

Tom Jones

-Henry Fielding

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Characters:

- Mr Allworthy: is a kind and generous man. His only fault is that often he does not see evil in other people.
- Tom Jones: grows up to be a brave and handsome young man. He has affairs with many different women but his one true love is Sophia Western.
- Blifil: is the opposite of Tom. He is superficially virtuous and honest but really evil. He wants to marry Sophia for her money

- Bridget Allworthy: is Mr Allworthy's not very beautiful sister. She marries Captain Blifil because he praises her religious ideas. She is the mother of young Blifil and (we later discover) of Tom Jones.
- Captain Blifil: pretends to be religious but marries Bridget for her money.
- Mr Western: is a neighbour of Mr Allworthy and the father of Sophia Western. He loves hunting and drinking

- Mrs Western: is the sister of Mr Western and the aunt of Sophia.
- Sophia Western: is a young and beautiful woman. She represents the weak position of women in this period.
- Jenny Jones: (Mrs Waters) is a servant girl who is not beautiful but very sexy.
- Partridge: is a simple man with superficial signs of education. He appears first as a school master and employer of Jenny Jones and later as a travelling companion of Tom Jones.

- Mrs Fitzpatrick: is Sophia's cousin. She is unhappily married to an Irish Lord who is stabbed a duel with Tom Jones.
- Lady Bellaston: is a rich, middle-aged woman who is attracted to Tom Jones and wants to keep him as her lover.
- George Seagrim: works as a gamekeeper for Mr Allworthy. He is not always honest but shows his loyalty to Tom at the end of the story.
- Thwackum and Square: are teachers for Tom and young Blifil. Although they claim to be interested in philosophy and religion, they are selfish and only interested in their own success.

- Lord Fellamar is simple aristocrat who is easily manipulated by Lady Bellaston.

Themes:

- Good v/s Evil
- Vanity and human weakness
- Desire for money, power, position
- “[Tom Jones] is about truth and human nature in itself...”
- Law: Justice, Mercy, and Judgment
- “Trials”, formal and informal, dominate much of the action in Tom Jones.

- A trial is a mechanism for presenting both sides of a legal case, and for determining guilt or innocence.
- Tom Jones expresses his personal approach to “doing justice.
- False imprisonment
- Forced marriage
- Circumstantial evidences
- Deed and Doer
- Tom Jones: “A thesis on humanity”

Ambiguity in Tom Jones:

- Combination of comedy and moral judgment
- Language of irony in Tom Jones: Literary meaning of the word fits in the context while the connotative meanings results in clashes.
- For ex. the gentle man may not mean the same in connotative significance
- The structure of Tom Jones is “Irony of form.”
- What is form?

- Form need not be ironic. It should be simple and supportive. It is for our psychological and aesthetic pleasure.
- It is a virtual history or virtual memory created by a literary artist with the perception of real world experience.
- Vicious and fallen world in Tom Jones
- Tom Jones is a small series of peripeteias and discoveries that exactly forecast the grand Aristotelian peripeteia and discovery at the end – scene by scene in a characteristic manner.

- A girl, on the eve of forced marriage with a young foxhunting squire from Somerset, flees from her father's estate with her maid and arrives at a country inn to meet her unaccredited but sterling lover. Girl and lover remain at the inn for some time in mutual ignorance of each other's presence. The lover's man eventually discovers that the girl is there. The squire and his hounds ride up, from one direction, on their way to claim his bride; the father rides up from the other in search of his daughter.

- The novel has a very deliberate purpose, to teach moral lessons.
- Readers role as a judge. The ironic structure of the novel detaches us from the characters and situations which creates amusement.
- Mrs. Waters' role
- Tom's relation with Bridget
- So called social morality is the result of irony in the novel.
- A clear recognition of appearance and reality

- **There are a Set of Religious, or rather Moral Writer who teach that Virtue is the certain Road to Happiness, and Vice to Misery, in this World. A very wholesome and comfortable Doctrine, and to which we have but one Objection, namely, That it is not true. (Opening chapter of Book- XV)**
- Creates more ambiguity
- Role of Mr. Allworthy:

- ...there lately...a Gentleman whose name was Allworthy, and who might well be called the Favorite of both Nature and Fortune; for both of these seem to have contended which should bless and enrich him most. In this Contention, Nature may seem to some to have come off victorious, as she bestowed on him many Gifts: while Fortune had only one Gift in her Power; but in pouring forth this, she was so very profuse, that others perhaps may think this single Endowment to have been more than equivalent to all the various Blessings which he enjoyed from Nature. From the former of these, he derived an agreeable Person, a sound Constitution, a solid Understanding, and a benevolent Heart; by the latter, he was decreed to the Inheritance of one of the largest Estates in the County. (I,ii,27)

- The description shows the generosity of the narrator. Things are not like this.
- **It was now the Middle of May, and the Morning was remarkably serene, when Mr. Allworthy walked forth on the Terrace, where the Dawn opened every Minute that lovely Prospect we have before described to his Eye...in the full Blaze of his Majesty up rose the Sun; than which one Object alone in this lower Creation could be more glorious, and that Mr. Allworthy himself presented; a human Being replete with Benevolence, meditating in what Manner he might render himself most acceptable to his Creator, by doing most Good to his Creatures. (I,iv,32)**

- The words 'his creature' and 'his creator' create ambiguity.
- He fails to play his role as a responsible brother.
- Lack of decisive power
- His misjudgment
- Fail to understand human nature
- The education system is a disaster in Tom Jones.

