

Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832)



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Sir Walter Scott was born of a lawyer's family in Edinburgh, Scotland on August 15, 1771. He suffered from many physical ailments, one particularly serious one in adolescence, which made him, in his own words, "a glutton of books."

He attended Edinburgh High School and studied at Edinburgh University arts and law. At the age of sixteen he had already started to collect old ballads 'The Wild Huntsman', 'Lenore' and 'Goetz of Berlichingen' from Goethe's play.

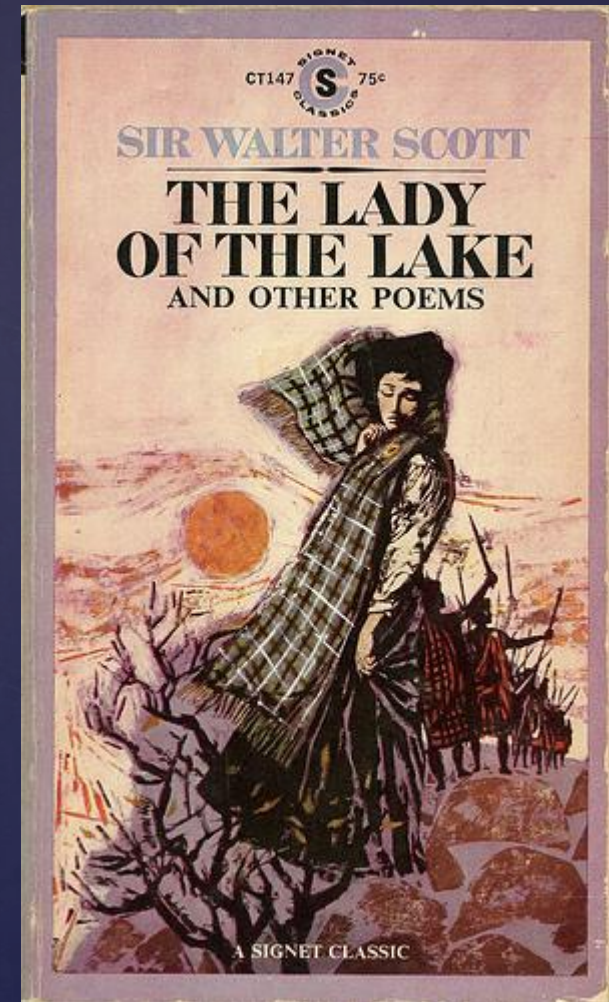
Scott married in 1797 Margaret Charpentier in France. They had five children. In 1806 Scott became clerk to the Court of Session in Edinburgh.

In 1820 Scott was created a baronet. Scott visited France in 1826 to collect material for his *Life of Napoleon*. A few years earlier Scott had started to keep his Journal, recording in courageous spirit his deteriorating health and other misfortunes.

