observation** made by Crabbe in his poem *The Village* (1783):

"By such examples taught, I paint the cot  
As Truth will paint it, and as Bards will not."

**Ann Radcliffe** (1764-1823) wrote adventure stories full of suspense and terror, which were very popular. *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) was much admired and imitated, although Jane Austen was one of those who used imitation to mock this Gothic romance.

**Observation** in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*: "(He had) a look so solemn...which was mingled with a certain wild expression, that partook more of horror than of any other character."

**Maria Edgeworth** (1768-1849) wrote *Castle Rackrent* (1800) and *Belinda* (1801), among other regional and historical novels, often introducing a theme of social realism. The heroine of Jane Austen's novel 'Northanger Abbey' singles out *Belinda* for special praise.

**Observation** made in the last chapter of *Belinda*: "....in fact, her imagination, exalted by solitude and romance, embodied and became enamoured of a phantom."