## **Scottish Prose Non-fiction**



## **Spotlight:** Tobias Smollett **Biographical Details**



Tobias Smollett was born and raised in Dunbartonshire. He moved to London in 1739 at the age of 18. A wartime naval surgeon-turned-writer, Tobias Smollett enjoyed a rich and varied literary career. Throughout the mid-18th century in which he lived and worked, there seemed to be no genre to which Smollett would not turn his hand: the Scotsman wrote histories, prepared translations, authored picaresque novels, penned essays, produced satires, edited periodicals, composed journalistic pieces, and published travel writing. While other novelists of the 18th century came eventually to outshine his literary star, Smollett's prose is still recognised today as scholarly, thorough, and very well-informed.

## **Publications of Interest**



- Travels Through France and Italy (1766)
- Complete History of England (1756)

## Where to Begin?



- 'An Essay on the External Use of Water' (1752)
- LETTER XIII, NICE, January 15, 1764', Travels Through France and Italy (Tauris Parke Paperbacks,
- 'LETTER XV, NICE, JANUARY 3, 1764', Travels Through France and Italy (Tauris Parke paperbacks,

#### <u>Style</u>



- Hyperbolic
- Satirical/comedic
- Panoramic



## Core Themes

- The body
- Society and social norms
- People within place

# **Contextualisina**



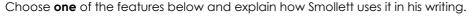
Smollett's prose non-fiction texts are characterised by their formal and generic hybridity. For example, his accurate and detailed observations of his travels through various European destinations are packaged as epistles - a literary device found in popular fictions of the time. Often, his more serious socio-political non-fiction is filled with hyperbole. More celebrated writers of the 18th Century in literature – such as Laurence Sterne – poked fun at Smollett's idiosyncratic style, which they felt was inflated, pompous, and intransigent in its views.

# <u>Understanding</u>



Thinking about your chosen Tobias Smollett text, consider the following questions, geared towards checking understanding:

- Summarise two negative aspects that Smollett finds with the topic/issue.
- Summarise two positive aspects that Smollett finds with the topic/issue.
- Identify ten vocabulary words that you are unsure about in the passage and find each word's denotation.







# **Evaluating**





- 1. Some critics have argued that Smollett's descriptions of places and people are like "verbal pictures". Identify a person or place described in Tobias Smollett's writing and compare it to a painting by William Hogarth. What similarities can you find between these texts (word-based and image-based) from the same period?
- 2. Has the author made any assumptions about or shown any prejudice towards the people/ communities /societies that he focuses on in his writing?
- 3. What is your opinion of Smollett's style of writing? Justify your answer.

