

# BOOKS

## Literature in perspective

**Book title:** A History of English Literature —

Traversing the Centuries

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Everyone wants to have a command over English literature, what with the immense worldly and other gains to be made out of it! Literature, after all, is the basis of human acumen and inspiration, and English lords over all other languages by sheer profundity and plenty.

Yet the problem, for many of us, is to be guided through our random picks so as to make the most of the precious time spent reading. In times like these, when even going to the movies without any idea of the cast, scope and genre

has become a strict no-no for us, it is not prudent to invest time and money on books picked randomly off the shelf, in the vague hope of a rewarding experience.

This is where the latest guide to English litterateurs, penned by Aditi Chowdhury and Rita Goswami, comes in.

With decades of English teaching experience at Handique Girls' College, Guwahati, these authors lead you on a chartered path through the literary aeons, succinctly summing up the spirit of each period of literary development, the main authors, their works and contributions. The style flows easy and free, guiding students of English literature, as well as general readers who want to choose their reading with care.

Placing the authors and their literary oeuvre in their respective time frames, referring to events and incidents that shaped their work, make for reading that is at once interesting and informative. Also of interest is the introductory piece that gives an overview of the shaping forces of English literature. The Greek, Latin, French, Italian and other stalwarts who moulded the thought processes of writers down the ages are briefly introduced, which sets the literary works in perspective. An overview of the political and social milieu prevalent in England over the centuries lends depth to our understanding of the works of literature. This contextualising is of grave import in order to view literature in its proper perspective, and prevent us from attaching undue significance to certain works. It often turns out that authors were repeating common beliefs of the age, or reflecting views of contemporaries in "purple passages" ripped out of context.

Right from the beginnings of recorded English literature in Anglo-Saxon times, to the multifarious produce of present times, this useful tome on the history of English literature is one to adorn the library of every lover of literature.

Orient BlackSwan has been a boon for authors of the region. It is indeed laudatory that homegrown experts are coming forward to tackle the needs of readers here, making the most of the advantages of a shared history and a common ground of difficulties.