

Charles Lamb – Biography (Exam Points)

- **Born:** 10 February 1775, London
- **Died:** 27 December 1834
- **Age:** Romantic Age writer
- **Education:** Christ's Hospital School
- **School Friend:** Samuel Taylor Coleridge
- **Occupation:** Clerk at East India Company (33 years)
- **Retirement:** 1832
- ◆ **Personal Life (Very Important for Exams)**
 - **Sister: Mary Lamb**
 - Mary suffered from mental illness and killed their mother in 1796.
 - Lamb devoted his life to caring for her.
 - Remained unmarried.

◆ Literary Title

- Known as “The Prince of English Essayists.”
- Master of the **Personal Essay**.



Major Works (Very Important)

1 Essays

- **Essays of Elia** (1823)
- **Last Essays of Elia** (1833)
- Pen name: **Elia**

Important Essays:

- *Dream Children: A Reverie*
- *A Dissertation upon Roast Pig*
- *Old China*
- *Poor Relations*
- *The Superannuated Man*

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2 Children's Literature

- **Tales from Shakespeare** (1807)
(Written with Mary Lamb)
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3 Other Works

- *Rosamund Gray* (1798 – novel)
 - *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets* (1808 – criticism)
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Style – Exam Keywords

- Personal & autobiographical
- Nostalgic
- Gentle humour
- Pathos + tenderness
- Old-fashioned/Elizabethan flavour
- Conversational tone



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Frequently Asked Exam Traps

- Born 1775 (not 1770)
- Essays published in **London Magazine**
- “Dream Children” → Essays of Elia
- Romantic Age writer
- Worked in East India Company
- Friend of William Wordsworth & Coleridge

Tales from Shakespeare (1807)

Tales from Shakespeare

◆ What is it?

- A prose retelling of Shakespeare's plays.
- Written for **children**.
- Published in **1807**.
- Written jointly by **Charles Lamb and Mary Lamb**.

◆ Division of Work:

- **Mary Lamb** → Wrote most of the **comedies**.
- **Charles Lamb** → Wrote the **tragedies**.

◆ Purpose:

- To make Shakespeare easy and understandable for young readers.
- Simplified language but kept original plot and moral spirit.
- Removed complex poetry and dramatic structure.

◆ Important Plays Included:

- *Hamlet*
- *Macbeth*
- *King Lear*
- *Othello*
- *The Merchant of Venice*
- *Twelfth Night*

🎯 Exam Points:

- It is NOT a translation.
- It is NOT drama.
- It is prose adaptation.

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Essays of Elia (1823)

Essays of Elia

◆ Features:

- Published in London Magazine first.
- Pen name: **Elia**.
- Highly personal and nostalgic.
- Mix of humour and pathos.

Important Essays:

- *Dream Children: A Reverie*
- *Old China*
- *A Dissertation upon Roast Pig*
- *Poor Relations*





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Last Essays of Elia (1833)

Last Essays of Elia

- Published near the end of his life.
- More mature and reflective tone.
- Includes *The Superannuated Man*.



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Specimens of English Dramatic Poets (1808)

- A critical work.
- Focused on Elizabethan dramatists.
- Shows Lamb's deep admiration for Shakespeare.

7 Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading

- Love for old books.
- Literary taste.

8 The Praise of Chimney-Sweepers

- Sympathy for child labour.
- Blend of humour and pathos.

9 Mackery End, in Hertfordshire

- Visit to grandmother's house.
- Nostalgic tone.

10 The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple

- Legal world memories.
- Personal recollection style.