

Virginia Woolf

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Childhood & Early Life



Adeline Virginia Stephen-Woolf



Talland house.

- Born 25 January 1882 to Sir Leslie Stephen (a historian and author) and Julia Prinsep Stephen (model and nurse)
- Raised in South Kensington, London in a family of ten
- Girls of family taught at home and in family's Victorian library while sons went to Oxford
- Woolf's parents were well connected socially and artistically
 - William Thackeray and George Henry Lewes, as well as many other noted thinkers knew Woolf's father
 - Mother's aunt was famous 19th century photographer Julia Margaret Cameron
- Talland House (the family summer home) faces Porthminster Bay and the Godrevy Lighthouse, which inspired her writing in *TTL*
- Woolf began writing young- started a family newspaper, the *Hyde Park Gate News*, to document her family's anecdotes

Mental Breakdown



Woolf's stepsister Stella and Woolf's mother.



- Sexually abused by her half-brothers George and Gerald Duckworth
- Starting in 1895 with her mother's death at age 13, followed two years later with the death of her stepsister and surrogate mother Stella
 - Her mother's death triggered her first mental breakdown
- Encouraged by her father, she began writing in 1900
- Her father died in 1905, causing another mental breakdown
- Shortly after, she and her family moved to Bloomsbury, where she would meet Leonard Woolf and started Bloomsbury Group
- Woolf is not mentally sane and has experienced lots of sexual trauma and downfalls of traditional Victorian family structure growing up in the Stephens household at this point

Writing Career & Bloomsbury



Married Life

- Married Leonard Woolf and founded the Hogarth Press together
- Began to notice that in people's daily lives, class positions and gender roles were very fixed, and church was considered very important
- Spanned the time after the transition from the Victorian world to the modern world
- Aimed to “reform” the standard for novels by creating multiple points of views and approaching writing more holistically
 - A Room of One's Own
 - Mrs. Dalloway



Leonard and Virginia Woolf.

Bloomsbury Group

- A circle of English writers, artists, philosophers, and intellectuals
- Discussed aesthetic and philosophical questions in a spirit of agnosticism
- Influenced by G.E. Moore's *Principia Ethica* and A.N. Whitehead and Bertrand Russell's *Principia Mathematica*
- The group included Virginia Woolf, E.M. Forster, Lytton Strachey, Clive Bell, Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant, John Maynard Keynes, Leonard Woolf, Desmond Macarthy, Arthur Waley, Saxon Sidney-Turner, Robert Trevelyan, Francis Birrell, J.T. Sheppard, Raymond Mortimer, and Stephen Tomlin



The Bloomsbury Group.

Purpose for Writing TTL



- Semi-autobiographical
- Written to explore her issues with her deceased parents and to explore themes like life and death
- She wrote this book while simultaneously working on other pieces
- The three parts of the novel reflect before, during, and after World War I
- *"Monday 21 March"*

My brain is ferociously active. I want to have at my books as if I were conscious of the lapse of time., age & death. Dear me, how lovely some parts of To The Lighthouse are! Soft & pliable, & I think deep & never a word wrong for a page at a time. This I feel about the dinner party, & the children in the boat ; but not of Lily on the lawn. That I do not much like. But I like the end." -A Journal Entry by Virginia Woolf

- Woolf had a lot of ups and downs while writing this novel
- She likes some parts and felt insecure about others

Later Life & Death





Woolf struggled with her mental health throughout her life, likely caused in part by the sexual abuse she suffered at the hands of her half brothers. At the start of WW2, following the destruction of her London home she became extremely depressed. This culminated in her filling her pockets with rocks and drowning herself in a river near her home. She left a suicide note for her husband, saying “I don’t think two people could be happier than we have been.”