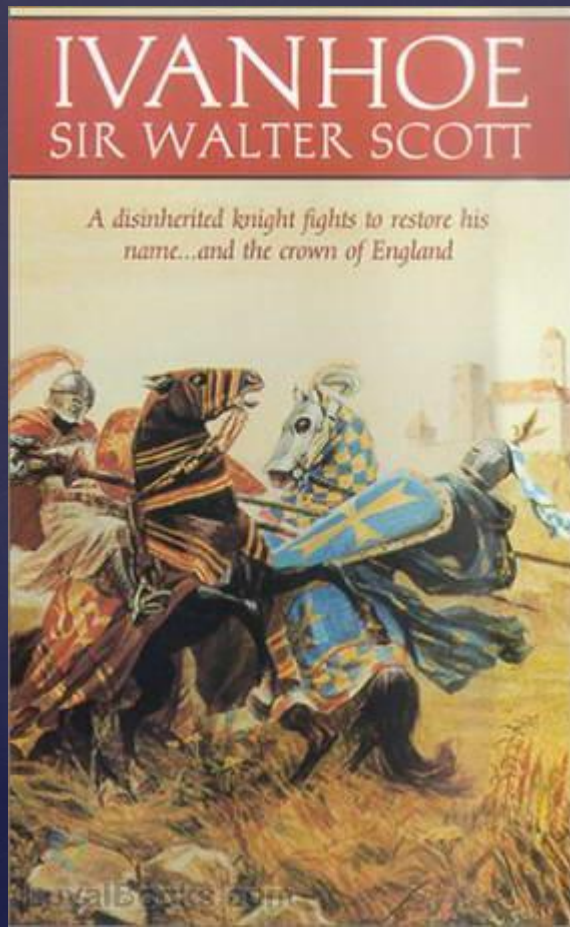
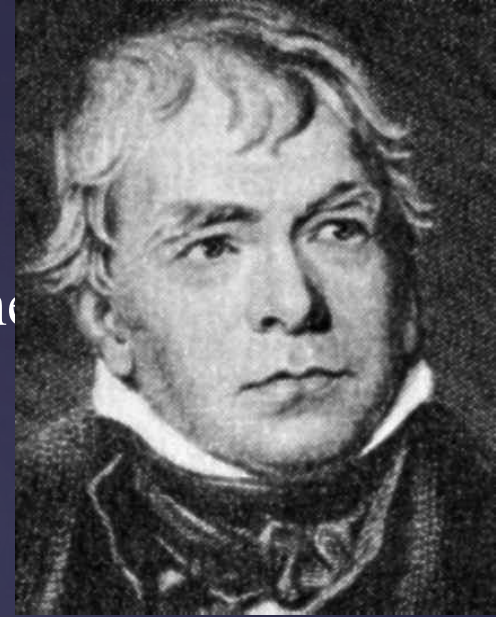
His popularity, both socially and as a writer, was almost unparalleled. Scott received his title and baronetcy from King George IV in the spring of 1820. He died, Sir Walter Scott, in 1832.

Walter Scott's poetry

From 1796 to 1812 Scott was known as a poet, but he felt that he had not yet found himself. In 1802 appeared Scott's first major work, "Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border". As a poet Scott rose into fame with the publication of "The Lay of the Last Minstrel" (1805) about an old border country legend. In 1810 appeared "the Lady of the Lake" and in 1813 "Rokeby". Scott's last major poem, "The Lord of the Isles", was published in 1815.



The name of Sir Walter Scott is closely connected with the genre of the historical novel. He was interested in the romantic aspects of Scottish history and his historical novels changed attitudes towards the past, he made the world aware of Scotland, his novels struck the reader with their epic quality.



