

# Uncover the Secrets of Daniel Defoe's The True Born Englishman with Our In-depth Study Guide

Embark on a literary journey through the captivating world of Daniel Defoe's iconic poem, *The True Born Englishman*. Written in 1701 during a turbulent political era, this work has become a literary masterpiece, renowned for its wit, satire, and incisive social commentary. Our comprehensive study guide delves into the poem's historical context, literary devices, and enduring themes, providing you with a deeper understanding and appreciation of this literary gem.



## Study Guide for Daniel Defoe's The True-Born Englishman by Course Hero

★★★★☆ 4 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 578 KB

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Print length : 244 pages

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Hardcover : 48 pages

Reading age : 2 - 4 years

Grade level : Preschool and up

Item Weight : 1.74 pounds



## Historical Context

To grasp the full significance of *The True Born Englishman*, it's essential to understand its historical backdrop. Published during the reign of King

William III, a Dutch monarch, the poem reflects the political and social tensions surrounding the issue of national identity in England. Defoe, a staunch supporter of William, uses his poem to critique the ongoing debate over who rightfully belonged to the English nation.

The poem's title, "The True Born Englishman," is itself a satirical reference to the prevalent notion that only those born on English soil could claim true Englishness. Defoe challenges this idea, arguing that true Englishness lies not in mere birthplace, but in character and values.

## **Literary Analysis**

**Structure and Form:** The True Born Englishman is a free verse poem, consisting of 214 three-line stanzas. This unique structure allows Defoe to convey a wealth of information and ideas in a concise and engaging manner.

**Language and Style:** Defoe employs a conversational, almost colloquial tone throughout the poem. He incorporates slang, colloquialisms, and references to everyday life, making the poem accessible to a broad audience.

**Satire and Irony:** The poem is a masterclass in satire. Defoe uses irony, exaggeration, and ridicule to expose the hypocrisy and absurdity of the prevailing attitudes towards English identity. He pokes fun at those who claim superiority based on their lineage, while highlighting the true qualities that make a person English.

**Literary Devices:** Defoe employs a range of literary devices to enhance the poem's impact, including metaphors, similes, and personification.

These devices bring the poem to life, making the ideas and concepts more vivid and memorable.

## Enduring Themes

The True Born Englishman transcends its historical context to explore enduring themes that resonate with readers today. These themes include:

- **National Identity:** Defoe challenges the narrow definition of Englishness, arguing that it is not determined by birth but by character and values.
- **Tolerance and Inclusion:** The poem promotes tolerance and inclusivity, advocating for a society that embraces diversity and rejects prejudice.
- **Social Justice:** Defoe uses satire to criticize the social inequalities and injustices of his time, calling for a more equitable society.
- **The Power of Language:** The poem demonstrates the power of language to shape and influence public opinion, highlighting the importance of using language responsibly.

## Detailed Summary

The poem begins with a satirical attack on those who claim to be "true-born Englishmen" based solely on their place of birth. Defoe argues that true Englishness is not inherited but earned through character and actions.

He then provides a humorous and somewhat chaotic history of England, tracing its origins back to a mix of different ethnicities. Defoe uses this history to support his argument that English identity is a complex and inclusive concept.

The poem continues with a series of satirical portraits of various social types, including politicians, lawyers, and wealthy landowners. Defoe exposes their hypocrisy and self-interest, contrasting them with the true heroes of England, such as sailors, farmers, and tradesmen.

In the final stanzas, Defoe delivers a powerful call for unity and tolerance. He urges his readers to set aside their differences and work together to create a better society for all.

## Character Analysis

While *The True Born Englishman* is not a narrative poem, it features a number of memorable characters, each representing different aspects of English society. These characters include:

- **The True-Born Englishman:** An idealized figure who embodies the qualities of courage, honesty, and hard work that Defoe believes are essential to true Englishness.
- **The Foreigner:** A satirical representation of those who claim to be English but have no real connection to the country or its culture.
- **The Politician:** A corrupt and self-serving figure who uses his position for personal gain.
- **The Lawyer:** A dishonest and manipulative character who twists the law to his advantage.

