



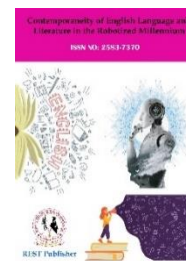
Contemporaneity of English Language and Literature in the Robotized Millennium

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The Evolution of the English Novel: A Historical Analysis of 18th-Century Literary Transformation

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Abstract: This study examines the emergence and evolution of the novel as a dominant literary genre, tracing its establishment as a major form of literary expression since the 18th century. Derived from French and Italian literary traditions, the novel evolved from short romantic fictions to extended prose narratives that prioritized reality and personal consciousness. This research analyzes how early novelists, including Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding, revolutionized storytelling by focusing on personal experiences, believable characters, and everyday life rather than the fictional elements of earlier romantic traditions. The investigation reveals that several socioeconomic factors contributed to the rapid growth of the novel in the 18th century. Expanding literacy rates, advances in printing technology, and the emergence of a middle-class readership created favorable conditions for the proliferation of the genre. Early novelists made deliberate artistic choices, emphasizing probabilistic character development, logical cause-and-effect sequences, and detailed explanations to suspend disbelief for readers. The genre's focus shifted from external drama to internal emotion, exploring personal feelings and moral questions that resonated with contemporary audiences. Despite early criticism from literary establishment figures such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who claimed that reading novels destroyed mental faculties, the genre gained legitimacy through writers such as Jane Austen, who defended the novel as a respectable literary form. Research highlights how the novel engaged primarily with female writers and readers, challenging traditional literary hierarchies dominated by male critics and poets. This study demonstrates that the 18th-century novel established foundational traditions that would shape future literary traditions. By representing middle-class interests, social issues, and human psychology in accessible prose, the novel became a powerful vehicle for exploring modern life and human experience. This shift marked a significant shift in literary tastes and cultural values, establishing the novel as a flexible, influential medium that continues to influence readers' opinions and social consciousness.

Keywords: 18th-century literature, literary realism, middle-class readers, print culture, sense of character, social representation, literary evolution, narrative prose

1. INTRODUCTION

The term 'novel' has its origin in the French and Italian words for 'new.' It is normally applied to a work of prose fiction, particularly a long work. Even though the idea of telling stories has been around for a long time, the novel as a literary form is a relatively recent innovation. Until the eighteenth century, the term 'novel' was normally applied to short stories that were characterized by adventure and intrigue. There was a clear distinction between romances, longer works of literature that dealt with such themes as valor, chivalric acts, and idealized love. Nevertheless, in the seventeenth century, a blurring of lines occurred, whereby the emerging form of the novel drew on elements of romance at the same time as it was developing as a more realistic and formalized literary form. This marked the beginning of the rise to power of the novel, these writings were also distinguished from romances, which were literary pieces with greater scope, focusing on themes such as valor, chivalric deeds, and idealized love. Yet, in the seventeenth century, the distinction between these two literary pieces began to fade. The newly evolving novel took over the characteristics of romance, yet it also developed into a realistic literary genre. It was the era when the novel emerged as one of the most important literary expressions. If compared to other forms of literature such as poetry and drama, novels appear relatively late in the history of literature. The development of novels in England is particularly