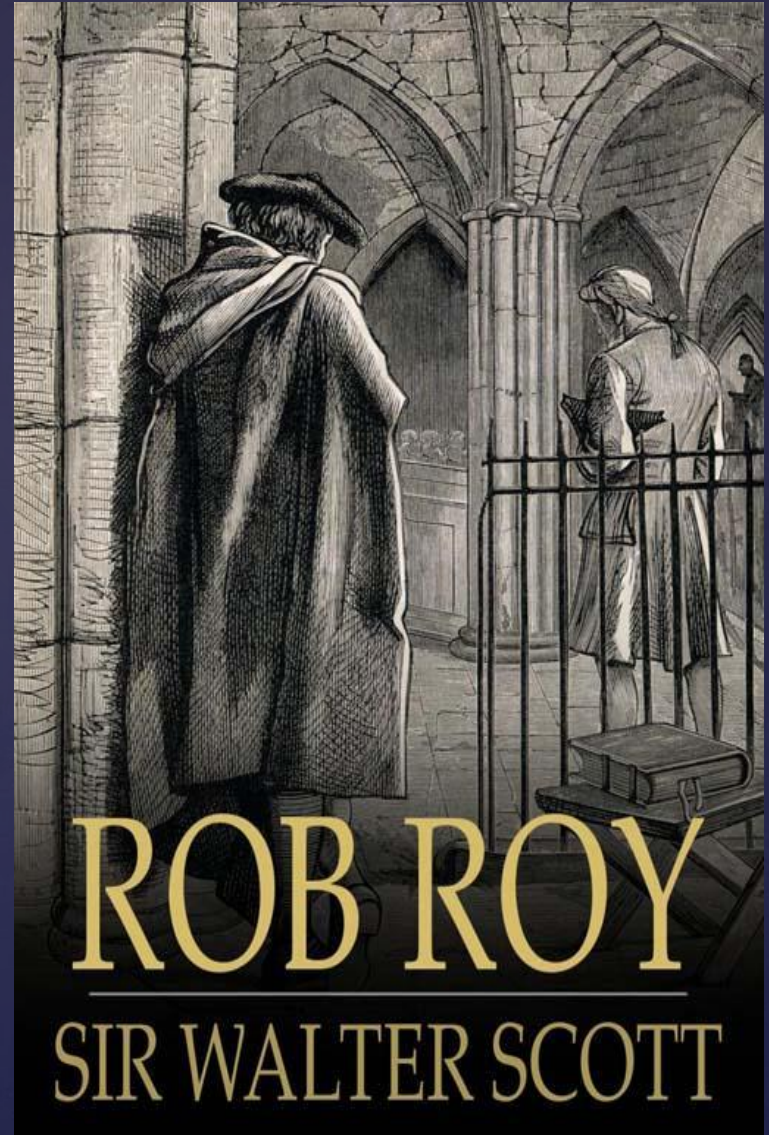
The most famous works by Walter Scott

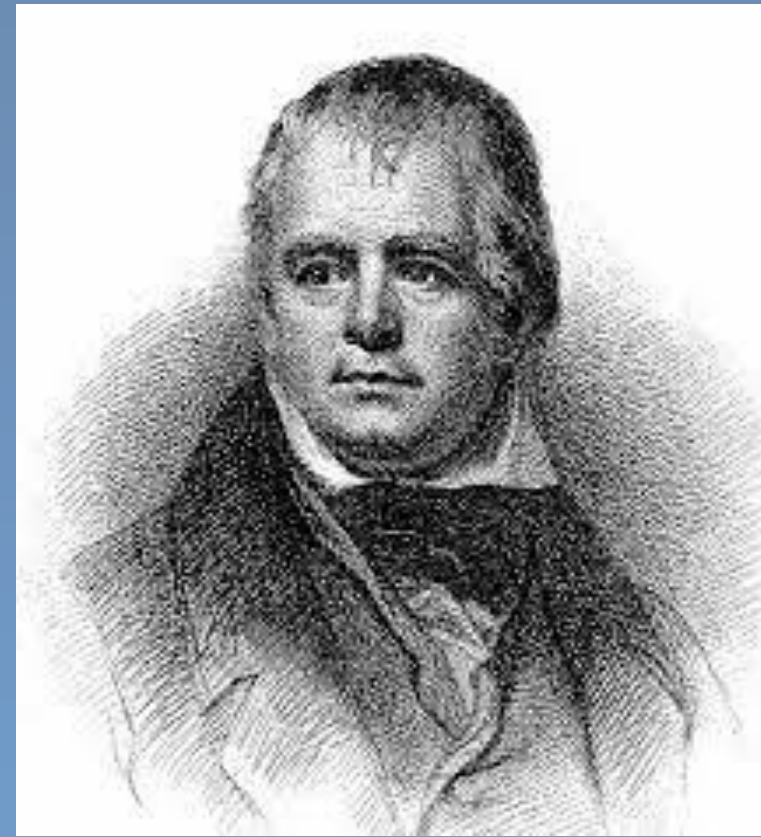
- *Waverley* (1814)
- *Rob Roy* (1817)
- *Ivanhoe* (1819)
- *Kenilworth* (1821)
- *The Fortunes of Nigel* (1822)
- *Quentin Durward* (1823)
- *The Talisman* (1825)
- *Woodstock* (1826)

Rob Roy

The young English hero, Frank, travels first to the north of England and then to the Scottish Highlands to retrieve money stolen from his father by his villainous cousin, and meets the famous outlaw Rob Roy. Despite the title, Rob Roy is not the main character, but his actions drive the plot. He appears out of the shadows, usually to help Frank, and disappears as quickly.

The novel is a brutally realistic depiction of the social conditions in Highland and Lowland Scotland in the early 18th century. Full of drama, rich language and humour, the novel created Rob Roy's iconic status.





