



LEADERS IN LITERATURE

What makes a Nobel Prize for Literature winner, and who will 2019's recipients join in the hall of fame? We look back at the careers of some of the award's most celebrated winners from the last century.

1901: SULLY PRUDHOMME

The Nobel Prize for Literature's inaugural winner had been destined for a career in engineering until an eye disease forced him to end his studies. Turning to the law to make his living, Prudhomme also began to spend more time writing poetry, a hobby he had initially embarked on as a student. His publishing debut came in 1865 and respect for his work began to grow, but it was with his ascension to the French Academy in 1881 that his notoriety really reached new heights.

In 1901, the Swedish Academy selected him as the first-ever winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature "in special recognition of his poetic composition, which gives evidence of lofty idealism, artistic perfection and a rare combination of the qualities of both heart and intellect".

However, by the time of his selection, his health had already begun to decline and he died just six years later, in 1907, after using the money from his prize to establish a fund for publishing the work of young French poets.



1907: RUDYARD KIPLING

The first Nobel winner to remain a global household name today, Kipling was born and raised in what was then known as British India, before receiving his further education in England. He returned to India in 1882 to work as a journalist for a number of Anglo-Indian newspapers.

His literary career kicked off in 1886 with the publication of *Departmental Ditties*, but he then quickly rose to fame as a prolific writer of short stories. Kipling was also the poet of the British Empire and wrote a host of well-regarded works about the movement's military men before, in 1894, *The Jungle Book* was released to huge acclaim, going on to become a revered children's classic.

He was 42 years old when the Academy recognised him as the winner of the 1907 Nobel Prize "in consideration of the power of observation, originality of imagination, virility of ideas and remarkable talent for narration, which characterise the creations of this world-famous author".



1926: GRAZIA DELEDDA

The Swedish Committee's second female winner (after Selma Ottilia Lovisa Lagerlöf was victorious in 1909), Deledda hailed from Sardinia, where she had attended school for just four years – a norm for girls of her time.

Nonetheless, her father, a fairly well-off landowner and farmer, continued to encourage her intellectual development by providing her with private lessons from a local elementary school teacher. It was this tutor who spotted her talent for writing, urging her to send her short stories out for publication – her first piece appeared in a fashion magazine when she was just 13 years old.

Her first novel, *Fior di Sardegna*, or *Flower of Sardinia*, was published when Deledda was just 21, but it wasn't until 1903, with the publication of *Elias Portolù* that she was to rise to fame, with the novel first translated by Paris-based cultural magazine *Revue des deux Mondes* and then into a host of other European languages.

By the time of her award in 1926, Deledda had published 25 novels and was recognised by the committee “for her idealistically inspired writings, which with clarity picture the life on her native island and with depth and sympathy deal with human problems in general.”



1954: ERNEST HEMINGWAY

One of the world's most acclaimed authors, Hemingway started his career as a journalist in the USA at the age of 17, before enlisting with a volunteer ambulance unit in the Italian Army during the First World War.

After being wounded, and subsequently decorated by the Italian Government, Hemingway returned to journalism in the USA and Canada, before being posted back to Europe to cover the Greek revolution. In the 1920s, he found himself as an American expat in Paris, an experience covered in his first novel *The Sun Also Rises*, published in 1926.

His subsequent works followed a similar vein, exploring his own autobiographical experiences through the art of the novel, from 1929's *A Farewell to Arms*, the story of an American ambulance officer's disillusionment in the war, to arguably his most ambitious novel, 1940's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, drawing on his experiences as a reporter during Spain's civil war.

It was, however, for *The Old Man and the Sea* that he drew the attention of the Swedish Committee, which awarded him in recognition of “his mastery of the art of narrative, and for the influence that he has exerted on contemporary style”.



1957: ALBERT CAMUS

Born in Algeria, Albert Camus moved to France at the age of 25. After working as a political journalist, his breakthrough came with the novel *The Stranger*, published in 1942, which concerns the absurdity of life, a theme he returns to in other books, including his philosophical work *The Myth of Sisyphus*.

His best-selling and highly influential works include *The Plague* (1947) and the 1956 published *The Fall*. Described as “a brilliant portrayal of a man who has glimpsed the hollowness of his existence”, *The Fall* explores man’s relationship with guilt. His unfinished autobiography *The First Man* was published posthumously after Camus passed away in 1960.

Active also in the theatre as a producer and playwright, Camus also adapted plays by Calderon, Lope de Vega and more.

He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature “for his important literary production, which with clear-sighted earnestness illuminates the problems of the human conscience in our times”.

During his Nobel Banquet speech, Camus said: “True artists scorn nothing: they are obliged to understand rather than to judge.”