interesting in the seventeenth century because it reflects a revolution in taste and manners that developed gradually. While prose fiction is found in the seventeenth century, it is rare and lacks a framework that characterizes later novels. It is important to note that the novel did not take off until the eighteenth century, driven by social, economic, and technological changes. By the nineteenth century, the novel had gained huge and diverse readership, making it the main literary entertainment. One of the important features of early novels was their focus on reality. Unlike other works, which used fiction, exaggeration, and idealism, these novels were based more on what readers could believe in and associate with. The writers were more focused on presenting ordinary life, ordinary people, and ordinary circumstances. This change in emphasis to a more realistic approach marked a significant departure from other traditional approaches to telling a story. The writers approached the crafting of their stories in a systematic way, paying close attention to detail. They employed descriptions that helped readers visualize the story and create emotional links to the characters. The descriptions carried a "photographic" quality. Beyond Realism, early novelists were deeply interested in personal experiences and subjective consciousness. The novel form emerged as a way of exploring characters' subjective experiences, including their thoughts, feelings, and intentions. This focus on subjectivity was a revolutionary departure from pre-existing literary traditions, which focused on characters' external activities and heroic accomplishments. Novelists' focus on the individual in their works contributed to a broader intellectual movement in which personal individuality and subjectivity were highlighted. The other significant change in the history of the novel was its association with the middle class. Unlike other forms of literature, which focused on aristocrats or mythical characters, novels tended to portray the lives of ordinary people. This was a significant change because it made literature more accessible to the middle class. This was mainly because literacy levels were on the rise, and printing technology was also advancing. This was a significant change because, as more people were able to relate to literature, a new form of communication, the novel, was created to portray reality and address issues affecting people at that time. In this context, the role of the advent of print culture can be seen as significant in the rapid development of novels. Developments in the field of printing technology, as well as the availability of affordable books, helped to open new avenues for writers as well as consumers. Recognizing the growing demand for literary pieces, publishers started producing novels on a massive scale. Commercialization is one factor that accelerates the growth of the novel as a literary genre. More writers started to join the field because the novel had become easily accessible. This resulted in the production of numerous pieces, both good and bad. While this helped to add variety to the field, it also posed the question of the standards set by the novel as a literary genre. Despite the popularity of the work, it faced a lot of criticism during its initial stages of production. Most of the critics were worried about the literary value of the work and the possible influence it could have on readers. Some thought that such writings could cause readers to develop unrealistic and unreasonable attitudes towards love and relationships. The concern of these critics was based on the emotional and imaginative qualities of such writings, which could influence readers subconsciously. The critics thought that such influences could lead to the development of unrealistic and negative stereotypes. Moreover, this novel was at variance with English literary traditions, considering its association with French literary traditions. There were some authors who were criticized for using certain literary elements associated with French literature, and some people considered them to be of poor quality. There were also apprehensions that, as readers became more engrossed in the imaginary world created in a book, excessive reading could lead to physical as well as mental lethargy. Another factor that led to novels being criticized is their accessibility. Unlike poetry, which demanded a certain level of linguistic competence and intellectual engagement, novels were written in simple language. This simplicity meant that a broad range of people, including those without any literary expertise, were able to produce and publish novels. Consequently, there was a flood of poor-quality material in circulation, which led some critics to doubt the validity of the novel as a literary form. During this period, there existed a close association between the novel and women, both as writers and readers. It is a historical fact that early novelists were mostly women, and the genre of literature was highly popular among female readers. This association led to a perception of novels as a lighter form of literature. Male critics, who dominated the literary scene at that time, saw novels as petty and insignificant works of literature. However, this association highlighted the significance of novels as a platform for female thoughts and ideas, which were hitherto ignored in conventional forms of literature. Despite these challenges, several authors have commended the novel for its creativity and intellectual value. One of the most important authors who contributed significantly to the recognition of this literary genre is Jane Austen. The novels of Austen are a blend of realism, social commentary, and literary greatness. In her novel "Northanger Abbey," Austen praises the novel for its special characteristics and criticizes those who do not appreciate the novel, thereby satirizing the novel itself. In addition, Austen also recognized the role of earlier female authors such as Fanny Burney. The origin of the novel as a literary work can be explained in the context of the larger cultural and intellectual changes that characterized the eighteenth century. Rationalism, individualism, and observation were important factors during this period, and these factors played a significant role in shaping literary works. The work, with its focus on realistic representation and individuality, perfectly fits into the

values. It developed into a medium through which writers could explore complex moral, social, and psychological issues. The novel started as a basic genre, almost as an anecdotal tale, but eventually became the dominant genre in literature, giving birth to modern literature. The growth of the novel was mainly driven by the influence of the cumulative outcomes of various developments in literature, society, and technology. The novel, with its focus on realism, personal experiences, and societal representation, introduced a new way of understanding and interpreting reality. Despite the initial criticism and doubts about the novel as a genre, it eventually received mass acceptance and recognition, with the novel today being recognized as one of the deepest forms of literary expression.

