

# Cloud School Pro (CSP)

## Lecture Sheet

For 3rd Year Paid Group

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**Novel, Fiction:** Tom Jones

**Writer:** Henry Fielding (22 April 1707 – 8 October 1754)

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The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling, often known simply as Tom Jones, is a comic novel by English playwright and novelist Henry Fielding. It is a Bildungsroman and a picaresque novel. It was first published on 28 February 1749 in London and is among the earliest English works to be classified as a novel. It is the earliest novel mentioned by W. Somerset Maugham in his 1948 book Great Novelists and Their Novels among the ten best novels of the world.

The novel is highly organised despite its length. Samuel Taylor Coleridge argued that it has one of the "three most perfect plots ever planned", alongside Oedipus Tyrannus and The Alchemist. It became a best seller with four editions published in its first year alone. It is generally regarded as Fielding's greatest book and as an influential English novel.

As it proceeds, Squire Allworthy suspects that the infant whom he adopts and names Tom Jones is the illegitimate child of his servant Jenny Jones. When Tom is a young man, he falls in love with Sophia Western, his beautiful and virtuous neighbour. In the end his true identity is revealed and he wins Sophia's hand, but numerous obstacles have to be overcome before he achieves this, and in the course of the action the various sets of characters pursue each other from one part of the country to another, giving Fielding an opportunity to paint an incomparably vivid picture of England in the mid-18th century.

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Tom Jones is one of the earliest English novels, and was hugely popular when it was first published in 1749. It tells the story of the foundling Tom and his journey towards adulthood and marriage. As might be expected, this journey is a complicated one: Tom falls in love with a neighbour's daughter, discovers that he has a rival for his love in the shape of the unpleasant Master Blifil, and is expelled from Mr Allworthy's house after a series of misadventures. His picaresque journey leads him to encounter a vivid cast of characters including robbers, soldiers, gypsies and untrustworthy lawyers - the latter perhaps an arch nod to Fielding's own legal career. Yet the plot alone is only part of Tom Jones. The novel is written in a mock-epic style in which Tom's adventures are paralleled with those of the heroes of Classical mythology: whole chapters are given up to seemingly irrelevant digressions, and the story is frequently underscored with a bawdy humour that led Samuel Johnson to comment that he 'scarcely knew a more corrupt work'.

### About Poet/ Writer

Henry Fielding was an English writer and magistrate known for the use of humour and satire in his works. His 1749 comic novel The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling was a seminal work in the genre. Along with Samuel Richardson, Fielding is seen as the founder of the traditional English novel. He also played an important role in the history of law enforcement in the United Kingdom, using his authority as a magistrate to found the Bow Street Runners, London's first professional police force.

### Themes

Tom Jones is a great novel by Henry Fielding. It deals with various aspects of life and various elements of the society. The main theme of the novel is the contrast between Tom Jones's good nature, flawed but eventually corrected by his love for virtuous Sophia Western, and his half-brother

Blifil's hypocrisy. Furthermore, *Tom Jones* includes the theme of love and marriage, human nature, hypocrisy, villainy, contrast, fortune, wisdom, money, wealth, greed, appearances and reality, and the nature of virtue or morality.

### **Tone, Mood, and Emotion**

*Tom Jones* is a picaresque story that chronicles the humorous escapades, romances and redemption of its roguish protagonist. The narrator's tone is emotional, even when he's being negative about the villains in the novel. The overall tone of the novel still comes across as witty, darkly funny, and really sarcastic.

### **Settings**

Paradise Hall, Somerset; the roads of southern England; London. *Tom Jones* literally covers a lot of ground. Henry Fielding wants to show us as many aspects as he can of life in England in 1745, from the strong class hierarchies of the countryside to the glittering (but often fake) high society of London.

### **Background**

*Tom Jones* is one of the earliest English novels, and was hugely popular when it was first published in 1749. It tells the story of the foundling Tom and his journey towards adulthood and marriage.

### **Title**

The full title of the book is *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling*. The use of the word history contrasts the novel with romances and grounds the text in realism. A foundling is a child abandoned by his parents at birth or shortly thereafter. This word contrasts two types of characters in the book: those motivated by money and those motivated by birth. In addition, being a foundling makes Tom an outsider, which gives him social flexibility between the characters of these two worlds.

