

The Movement

The Movement was a group of writers including ***Philip Larkin, Kingsley Amis, Donald Davie, Thom Gunn, John Wain, D J Enright and Robert Conquest***. ***The Movement*** was essentially English in character as poets from other parts of the United Kingdom were not involved.

After the end of the Second World War (1939-1945), British public started to have a normal prosperous life. The war took a toll on everything and five years after its end, people started to have a normal life. Food rations ended; medical care improved, economical welfare was almost at hand. So life was healing from the pains of the war and people were in the process of forgetting the atrocities of the war. They were about to put the war behind.

Even though life was improving on many levels, the arts, however, and literature and theatre in particular, were in a rut. The literature produced was dominated by the ideas and sentiments of the pre-war times and neither poetry nor novel could reflect the change that took place because of the war. Poets, novelists and dramatists showed a reluctance to let go of Britain's imperial past and an obsession with class held sway. A radical shake-up was needed. Literature needed to get angry.

The title for the group was coined in 1954 by the literary editor of the *spectator*, J. D. Scott, who referred to 'this new movement of the fifties'. Recently, the notion of the movement has come in for criticism. Some see it as a fraud, an artificial construct created by the press to counter the arguments that English literature was in decline and overshadowed by American popular culture. Even the poets grouped under The Movement such as Philip Larkin and Kingsley Amis refused to be identified as Movement writers. However, the term caught on, and by rejecting the complexities of modernism the group helped return poetry to a wider readership.

The main features of The Movement Verse are as follows:

1. It is ironical, down to earth, unsentimental and rooted in a nostalgic idea of English identity.
2. European sympathies were regarded as unmistakable signs of intellectual pretentiousness and moral turpitude. For some critics and readers, the poets' approach understandably evokes a narrow-minded Little Englandism.

The Movement – were Oxbridge-educated, white, predominantly male (Jennings was the only woman in the group, and she was a late arrival), middle-class, Europhobic and for the most part heterosexual. Even so, they caught the mood of their time, and Larkin and Amis in particular are undeniably major figures in English literature.

The Movement produced two anthologies, Enright's *Poets of the 1950s* (1955) and Conquest's *New Lines* (1956).

Philip Larkin (1922-1985)

Philip Larkin was born in Coventry, England in 1922. He earned his BA from St. John's College, Oxford, where he befriended novelist and poet Kingsley Amis and finished with First Class Honors in English. After graduating, Larkin undertook professional studies to become a librarian. He worked in libraries his entire life.

Larkin published two novels—*Jill* (1946) and *A Girl in Winter* (1947)—as well as criticism, essays, and reviews of jazz music. He was one of post-war England's most famous poets, and was commonly referred to as "England's other Poet Laureate" until his death in 1985. Indeed, when the position of laureate became vacant in 1984, many poets and critics favoured Larkin's appointment, but Larkin preferred to avoid the limelight.

His published books of verse during his life include: *The North Ship* (1945), *The Less Deceived* (1955), *The Whitsun Weddings* (1964), and *High Windows* (1974)

The main features of his poetry are:

1. It is purely English and inspired by English poets particularly Thomas Hardy and W.H. Auden.
2. He avoided obscurity, a very famous feature of the modernist writing as led by Eliot and Pound
3. It celebrates English life whether urban or rural.
4. It is written in simple conversational language that reflects modern life and addresses the majority of people.
5. Larkin basically rejected free verse and preferred to write using rhyme and rhythm, a matter that gives his poetry a musical and memorable quality.