



Sir Walter Scott

(1771-1832)

1 COMPLETE Sir Walter Scott's biography with the words from the box.

the historical novel
his own publishing house

folktales
Jacobite rebellion
did not appeal

immediate success
growing fame
collection of the tales

suffered
political periodical

Life and works

Sir Walter Scott was born in Edinburgh in 1771 and was educated there. Since he (1) from poliomyelitis as a child, he was sent to his grandfather's farm on the Scottish border. This experience proved extremely important in his life since he started to collect (2) and ballads about the Jacobite rising of 1745.

In 1792 he graduated in Law at Edinburgh University and in 1802-03 he published a (3) heard during his trips in the border country, *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*. In *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805), a romantic poem, there was much more originality, but the book (4) to the public. After that, Scott wrote other narratives in verse, among which *The Lady of the Lake* (1810), celebrating Scottish life during the Middle Ages, and *Rokeby* (1813).

About one year later, he felt that his poetical vein was exhausted and overshadowed by the (5) of Byron; so he began writing prose, making a name for himself, greater than the one he had reached in poetry, as 'the creator of (6) ' (→ 4.8). His first novel, *Waverley*, was set during the (7) of 1745. It appeared anonymously in 1814 and was an (8), starting the vogue for the historical novel. He then wrote *Rob Roy* (1817), *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819), which gave Gaetano Donizetti (1797-1848) inspiration for his opera *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Ivanhoe* (1819) set in the 12th century when Richard the Lion-Heart returned from the Holy Land, and *Quentin Durward* (1823).

In spite of his success as a novelist, Scott had to work with great speed to pay off his debts after the bankruptcy of (9) His writing skills, energies and profound knowledge also enabled him to contribute to a (10), *The Quarterly Review* (1809). He died in 1832.

A Romantic writer

Scott had a passion for political and religious intrigues and described the whole of a community at a given moment, showing heroic characters battling against great odds. It is this characteristic, together with his

interest in mingling historical events with mystery and the marvellous, which makes him a Romantic writer. However, his Romanticism is not that of the great Romantic poets: he does not have their sensibility or their cult of wild nature. Nor does he illustrate the horror or the grotesque of the Gothic novels, but he mixes the elements of mystery with a little humour and a touch of the picturesque.

Scott and Manzoni

Scott's works have been compared to those of Alessandro Manzoni (1785-1873). However, Manzoni portrayed the characters of ordinary people with greater precision and psychological insight; his aim was to create a national consciousness and his works had a higher degree of historical accuracy.

On the other hand, Scott wanted to celebrate the glorious past of his country and to express regret for the values of heroism and loyalty, which seemed to be lost in a world dominated by economic laws.

Characters

Scott did not only create fictional characters: in fact, his minor characters are real kings and princes. Moreover, he altered great historical events setting them in poetical environments and because of this he was accused of historical anachronism. However, the historical method he introduced allowed him to paint unforgettable portraits of remote times and people.

Style

Scott adopted the third-person omniscient narrator exploiting the techniques of flashbacks and time shifts to follow the adventures connected with different sets of characters. He used a great deal of descriptions of settings and characters, introducing his personal comments about them. He also pretended to possess documents proving the truthfulness of his narrative and giving authority to his words.

Scott's interest in the past is confirmed by his stylistic devices: references to the Scottish language and his simple and immediate prose, similar to that used in old legends and romances.

*Key idea***The pattern of the 'journey'**

Most of his novels follow a pattern which has been called the 'journey': a traveller, for instance Waverley or Ivanhoe, moves from a safe situation inside an ethnic group, comes into contact with another ethnic group and

shares their life for a time. In the end he will return from where he came with a different experience of life which will enable him to mediate between two rival groups.

COMPETENCE: READING AND UNDERSTANDING INFORMATION**2 ANSWER** the following questions about Walter Scott's novels.

- 1 What makes Walter Scott a Romantic writer?
- 2 How does he differ from the Romantic poets?
- 3 What are the main differences between Walter Scott and Alessandro Manzoni?
- 4 What characters can be found in Scott's novels?
- 5 What are the most important stylistic features of his novels?
- 6 What pattern do most of them follow?

Waverley

Sir Walter Scott
(1814)

PLOT AND SETTING

Waverley is set in the **period of Jacobite uprisings**: it starts in the late summer of 1744 and ends several months after the battle of Culloden (1746), where the Jacobites were defeated and their cause was virtually destroyed.

