Fiction and Poetry

Reading became an increasingly popular entertainment in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain, Europe and America, reaching an ever wider spectrum of society as the cost of printing came down and levels of literacy rose. The novels avidly consumed in this period were not merely escapist fiction. Many of them drew attention to serious social issues such as slavery, child labour and other forms of exploitation that blighted the age of revolutions and empire, some were thinly disguised autobiographies, while others had clear educational aims: thus the line between fiction and non-fiction was a fluid one. Poetry too flourished across a wide range of genres, and the political and social agendas of the Romantic movement in particular led to its being read and appreciated at all levels of society. In this series, the Cambridge Library Collection offers the texts of fiction and poetry as these works were first published and received by an eager reading public.

A Christmas Carol

Charles Dickens (1812–70) was an established novelist when he decided to produce a Christmas story, which was written in only six weeks and published at the end of 1843. The book was an immediate bestseller, and had it not been for the very high production costs of the specially commissioned illustrations and the decorative binding, it would have been a great commercial success. This strategic error meant that Dickens did not make the profits he expected, which contributed to his falling out with the publishers, Chapman and Hall. The story, however, has endured to this day as a classic and remains Dickens' best-known and most adapted work. This reissue of the first edition, with its famous illustrations by Punch caricaturist John Leech (1817–64), is printed in black and white, but the four colour illustrations found in the original can be viewed at: http://www.cambridge.org/9781108057141
Cambridge University Press has long been a pioneer in the reissuing of out-of-print titles from its own backlist, producing digital reprints of books that are still sought after by scholars and students but could not be reprinted economically using traditional technology. The Cambridge Library Collection extends this activity to a wider range of books which are still of importance to researchers and professionals, either for the source material they contain, or as landmarks in the history of their academic discipline.

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A Christmas Carol

CHARLES DICKENS
A CHRISTMAS CAROL.

IN PROSE.

BRING

A GHOST STORY OF CHRISTMAS.

BY

CHARLES DICKENS

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOHN LEECH.

LONDON:
CHAPMAN & HALL, 186, STRAND.

MDCCCLIII.
LONDON:
BRADBURY AND EVANS, PRINTERS, WHITFRIARS.
PREFACE.

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I have endeavoured in this Ghostly little book, to raise the Ghost of an Idea, which shall not put my readers out of humour with themselves, with each other, with the season, or with me. May it haunt their houses pleasantly, and no one wish to lay it.

Their faithful Friend and Servant,

C. D.

December, 1843.
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