The name of Sir Walter Scott is closely connected with the genre of the historical novel. It was he who introduced it into English Literature, because he was interested in the romantic aspects of Scottish history. Walter Scott expanded the range of the novel as a literary form. His historical novels changed attitudes towards the past, he made the world aware of Scotland, his novel struck the reader with their epic quality.

Walter Scott's profound interest in history and passionate love for his country changed the course of his life. He was greatly interested in the folklore of Scotland; he collected legends and popular ballads of the Highlands and Border Country, filling his mind with romantic traditions. The works of the German romantics, Schiller and Goethe, attracted him. He possessed a great knowledge of romantic literature. Though personally friendly to the Lakists (William Wordsworth was his lifelong friend), he never shared their literary tastes .

His early reputation was as a narrative poet. In 1802-1803 Walter Scott published a collection of Scottish legends under the title “The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border”.

In hunting for ballads he also hit upon the goblin story out of which he developed his first verse-tale of Border chivalry, “The Lay of the Last Minstrel “(1805).

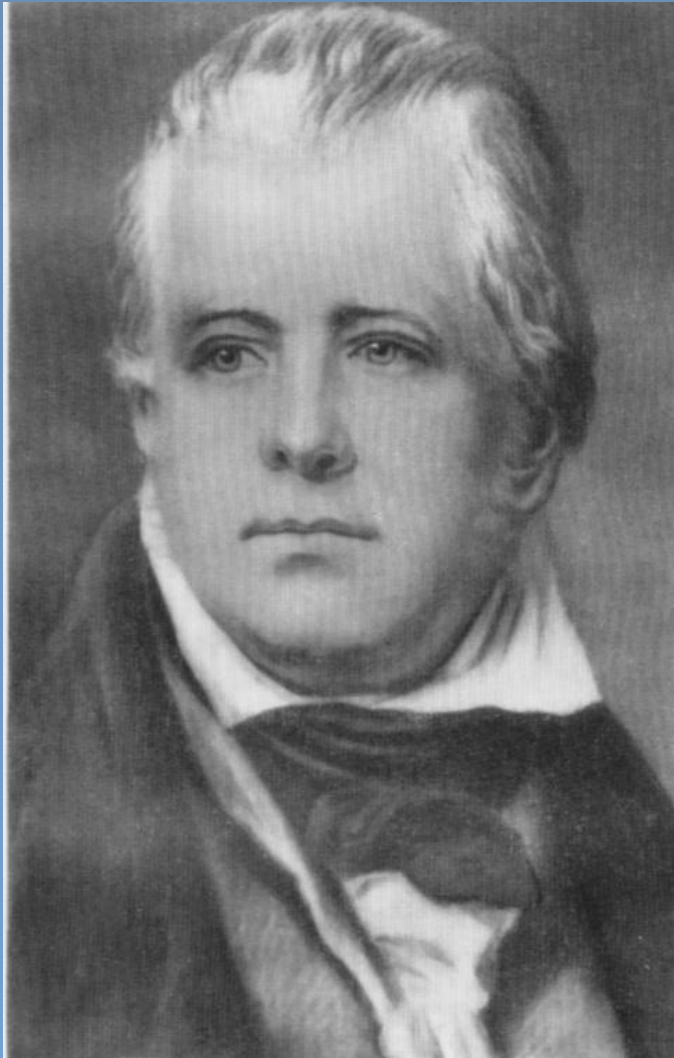
Walter Scott’s tales portrayed vivid image of the chivalry of feudal times, well-drawn pictures of Border and Highland scenery. The following literary ballad comes from “The Heart of Midlothian“. It’s called “Maisie”. It is the death song of a mad peasant woman:

“Proud Maisie is in the wod,
Walking so early;
Sweet Robin sits on the bush ,
Singing so rarely.

“Tell me ,thou bonny bird,
When shall I marry me?”-

“When six braw gentlemen
Kirkward shall carry ye.”