### **Characters**

#### **Tom Jones**

Tom Jones, a "bastard" raised by the philanthropic Allworthy, is the novel's eponymous hero and protagonist. Although Tom's faults (namely, his imprudence and his lack of chastity) prevent him from being a perfect hero, his good heart and generosity make him Fielding's avatar of Virtue, along with Allworthy. Tom's handsome face and gallantry win him the love and affection of women throughout the countryside. His dignified, though natural air induces characters to assume that he is a gentleman—which ultimately turns out to be true.

#### **Sophia Western**

Sophia Western is Fielding's beautiful, generous heroine and the daughter of the violent Squire Western. Like Tom, Sophia lavishes gifts on the poor, and she treats people of all classes with such respect that one landlady cannot believe she is a "gentlewoman." Sophia manages to reconcile her love for Tom, her filial duty to her father, and her hatred for Blifil through her courage and patience. Sophia's natural courtesy can be contrasted with her Aunt Western's artificial manners.

#### **Mr. Allworthy**

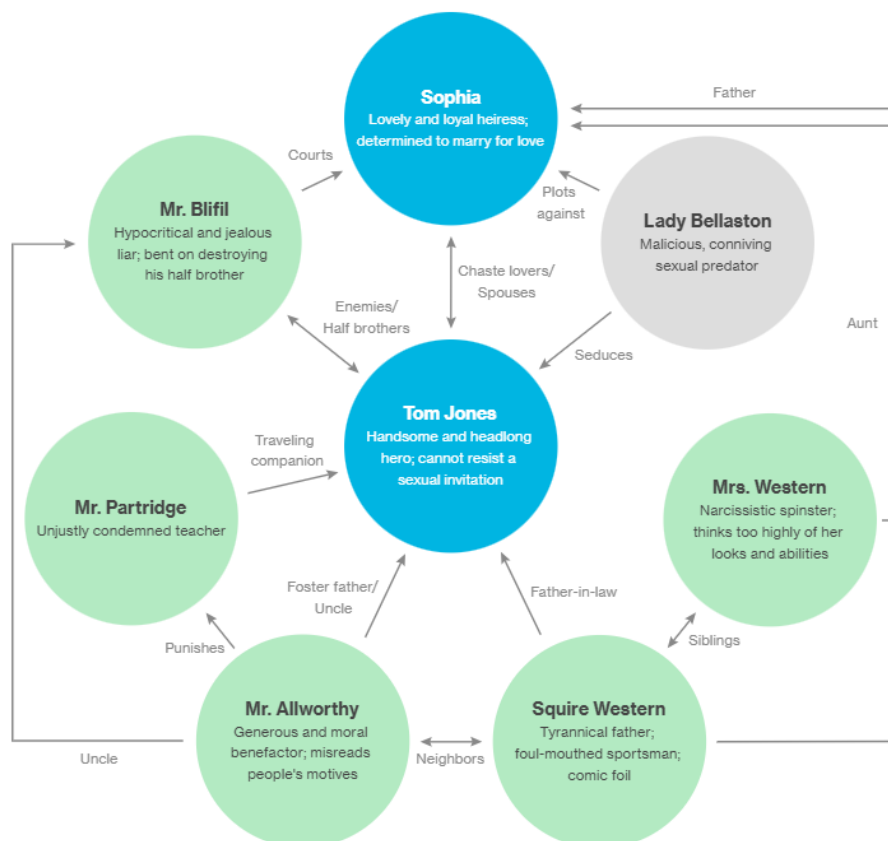
Mr. Allworthy is just what his name implies: all worthy. Allworthy has a reputation throughout England because of his benevolent, altruistic behavior. The moral yardstick of the novel, Allworthy's only fault (which ironically propels much of the plot) is that—due to his goodness—he cannot perceive the evil in others.

## Master Blifil

Blifil is antagonist to Tom Jones and the son of Bridget Allworthy and Captain Blifil. Although he appears at first to be a virtuous character, his hypocrisy soon exposes itself—Blifil pretends to be pious and principled, but greed governs him. The fact that Blifil has few redeeming qualities makes Tom compassion for him at the end of the novel—after the revelation that Blifil kept the secret of Tom's birth to himself—even more commendable. Blifil's dearth of natural human appetites—he at first does not desire Sophia—does not distinguish him as a virtuous character, but rather provides a depressing picture of what humanity would be like if devoid of passion.