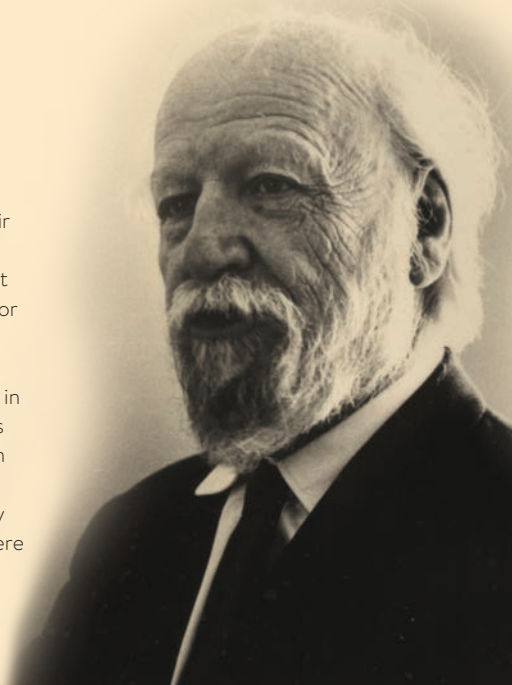
1983: WILLIAM GOLDING

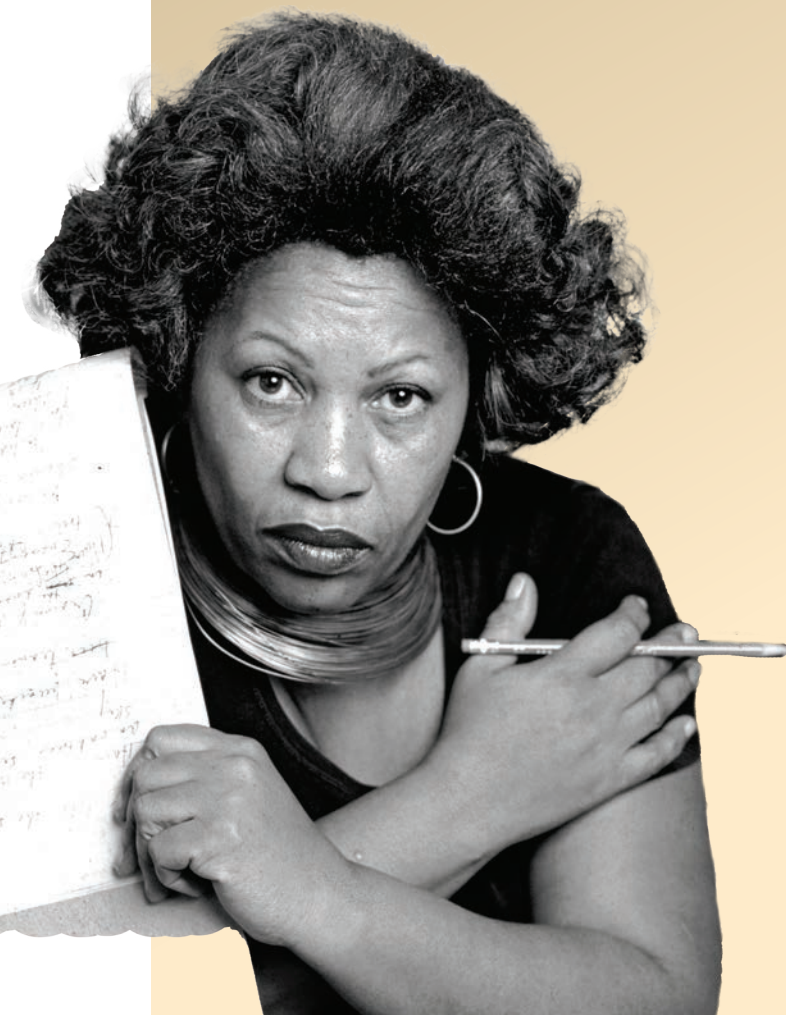
“Words may, through the devotion, the skill, the passion, and the luck of writers prove to be the most powerful thing in the world,” said William Golding in his Nobel lecture of 1983, after he won the Nobel Prize in Literature that year.

A British novelist, playwright and poet, Golding was best known for his novel *Lord of the Flies*, published over 60 years ago. The classic novel telling the tale of a group of British boys stranded on an uninhabited island, and their disastrous attempt to govern themselves, has sold more than 25 million copies in English alone and has been translated into all the major languages. It has been made into two films and dramatised for the stage. Celebrated author Stephen King insists *Lord of the Flies* is “as exciting, relevant and as thought-provoking now as it was when Golding published it in 1954”.

In fact, the battle between civilization and savagery is a recurring theme in a number of Golding’s books. With over a dozen novels published during his career, the former school teacher was awarded the Booker Prize for fiction in 1980 for *Rites of Passage*. In 1983, the same year as he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, Golding was made a Companion of Literature by the Royal Society of Literature, another extremely prestigious award as there are only 10 Companions at any one time.

Appointed CBE in 1966 and knighted in 1988, Golding died while at home in Cornwall, England, in 1993.





1993: TONI MORRISON

Born into a working-class family in Ohio, USA, Morrison is widely renowned as one of literature's foremost commentators on the African-American experience.

A voracious reader as a child, Morrison's work draws heavily on her experiences listening to the tales of her father. Having studied and taught English at several colleges, including Washington DC's renowned Howard University, she worked as a publishing house editor before her debut as an author in 1970.

Her work revolves around the history and modern-day experiences of Black America, and she is widely recognised by critics as having an incredible ear for dialogue. She has been a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters since 1981, and was awarded a number of literary prizes, including the 1988 Pulitzer Prize, before being recognised by the Swedish Committee in 1993 as a writer "who in novels characterised by visionary force and poetic import, gives life to an essential aspect of American reality".

NOBEL MUSEUM 2019

Under the title **'Sharing Worlds'**, this year's **Nobel Museum** organised by the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Knowledge Foundation celebrates the Nobel Prize in Literature. Focusing on the work of selected **Nobel laureates in literature**, and featuring an interactive exhibition suitable for all ages, the Museum runs from **3 February to 2 March, at La Mer**, in Dubai. The Museum is open Sunday to Thursday, 9am – 10pm, and Friday, 2pm – 10pm.