When Scott wrote this novel, Jacobitism had ceased to be a political force, but he pointed out in the 'Postscript' to *Waverley* that: 'There is no European nation which, within the course of half a century, or little more, has undergone such a complete change as this kingdom of Scotland'. By 1814 in both the Highlands and Lowlands of Scotland patterns of life had been changed, both by measures of Government and by the gradual infiltration of ideas and wealth from the South. In his novel Scott aimed at **recreating the past ways of life**, both of Highland chief and Lowland landowner, showing them as they put up a final struggle against the forces of Hanoverian Britain.

Waverley starts with the **account of the education of a young man** from an English Jacobite aristocratic family, Edward Waverley. He is an avid reader and dreams of romantic love and war. In the house of Sir Everard

Waverley, Edward's uncle, politics are a matter of long-standing conviction, but are rarely examined. Waverley's father has decided to move with the times in favour of advancement in the Hanoverian Government and he obtains for his son a commission in the Hanoverian army of King George II (1727-1760); so **Waverley is sent to Scotland** to join his regiment.

In Scotland he visits a Jacobite family friend, whose daughter, Rose, falls in love with him. However, Edward's attention is attracted by the **charming Flora**.

Flora's brother is the **Jacobite chieftain Fergus Mac-Ivor**, but Edward's visits to Fergus are wholly unwise and it is not long before Edward is arrested. Fortunately he is rescued by Flora and joins the Jacobite side.

During a battle he saves an English officer from certain death and for this act of bravery he is pardoned for his involvement in the Jacobite cause. His friends are not so lucky: Fergus is executed and Flora takes refuge in a convent. Edward goes back to Rose and the two are happily married.



Waverley and the wounded man

In this extract Waverley on his way to battle hears the dying groans of a man who turns out to be his former sergeant, Houghton. He goes to his aid, but he is called impatiently by Fergus Mac-Ivor, the Jacobite chieftain who is fighting on the side of Prince Charles Edward Stuart, who intends to defeat the Hanoverian King George II and reclaim the English throne for the Stuarts.

Sir Walter Scott
Waverley
(1814)

Chapter XLV

Waverley walked forward out of the line to satisfy his curiosity, and soon observed five or six of the troopers¹, who, covered with dust, had galloped in to announce that the enemy were **in full march** westward along the coast. Passing still a little farther on, he was struck with a **groan** which issued² from a hovel³, – he approached the spot, and
5 heard a voice, in the provincial English of his native country, which endeavoured⁴, though frequently interrupted by pain, to repeat the Lord's Prayer. The voice of **distress** always found a ready answer in our hero's **bosom**. He entered the hovel, which seemed to be intended for what is called, in the pastoral counties of Scotland, a *smearing-house*⁵; and in its obscurity Edward could only at first discern a sort of red bundle⁶, for those
10 who had stripped⁷ the wounded man of his arms, and part of his clothes, had left him the dragoon-cloak⁸ in which he was **enveloped**.

'For the sake of God,' said the wounded man, as he heard Waverley's step, 'give me a single drop of water!'

'You shall have it,' answered Waverley, at the same time raising him in his arms,
15 bearing him to the door of the hut⁹, and giving him some drink from his flask.

'I should know that voice,' answered the man; but looking on Edward's dress with a **bewildered** look, – 'no, this is not the young **squire**.'

This was the common phrase by which Edward was distinguished on the estate of Waverley-Honour, and the sound now thrilled¹⁰ to his heart with the thousand
20 recollections which the well-known accents of his native country had already contributed to awaken. 'Houghton!' he said, gazing on the ghastly features¹¹ which death was fast disfiguring, 'can this be you?'

'I never thought to hear an English voice again,' said the wounded man; 'they left me to live or die here as I could, when they found I could say nothing about the strength of
25 the regiment. But, O! squire, how could you stay from us so long, and let us be tempted by that fiend of the pit¹², Ruffen; – we would have followed you through flood and fire¹³, to be sure.'

'Ruffen! I assure you, Houghton, you have been vilely¹⁴ imposed upon.'

'I often thought so,' said Houghton, 'though they shewed¹⁵ us your very seal¹⁶; and
30 so Tims was shot, and I was reduced to the ranks¹⁷.'

