

## Topic Page: [Thackeray, William Makepeace \(1811 - 1863\)](https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/thackeray_william_1811_1863)

Summary Article: **Thackeray, William Makepeace**

From *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

(thăk'Ərē), 1811–63, English novelist, b. Calcutta (now Kolkata), India. He is important not only as a great novelist but also as a brilliant satirist. In 1830, Thackeray left Cambridge without a degree and later entered the Middle Temple to study law. In 1833 he became editor of a periodical, the *National Standard*, but the following year he settled in Paris to study art. There he met Isabella Shawe, whom he married in 1836. He returned to England in 1837, supporting himself and his wife by literary hack work and by illustrating. Three years later his wife became hopelessly insane; she was cared for by a family in Essex and survived her husband by 30 years. Thackeray sent his two young daughters to live with his parents in Paris, lived himself the life of a clubman in London, and worked assiduously to support his family. Throughout the 1830s and 40s, his novels appeared serially together with miscellaneous writings in several magazines. His "Yellowplush Correspondence," in which a footman assumes the role of social and literary critic of the times, appeared (1837–38) in *Fraser's*. As a contributor to *Punch* he often parodied the false romantic sentiment pervading the fiction of his day. In 1848, Thackeray achieved widespread popularity with his humorous *Book of Snobs* and the same year rose to major rank among English novelists with *Vanity Fair*, a satirical panorama of upper-middle-class London life and manners at the beginning of the 19th cent. The novel contains many fascinating characters, particularly Becky Sharp, who, although clever and unscrupulous, is also extremely appealing. His reputation increased in 1850 with the completion of the partly autobiographical novel *Pendennis*. In 1851 he delivered a series of lectures, *English Humorists of the Eighteenth Century*, which he repeated in a tour of the United States in 1852–53. In 1852 his novel of 18th-century life, *Henry Esmond*, appeared. *The Newcomes*, in which some of the characters of *Pendennis* reappear, came out serially in 1853–55. In 1855–56 he delivered another series of lectures in the United States entitled *The Four Georges* (pub. 1860). His next novel, *The Virginians* (1857–59), is a continuation of the Esmond story. In 1860 Thackeray became editor of the newly founded *Cornhill Magazine*, in which his last novels appeared—*Lovel the Widower* (1860), *The Adventures of Philip* (1861–62), and the unfinished historical romance, *Denis Duval* (1864). Thackeray's eldest daughter, Anne, Lady Ritchie, was also an author; his younger daughter Harriet married Sir Leslie Stephen.

See his complete works (26 vol., 1910-11);

his letters (ed. by G. N. Ray, 4 vol., 1945-46);

studies by R. A. Colby (1979) and E. F. Harden (1979);

Ray, G. N. , Thackeray (2 vol., 1955 and 1958, repr. 1972) and

The Buried Life (1952, repr. 1974);

Taylor, D. J. , Thackeray: The Life of a Literary Man (2001).

### **APA**

Chicago

Harvard

MLA

Thackeray, William Makepeace. (2018). In P. Lagasse, & Columbia University, *The Columbia encyclopedia* (8th ed.). New York, NY: Columbia University Press. Retrieved from [https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/thackeray\\_william\\_1811\\_1863](https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/thackeray_william_1811_1863)

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## Chicago

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## Harvard

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## MLA

"Thackeray, William Makepeace." *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, Paul Lagasse, and Columbia University, Columbia University Press, 8th edition, 2018. *Credo Reference*, [https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/thackeray\\_william\\_1811\\_1863](https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/thackeray_william_1811_1863). Accessed 20 Oct. 2019.