## Squire Western

Squire Western is a caricature of the rough-and-ready, conservative country gentleman. Affectionate at heart, the Squire nevertheless acts with extreme violence towards his daughter Sophia, by constantly incarcerating her, and even verbally and physically abusing her. However, since the Squire is a caricature, Fielding does not intend for us to judge these actions too harshly. Similarly, the Squire's insistence on Sophia marrying Blifil has less to do with greed than with his stubbornness and adherence to tradition. Squire Western's speaks in West Country dialect, and peppers his speech with curses.



**Mrs. Western**

Mrs. Western, the foil of her brother Squire Western, is a caricature of the artificial city lady who always acts out of expediency. Mrs. Western prides herself on being adept at all intellectual pursuits—from politics to philosophy to feminism to amour—yet her ignorance reveals itself on numerous occasions (she thinks that Socrates lectured to students instead of engaging in conversational debate). Mrs. Western's sole aim in the novel is to improve the Western name by marrying off Sophia to the richest, most prosperous man she can find.

**Partridge**

Partridge is the teacher whom Allworthy accuses of being Tom's father. He is a kind of comedic Harlequin character (Fielding even compares him to Harlequin). Although pathetic, bumbling, and cowardly, Partridge remains a loyal servant to Jones and deserves his reward at the end of the novel. Partridge has a passion for speaking in Latin non sequiturs. Although Partridge creates problems for Tom and Sophia by boosting Tom's reputation and defiling Sophia's to all and sundry, Tom cannot help forgiving Partridge, who always has the best of intentions.

**Jenny Jones**

Jenny Jones (Mrs. Waters) is the student of Partridge whom Allworthy banishes for being Tom's mother—at the end of the novel we learn that Jenny is not Tom's mother. Jenny reappears as "Mrs. Waters" at Upton, where Tom saves her from a robbery. Although Jenny does not possess the beauty of a Sophia, her very white breasts attract Tom to her. Although she protests to Mr. Allworthy at the end of the novel that she has led a virtuous life, her seduction of Tom in Upton suggests otherwise. She eventually marries Parson Supple, a friend of Western.

**Bridget Allworthy**

Bridget Allworthy is the mother of Blifil and Tom. An unattractive lady who resents beautiful women, Bridget marries Captain Blifil because he flatters her religious views. Although Bridget's affection wavers between Blifil and Tom as the boys mature, she becomes devoted to Tom before her death—largely due to his good looks and gallantry.

**Lady Bellaston**

Lady Bellaston is a London lady, and a relative of Sophia, whose passionate, lusty personality leads her to dabble in intrigues. The stem of her last name "Bella-", meaning "war" in Latin, points to her malicious nature—she thinks of no one but herself. Lady Bellaston carries out a vengeful battle against Tom and Sophia with the utmost glee.

**Harriet Fitzpatrick**

Harriet Fitzpatrick is Sophia's cousin and the wife of Mr. Fitzpatrick. Pretty and charming, she is nevertheless selfish and contrives against Sophia in order to improve her relationship with Squire Western and Mrs. Western.

**Mr. Fitzpatrick**

Mr. Fitzpatrick is a rash Irishman whom Harriet Fitzpatrick casts in the light of an ogre chasing her across the countryside. Fitzpatrick becomes admirable, however, when he admits to initiating the duel with Tom at the end of the novel.

**Mr. Dowling**

Mr. Dowling is a shrewd, shifty lawyer who becomes a friend of Blifil. Always operating out of expediency, when Dowling realizes that Blifil will not be able to reward him for his efforts, he defects to Tom and Allworthy's side.

**Mrs. Miller**

Mrs. Miller is a faithful friend to Tom and the most caring and concerned of mothers to Nancy and Betty. Feisty and active, Mrs. Miller carries through on her promises and becomes Tom's biggest advocate to Allworthy. She is trusting and loyal.

**Nightingale**

Nightingale, although a foppish city gentleman, possesses the laudable traits of loyalty and compassion—although not always in affairs of love. It takes a little time for Tom to convince Nightingale not to abandon Nancy, since Nightingale is caught up in his image in London. To his credit, Nightingale transforms and follows Tom's principles of Honour—that is, fulfilling verbal commitments.

**Lord Fellamar**

Lord Fellamar is a suitor of Sophia who, though he has a conscience, easily allows himself to be manipulated by Lady Bellaston.

**Square**

Square is a philosopher who lives with Allworthy. He justifies his questionable behavior (such as making love to Molly Seagrim) by contorting his philosophical notions. Square, although a foil to Thwackum, is less sinister than the latter. Indeed, Square's virtuous transformation at the end of the novel allows Allworthy to forgive Tom.