- As Kropf writes: The surprising thing is not that Blifil emerges from his childhood such a bad character but that Tom emerges such a good one, and in that fact lies the importance of Fielding's use of education in the novel. In the terms-commonly used in educational tracts, Tom's basic goodness must either arise from innate qualities or be learned: Fielding has been careful to eliminate the latter and so forces the reader to agree with the former.

- Allworthy's natural love of justice v/s his coolness of temper
- A case with Tom
- Improper trial given to Tom by Allworthy

- When Dinner was over, 'and the Servants departed, Mr. Allworthy began to harangue. He set forth, in a long Speech, the many Iniquities of which Jones had been guilty, particularly those which this Day had brought to Light; and concluded by telling him, 'That unless he could clear himself of the Charge, he was resolved to banish him his Sight for ever.' (VI, xi, 236)
- Tom's real crime in Allworthy's eyes

- ...your audacious Attempt to steal away the young Lady calls me to justify my own Character in punishing you. The World, who have already censured the Regard I have shewn for you, may think, with some Colour at least of Justice, that I connive at so base and barbarous an Action. An Action of which you must have known my Abhorrence; and which, had you any Concern for my Ease and Honour, as well as for my Friendship, you would never have thought of undertaking. (Ibid. 237)

- Mrs. Waters:
- **Fielding's own sentiment about such women as Mrs. Waters is evident. They are more good-natured and more generous than many nominally more virtuous. He quite likes Mrs. Waters, and so do we. She is completely unmercenary, and she retained sufficient affection for Tom to do him a great service; and we may be pretty sure she made her lover happy ... 33**

- Jenny's comparison with Joseph Andrews
- Miss Bridget – Mrs. Waters – Sophia Western
- **He said, she was the Hife of Mr. Waters, who was a Captain in their Regiment, and had often been with him at Quarters. 'Some Folks,' says he, 'used indeed to doubt whether they were lawfully married in a Church or no. But, for my part, that's no Business of mine; I must own, if I was put to my Corporal Oath, I believe she is little better than one of us; and I fancy the Captain may go to Heaven when the Sun shines upon a rainy Day.**

- But if he does, that is neither here nor there; for he won't want Company. And the Lady, to give the Devil his Due, is a very good Sort of Lady, and loves the Cloth, and is always desirous to do strict Justice to it; for she hath begged off many a poor Soldier, and, by her Good-will, would never have any of them punished.' (IX,vi,391)
- She may not be completely a virtuous woman but she is full of love, generosity and life.

- Mrs. Waters: the embodiment of independence in the novel
- This keeps her aside from all other women in the novel and she is more independence than men characters of the novel.
- Allworthy, Squire Western, Sophia, Briget...prisoners of property and moral code
- Allworthy is a pious moralizer and Jenny Jones uses her intellect to convince him

- 'Mr. Allworthy,' says she, interrupting him, 'I know I have Faults, but Ingratitude to you is not one of them. I never can nor shall forget your Goodness, which I have very little deserved ... II (XVII I, vi i ,726)
- 'Indeed Sir,' says she, 'I was ruined by a very deep Scheme of Villainy, which if you knew, though I pretend not to think it would justify me in your Opinion, it would at least mitigate my Offence, and induce you to pity me; you are not now at Leisure to hear my whole Story; but this I assure you, I was betrayed by the most solemn Promises of Marriage, nay, in the Eye of Heaven I was married to him. I (XVIII,viii,731)

- Characters are not good or evil they are simple.
- “To err is human” is touched upon by Fielding in the novel.
- Fielding’s use of authorial instruction, mock-heroic style, and irony
- Fielding’s purpose is to “defend what is good by displaying the Ridiculous.”
- Magill: “Fielding saw his task as a novelist to be a ‘historian’ of human nature and human events, and he felt obligated to emphasize the moral aspect of his work” (Magill 876).

- Nobility of heart v/s nobility of birth
- To give moral lesson Fielding uses “I” and “My Readers”
- **But perhaps the reader may wonder why Lady Bellaston, who in her heart hated Sophia, should be so desirous of prompting a match which was so much to the interest of the young woman. Now, I would desire such readers to look carefully into human nature. . . (667)**
- Readers are directed by Fielding

- Structure of the novel: 6 – 6 – 6
- Characters are simple and general
- No idealism
- Tom Jones makes us laugh at our own weaknesses.

- Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones*, for example, illustrates the moral superiority of a hot-blooded young man like Tom, whose sexual indulgences are decidedly atoned for by his humanitarianism, tenderheartedness, and instinctive honor (innate as opposed to acquired through training). Serving as foils to Tom are the real sinners in the novel—the vicious and the hypocritical (Guerin, et. al. 26).