

Research Brief for a TV Presenter

Cricket in Literature

Ever since Victorian times, in books from England and its empire, cricket has come up in many different ways and across several different genres. It is often tied up in ideas of whiteness, colonialism, empire, and most novels also examine the role of race and masculinity and class, which go hand-in-hand with cricket and empire. In recent times, this has been turned on its head with novels from Pakistan, India, and Sri Lanka – but these novels still expose the impact that empire and colonialism have had across the world. The most pertinent thing with these novels is that they all engage with cricket at different levels and in different ways, exposing truths and the history of cricket from its days as a childhood game to the Test matches we see today.

Cricket can't be divorced from empire – so the novels that explore cricket in a satirical way or within the realms of colonised countries exploring their identities beyond their place in the empire are just as important as those that place cricket solidly within its English confines. Equally, books that examine cricket from different perspectives, including non-fiction books such as *The Bodyline Fix: How Women Saved Cricket* by Marion Stell, give us a deeper insight into a sport that has long been the realm of the white man.

Within these novels, as cricket becomes more diverse and less male, we get authors like Kamila Shamsie and Timeri N Murari whose novels explore cricket and its links to female identity and dictatorships. Many novels by men and women can question the role of class and empire through satire, and the type of cricket played, but ultimately, cricket always represents empire, despite the way it has been used to push back against empire in places like India, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan.

Interesting Moments in Cricketing History

- May to October 1868 – First Australian cricketing tour of England – an all-Indigenous team
- 1874 – women's cricket credited with inventing overarm bowling
- 1877 – England and Australia played the first Test match
- 1882 – Start of the Ashes tournament
- 1889 – South Africa became third nation to play Test cricket
- 1890 – Sheffield Shield (Australia), The County Championship (England), and the Currie Cup (South Africa) formed
- By 1952, there were seven members of the International Cricket Council – England, South Africa, and Australia (1909), West Indies (1928), New Zealand (1930), India (1932), and Pakistan (1952).
- 1932-1933 Controversial Bodyline tour of England
- 1934 – England undertook a six-week Test tour of Brisbane – first Test Match with an all-women's team
- 1970 controversy – South Africa banned from Test cricket due to apartheid laws

Key Books Featuring Cricket

Willowman by Inga Simpson
The Bodyline Fix: How Women Saved Cricket by Marion Stell
The Gift of Speed by Steven Carroll
The Call by Martin Flanagan
Death Before Wicket by Kerry Greenwood
A Private Man by Malcolm A Knox
Cricket Kings by William McInnes
The Rules of Backyard Cricket by Jock Serong
Jasper Jones by Craig Silvey
Universe, and Everything by Douglas Adams
The Pickwick Papers by Charles Dickens
The Go-Between by L.P Hartley
Memoirs of a Foxhunting Man by Siegfried Sassoon
Lord Peter Wimsey Mystery #10: Murder Must Advertise by Dorothy L Sayers
Psmith in the City by P.G. Wodehouse
Selection Day by Aravind Adiga
The Taliban Cricket Club by Timeri N Murari
Netherland by Joseph O'Neill
The Goat, The Sofa and the Swami by R. Chandrasekar
Best of Friends by Kamila Shamsie
In the City by the Sea by Kamila Shamsie
Chinaman by Shehan Karunatilaka