

SAMUEL RICHARDSON

LIFE (1689 - 1761)

Samuel Richardson was born in Derbyshire in 1689, the son of a carpenter. He was apprenticed to a printer in London and until the age of fifty led a industrious life. Having married his employer's daughter, he went on to become a successful printer himself. Richardson discovered his ability as novelist by accident. In 1739 he was commissioned by two booksellers to produce a volume called *The Familiar Letters on Important Occasions*, a guide book meant to provide model letters that could be imitated. Some of these letters were meant to illustrate to maid servants the potential dangers of their male masters and how to resist them. When he came to writing these, Richardson became excited by the situation. He developed a story of a young maid who is harassed by the master of the great house where she works. The result was *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded*, a four-volume novel. Richardson consolidated his reputation with *Clarissa* in 1748. He died in 1761 and was buried in London.

ACHIEVEMENT

Richardson was one of the most innovative writers of his time, developing a new genre with the epistolary novel that provided new ways of revealing the human character and dramatizing human relations.

PAMELA

Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded is narrated in the form of letters that various characters write each other. It's the story of a young servant, Pamela Andrews, who manages to escape her aristocratic master's attempts against her virtue. Pamela begs him to let her return home to a life of poverty but honesty. He pretends to allow her to leave, but with the pretence of sending her home in his carriage he has her abducted and carried to his Lincolnshire estate. Pamela tries to escape but is discovered and imprisoned again. However, she refuses to give in to his threats and her master agrees to let her go. Once she leaves, he falls ill. He begs to return and proposes marriage. The novel ends with their return as mistress to the estate where she once worked as a servant.

The story is an exaltation of the puritan ideals of virtue, honor and duty as Pamela remains pure and respectable till the end. Critical opinions on the character vary. Pamela can be considered both as a calculating hypocrite who uses her virtue to climb the social ladder and as a social rebel who manages to break the social limitations of her class.