

List of a few famous English people

- William Blake



William Blake (28 November 1757 – 12 August 1827) was an English poet, painter, and printmaker. Largely unrecognised during his lifetime, Blake is now considered a seminal figure in the history of both the poetry and visual arts of the Romantic Age. His prophetic poetry has been said to form "what is in proportion to its merits the least read body of poetry in the English language". His visual artistry has led one contemporary art critic to proclaim him "far and away the greatest artist Britain has ever produced". Although he lived in London his entire life except for three years spent in Felpham he produced a diverse and symbolically rich corpus, which embraced the imagination as "the body of God", or "Human existence itself".

Considered mad by contemporaries for his idiosyncratic views, Blake is held in high regard by later critics for his expressiveness and creativity, and for the philosophical and mystical undercurrents within his work. His paintings and poetry have been characterised as part of both the Romantic movement and "Pre-Romantic", for its large appearance in the 18th century. Reverent of the Bible but hostile to the Church of England – indeed, to all forms of organised religion – Blake was influenced by the ideals and ambitions of the French and American revolutions, as well as by such thinkers as Jakob Böhme and Emanuel Swedenborg. Despite these known influences, the singularity of Blake's work makes him difficult to classify. The 19th-century scholar William Rossetti characterised Blake as a "glorious luminary," and as "a man not forestalled by predecessors, nor to be classed with contemporaries, nor to be replaced by known or readily surmisable successors".

- Banksy



Banksy is a pseudonymous England-based graffiti artist, political activist, film director, and painter. His satirical street art and subversive epigrams combine irreverent dark humour with graffiti done in a distinctive stencilling technique. Such artistic works of political and social commentary have been featured on streets, walls, and bridges of cities throughout the world. Banksy's work was born of the Bristol underground scene which involved collaborations between artists and musicians. According to author and graphic designer Tristan Manco and the book *Home Sweet Home*, Banksy "was born in 1974 and

raised in Bristol, England. The son of a photocopier technician, he trained as a butcher but became involved in graffiti during the great Bristol aerosol boom of the late 1980s." Observers have noted that his style is similar to Blek le Rat, who began to work with stencils in 1981 in Paris, and members of the anarcho-punk band Crass, which maintained a graffiti stencil campaign on the London Tube System in the late 1970s and early 1980s. However Banksy himself stated on his website that in all actuality he based his work on that of 3D from Massive Attack, stating, "No, I copied 3D from Massive Attack. He can actually draw."Known for his contempt for the government in labelling graffiti as vandalism, Banksy displays his art on public surfaces such as walls and even going as far as to build physical prop pieces. Banksy does not sell photos of street graffiti directly himself; however, art auctioneers have been known to attempt to sell his street art on location and leave the problem of its removal in the hands of the winning bidder. Banksy's first film, *Exit Through the Gift Shop*, billed as "the world's first street art disaster movie," made its debut at the 2010 Sundance Film Festival. The film was released in the UK on 5 March 2010. In January 2011, he was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Documentary for the film.

- **Thomas Gainsborough**



Thomas Gainsborough (christened 14 May 1727 – 2 August 1788) was an English portrait and landscape painter. He was born the youngest son of John Gainsborough, a weaver in Suffolk, and, in 1740, left home to study art in London with Hubert Gravelot, Francis Hayman, and William Hogarth. In 1746, he married Margaret Burr, and the couple became the parents of two daughters. He moved to Bath in 1759 where fashionable society patronised him, and he began exhibiting in London. In 1769, he became a founding member of the Royal Academy, but his relationship with the organization was thorny and he sometimes withdrew his work from exhibition. Gainsborough moved to London in 1774, and painted portraits of the King and Queen, but the King was obliged to name as royal painter Gainsborough's rival Joshua Reynolds. In his last years, Gainsborough painted relatively simple landscapes and is credited (with Richard Wilson) as the originator of the 18th century British landscape school. Gainsborough died of cancer in 1788 and is interred at St. Anne's Church, Kew, Surrey. He painted quickly and his later pictures are characterised by a light palette and easy strokes. He preferred landscapes to portraits. Cecil Kellaway portrayed Gainsborough in the 1945 film *Kitty*.

- **Guy Fawkes**



Guy Fawkes (13 April 1570 – 31 January 1606), also known as **Guido Fawkes**, the name he adopted while fighting for the Spanish in the Low Countries, was a member of a group of provincial English Catholics who planned the failed Gunpowder Plot of 1605.

Fawkes was born and educated in York. His father died when Fawkes was eight years old, after which his mother married a recusant Catholic. Fawkes later converted to Catholicism and left for the continent, where he fought in the Eighty Years' War on the side of Catholic Spain against Protestant Dutch reformers. He travelled to Spain to seek support for a Catholic rebellion in England but was unsuccessful. He later met Thomas Wintour, with whom he returned to England.

Wintour introduced Fawkes to Robert Catesby, who planned to assassinate King James I and restore a Catholic monarch to the throne. The plotters secured the lease to an undercroft beneath the House of Lords, and Fawkes was placed in charge of the gunpowder they stockpiled there. Prompted by the receipt of an anonymous letter, the authorities searched Westminster Palace during the early hours of 5 November, and found Fawkes guarding the explosives. Over the next few days, he was questioned and tortured, and eventually he broke. Immediately before his execution on 31 January, Fawkes jumped from the scaffold where he was to be hanged and broke his neck, thus avoiding the agony of the mutilation that followed.

Fawkes became synonymous with the Gunpowder Plot, the failure of which has been commemorated in England since 5 November 1605. His effigy is traditionally burned on a bonfire, commonly accompanied by a firework display.

- **Kristin Scott Thomas**



Kristin A. Scott Thomas, OBE (born 24 May 1960) is an English actress who has also acquired French nationality. She gained international recognition in the 1990s for her roles in *Bitter Moon*, *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and *The English Patient*. Since the 1980s, she has also worked in French cinema in films such as the thriller *Tell No One* and Philippe Claudel's *I've Loved You So Long*. She has lived in France since she was 19, has brought up her three children in Paris, and says she considers herself more French than British. She was made a chevalier of the Légion d'honneur in 2005.

- **Gary Oldman**



Gary Leonard Oldman (born 21 March 1958) is an English screen and stage actor, filmmaker and musician. A former member of the Royal Shakespeare Company, Oldman rose to prominence as a film actor for his portrayals of Sid Vicious in *Sid and Nancy* (1986), Joe Orton in *Prick Up Your Ears* (1987), a football firm leader in *The Firm* (1989), Lee Harvey Oswald in *JFK* (1991) and the title character of *Dracula* (1992). He became a popular portrayer of villains, playing the antagonist of *True Romance* (1993), *Léon* (1994), *The Fifth Element* (1997), *Air Force One* (1997) and *The Contender* (2000). He has since starred as Sirius Black in the *Harry Potter* series, James Gordon in Christopher Nolan's *Batman* trilogy and George Smiley in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* (2011).

Based on lead and supporting roles, Oldman is the highest-grossing actor in the history of film. He has garnered widespread critical and peer respect; Tom Hardy once remarked, "Gary Oldman is, hands down, the greatest actor that's ever lived." Among other honours, he has won two BAFTA Awards and a Saturn Award, and has been nominated for Academy-, Emmy-, Screen Actors Guild- and Independent Spirit Awards, as well as the Palme d'Or. Norman Stansfield, the antagonist in *Léon* played by Oldman, has been named as one of cinema's greatest villains. In 2011, Oldman was voted an "Icon of Film" by *Empire* readers.