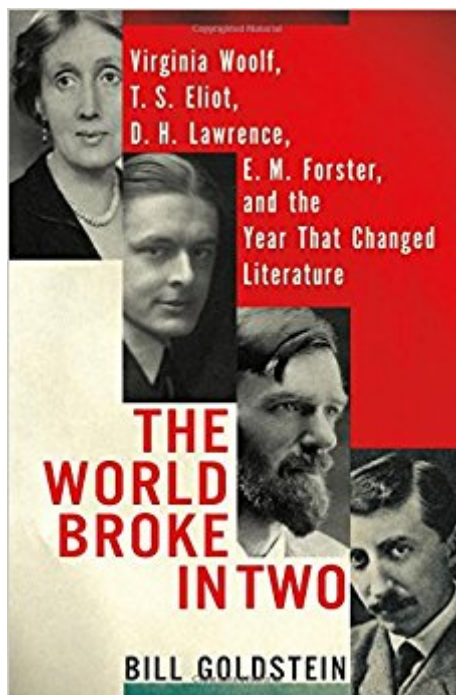




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The World Broke In Two: Virginia Woolf, T. S. Eliot, D. H. Lawrence, E. M. Forster And The Year That Changed Literature



Synopsis

A revelatory narrative of the intersecting lives and works of revered authors Virginia Woolf, T. S. Eliot, E. M. Forster and D. H. Lawrence during 1922, the birth year of modernism *The World Broke in Two* tells the fascinating story of the intellectual and personal journeys four legendary writers, Virginia Woolf, T. S. Eliot, E. M. Forster, and D. H. Lawrence, make over the course of one pivotal year. As 1922 begins, all four are literally at a loss for words, confronting an uncertain creative future despite success in the past. The literary ground is shifting, as *Ulysses* is published in February and Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* begins to be published in England in the autumn. Yet, dismal as their prospects seemed in January, by the end of the year Woolf has started *Mrs. Dalloway*, Forster has, for the first time in nearly a decade, returned to work on the novel that will become *A Passage to India*, Lawrence has written *Kangaroo*, his unjustly neglected and most autobiographical novel, and Eliot has finished and published to acclaim *"The Waste Land."* As Willa Cather put it, "The world broke in two in 1922 or thereabouts, and what these writers were struggling with that year was in fact the invention of modernism. Based on original research, Bill Goldstein's *The World Broke in Two* captures both the literary breakthroughs and the intense personal dramas of these beloved writers as they strive for greatness.

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Customer Reviews

"The World Broke in Two chronicles Morgan (Forster), David (Lawrence), Tom (Eliot) and Virginia

(Woolf) as they wage personal battle in tremendous earnest against blank sheets of paper to create important new works from the inner recesses of their genius. Goldstein offers a snapshot history of their careers in deference to the American now, embracing not only the chatty familiarity of first names but also, and more significant, the biographical details of authorship that most 21st-century interest in literature seems to depend upon." [The New York Times Book](#)

[Review](#) "An extensively researched, extraordinarily fine-grained and lucid literary history rich in biographical discoveries" | Goldstein's ardently detailed, many-faceted story of a pivotal literary year illuminates all that these tormented visionaries had to overcome to

make the modern happen. [Booklist](#) "[An] accomplished, captivating look at that seminal year through the lens of the interconnecting lives of four literary icons" | Impressively rich and nuanced [Goldstein's] evenhanded passion for each of his subjects plays out in an elegant narrative. In our own fractured, impatient age, the poignant and arresting stories of these four genius writers evoke nostalgia for a time when precision and introspection were the guiding principles of literature.

[The World Broke in Two](#) beautifully captures a seismic moment of cultural rupture that, despite its shock and awe, left something new and exciting in its path. [BookPage](#) "The ingenious conceit of Goldstein's book is to follow, using excerpts from both their correspondence and their diaries, the intertwined personal and literary lives of four writers—Virginia Woolf, D. H. Lawrence, E. M. Forster, and Eliot himself—as the three seismic shocks of those

publications ripple through their lives, and their work" | In letting these four writers speak in their own words—their own witty, gossipy, often waspish words—Goldstein neatly avoids a dutiful chronicling of anything so weighty and abstruse as *The Rise of Modernism*. Cannily, he sacrifices historical sweep and gravitas for something much more grounded and intimate. In his hands, these literary lions prove surprisingly and bracingly catty.

[NPR](#) "Engaging and very well researched.... Goldstein's insightful and graceful prose reveals four authors during troubled moments of their careers, and he is fortunate in having a trove of writings from which to draw.... This year-in-the-life chronicle gives us a remarkable look at the gestation of literature." [Minneapolis Star-Tribune](#) "Candy for those who have a taste for literary history" | Goldstein splits his focus between the writers' work and their intertwined lives, offering drama, cultural insight and a good dose of pure fun.

