

Walter Scott was born in Edinburgh, as the son of a solicitor Walter Scott and Anne, a daughter of professor of medicine. He suffered from polio as a child and, as a result, remained lame in his right leg. Nevertheless, he grew strong and a young man and was always possessed of extraordinary endurance and energy.

He attended Edinburgh High School (1779-1783) and studied at Edinburgh University arts and law (1783-86, 1789-92). At the age of sixteen he had already started to collect old ballads, the beginning of his prodigious effort to make the stories and songs of the Scottish Border country widely available. In 1792 Scott was called to the bar. In 1799 he was appointed sheriff deputy of the county of Selkirk. Scott married Margaret Charlotte Charpentier (in 1797 ) daughter of Jean Charpentier of Lyon in France. They had five children.

The first publication to bear his own name was his translation of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's play. *Goetz von Berlichingen* (1799). In 1802-03 appeared Scott's first major work, *Minstrelsy Of The Scottish Border*. As a poet Scott rose into fame with the publication of *The Lay Of The Last Minstrel* (1805) about an old border country legend. His immensely popular *Marmion* followed in 1808. Scott's narrative poetry, including *The Lady of the Lake* in 1810, made him world famous. But within a few years his poetic reputation began to be outshone in the public eye by Byron's compelling genius. Scott thus turned to fiction as alternate path for his prodigious literary energies.

The first of his novels, *Waverley*, re-doubled his popularity. No less an authority than Jane Austen recognized its success: "Walter Scott has no business to write novels," she said, "especially good ones. It is not fair. He has fame and profit enough as a poet, and should not be taking the bread out of the mouths of other people." (Scott would later return the compliment when he reviewed *Emma*: "That young lady had a talent for describing the involvement and feelings and characters of ordinary life which is to me the most wonderful I ever met with. The big Bow-wow strain I can do myself like any now going, but [her] exquisite touch which renders ordinary commonplace things and characters interesting from the truth of the description and the sentiment is denied to me."). Until his death in 1832, Scott continued to publish a whole series of what came to be known as "The Waverly Novels" as well as many other works. In addition to *Waverley* itself, his best novels include *Old Mortality*, 1816, *Rob Roy*, 1817, *The Heart Of Midlothian*, 1818, *The Bride Of Lammermoor*, 1819.