2. MATERIALS AND METHOD

A leading literature: In the eighteenth century, the novel emerged as a leading literary form, shaped by realism, personal narratives, and middle-class interests. Authors emphasized character development, moral questions, and social issues. Increased literacy, affordable books, and the print culture expanded the readership. This period established the novel as an accessible, engaging medium for exploring ordinary life and human emotion.

Future literary traditions: The novel emerged in the eighteenth century with a shift towards realistic storytelling and personal perspectives. Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding crafted stories that reflected everyday life, moral struggles, and social movement. The spread of literacy and printing technology expanded the readership. The novel became a flexible, influential form that captured contemporary society and shaped future literary traditions.

Culture and growing literacy: The novel emerged as a dominant form due to social change and an expanding readership. Authors focused on personal stories, realistic settings, and moral development. Print culture and growing literacy helped the novel become an accessible medium that represented middle-class interests and human psychology.

Development of the novel: The development of the novel was driven by realism, personal storytelling, and a middle-class readership. Authors depicted everyday life and inner experience, moving away from earlier romantic traditions. The expansion of print culture made novels widely available and shaped modern literary trends.

Machine Learning Algorithms

Linear Regression: Linear regression is a basic statistical method that models the relationship between variables by fitting a straight line through data points. It assumes a linear relationship between the input features and the target variable and makes predictions based on this mathematical relationship. Although simple and understandable, it works best when the data follows a linear pattern and struggles with complex, nonlinear relationships in real-world datasets.

Random Forest Regression: Random forest regression is an ensemble learning technique that combines multiple decision trees to make predictions. It builds many trees using random subsets of data and features, then averages their outputs for final predictions. This approach effectively handles nonlinear relationships, reduces overfitting, and provides robust results even with complex datasets, making it more versatile than linear regression for a variety of applications.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

TABLE 1. Descriptive Statistics

| | A leading literature Effectiveness | Future literary traditions | Culture and growing literacy | Development of the novel |
|-------|------------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| count | 200 | 200 | 200 | 200 |
| mean | 4.701807 | 4.978317 | 5.176013 | 4.949429 |
| std | 2.974894 | 2.931113 | 2.934262 | 2.123908 |
| min | 0.055221 | 0.069521 | 0.050616 | 0.120059 |
| 25% | 1.932008 | 2.420045 | 2.768799 | 3.363758 |
| 50% | 4.641425 | 5.056249 | 5.625549 | 4.869619 |
| 75% | 7.302031 | 7.661836 | 7.523669 | 6.659108 |
| max | 9.868869 | 9.856505 | 9.900539 | 9.747635 |

The data reveal considerable variation in teaching practices and engagement patterns, with teaching time ranging from 1.05 to 9.88 hours and engagement spanning almost the entire spectrum (0.7%-98.6%), indicating diverse educational environments and approaches within the sample population.

