

author of the pillars of the earth

The author of The Pillars of the Earth is Ken Follett, a Welsh author renowned for his gripping storytelling and meticulous historical research. Born on June 5, 1949, in Cardiff, Wales, Follett has become a household name, particularly for his works of historical fiction and thrillers. His most remarkable novel, "The Pillars of the Earth," published in 1989, has captivated millions of readers across the globe. This article delves into the life, career, and impact of Ken Follett, exploring the elements that have made him a standout figure in contemporary literature.

Early Life and Education

Ken Follett's early years were marked by a love of reading and storytelling. He grew up in a family that valued education and literature, which significantly influenced his literary aspirations.

Childhood and Family Background

- Family: Follett was the son of a Congregationalist minister and a teacher. His upbringing in a religious household exposed him to various narratives and moral lessons that would later seep into his writing.
- Reading: He developed a passion for reading at an early age, particularly enjoying adventure and historical novels. Influential authors during his formative years included J.R.R. Tolkien and Charles Dickens.

Education

Follett attended University College London, where he studied philosophy. Although he never formally studied writing, his college years were crucial in honing his analytical skills and creativity. After graduation, he worked as a journalist and in publishing before embarking on his writing career.

Career Beginnings

Ken Follett's professional writing career began in the early 1970s. His initial foray into fiction was marked by a series of thrillers that established him as a talented storyteller.

Early Novels

Follett's first novel, "The Big O," was published in 1974. However, it was his subsequent works that garnered more attention. Some notable early novels include:

1. "The Eye of the Needle" (1978): This espionage thriller set during World War II became a bestseller and won the Edgar Award.
2. "Triple" (1979): Another successful thriller that further solidified Follett's reputation as a master of suspense.

Shift to Historical Fiction

In the 1980s, Follett began to explore historical fiction, a genre that would become his hallmark. This shift was inspired by his fascination with the Middle Ages and the architectural marvels of cathedrals.

The Pillars of the Earth

Published in 1989, "The Pillars of the Earth" marks a turning point in Follett's career, catapulting him to international fame. This monumental novel is set in 12th-century England and revolves around the construction of a cathedral in the fictional town of Kingsbridge.

Plot Overview

The narrative spans several decades and intricately weaves together the lives of various characters, including:

- Tom Builder: The ambitious mason who dreams of building a cathedral.
- Aliena: The noblewoman who faces adversity but remains resilient.
- Prior Philip: The determined monk who seeks to bring prosperity to Kingsbridge.

The story explores themes of love, ambition, betrayal, and the struggle for power amidst the backdrop of political turmoil and social upheaval.

Critical Reception and Impact

"The Pillars of the Earth" received widespread acclaim from critics and readers alike. Its vivid characterization, rich detail, and intricate plot have made it a staple in historical fiction. Some key points about its reception include:

- Bestseller Status: The novel remained on bestseller lists for years and has sold over 26 million copies worldwide.
- Adaptations: It has been adapted into a miniseries and a video game, expanding its reach and influence.

Subsequent Works and Series

Following the success of "The Pillars of the Earth," Follett continued to explore historical fiction and expand the narrative universe he created.

Sequels and Related Novels

Follett revisited the world of Kingsbridge in subsequent novels, including:

1. "World Without End" (2007): Set two centuries after "The Pillars of the Earth," it explores the lives of the descendants of the original characters.
2. "A Column of Fire" (2017): This installment is set during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I and delves into the religious conflicts of the time.
3. "The Evening and the Morning" (2020): A prequel to "The Pillars of the Earth," this novel sets the stage for the events and characters that would later populate Kingsbridge.

Other Notable Novels

In addition to his Kingsbridge series, Follett has written numerous other bestselling novels, including:

- "The Key to Rebecca" (1980): A World War II thriller that interlaces fiction with historical events.
- "Fall of Giants" (2010): The first book in the Century Trilogy, it chronicles the lives of several families during World War I.
- "Winter of the World" (2012) and "Edge of Eternity" (2014): The sequels to "Fall of Giants," continuing the story of the same families through the 20th century.

Writing Style and Research

Ken Follett's writing is characterized by its meticulous attention to detail and vivid storytelling. He employs a blend of historical accuracy and imaginative narrative, which brings his characters and settings to life.

Research Methodology

Follett is known for conducting extensive research before writing his historical novels. This involves:

- Reading Historical Texts: He studies primary and secondary sources to understand the period he is writing about.
- Visiting Locations: Follett often visits historical sites to gain a deeper perspective on the architecture, culture, and environment.
- Consulting Experts: He collaborates with historians and experts to ensure the accuracy of the details in his novels.

Themes in Follett's Work

Several recurring themes can be found in Follett's novels, including:

- Power and Corruption: Many of his stories explore the dynamics of power and the moral complexities that accompany it.
- Resilience: His characters often face significant obstacles but demonstrate remarkable resilience and determination.
- Love and Betrayal: Follett's narratives frequently feature intricate relationships, highlighting the complexities of love and the consequences of betrayal.

Legacy and Influence

Ken Follett's impact on literature is profound, particularly in the realm of historical fiction. He has inspired countless writers and captivated readers across generations.

Recognition and Awards

Follett's contributions to literature have been recognized through numerous awards, including:

- Edgar Award: For "Eye of the Needle."
- British Book Awards: Several wins and nominations throughout his career.

Influence on Popular Culture

Follett's works have transcended the literary world, influencing various forms of media:

- Television Adaptations: "The Pillars of the Earth" was adapted into a critically acclaimed miniseries in 2010, bringing the story to a new audience.
- Video Games: His novels have inspired video game adaptations, allowing players to engage with his narratives interactively.

Conclusion

Ken Follett, the author of "The Pillars of the Earth," has left an indelible mark on the literary world. His ability to weave intricate stories set against rich historical backdrops has captivated readers for decades. With his dedication to research, compelling characters, and engaging narratives, Follett continues to be a prominent figure in contemporary literature, inspiring future generations of writers and readers alike. As he continues to publish new works, his legacy as a master storyteller remains firmly established in the realm of historical fiction.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who is the author of 'The Pillars of the Earth'?

The author of 'The Pillars of the Earth' is Ken Follett.

What genre does 'The Pillars of the Earth' belong to?

'The Pillars of the Earth' is primarily a historical fiction novel.

When was 'The Pillars of the Earth' first published?

'The Pillars of the Earth' was first published in 1989.

What is the main setting of 'The Pillars of the Earth'?

The main setting of 'The Pillars of the Earth' is 12th-century England.

What historical event serves as a backdrop in 'The Pillars of the Earth'?

The novel is set against the backdrop of the struggle to build a cathedral during the civil war known as The Anarchy.

Is 'The Pillars of the Earth' part of a series?

Yes, 'The Pillars of the Earth' is the first book in the Kingsbridge series.

What themes are explored in 'The Pillars of the Earth'?

Themes in 'The Pillars of the Earth' include ambition, love, betrayal, and the struggle for power.

Has 'The Pillars of the Earth' been adapted into any other media?

Yes, 'The Pillars of the Earth' has been adapted into a miniseries and a video game.

What is a significant impact of 'The Pillars of the Earth' on literature?

'The Pillars of the Earth' has popularized historical fiction and has sold millions of copies worldwide.

What is Ken Follett's writing style in 'The Pillars of the Earth'?

Ken Follett's writing style in 'The Pillars of the Earth' is characterized by detailed historical research, rich character development, and intricate plotting.

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