**Tamil Literature**

**Tamil literature** includes a collection of literary works that have come from a tradition spanning more than two thousand years. The oldest extant works show signs of maturity indicating an even longer period of evolution. Contributors to the Tamil literature are mainly from [Tamil people](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tamil_people) from south India, including the land now comprising [Tamil Nadu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tamil_Nadu), [Kerala](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kerala), [Eelam Tamils](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sri_Lankan_Tamil_people) from [Sri Lanka](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sri_Lanka), as well as the [Tamil diaspora](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tamil_diaspora).

The history of Tamil literature follows the [history of Tamil Nadu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Tamil_Nadu), closely following the social, economical, political and cultural trends of various periods. The early [Sangam literature](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sangam_Literature), dated before 300 BCE, contain anthologies of various poets dealing with many aspects of life, including love, war, social values and religion.[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tamil_literature#cite_note-sangam_before_300_bc-1) This was followed by the early epics and moral literature, authored by [Vaishnavite](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vaishnavism%22%20%5Co%20%22Vaishnavism), [Shaivite](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shaivism), [Ājīvika](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C4%80j%C4%ABvika%22%20%5Co%20%22%C4%80j%C4%ABvika), [Jain](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jainism) and [Buddhist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhism) authors and poets lasting up to the 5th century CE. From the 6th to 12th century CE, the Tamil devotional poems written by [Alvars](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alvars) (sages of [Vaishnavism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vaishnavism)) and [Nayanmars](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nayanmars%22%20%5Co%20%22Nayanmars) (sages of [Shaivism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shaivism)) and, heralded the great [Bhakti movement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bhakti_movement) which later engulfed the entire Indian subcontinent. During the medieval era some of the grandest of Tamil literary classics like [Kambaramayanam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kambaramayanam%22%20%5Co%20%22Kambaramayanam) and [Periya Puranam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Periya_Puranam%22%20%5Co%20%22Periya%20Puranam) were authored and many poets were patronized by the imperial [Chola](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chola%22%20%5Co%20%22Chola) and [Pandya](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pandya) empires. The later medieval period saw many assorted minor literary works and also contributions by a few [Muslim](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tamil_Muslim) and European authors.[[*citation needed*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed)]

A revival of Tamil literature took place from the late 19th century when works of religious and philosophical nature were written in a style that made it easier for the common people to enjoy. The modern Tamil literary movement started with [Subramania Bharathi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subramania_Bharathi%22%20%5Co%20%22Subramania%20Bharathi), the multifaceted Indian Nationalist poet and author, and was quickly followed up by many who began to utilize the power of literature in influencing the masses. With growth of literacy, Tamil prose began to blossom and mature. Short stories and novels began to appear. Modern Tamil literary criticism also evolved.

English Literature

The body of written works produced in the [English language](https://www.britannica.com/topic/English-language) by inhabitants of the [British Isles](https://www.britannica.com/place/British-Isles) (including Ireland) from the 7th century to the present day. The major literatures written in English outside the British Isles are treated separately under [American literature](https://www.britannica.com/art/American-literature), [Australian literature](https://www.britannica.com/art/Australian-literature), [Canadian literature](https://www.britannica.com/art/Canadian-literature), and [New Zealand literature](https://www.britannica.com/art/New-Zealand-literature).

English [literature](https://www.britannica.com/art/literature) has sometimes been stigmatized as [insular](https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/insular). It can be argued that no single English [novel](https://www.britannica.com/art/novel) attains the universality of the Russian writer [Leo Tolstoy’s](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Leo-Tolstoy) War and Peace or the French writer [Gustave Flaubert’s](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Gustave-Flaubert) Madame Bovary. Yet in the Middle Ages the [Old English literature](https://www.britannica.com/art/Anglo-Saxon-literature) of the subjugated Saxons was leavened by the [Latin](https://www.britannica.com/art/Latin-literature/Medieval-Latin-literature#ref12737) and [Anglo-Norman writings](https://www.britannica.com/art/Anglo-Norman-literature), eminently foreign in origin, in which the churchmen and the Norman conquerors expressed themselves. From this combination emerged a flexible and subtle linguistic instrument exploited by [Geoffrey Chaucer](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Geoffrey-Chaucer) and brought to supreme application by [William Shakespeare](https://www.britannica.com/biography/William-Shakespeare). During the [Renaissance](https://www.britannica.com/event/Renaissance) the renewed interest in Classical learning and values had an important effect on English literature, as on all the arts; and ideas of Augustan literary propriety in the 18th century and reverence in the 19th century for a less specific, though still selectively viewed, [Classical antiquity](https://www.britannica.com/event/Classical-antiquity) continued to shape the literature. All three of these impulses derived from a foreign source, namely the Mediterranean basin. The [Decadents](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Decadents) of the late 19th century and the Modernists of the early 20th looked to continental European individuals and movements for inspiration. Nor was attraction toward European intellectualism dead in the late 20th century, for by the mid-1980s the approach known as structuralism, a phenomenon predominantly French and German in origin, infused the very study of English literature itself in a host of published critical studies and university departments. Additional influence was exercised by deconstructionist analysis, based largely on the work of French philosopher [Jacques Derrida](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jacques-Derrida).