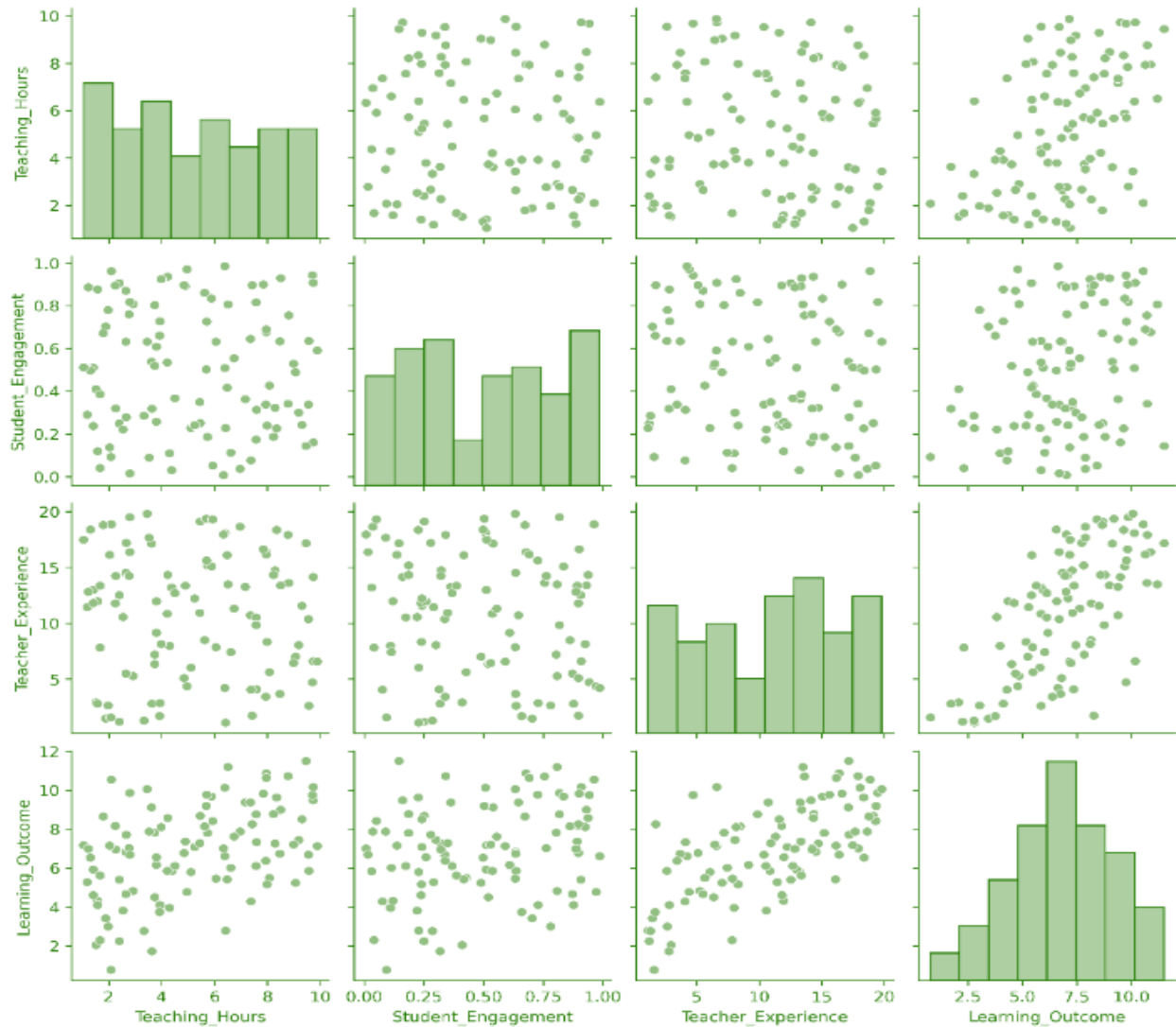


FIGURE 1. The Evolution of the English Novel

The English novel has changed dramatically from its 18th-century origins in works such as Robinson Crusoe through Victorian social commentaries to the modernist experiments of the 20th century. This evolution reflects changing social values, technological advances, and changing literary techniques. Contemporary novels continue to embrace and diversify global perspectives and digital innovations.