**Thwackum**

Thwackum is the vicious tutor of Blifil and Tom who constantly beats Tom and praises Blifil. Thwackum, who claims to value Religion above all else, seeks only his own good.

**Molly Seagrim**

Molly Seagrim is the rugged, unfeminine daughter of Black George who seduces Tom. Feisty and aggressive, Molly enjoys the company of men, and fights fiercely for her rights.

**Black George**

Black George is the servant who is favored by Tom. Although of dubious moral tincture (Black George steals and lies), Black George's loyalty to and love of Tom nevertheless emerges.

**Nancy Miller**

Nancy Miller is the daughter of Mrs. Miller who becomes Nightingale's wife.

## **Narrator**

The ironic, intrusive narrator can be assumed to be Fielding himself since he reflects on his process of creating Tom Jones.

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## **Summary**

The distinguished country gentleman Allworthy, who lives in Somersetshire with his unmarried sister Bridget Allworthy, arrives home from a trip to London to discover a baby boy in his bed. Allworthy undertakes to uncover the mother and father of this foundling, and finds local woman Jenny Jones and her tutor, Mr. Partridge, guilty. Allworthy sends Jenny away from the county, and the poverty-stricken Partridge leaves of his own accord. In spite of the criticism of the parish, Allworthy decides to bring up the boy. Soon after, Bridget marries Captain Blifil, a visitor at Allworthy's estate, and gives birth to a son of her own, named Blifil. Captain Blifil regards Tom Jones with jealousy, since he wishes his son to inherit all of Allworthy's possessions. While meditating on money matters, Captain Blifil falls dead of an apoplexy.

The narrator skips forward twelve years. Blifil and Tom Jones have been brought up together, but receive vastly different treatment from the other members of the household. Allworthy is the only person who shows consistent affection for Tom. The philosopher Square and the reverend Thwackum, the boys' tutors, despise Tom and adore Blifil, since Tom is wild and Blifil is pious. Tom frequently steals apples and ducks to support the family of Black George, one of Allworthy's servants. Tom tells all of his secrets to Blifil, who then relates these to Thwackum or Allworthy, thereby getting Tom into trouble. The people of the parish, hearing of Tom's generosity to Black George, begin to speak kindly of Tom while condemning Blifil for his sneakiness.

Tom spends much time with Squire Western—Allworthy's neighbor—since the Squire is impressed by Tom's sportsmanship. Sophia Western, Squire Western's daughter, falls deeply in love with Tom. Tom has already bestowed his affection on Molly Seagrim, the poor but feisty daughter of Black George. When Molly becomes pregnant, Tom prevents Allworthy from sending Molly to prison by admitting that he has fathered her child. Tom, at first oblivious to Sophia's charms and beauty, falls deeply in love with her, and begins to resent his ties to Molly. Yet he remains with Molly out of honor. Tom's commitment to Molly ends when he discovers that she has been having affairs, which means Tom is not the father of her child and frees him to confess his feelings to Sophia.

Allworthy falls gravely ill and summons his family and friends to be near him. He reads out his will, which states that Blifil will inherit most of his estate, although Tom is also provided for. Thwackum and Square are upset that they are each promised only a thousand pounds. Tom experiences great emotion at Allworthy's illness and barely leaves his bedside. A lawyer named Dowling arrives and announces the sudden and unexpected death of Bridget Allworthy. When the doctor announces that Allworthy will not die, Tom rejoices and gets drunk on both joy and alcohol. Blifil calls Tom a "bastard" and Tom retaliates by hitting him. Tom, after swearing eternal constancy to Sophia, encounters Molly by chance and makes love to her.

Mrs. Western, the aunt with whom Sophia spent much of her youth, comes to stay at her brother's house. She and the Squire fight constantly, but they unite over Mrs. Western's plan to marry Sophia to Blifil. Mrs. Western promises not to reveal Sophia's love for Tom as long as Sophia submits to receiving Blifil as a suitor. Blifil thus begins his courtship of Sophia, and brags so much about his progress that Allworthy believes that Sophia must love Blifil. Sophia, however, strongly opposes the proposal, and Squire Western grows violent with her. Blifil tells Allworthy that Tom is a rascal who cavorted drunkenly about the house, and Allworthy banishes Tom from the county. Tom does not want to leave Sophia, but decides that he must follow the honorable path.