[The Forward](#) "An extensively annotated account of how four major authors invented modernism in 1922" | The intimate peek into the lives, rivalries, and heartbreaks of these celebrated writers sustains an entertaining story about how great literature is made, and will

please scholars and hardcore fans alike. Publishers Weekly “What a masterpiece this book is! So captivating, so original, so full of energy, insights and analysis! Bill Goldstein’s brilliant work will be read with great pleasure not only by those who think they already know his famous subjects, but by all readers who love history and biography.

Doris Kearns Goodwin, author of *Team of Rivals* and *The Bully Pulpit* “The World Broke in Two is more fun to read than it has any right to be. Its subject – the overlapping neuroses, illnesses, and inspirations of four 20th Century greats – would seem familiar territory. But Bill Goldstein is such a companionable writer and his narrative is so full of telling detail that we encounter each of these writers anew. The result is a book that anyone interested in the vicissitudes of the writing life – then or now – will read with hunger. Like all good accounts of writing, it draws us back to the books themselves.

Adam Haslett, author of *Imagine Me Gone* “The World Broke in Two is a gem of collective and interwoven biography. Like the great modernists of fiction, Bill Goldstein pays keen imaginative attention to simultaneity; he surveys the literary landscape, and these four great peaks upon it, as if he were the pilot flying that famous airplane over Mrs. Dalloway. The reader is made to see the writers – paused, burgeoning, and on the brink – in strong relationship to one another. The result is a view and vision we’ve not had before.

Thomas Mallon, author of *Yours Ever: People and Their Letters* “The year 1922 was indeed “a grrrrreat littttery period,” as Ezra Pound wrote to T. S. Eliot, and as Bill Goldstein demonstrates in this stunningly written, riveting day-by-day account of how four of the world’s most beloved writers created their greatest works. He provides new insight into the relationships among writers we thought we knew. How heartening this book will be to readers and to writers – it was to me – to realize that even Virginia Woolf, T. S. Eliot, E. M. Forster, and D. H. Lawrence experienced self-doubts, envy, and all kinds of other challenges, and that they simply had to plow through them and get their work done. *The World Broke in Two* brilliantly illuminates the adventure that is the creative process.

Sherill Tippins, author of *February House* and *Inside the Dream Palace: The Life and Times of New York’s Legendary Chelsea Hotel* “Bill Goldstein, a wizard of words, has gifted us with a magical brew. Profoundly researched and filled with stunning connections, *The World Broke in Two* is brilliant, compelling, incisive. It transforms our understanding of modern literature, and the creative relationships of Virginia Woolf, T.S. Eliot, D.H. Lawrence, and E.M. Forster. Everyone interested in history, literature, life will enjoy and benefit from this dazzling work.

Blanche Wiesen Cook, author, *Eleanor Roosevelt, Volumes I, II, and III*. “This is a brilliant book about

the birth of modernism, one which taught me something on every page. I never knew what a life-changing influence Proust had on Virginia Woolf and E.M. Forster or how everyone struggled with money, especially T. S. Eliot. This beautifully written book reveals how artistic innovation occurs in the real world of gossip, love affairs, poverty and class differences. You will feel and be! much smarter after you read it. Edmund White, author of Proust "[Bill Goldstein] makes a solid case for 1922 as the climacteric in which the modern era began modern, that is to say, in the sense of literary and artistic modernism [he] writes assuredly and well of the work of his chosen four exemplars he brings fresh eyes to all of them engaging. Kirkus Reviews

Bill Goldstein, the founding editor of the books site of The New York Times on the Web, reviews books and interviews authors for NBC's "Weekend Today in New York." He is also curator of public programs at Roosevelt House, the public policy institute of New York's Hunter College. He received a PH.D in English from City University of New York Graduate Center in 2010, and is the recipient of writing fellowships at MacDowell, Yaddo, Ucross and elsewhere.

This amazing book will be of interest to anybody who is involved with or has an interest in any of the following: the creative process, books, history, and/or experiencing a non-fiction book that reads like a novel and includes love stories, mental illness, jealousy and suspense regarding major changes in the world after World War I. As a writer, I will focus this review on the benefits that reading this book might bring to those who write, want to write, or who are fascinated about the creative process and want to find out more about it. The four famous writers discussed in this book, Virginia Woolf, T.S. Eliot, D.H. Lawrence, and E.M. Forster all had different ways that they approached the writing process. Bill Goldstein describes in depth the process for each of these writers. For example, Virginia Woolf found two hours every morning, "the sacred morning hours" "Phrase tossing can only be done then." She found walking and journal writing extremely helpful for her writing. "She kept to both as regularly as possible, believing, as she put it in 1919, "the habit of writing thus for my own eye only is good practice. It loosens the ligaments." Identifying the right time and place to write was a critical decision for each of the four and they all chose a different pattern for their writing endeavors. The sharing of ideas while reading and discussing each other's work was a second theme about the creative process that surfaced. I have spoken to many writers