“Who makes the bridal bed,
Birdie say truly?”-





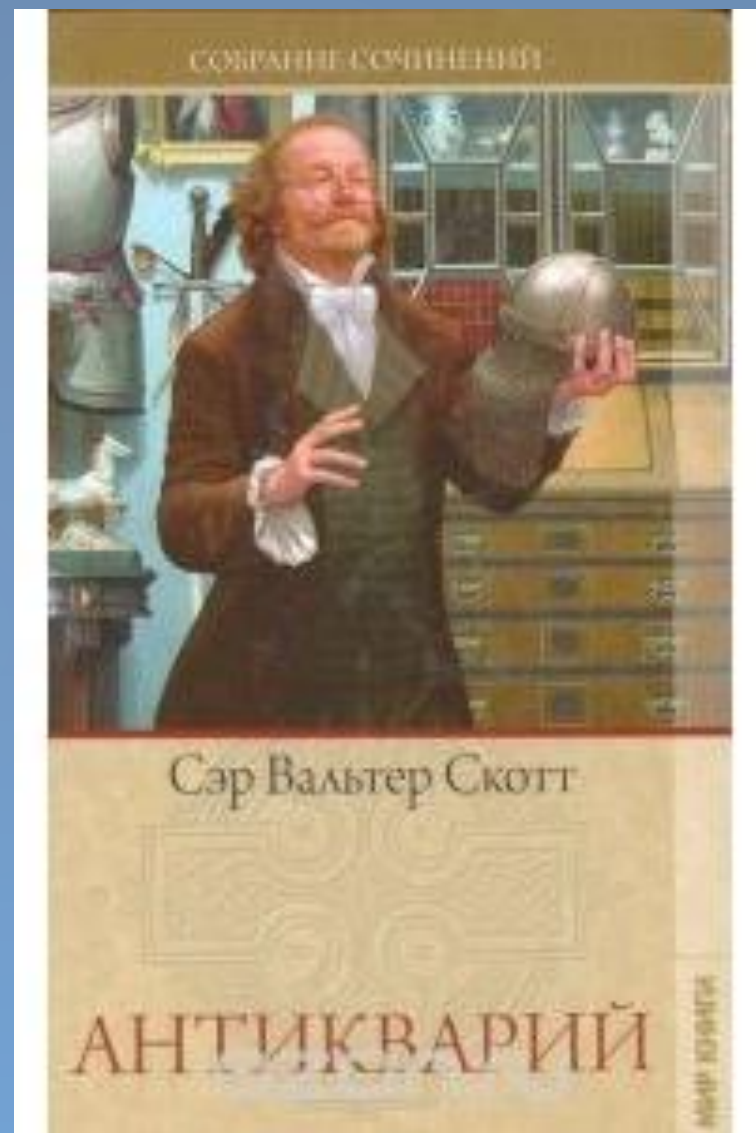
In 1810 Walter Scott published the most powerful poem,
“ The Lady of the Lake”:

“The summer dawn’s reflected hue,
To purple changed Loch Katrine blue ,
Mildly and soft the eìwestern breeze,
Just kissed the Lake,just stirr’d the trees.”

Edinburgh was a vital part of Scott's being and his books were published there. Up to 1814 Scott wrote poems on historical and legendary subjects and became famous as a poet. Meanwhile, he purchased a farmhouse on the banks of the Tweed.



During 1814-1832 he began to write novel after novel. “Waverley”, his first historical novel was published in 1814. It was the beginning. It was a success, and from then to the end of his life Walter Scott devoted himself only to prose. He managed to create a historical novel by blending historical fact with romantic fancy.



Among his most famous novels are “Rob Roy” (1818) and “The Bride of Lammermoor” (1819). He chose for his heroes the common people of Scotland. Later Walter Scott extended his background also to England. He wrote several historical novels about England; the periods he chose there were the end of the 16th century and the middle of the 17th century. Among those novels were: “Ivanhoe” (1820), “The Monastery” (1820), “The Abbot” (1820), “Quentin Durward” (1823).

England and Scotland were closely connected with each other in their historical development. Thus in “The Abbot” Walter Scott described one of the episodes of the tragic life of Mary, queen of Scots.

“Quentin Durward” was written on a different subject. Walter Scott portrayed the King of France as one of the most cunning politicians of his time. Among the outstanding historical novels “Ivanhoe” was one of the best. But it was Walter Scott first writer of a new genre of the historical novel who depicted Scotland as a mysteriously romantic country full of adventure.