

E. M. FORSTER

b. January 1, 1879

d. June 7, 1970

“If I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friend, I hope I should have the guts to betray my country.”

E. M. Forster was an internationally acclaimed writer. His classic works about 19th-century England were adapted into Oscar-winning films.

E. M. Forster was a prolific and internationally acclaimed writer. His works display his acute awareness of the social and political problems of his time and his belief in the power of human connection. Though best known for novels, he wrote numerous short stories and nonfiction works.

Forster grew up in London, England. An inheritance from his great-aunt allowed him to attend college and sustained his early writing career. Forster received his B.A. from King's College in Cambridge. After graduation, he and his mother traveled to Italy. This experience deeply influenced two of his first novels, “Where Angels Fear to Tread” (1905) and “A Room with a View” (1907).

Forster's novel “Howard's End” (1910) provided a sharp analysis of the upper-class British world. It is recognized as his greatest work. His next novel, “A Passage to India” (1924), won the James Tait Black Memorial Prize in 1924 and was named one of the 100 best novels published in the English language by Modern Library in 1998.

“Maurice,” which Forster wrote between 1913 and 1915, was not published until a year after his death, at the author's request. Written when homosexuality was illegal in England, the book revolved around a gay man and his relationships. Though unwilling to publish “Maurice,” Forster fought against the suppression of Radclyffe Hall's novel about a lesbian Englishwoman, “The Well of Loneliness” (1928).

In the 1980's and 1990's, Forster's novels were adapted for the big screen. According to The New York Times, “Forster displayed a genius for capturing the complex personalities expressed in the social manners of his day, and the best screen adaptations have done the same.” The film versions of “Howard's End” and “A Room with a View” each won three Oscars, and “A Passage to India” secured two more.

In 1934, Forster became the first president of the National Council for Civil Liberties, a human rights organization in England. A year before his death, Queen Elizabeth appointed Forster a member of England's Order of Merit, one of the highest national honors.



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