

Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832)

Sir Walter Scott was born on August 15, 1771, in Edinburgh as the son of a solicitor Walter Scott and Anne, a daughter of professor of medicine.

An early illness left him lame in the right leg, but he grew up to be a man over six feet and great physical endurance. Scott's interest in the old Border tales and ballads had early been awakened, and he devoted much of his leisure to the exploration of the Border country.

He attended Edinburgh High School and studied at Edinburgh University arts and law. Scott was apprenticed to his father in 1786 and in 1792 he was called to the bar. In 1799 he was appointed sheriff depute of the county of Selkirk. In 1797 Scott married Margaret Charlotte Carpenter. They had five children.

In 1802-03 Scott's first major work, *Minstrelsy Of The Scottish Border* appeared. As a poet Scott rose into fame with the publication of *The Lay Of The Last Minstrel* (1805) about an old border country legend. It became a huge success and made him the most popular author of the day. It was followed by *Marmion* (1808), a historical romance in tetrameter. *The Lady In The Lake* appeared in 1810 and *Rokeby* in 1813. Scott's last major poem, *The Lord Of The Isles*, was published in 1815.



In 1806 Scott became clerk to the Court of Session in Edinburgh. To increase his income he started a printing and publishing business with his friend James Ballantyne. The enterprise crashed and Scott accepted all debts and tried to pay them off with his writings.

In the 1810s Scott published several novels. From this period date such works as *Waverley* (1814), dealing with the rebellion of 1745, which attempted to restore a Scottish family to the British throne. Scott continued with *Guy Mannering* (1815) and *Tales Of My Landlord* (1816). *Rob Roy* (1817) a portrait of one of Scotland's greatest heroes, sold out its edition of 10 000 copies in two weeks. *The Heart of Midlothian* appeared in 1818 followed by *The Bride Of Lammermoor* (1819) and *A Legend Of Montrose* (1819). *Ivanhoe* (1819) set in the reign of Richard I is perhaps the best known of Scott's novels today. In the 1820s appeared *Kenilworth* (1821), *The Fortunes Of Nigel* (1822), *Peveril Of The Peak* (1823), *Quentin Durward* (1823), *The Talisman* (1825), *Woodstock* (1826), *The Surgeon's Daughter* (1827), and *Anne Of Geierstein* (1829).

In 1820 Scott was created a baronet. A few years later he founded the Bannatyne Club, which published old Scottish documents. Scott visited France in 1826 to collect material for his *Life Of Napoleon*, which was published in 9 volumes in 1827. His wife, Lady Scott, died in 1826, and the author himself had a stroke in 1830. Next year Scott sailed to Italy.

After his return to England in 1832, he died on September 21. Scott was buried beside his ancestors in Dryburgh Abbey.

Ivanhoe (1819)

Ivanhoe is the story of one of the remaining Saxon noble families at a time when the English nobility was overwhelmingly Norman. It follows the Saxon protagonist, Wilfred of Ivanhoe, who is out of favour with his father owing to his courting the Lady Rowena and for his allegiance to the Norman king Richard I of England. The story is set in 1194, after the end of the Third Crusade, when many of the Crusaders were still returning to Europe. King Richard, who had been captured by the Duke of Saxony, on his way back, was still supposed to be in the arms of his captors. The legendary Robin Hood, initially under the name of Locksley, is also a character in the story, as are his 'merry men,' including Friar Tuck and, less so, Alan-a-Dale. (Little John is merely mentioned.) The character that Scott gave to Robin Hood in Ivanhoe helped shape the modern notion of this figure as a cheery noble outlaw.



Other major characters include Ivanhoe's intractable Saxon father Cedric, a descendant of the Saxon King Harold Godwinson; various Knights Templar and churchmen; the loyal serfs Gurth the swineherd and the jester Wamba, whose observations punctuate much of the action; and the Jewish moneylender, Isaac of York, equally passionate of money and his daughter, Rebecca. The book was written and published during a period of increasing struggle for Emancipation of the Jews in England, and there are frequent references to injustice against them.

Ivanhoe

Chapter I

In that pleasant district of merry England which is watered by the river Don, there extended in ancient times a large forest, covering the greater part of the beautiful hills and valleys which lie between Sheffield and the pleasant town of Doncaster. The remains of this extensive wood are still to be seen at the noble seats of Wentworth, of Warncliffe Park, and around Rotherham. Here haunted of yore the fabulous Dragon of Wantley; here were fought many of the most desperate battles during the Civil Wars of the Roses; and here also flourished in ancient times those bands of gallant outlaws, whose deeds have been rendered so popular in English song.

Such being our chief scene, the date of our story refers to a period towards the end of the reign of Richard I., when his return from his long captivity had become an event rather wished than hoped for by his despairing subjects, who were in the meantime subjected to every species of subordinate oppression. The nobles, whose power had become exorbitant during the reign of Stephen, and whom the prudence of Henry the Second had scarce reduced to some degree of subjection to the crown, had now resumed their ancient license in its utmost extent; despising the feeble interference of the English Council of State, fortifying their castles, increasing the number of their dependants, reducing all around them to a state of vassalage, and striving by every means in their power, to place themselves each at the head of such forces as might enable him to make a figure in the national convulsions which appeared to be impending.