**Ancient Literature**

**Ancient literature** comprises religious and scientific documents, tales, poetry and plays, royal edicts and declarations, and other forms of writing that were recorded on a variety of media, including stone, clay tablets, papyri, palm leaves, and metal. Before the spread of writing, [oral literature](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oral_literature) did not always survive well, but some texts and fragments have persisted. One can conclude that an unknown number of written works too have likely not survived the ravages of time and are therefore lost.

**Incomplete list of ancient texts**

**Bronze Age**

Early Bronze Age: 3rd millennium BC (approximate dates shown). The earliest written literature dates from about 2600 BC (classical [Sumerian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sumerian_language)).[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_literature#cite_note-1) The earliest literary author known by name is [Enheduanna](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enheduanna%22%20%5Co%20%22Enheduanna), a Sumerian priestess and public figure dating to c. the 24th century BC.[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_literature#cite_note-2) Certain literary texts are difficult to date, such as the [*Egyptian Book of the Dead*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egyptian_Book_of_the_Dead), which was recorded in the [*Papyrus of Ani*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papyrus_of_Ani) around 1240 BC, but other versions of the book probably date from about the 18th century BC.

* 2600 BC: Sumerian texts from [Abu Salabikh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abu_Salabikh), including the [*Instructions of Shuruppak*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Instructions_of_Shuruppak) and the [*Kesh temple hymn*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kesh_temple_hymn)[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_literature#cite_note-3)[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_literature#cite_note-4)[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_literature#cite_note-Hansencentret2002-5)[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_literature#cite_note-BlackBlack2006-6)
* 2600 BC: Egyptian *The Life of [Metjen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metjen%22%20%5Co%20%22Metjen)* from [Saqqara](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saqqara)[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_literature#cite_note-towi-7)
* 2500 BC: Egyptian [*Diary of Merer*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diary_of_Merer)[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_literature#cite_note-Smithsonian-8) and [Instruction of Hardjedef](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Instruction_of_Hardjedef)
* 2500 BC: Sumerian [*Hymn to Enlil*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hymn_to_Enlil)[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_literature#cite_note-Borr%C3%A1sBarcelona2000-9), [*Enlil and Ninlil*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enlil_and_Ninlil)*, and* [*Debate between sheep and grain*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Debate_between_sheep_and_grain)[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_literature#cite_note-Kramer1964-10)
* 2400 BC: Sumerian [*Code of Urukagina*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Code_of_Urukagina)[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_literature#cite_note-11)
* 2400 BC – 2300 BC: Egyptian [*Pyramid Texts*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pyramid_Texts), including the [*Cannibal Hymn*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pyramid_Texts#Cannibal_hymn)[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_literature#cite_note-12)
* 2375 BC: Egyptian [*The Maxims of Ptahhotep*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Maxims_of_Ptahhotep)
* 2283 BC: Egyptian [*Palermo Stone*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palermo_Stone)
* 2270 BC: Sumerian *[Enheduanna's Hymns](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enheduanna%22%20%5Co%20%22Enheduanna)*
* 2250 BC: Egyptian [*Autobiography of Weni*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Autobiography_of_Weni) and [*South Saqqara Stone*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Saqqara_Stone)
* 2250 BC – 2000 BC: Earliest Sumerian stories in the [*Epic of Gilgamesh*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epic_of_Gilgamesh)[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_literature#cite_note-Oxford_University_Press-13)[[14]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_literature#cite_note-14)
* 2200 BC: Egyptian [*Autobiography of Harkhuf*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Autobiography_of_Harkhuf)[[15]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_literature#cite_note-15)
* 2125 BC: Sumerian [*Building of Ningirsu's Temple*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gudea_cylinders)[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_literature#cite_note-Jacobsen1997-16)
* 2100 BC: Sumerian [*Curse of Agade*](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Curse_of_Agade&action=edit&redlink=1), [*Debate between bird and fish*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Debate_between_bird_and_fish)[[17]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_literature#cite_note-17), [*Inanna's Descent into the Underworld*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inanna), [*Self-praise of Shulgi*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Self-praise_of_Shulgi_%28Shulgi_D%29), [*Code of Ur-Nammu*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Code_of_Ur-Nammu), and [*Song of the hoe*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Song_of_the_hoe)[[18]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_literature#cite_note-Kramer1979-18)
* 2084 BC: Sumerian *[Sumerian King List](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sumerian_King_List%22%20%5Co%20%22Sumerian%20King%20List)*[[19]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_literature#cite_note-:9-19)
* 2050 BC: Egyptian [*The Satire of the Trades*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Satire_of_the_Trades)