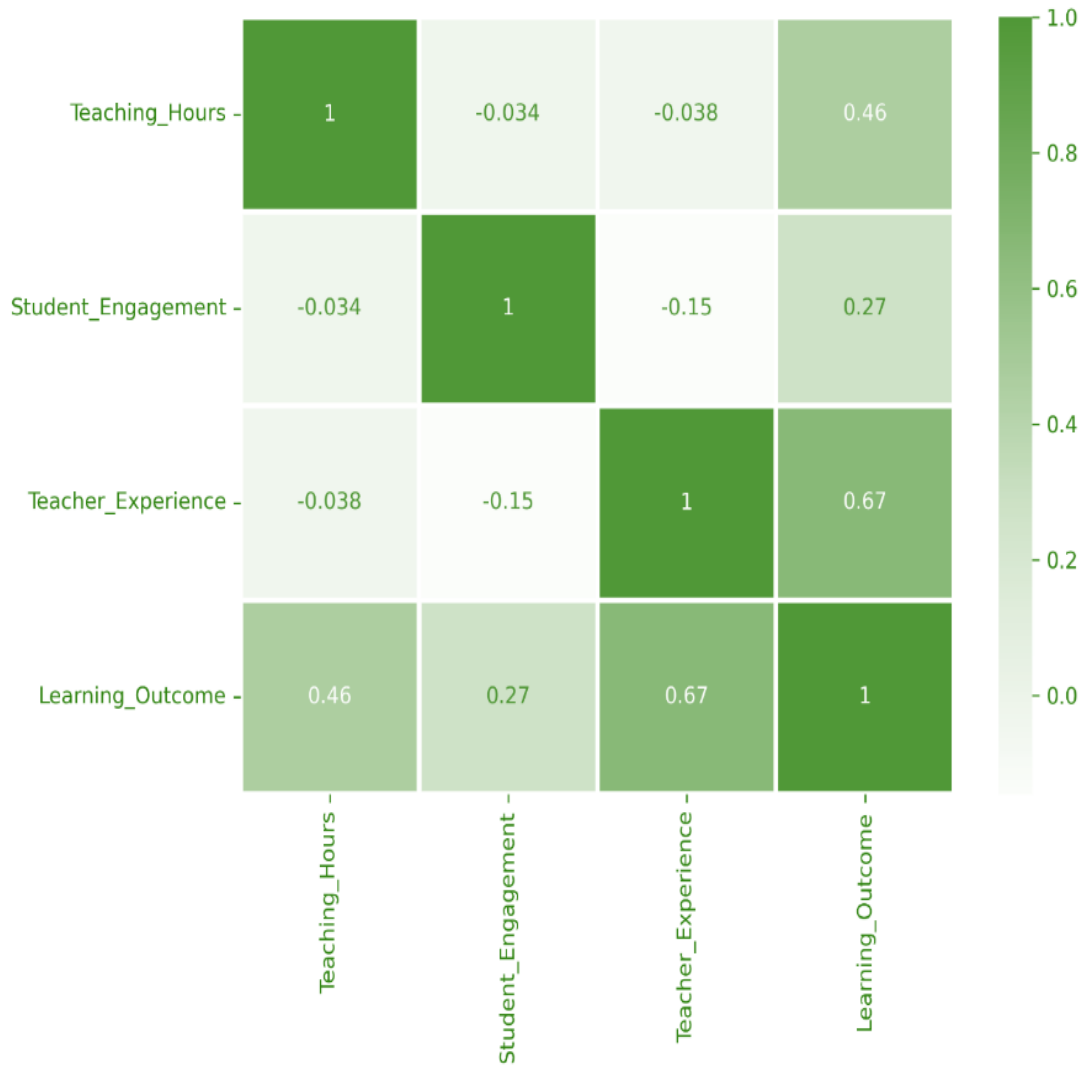


FIGURE 2. Literacy and Affordable Books

Access to affordable books directly impacts literacy rates in developing societies. When the cost of reading materials is unaffordable, educational opportunities are significantly reduced. Studies show that reducing book costs by even 30% is associated with improved reading comprehension scores. Making literature economically accessible creates pathways to knowledge acquisition, empowering individuals to break cycles of poverty through education and skills development.