who find great benefit in joining writer's groups to do the same thing that was done by authors in the 1920s. An example of how reading each other's work at times was helpful describes how E.M. Forster learned from Virginia Woolf. The following passage describes him writing to her about the copy of her book *Jacob's Room* she had given him. "It was an amazing success," he told her, and his mind was occupied with wondering what developments, both of style and form, might come out of it. He had read it, in other words, as a novelist thinking about the use it might be to him. A third theme related to the creative process dealt with how each of the four worked to overcome sometimes debilitating physical and mental challenges. For example, T.S. Eliot marked the end of 1921 in Lausanne, Switzerland, continuing to recover from a nervous breakdown so severe in October he had taken three months' leave of absence from his job at Lloyds Bank. Financial uncertainty, an unhappy marriage, and a stultifying anxiety over the lack of time his job at Lloyds left to write had sculpted what Virginia Woolf called the "grim marble" of Eliot's face into puffy hollows. One of the ways he overcame this was by leaving his job at Lloyds in 1925 after the successful publication of *The Wasteland*, a move that was encouraged by many of his literary colleagues. If you love literature that fact alone will make this book a joy to read as you learn about four literary greats while enjoying a story that has dozens of twists and turns. As I have outlined, there is also much to be learned about the writing process for those who write or want to write. Bill Goldstein has written a valuable and useful book. I highly recommend it.

The year 1922 ushered in a new style of English modernist literature. The popularity of Victorian and Edwardian Literature seemed to have passed. Bill Goldstein's superbly written informative book, *The World Broke in Two: Virginia Woolf, T.S. Eliot, D. H. Lawrence, E.M. Forster and The Year That Changed Literature* recalls that specific literary era, the lives of these notable authors, and those affiliated with them. The Hogarth Press was small and successful. Still, Virginia and Leonard Woolf had declined to publish James Joyce's *Ulysses*. Books of such large volume were difficult for such a small press, they may have feared the book would be banned. In that case, the Hogarth Press could have been confiscated and/or shut down by the authorities. The controversial *Ulysses* was very troubling for Virginia, she found it dull and

boring, didn't finish it, and wouldn't praise it in a favorable review, as other critics. Woolf continued writing *Mrs. Dalloway* a series of stories, and happily returned to reading Proust. Book critic John Middleton Murray, immediately recognized *Ulysses* as a "literary milestone" and highly praised it, noting that writing careers could be advanced (or not) by the novel alone. Other critics noted: "It is no proof that a man is a fool if he doesn't admire *Ulysses*, and no proof either that a person was a genius for admiring it." It was odd that Murray didn't hesitate to publically bash his close friend, D.H. Lawrence in his review of *Women in Love* (1921). According to Murray, Lawrence had passed his prime as a writer before actually reaching it. When he traveled, D.H. Lawrence could write at will, and easily abandoned *Mr. Noon* to focus on *Kangaroo* after his stay in Australia. Some of Lawrence's books were banned in England, and dealing with unwelcoming ramifications of obscenity laws/acts, may have kept him away. An invitation to visit America took Lawrence and his wife Frieda to visit Mable Dodge Sterne at her exclusive community in Taos, New Mexico. The idea was for Lawrence to write about southwest native culture. Frieda likely sabotaged efforts of Sterne to work to closely with her husband. T.S. (Tom) Eliot and E.M. (Morgan) Forster both visited Virginia and Leonard Woolf often. Leonard cautioned Morgan about a "wrong channel" for the direction of his writing. As a gay man, Morgan's fictional stories of love between men, and love that endured after death was a powerful inspiration in life and work. Following the death of his lover Mohammed, in Cairo, Egypt, Morgan faced a private, quiet mourning. *A Passage to India* was his greatest achievement, *Maurice* (1971) was published posthumously. In 1922, the influenza epidemic affected thousands of people in England and Wales. Tom Eliot and Virginia Woolf corresponded, sharing the misery of their symptoms. As Leonard had cared for Virginia when she was mentally unstable, Eliot cared for his wife Vivienne in a similar way. In addition, Eliot had anxiety and depressive moods of his own, and his editor found it difficult for Eliot to deliver his poems within agreed upon time frames for publication. Ezra Pound sometimes sent allowances and income to Eliot, feeling great writers should be supported financially if necessary, to maintain excellence in authorship. When Eliot's greatest poem *The Waste Land* was finally released, new subscriptions to literary journals increased significantly. The literary loop featuring *Ulysses*

was a creative and connective feature throughout the book. D.H Lawrence observed:

“I am sorry, but I am one of the people who can’t read Ulysses. Only bits. I am glad I have seen the book, since in Europe they usually mention us together •James Joyce and D.H. Lawrence•and I feel I ought to know in what company I creep into immortality. Goldstein has skillfully researched his subject matter in this fascinating literary period. He is the founding editor of the New York Times books website, his book reviews and author interviews are featured on NBC television programming. Goldstein earned his PhD in English from the City University of New York Graduate Center. ~ Special thanks and appreciation to Henry Holt and Company via NetGalley for the direct e-copy for the purpose of the review.

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