



How Society Shapes the Stories We Write

KS4 ENGLISH LITERATURE

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Stories Reflect Their Times

Have you ever noticed that books, films, and plays from different eras feel quite different? That's because **every story is shaped by the society and time period in which it was written**. Writers don't create in a vacuum—they're influenced by the world around them, the problems people face, and what society cares about.

Think about how many **adventure stories** were written during the **Age of Exploration** (the 1500s and 1600s), when countries were sending explorers to discover new lands. Writers were excited about exploration and discovery, so their stories reflected that. Meanwhile, during wartime, many authors wrote stories about courage, sacrifice, and survival because those were the urgent themes of their society.

Think of it like a mirror—stories hold up a reflection of the society that creates them. If society is worried about something, that worry often appears in the stories people tell.

What Issues Matter to Writers?

Writers are deeply affected by the **big issues of their day**. During the **Industrial Revolution**, authors like Charles Dickens wrote about child labour and poverty because these were real problems in their society. When **slavery** was a major part of society, some writers challenged it through their stories, while others reflected the prejudices of their time.

Today, writers create stories about **climate change, social media, and equality** because these are things that matter to modern society. The **books, TV shows, and films** we see now are different from those written 50 or 100 years ago because society has changed.

Think of it like a thermometer—stories tell us what society's temperature is. They show us what people are worried about, excited about, or fighting against.

Who Gets to Tell Stories?

Society also decides whose stories get told and whose are left out. For a long time, **only stories by men were published**, and **stories by women, people of colour, and minority groups were rarely heard**. As society has changed and become more fair, we now hear many more voices and perspectives in literature.

This matters because **the stories society values shape how people think**. When only certain kinds of characters are shown as heroes, people start to believe only those kinds of people can be heroes in real life too.

The Two-Way Street

Here's something interesting: while society shapes stories, **stories also shape society**. A powerful novel or film can change how people think about an issue. Stories can make people care about problems they never noticed before. They can challenge unfair ideas and help society move forward.