Tom begins to wander about the countryside. In Bristol, he happens to meet up with Partridge, who becomes his loyal servant. Tom also rescues a Mrs. Waters from being robbed, and they begin an affair at a local inn. Sophia, who has run away from Squire Western's estate to avoid marrying Blifil, stops at this inn and discovers that Tom is having an affair with Mrs. Waters. She leaves her muff in Tom's bed so that he knows she has been there. When Tom finds the muff, he frantically sets out in pursuit of Sophia. The Irishman Fitzpatrick arrives at the inn searching for his wife, and Western arrives searching for Sophia.

On the way to London, Sophia rides with her cousin Harriet, who is also Fitzpatrick's wife. In London, Sophia stays with her lady relative Lady Bellaston. Tom and Partridge arrive in London soon after, and they stay in the house of Mrs. Miller and her daughters, one of whom is named Nancy. A young gentleman called Nightingale also inhabits the house, and Tom soon realizes that he and Nancy are in love. Nancy falls pregnant and Tom convinces Nightingale to marry her. Lady Bellaston and Tom begin an affair, although Tom privately, continues to pursue Sophia. When he and Sophia are reconciled, Tom breaks off the relationship with Lady Bellaston by sending her a marriage proposal that scares her away. Yet Lady Bellaston is still determined not to allow Sophia and Tom's love to flourish. She encourages another young man, Lord Fellamar, to rape Sophia.

Soon after, Squire Western, Mrs. Western, Blifil, and Allworthy arrive in London, and Squire Western locks Sophia in her bedroom. Mr. Fitzpatrick thinks Tom is his wife's lover and begins a duel with Tom. In defending himself, Tom stabs Fitzpatrick with the sword and is thrown into jail. Partridge visits Tom in jail with the ghastly news that Mrs. Waters is Jenny Jones, Tom's mother. Mrs. Waters meets with Allworthy and explains that Fitzpatrick is still alive, and has admitted to initiating the duel. She also tells Allworthy that a lawyer acting on behalf of an unnamed gentleman tried to persuade her to conspire against Tom. Allworthy realizes that Blifil is this very gentleman, and he decides never to speak to him again. Tom, however, takes pity on Blifil and provides him with an annuity.

Mrs. Waters also reveals that Tom's mother was Bridget Allworthy. Square sends Allworthy a letter explaining that Tom's conduct during Allworthy's illness was honorable and compassionate. Tom is released from jail and he and Allworthy are reunited as nephew and uncle. Mrs. Miller explains to Sophia the reasons for Tom's marriage proposal to Lady Bellaston, and Sophia is satisfied. Now that Tom is Allworthy's heir, Squire Western eagerly encourages the marriage between Tom and Sophia. Sophia chastises Tom for his lack of chastity, but agrees to marry him. They live happily on Western's estate with two children, and shower everyone around them with kindness and generosity.

## **Literary Devices/Keynotes**

### **Bildungsroman**

In literary criticism, a Bildungsroman is a literary genre that focuses on the psychological and moral growth of the protagonist from childhood to adulthood (coming of age), in which character change is important. The term comes from the German words Bildung ("education", alternatively "forming") and Roman ("novel").

### **Picaresque Novel**

The picaresque novel is a genre of prose fiction. It depicts the adventures of a roguish but "appealing hero", usually of low social class, who lives by his wits in a corrupt society. Picaresque novels typically adopt the form of "an episodic prose narrative" with a realistic style. There are often some elements of comedy and satire.

**What is the theme of "The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling"?**

A major theme of *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling* is the relationship between virtue and vice. Fielding explores the nature of virtue and its connection to happiness. There are also themes of marriage and hypocrisy.

**Why was Tom Jones called a foundling?**

Tom Jones is called a foundling because he was found on Mr. Allworthy's bed with no indication of his parentage. He was assumed to be the son of a local girl and a schoolmaster, although this was eventually proven false.

**What is the classic book "Tom Jones" about?**

The classic novel *Tom Jones* is the story of a young man of uncertain birth who falls in love with his neighbor Sophia. He is forced to leave home. Sophia runs away from her home to escape an arranged marriage. The two suffer a series of comic misadventures before they are finally reconciled and allowed to marry.

**What happens at the end of "Tom Jones"?**

At the end of *Tom Jones*, everyone learns that Tom is actually the son of Mr. Allworthy's sister. He becomes Mr. Allworthy's heir and marries Sophia Western.

**Major Conflict**

Tom Jones and Sophia Western cannot marry, since Tom is believed to be a foundling bastard and Sophia's father wishes her to marry someone of her own gentle class.