'Do not exhaust your strength in speaking,' said Edward, 'I will get you a surgeon **presently**.'

He saw Mac-Ivor approaching, who was now returning from headquarters, where he had attended a council of war, and **hastened** to meet him. 'Brave news!' shouted the
35 Chief; 'we shall be at it in less than two hours. The Prince has put himself at the head of the advance; and, as he drew his sword, called out, "My friends, I have thrown away the scabbard¹⁸". Come Waverley, we move instantly.'

- 1 troopers. Soldati di cavalleria.
- 2 issued. Proveniva.
- 3 hovel. Tugurio.
- 4 endeavoured. Si sforzava.
- 5 *smearing-house*. Luogo usato per applicare un unguento sul vello delle pecore.
- 6 bundle. Fagotto.
- 7 had stripped. Avevano strappato.
- 8 dragoon-cloak. Manto di soldato che porta una sorta di moschetto come arma.
- 9 hut. Capanna.
- 10 thrilled. Gli diede un fremito.
- 11 ghastly features. Terribili tratti fisici.
- 12 fiend of the pit. Demone dell'abisso (riferimento al capitano giacobita).
- 13 flood and fire. *Lett.*: Diluvio e fuoco; *qui*: in ogni difficoltà.
- 14 vilely. Vilmente.
- 15 shewed. *Showed*.
- 16 seal. Sigillo.
- 17 I ... ranks. Sono stato ridotto a soldato semplice.
- 18 I ... scabbard. Mi sono battuto fino all'ultimo sangue.

**READING COMPETENCE****1 READ the text and match the highlighted words and phrases with their Italian meaning.**

- 1 dolore
- 2 cuore
- 3 sorpreso
- 4 in marcia
- 5 si affrettò
- 6 immediatamente
- 7 gemito, lamento
- 8 possidente
- 9 avvolto

2 READ the text again and do the following activities.**1 Focus on the narrator.**

- 1 Is he first-person or third-person?
- 2 From whose point of view are the events narrated? Tick as appropriate.
 - ☐ Edward's.
 - ☐ Fergus's.
 - ☐ The wounded man's.
 - ☐ Other:

2 Scott is regarded as the founder of the historical novel.

- 1 How much of the factual information in the extract is historical?
- 2 Look for those elements which convey a sense of historical verisimilitude. Collect your data in the table below.

Scenery	Customs	Clothes	Social rank

3 Focus on the main characters, Edward and Fergus Mac-Ivor. How are they introduced? Tick as appropriate.

- ☐ Through their own thoughts.
- ☐ Through the other characters' thoughts.
- ☐ Through the narrator's words.
- ☐ Through the other characters' words.

4 Underline all the words uttered by the wounded man.

- 1 How does the narrator bring the wounded man's humanity to life?
- 2 What are the key expressions referring to the political cause?
- 3 What do they highlight?

5 Consider the extract as a whole and decide what the writer's main aim is. Tick as appropriate.

- ☐ To describe a battlefield.
- ☐ To provide a critique of the conflict between Hanoverian and Jacobite.
- ☐ To underline the qualities of the protagonist.
- ☐ To show that the traditional notions of honour have no meaning in a world that has changed.

**3 COMPLETE** the summary of the text with the words and phrases from the box.

Brave news

behaviour

pity

provincial English

drop of water

regiment

wounded man

struck

young squire

soldiers



Waverley saw five or six **(1)** who announced that the enemy was marching westwards towards the coast. All of a sudden a groan from a hut **(2)** Waverley. He soon entered since he heard a voice in the **(3)** of his native country. He could see a **(4)** enveloped in a dragoon-cloak in the dark. He was lying on the earth asking for a single **(5)** Waverley showed his **(6)** by raising the man in his arms, bearing him to the door of the hut and giving him some water from his flask. The wounded man was surprised since he recognised Edward as his **(7)** dressed in the Jacobite armour and Waverley understood the wounded man was his sergeant Houghton, who had been left there since he could no longer help his **(8)** He soon complained about Edward's **(9)** since he had left his country and fellows long ago. In the end Fergus Mac-Ivor shouted '**(10)**' because he had heard that Prince Charles Edward Stuart had put himself at the head of the advance.

4 LIST a few aspects which show that *Waverley* is different from the 18th-century novel.**5 REFER** to 4.6 and state the difference between Sir Walter Scott and the Gothic novelists.