

Women in English Literature

Women have always been underrated in all fields. As soon as you start thinking about well-known authors in British literature, names such as Shakespeare, Mark Twain, Charles Dickens, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Edgar A. Poe may come to mind, but what about women?

This Research Paper is focused on the evolution of female characters throughout history of English literature. I have been able to discover by myself the changes female authors experienced in different periods of time by reading their most well-known masterpieces and analysing the main female characters in it.

I worked by choosing a female author per century since the 15th century until the 20th, even though my first writer had to be a man, because there were not any well-known female writers during the 15th century.

This Research Paper tries to demonstrate women's changing lifestyle throughout history and it's representation in literature. Starting with Lady Macbeth in William Shakespeare's play *Macbeth* to Pecola and Claudia in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, the concept of how a perfect woman is, or even how she must look like has evolved, and literature, as a way of capturing reality, has the evidences.

To demonstrate my hypothesis, my work studies four different characters written in different novels, by different writers, in different periods of history but with something in common: they went down in history as revolutionary and controversial female characters because of their thoughts and actions.

To start with, there is Lady Macbeth, a woman whose feelings do not define her and that know what she wants and gets it herself. Then, I studied the essays written by Mary Wollstonecraft *A Vindication of Rights of Woman*, in which she argues that women are not naturally inferior to men. After, I focused on Lizzy Bennet, from *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen, who manages to marry the man she is in love with using her intelligence and not her beauty. And last but not the least, we have Pecola and Claudia from *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison, two ways of seeing and accepting —or not— beauty standards.