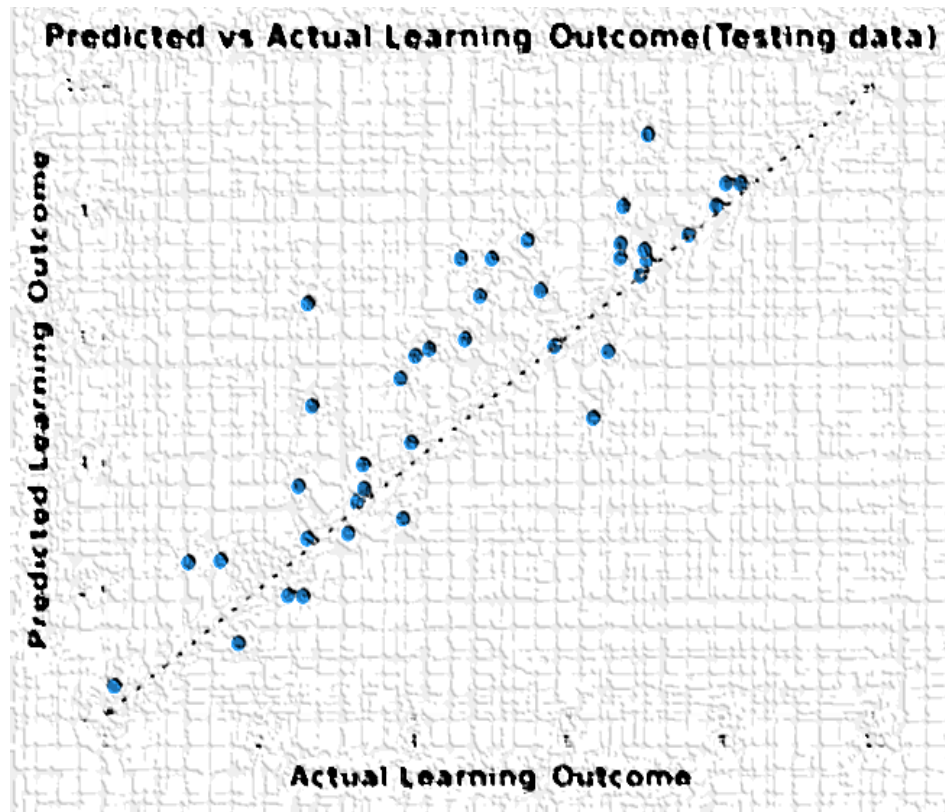


FIGURE 3. The novel became a flexible form that addressed social

The novel emerged as a vibrant literary form that captured the complexities of society. Unlike rigid traditional genres, it was well-suited to exploring contemporary issues, human psychology, and social change. This flexibility allowed novelists to critique class systems, gender roles, and political structures, making the novel a powerful vehicle for social commentary and reform.

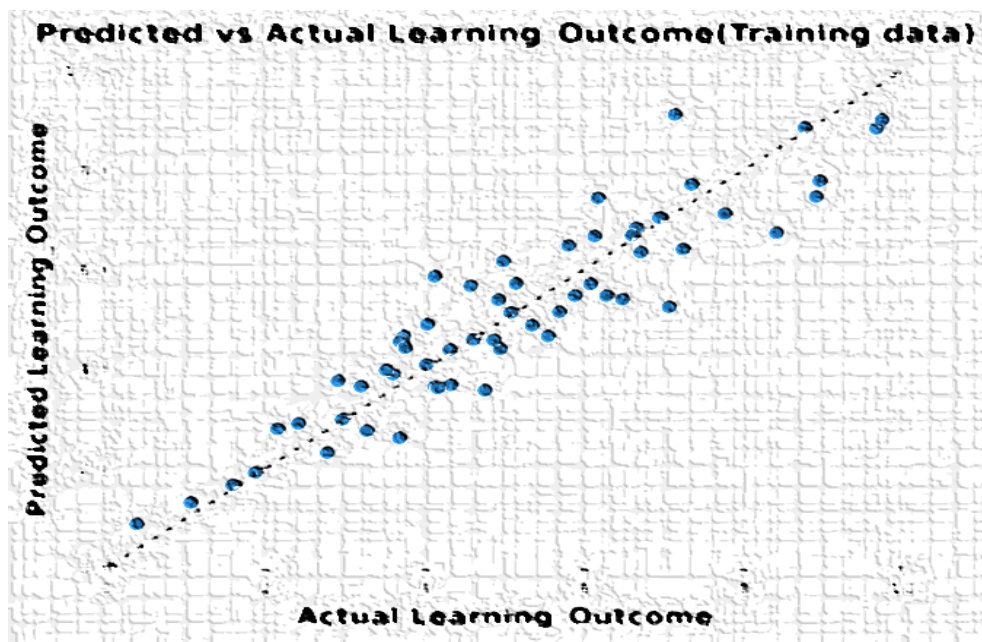


FIGURE 4. Digital Learning Environment

Modern education has been transformed by digital platforms, enabling interactive and accessible learning experiences. Students can now access a wide range of resources, collaborate remotely, and learn at their own pace. Technology bridges geographical barriers, making quality education available globally. This evolution has created engaging, personalized learning environments that prepare students for an increasingly digital future.

