Sentimental

1. William Hill Brown, *The Power of Sympathy* (1789). Brown's novel was based on the story of Perez Morton's seduction of his wife's sister, Fanny Apthorp, an act at once both incestuous and adulterous according to eighteenth-century law. The novel insists on the importance of education for women to avoid such a fate.


3. Hannah Foster, *The Coquette* (1797). Once again based on an actual incident, this epistolary novel features a woman seduced and abandoned who gives birth to an illegitimate stillborn child at an inn. The woman (Elizabeth Whitman/Eliza Wharton in the novel) was charged with arrogance because she had refused marriage until she could find someone who would be her intellectual companion. Foster tells the story from her point of view.

The sentimental novel failed because it could not sustain a coherent critique of American society.

**Contemporary Works (England)**

- 1740 Samuel Richardson, *Pamela*: the first English book that practically all readers are willing to call a fully realized novel.
- 1747-1748 *Clarissa*
- 1753 *Sir Charles Grandison*

All three are epistolary novels, novels told through letters written by one or more of the characters. This allows feelings and reactions to be presented without authorial intrusion, gives a sense of immediacy because the letters are written in the thick of the action, and allows the writer to present multiple points of view.

**Sentimental novel or novel of sensibility**: This form reflects the sentimentalism of the eighteenth century as reflected in sentimental comedy and domestic tragedy. *Pamela* was the beginning of the vogue, although Fielding's more realistic *Tom Jones* was written in protest. Examples of the eighteenth-century sentimental novel:

- Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766)
- Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* (1771)

**Sensibility**: A term for reliance on feelings as guides to truth and not on reason and law. This term is connected with primitivism, sentimentalism, the nature movement, and other aspects of romanticism. The high value that the 18th century put on sensibility was a reaction against the stoicism of the seventeenth century and the theories advanced by Hobbes and others that human beings were motivated primarily by self-interest.

For a good article on this term, see the excerpt from Jerome McGann's *The Poetics of Sensibility* and the *Dictionary of Sensibility*
**Sentimentalism:** Two meanings.
1. Overindulgence in emotion especially for the pleasure that this feeling provides.
2. Optimistic overemphasis on the goodness of humanity (sensibility), representing in part a reaction against Calvinism, which regarded human nature as depraved.