

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Virginia Woolf was born on 25th January 1882 in London. Her parents were wealthy¹ and their home was comfortable. Virginia grew up surrounded by books and intelligent² conversation.

Virginia Woolf had a tragic life. Many of the people closest to her died prematurely³ and she suffered a number of nervous breakdowns⁴ throughout her life. After her father's death in 1904, Virginia moved to the Bloomsbury area of London. Here, with her brother and friends, she helped form the Bloomsbury Group. The group was an intellectual⁵ circle⁶ of writers and artists who greatly influenced⁷ cultural attitudes⁸ in Britain in the early 20th century.



In 1912, Virginia married Leonard Woolf. He was the stable⁹ presence that Virginia needed.

Virginia Woolf is acknowledged as one of the greatest innovators¹⁰ in the English language and is a leading writer of the Modernist movement. She used a literary¹¹ device¹² called "stream of consciousness"¹³ to give voice to her characters'¹⁴ thoughts.

She wrote nine novels, two biographies, a volume of short stories, five volumes of collected essays¹⁵ and reviews¹⁶, and a volume of selections from her diary. Her most famous novels are: *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse* and *A Room of One's Own*.

In March 1941, Virginia drowned¹⁷ herself in a river near her East Sussex home. In a letter to her husband she said that she felt she was going insane¹⁸ and she did not want to spoil his life, too.

1 wealthy ['welθɪ] (a.) 富有的

2 intelligent [ɪn'telədʒənt] (a.) 有才智的

3 prematurely [ˌprɪmə'tʃʊrli] (adv.) 過早地

4 nervous breakdown 精神崩潰

5 intellectual [ˌɪntɪ'ektʃʊəl] (a.) 知識分子的

6 circle ['sɜːkl] (n.) 圈子

7 influence ['ɪnfluəns] (v.) 影響

8 attitude ['ætɪtʃud] (n.) 觀點；態度

9 stable ['steɪbl] (a.) 穩重的

10 innovator [ˈɪnə'veɪtə] (n.) 革新者

11 literary ['lɪtə,ri] (a.) 文學的

12 device [dɪ'veɪs] (n.) 手法

13 stream of consciousness 意識流

14 character ['kærɪktə] (n.) 角色

15 essay ['eseɪ] (n.) 散文

16 review [rɪ'veju] (n.) 評論

17 drown [draʊn] (v.) 淹死

18 insane [ɪn'sen] (a.) 精神錯亂的

ABOUT THE BOOK

To the Lighthouse is Virginia Woolf's most autobiographical¹ novel. When her sister Vanessa Bell, a painter like Lily Briscoe, read *To the Lighthouse*, she felt that their parents lived again in its pages. Her husband, Leonard, said it was a masterpiece².

Virginia and her family spent every summer until she was thirteen at a summer house in St Ives in Cornwall. Her mother, like Mrs Ramsay in the novel, invited friends from London to stay and the house was always full of guests. And as dusk³ fell, they watched the beam⁴ from Godrevy Lighthouse. After her mother's death in 1895, her father, like Mr Ramsay, didn't want to go there any more.



Godrevy Lighthouse in St. Ives Bay, Cornwall

The novel develops a series of thoughts rather than a plot, centering on themes like women's role in society, death and change. Virginia Woolf grew up in a time when women were wives and mothers and male domination⁵ in society was the norm⁶.

She rejected⁷ these attitudes and her novel punishes women who accept the roles of wife and mother. Marriages end in tragedy or boredom⁸, childbearing⁹ ends in death and only independent single women survive¹⁰.

Because she was deeply affected¹¹ by deaths in her family, Virginia Woolf wanted the characters in her novel to defeat¹² death. Mrs Ramsay wants to be remembered after her death, Mr Ramsay wants people to read his books after his death and Lily Briscoe would like to see her paintings hung for posterity¹³. All the characters are seeking a sense of permanence¹⁴, and perhaps the author was, too.

1 autobiographical [ˌɔtəˌbaɪəˈɡræfɪkəl]
(a.) 自傳性的

2 masterpiece [ˈmæstəˌpɪs] (n.) 傑作

3 dusk [dʌsk] (n.) 黃昏

4 beam [biːm] (n.) 光束

5 domination [ˌdɒmɪˈneɪʃən] (n.) 主宰

6 norm [nɔːm] (n.) 規範

7 reject [rɪˈdʒekt] (v.) 拒絕

8 boredom [ˈbɒdəm] (n.) 無聊；厭倦

9 childbearing [ˈtʃaɪldˌbeərɪŋ] (n.) 分娩

10 survive [səˈvaɪv] (v.) 活下來

11 affect [əˈfekt] (v.) 影響

12 defeat [dɪˈfiːt] (v.) 戰勝

13 posterity [pɒsˈterəti] (n.) 後世

14 permanence [ˈpɜːmənəns] (n.) 永恆

BEFORE READING


- 1** The lighthouse is a symbol of many things in the novel. Circle three words below that best describe the lighthouse for you.

calm
comforting
dangerous
distant
lonely
mysterious
peaceful
permanent
protective
tall



- 2** Complete the sentence with one of the words above. Check your answer after you have read the book.

"She looked at the long steady stroke of the Lighthouse, the last of the three, which was her stroke. She felt _____ again."

-  **3** Have you ever been to a lighthouse or seen a lighthouse? Describe your experience. Then tell the class.

- 4** Sometimes places hold special memories. The lighthouse is special to the characters in the novel. Is there a building that is special to you? It may be a house, a castle or a museum. Write a paragraph about it.

