

Winston Churchill Biography

Winston Churchill

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Biography

The American author Winston Churchill (1871-1947) was known during his lifetime for his historical and political novels.

Born in St. Louis, Winston Churchill went to Smith Academy, then attended Annapolis. He served briefly in the U.S. Navy, working as an editor for the *Army and Navy Journal*, and then joined the staff of *Cosmopolitan Magazine*. He had been encouraged to write during his years in the Naval Academy and soon began a career as an author.

Churchill's first novel, *The Celebrity: An Episode* (1898), satirized the era's literary and fashionable world. This book introduced him to the public and gave him practice in portraying two kinds of characters that eventually loomed large in his works--the politician and the business tycoon.

Richard Carvel (1899) is a romantic historical novel of the American Revolutionary period. Though carefully written, the book has the episodic structure characteristic of Churchill. It became a best seller because of the conscientious research that gave remarkable authenticity to events and characters.

Churchill determined to cover "the most emphasized epochs in the history of this country" in a series of novels. *The Crisis* (1901), set mainly in St. Louis, where northern and southern emigrants and German immigrants had commingled in a border region, pictures the Civil War in a new way. *The Crossing* (1904), a panorama of America's westward movement and the newly settled frontier during the Revolution, is generally considered Churchill's best historical novel. Like its predecessors, this narrative vividly characterizes a number of outstanding historical figures.

By 1904, however, public interest in historical fiction had waned, and a group of "muckraking" journalists were exposing graft and corruption in the United States. Churchill was affected by the trend and began to write about contemporary issues. *Coniston* (1906) shows the long-lasting ethical conflicts in New England's politics; *Mr. Crewe's Career* (1908) examines a railroad's attempt to dominate a state. *A Modern Chronicle* (1910) deals with divorce, *The Inside of the Cup* (1913) with religion, *A Far Country* (1915) with the need for the control of corporations, and *The Dwelling-Place of Light* (1917) with the rise of radicalism. His work established the value of research to the historical novelist.