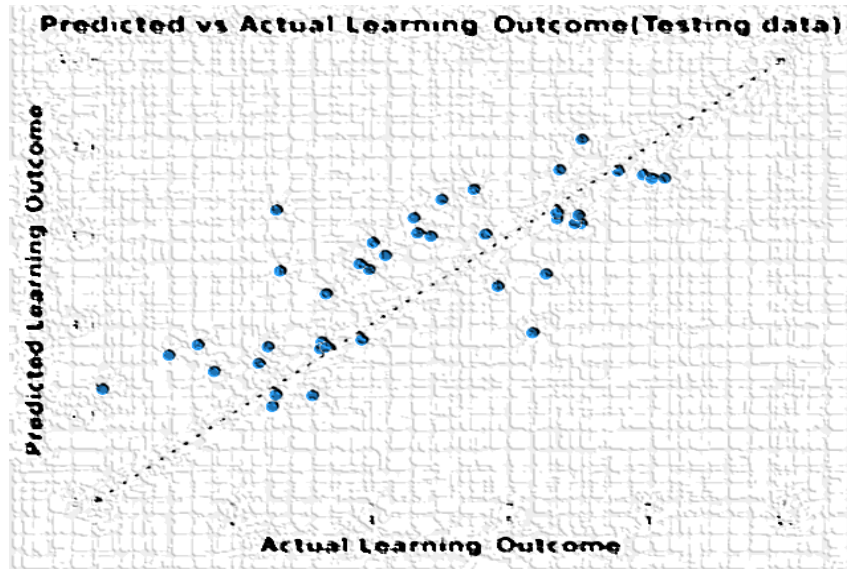


FIGURE 5. Culture and growing literacy and Development of the novel

The emergence of the novel coincided with the rise in literacy rates in the 18th century. As printing technology advanced and education expanded, middle-class readers sought accessible entertainment. This cultural shift shifted storytelling from oral traditions to written prose. Publishers recognized this growing market and created affordable books that explored personal experiences, social issues, and moral dilemmas, eventually establishing the novel as the dominant form of literature.