When did you visit it?

Who did you go with?

Why is it special?

- 5** Find these lines from *The Charge of the Light Brigade* in the novel. Decide on their meaning in the context of the novel.

A

Someone had blundered.

Who had “blundered” (made a mistake)?

- ☐ Mr Ramsay, because he didn’t pursue his studies to the full.
☐ Mrs Ramsay, because she only liked domestic life.

B

Attacked by gunshot and shell, bravely we rode and well,
 through the valley of Death.

What does this picture of bravery under gunshot and shell bring to mind?

- ☐ Facing life and daily events in a heroic way.
☐ Standing still and watching everyday life go by.

The Charge of the Light Brigade is a poem by Alfred Tennyson about an episode of the Crimean War. On 25th October 1854 near Balaclava, because of an error, either from the high command or from bad communication, more than one hundred men of the British cavalry were led to their death against Russian forces down a narrow valley.



I. THE WINDOW



"Yes, of course, if it's fine tomorrow," said Mrs Ramsay. "But you'll have to get up very early," she added.

These words made her six-year-old son very happy. It was settled¹. The expedition² was going to take place³. He had looked forward to⁴ this adventure for years and years. And after a night's darkness and a day's sail, it was finally going to happen.

James Ramsay, sitting on the floor, cutting out pictures from a catalogue⁵, was very happy. His mother watched him cut neatly⁶ round the refrigerator. "He looks very serious," she thought. "I can imagine him as a judge⁷, dressed in a red robe⁸ with white fur⁹, or helping the country through a crisis¹⁰."

"But, it won't be fine," said James's father, as he stopped in front of the drawing room¹¹ window.



1 settle ['setl] (v.) 確定下來

2 expedition [ˌeksprɪ'dɪʃən] (n.) 遠征；探險

3 take place 發生

4 look forward to 期待（後接名詞或動名詞）

5 catalogue ['kætəlɒɡ] (n.) 商品的型錄

6 neatly ['ni:tli] (a.) 整潔的

7 judge [dʒʌdʒ] (n.) 法官

8 robe [rɒb] (n.) 長袍

9 fur [fɜː] (n.) 毛皮

10 crisis ['kraɪsɪs] (n.) 危機

11 drawing room 起居室



At that moment, James wanted to kill his father. Mr Ramsay always provoked¹ strong emotions² in his children. He stood there, thin as a knife. And he was smiling with the pleasure of disappointing³ his son and ridiculing⁴ his wife, who was ten thousand times better than him (James thought).

Mr Ramsay was always right, and he knew it. What he said was true. It was always true. He never changed a disagreeable⁵ word to make somebody happy, least of all his own children.

"They should be aware⁶ from childhood that life is difficult," he thought.

"But it may be fine," said Mrs Ramsay, as she was knitting⁷ the brown sock.

If she managed to finish the sock and if they did go to the Lighthouse, she wanted to give it to the Lighthouse keeper for his little boy. She also wanted to give him some old magazines and some tobacco⁸. She would take all the things lying about the house that were not really wanted. She wanted to give those poor people something to amuse⁹ them. They must be bored to death¹⁰ sitting all day with nothing to do except polish¹¹ the lamp.

"How would you like to be shut up for a month in stormy weather, on a rock the size of a tennis court¹²? How would you like to see nobody? How would you like to see the same boring waves week after week? How would you like that?" she asked her daughters. "We must take them whatever comforts¹³ we can."

1 provoke [prəˈvɒk] (v.) 挑釁；激怒

2 emotion [ɪˈmoʊʃən] (n.) 情緒

3 disappoint [ˌdɪsəˈpɔɪnt] (v.) 使失望

4 ridicule [ˈrɪdɪkjʊl] (n.) (v.) 揶揄

5 disagreeable [ˌdɪsəˈɡriəbəl] (a.) 惹人厭的



Alone

- Do you like being on your own or do you prefer being with other people?
- Imagine what it is like to be a lighthouse keeper. Share with a friend.



"The wind is due west¹⁴," said the atheist¹⁵ Tansley.

A due west wind was the worst wind for landing at the Lighthouse.

Yes, he did say disagreeable things, Mrs Ramsay thought. Now James was even more disappointed. But she did not let the children laugh at Tansley. "The little atheist," the children called him. Rose made fun of him. Prue made fun of him. Andrew, Jasper and Roger made fun of him.

Mrs Ramsay hated incivility¹⁶ to her guests, especially to young men. She had invited lots of poor but very talented¹⁷ young men to stay with them on holiday on the Isle of Skye. Indeed, she had the whole of the male sex under her protection; for their chivalry¹⁸ and bravery, for the fact that they made treaties¹⁹, ruled India and controlled finance²⁰.

6 aware [ə`weɪ] (a.) 察覺的

7 knit [nɪt] (v.) 編織

8 tobacco [tə`bækə] (n.) 菸草

9 amuse [ə`mjuz] (v.) 娛樂；消遣

10 be bored to death 無聊至極

11 polish [`pɒlɪʃ] (v.) 擦亮

12 tennis court 網球場

13 comfort [`kʌmfət] (v.) 使安慰

14 due west 正西風

15 atheist [`eθɪst] (n.) 無神論者

16 incivility [ˌɪnsə`vɪlətɪ] (n.) 無禮

17 talented [ˈtæləntɪd] (a.) 有才華的

18 chivalry [ˈʃɪvəlɪ] (n.) 對婦女的殷勤體貼

19 treaty [ˈtriːtɪ] (n.) 條約

20 finance [faɪ`næns] (n.) 財政金融