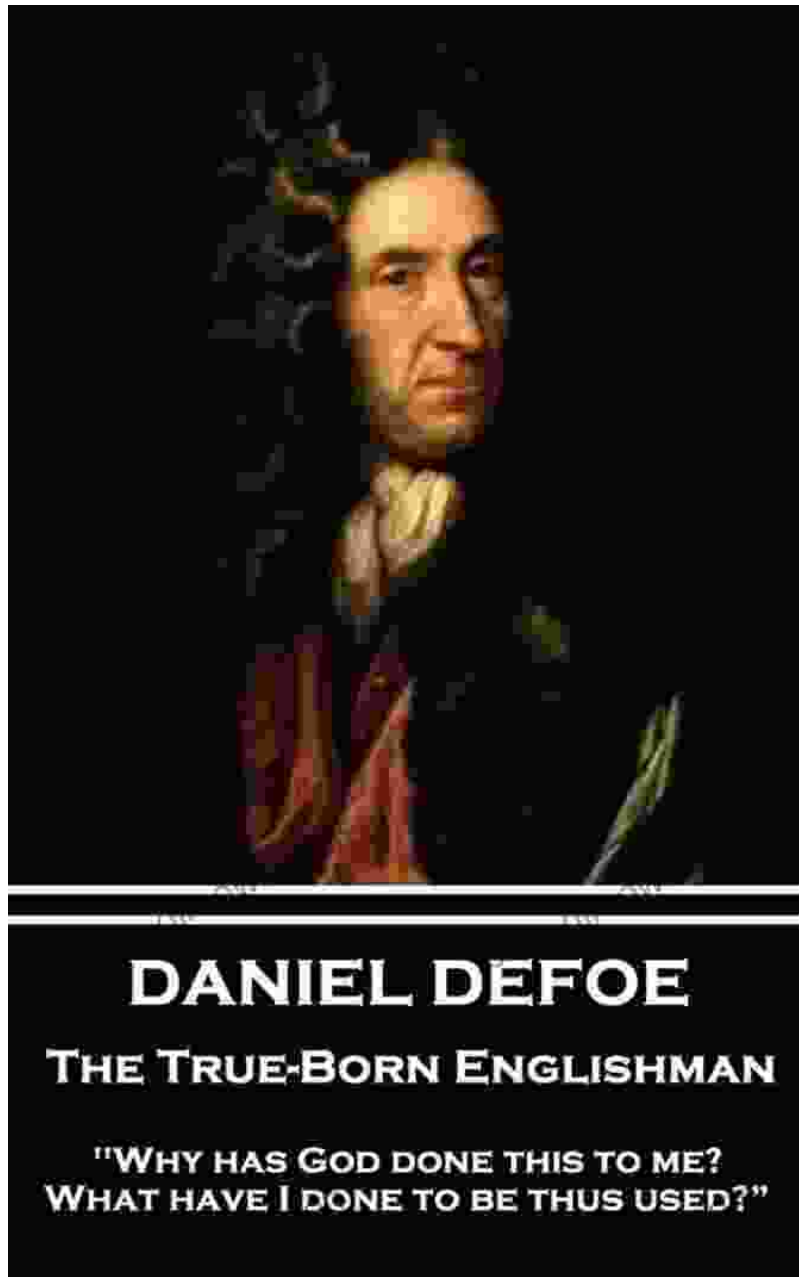
## Critical Perspectives

*The True Born Englishman* has been the subject of critical analysis for centuries. Critics have praised the poem's wit, satire, and social

commentary. However, some have also criticized its lack of structure and its occasional vulgarity.

One of the most significant critical perspectives on the poem is that it is a proto-nationalist work. Defoe's celebration of English identity and his critique of foreign influence have been seen by some as a precursor to the rise of nationalism in the 19th century.

Daniel Defoe's *The True Born Englishman* is a timeless classic that offers a satirical and thought-provoking examination of English national identity. Its enduring themes, literary devices, and historical context make it a valuable text for students of literature, history, and culture. Our comprehensive study guide provides you with the tools to delve deeply into this literary masterpiece, uncovering its secrets and gaining a deeper appreciation for its significance.



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