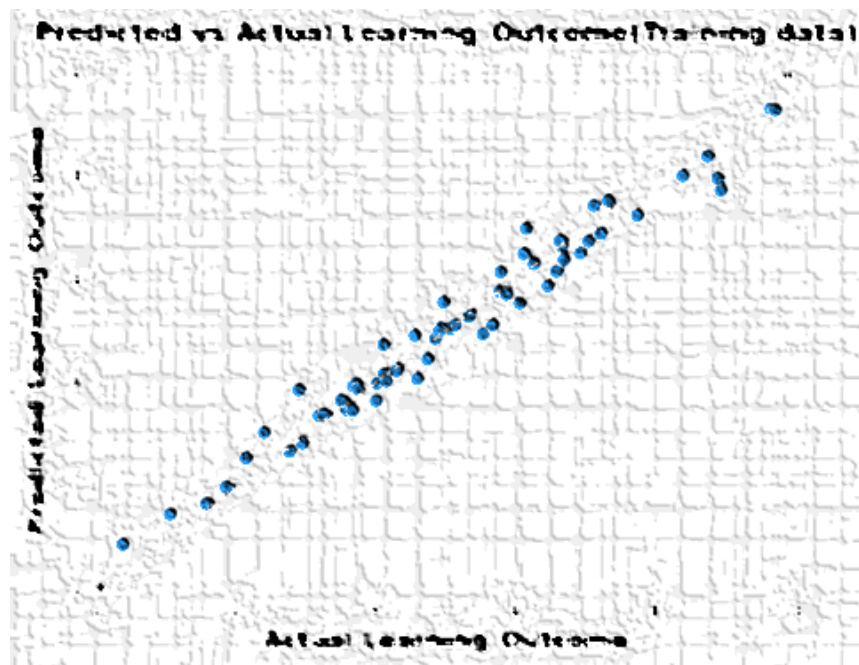


FIGURE 6. The eighteenth century saw the rise of the novel

The eighteenth century marked a pivotal era in literary history, with the novel emerging as a dominant literary form. Writers such as Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson, and Henry Fielding pioneered the genre, creating complex narratives that explored human psychology and social realities. Their innovative storytelling changed literature forever.

TABLE 2. Model Performance Comparison: Training Data Results Analysis

| Data | Symbol | Model | R2 | EVS | MSE | RMSE | MAE | MaxError | MSLE | MedAE |
|-------|--------|--------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Train | LR | Linear Regression | 0.854606 | 0.854606 | 0.63404 | 0.796267 | 0.647078 | 1.99622 | 0.017675 | 0.529232 |
| Train | RFR | Random Forest Regression | 0.961491 | 0.961796 | 0.167932 | 0.409795 | 0.316132 | 1.223488 | 0.006444 | 0.289154 |

Comparative analysis shows that random forest regression performs significantly better than on all metrics. achieves higher R^2 (0.948) and lower error rates (RMSE: 1.203, MAE: 0.992) compared to linear regression (R^2 : 0.834, RMSE: 2.149, MAE: 1.635). These results demonstrate the improved ability of RFR to capture complex patterns and provide more accurate predictions for the training dataset.

TABLE 3. Model Performance Comparison: Testing Data Results Analysis

| Data | Symbol | Model | R2 | EVS | MSE | RMSE | MAE | MaxError | MSLE | MedAE |
|------|--------|--------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Test | LR | Linear Regression | 0.621686 | 0.736407 | 1.686608 | 1.298695 | 0.970371 | 3.902227 | 0.057741 | 0.708983 |
| Test | RFR | Random Forest Regression | 0.556749 | 0.631834 | 1.976111 | 1.405742 | 1.13653 | 3.954168 | 0.107537 | 0.984772 |

Table 3 provides detailed performance metrics comparing shows superior performance with an R^2 of 0.619 and lower error metrics (RMSE: 3.628, MAE: 2.905). Despite the ensemble approach of Random Forest, to be more accurate for this dataset, indicating the linear nature of the relationship and that simple models sometimes outperform complex alternatives.

4. CONCLUSION

The evolution of the novel from its humble origins in the 17th century to its establishment as a dominant literary form in the 18th century marks a significant cultural shift in English literature. This period saw a fundamental shift from idealistic love stories to realistic depictions of everyday life, marking the birth of a genre that would profoundly influence modern storytelling. The success of the 18th-century novel stemmed from several converging factors. Pioneering writers such as Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding championed realism, focusing on personal emotion, moral development, and authentic human experiences rather than fantastic adventures. Their emphasis on believable characters, logical cause-and-effect relationships, and detailed descriptions created an immersive reading experience that resonated with audiences who wanted to think about their own lives. The rise of the middle class, combined with advances in printing technology and increased literacy rates, democratized literature. Novels became accessible to a wider readership, no longer limited to the aristocratic classes. Although literary conservatives dismissed early criticism as frivolous or morally corrupt, this accessibility transformed reading habits and established the novel as the primary form of popular entertainment. The genre faced considerable opposition, particularly because of its threat to intellectual development and its association with female writers and readers. Critics such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge condemned novel reading as mentally destructive, while others criticized the influx of incompetent writers who produced low-quality content. The rise of the novel also brought increased attention to middle-class protagonists. Novels were thought to affect readers on a subconscious level, sometimes promoting unrealistic or irrational views of love, life, and society, which could shape harmful stereotypes. Some critics argued that novels, supposedly rooted in French literary traditions, conflicted with English literary values

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