

# VIRGINIA WOOLF

b. January 25, 1882

d. March 28, 1941

## AUTHOR

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*"Language is wine upon the lips."*

Virginia Woolf was an accomplished 20th century English novelist and one of the founders of the modernist movement. She published nearly 500 essays and nine novels.

Born Adeline Virginia Stephen, she was privately tutored at home and never attended college. She inherited a love of literature from her father, Sir Leslie Stephen, who had an impressive library and was a magazine editor.

Woolf suffered emotional hardships from an early age. When she was 6, her stepbrother began molesting her. The abuse continued into her early adulthood. At 13, she suffered a mental breakdown following her mother's death. At 22, Woolf suffered a second breakdown when her father died.

Upon recovering, Woolf and her siblings moved to Bloomsbury in London. There she involved herself with the Bloomsbury Group, a cadre of intellectuals who met for discussion of politics, art and literature. She began her literary career teaching at Morley College and writing book reviews.

In 1912, Virginia married Leonard Woolf, a member of the Bloomsbury Group. The marriage was described as passionless, but loving. Together they founded the Hogarth Press and published significant books, including Mansfield's "Prelude," T.S. Elliot's "Poems" and her own book "Kew Gardens."



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Woolf had a number of close relationships with women. It is believed there was only one sexual relationship, which was with Vita Sackville-West, on whom she based the protagonist of her book "Orlando." Sackville-West's son described the novel as "the longest and most charming love letter in literature." "Orlando" was made into a movie in 1993.

Woolf's modernist style differed from other writers of the day. It concentrated more on communicating impressions and people's inner lives than recreating reality. It often included techniques such as stream-of-consciousness writing. Many of her works contain strong feminist themes, such as her essay "A Room of One's Own" where she wrote, "A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction."

Over the course of Woolf's life, she was treated for mental illness. She was likely suffering a mental breakdown at the time of her death. After weighing down her pockets with stones, she drowned herself in the River Ouse in Lewes, England. According to her suicide note, she feared her suffering would not end.

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