

READING

Virginia Woolf

Virginia Woolf was one of the greatest English writers of all time. She was a modernist writer and some of her most famous experimental novels are *Jacob's Room*, *Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*.

She was born in London on 25 January, 1882. Her father, Leslie Stephen, was a very educated man. He was part of the "intellectual aristocracy" of Victorian England. Virginia Woolf had two brothers, one sister, two stepbrothers and two stepsisters. All eight children lived with their parents and a few servants at 22 Hyde Park Gate, Kensington.

The family usually spent summer holidays at Talland House in St Ives, Cornwall. This house was very important for Virginia's imagination. Virginia Woolf never went to school but she could use her father's large library and she decided to become a writer. Her brothers Thoby and Adrian went to Cambridge. There they met many intelligent young men. Some of them later became Virginia's friends.

Virginia Woolf's mother died in 1895 and Virginia had her first nervous breakdown. After her father's death Virginia moved to 46 Gordon Square, Bloomsbury. In 1912, she married Leonard Woolf and they decided to earn money by writing and journalism. Virginia finished her first novel in 1913. Its name was *The Voyage Out* and it was quite conventional. The book was published by Duckworth & Co in 1915. In 1917, the Woolfs bought a small printing press. Virginia wrote, published and printed.

A lot of Virginia Woolf's friends died in the 1930s. After the start of the Second World War she and her husband moved to the country. Their London home was destroyed by German bombing. In January 1941, she became very depressed. She began to hear voices in her head and she couldn't concentrate. She felt that she was going mad and she thought that she had lost her art. On March 28, 1941, she filled her pockets with stones and walked into the water of the River Ouse. Her body was found by some children almost a month later.

1 Read the text and answer the following questions.

- 1 Who was Virginia Woolf? _____
- 2 How many children lived at 22 Hyde Park Gate, Kensington? _____
- 3 When did Virginia Woolf get married? _____
- 4 What is the title of Virginia Woolf's first published novel? _____
- 5 Where did Virginia and Leonard move after the beginning of the Second World War? _____
- 6 What happened to Virginia Woolf in January 1941? _____
- 7 How old was Virginia Woolf when she died? _____

2 Are these sentences true (T) or false (F)?

- 1 Virginia Woolf wrote experimental novels. _____
- 2 When she was a child, Virginia Woolf usually spent her holiday in Scotland. _____
- 3 Virginia Woolf went to Cambridge. _____
- 4 Virginia Woolf had some serious mental problems. _____
- 5 After her father's death, Virginia Woolf lived in Bloomsbury. _____
- 6 Virginia Woolf lost many friends in the 1930s. _____
- 7 German tanks destroyed Virginia Woolf's London home. _____

KEY

1 Read the text and answer the following questions.

- 1 Who was Virginia Woolf? **one of the greatest English writers of all time**
- 2 How many children lived at 22 Hyde Park Gate, Kensington? **eight**
- 3 When did Virginia Woolf get married? **in 1912**
- 4 What is the title of Virginia Woolf's first published novel? **The Voyage Out**
- 5 Where did Virginia and Leonard move after the beginning of the Second World War? **to the country**
- 6 What happened to Virginia Woolf in January 1941? **she became depressed**
- 7 How old was Virginia Woolf when she died? **59**

2 Are these sentences true (T) or false (F)?

- 1 Virginia Woolf wrote experimental novels. **T**
- 2 When she was a child, Virginia Woolf usually spent her holiday in Scotland. **F (in Cornwall)**
- 3 Virginia Woolf went to Cambridge. **F (her brothers went to Cambridge)**
- 4 Virginia Woolf had some serious mental problems. **T**
- 5 After her father's death, Virginia Woolf lived in Bloomsbury. **T**
- 6 Virginia Woolf lost many friends in the 1930s. **T**
- 7 German tanks destroyed Virginia Woolf's London home. **F (it was destroyed by German bombing)**