

# Ian Fleming

## The author and his work



Getty Images / Hulton Archive / Horst Trappe

Ian Fleming was an English novelist who wrote spy thrillers. His hero, James Bond, is known all over the world.

Fleming's stories of 007 – the British Secret Service agent who is 'licensed to kill' – are products of the Cold War. This was a period – after World War II – when two groups of countries were at war without actually fighting each other. For nearly 40 years, these two groups of countries – the East and the West as they were called at the time – spied on each other. They also killed each other's spies and tried to ruin each other's economies. They fought for influence over other countries in different parts of the world.

The East consisted of the communist Soviet Union and the countries of Eastern Europe, which it controlled. The West consisted of Britain, the USA and the Western European democracies.

Those days are finished now. The Soviet Union has gone. Communism in Europe has vanished. Countries which were enemies then are now friends. Ian Fleming's spy novels are about the Cold War because he lived during that period and he died before it ended. He wrote only thirteen Bond novels and a few short stories but

the character of James Bond has been continued by other writers and by film-makers. They have invented new enemies for Bond and the British Secret Service. Years pass but Bond hardly gets any older. He seems indestructible. He will never really retire or die.

Ian Fleming was born in London, in 1908. His father was a member of the British parliament, and his family was rich. Fleming went to several private schools, and spent three years as a student in Germany and Switzerland. When he returned to Britain, he tried several careers. He worked in banking and he worked as a journalist. He had many women friends but he seemed unable to decide what he wanted from life.

World War II saved Fleming. He was given a job in the Intelligence department of the British Navy. He worked with spies and he became a kind of secret service agent. After the end of the war, he returned to civilian life and worked for a famous newspaper, *The Sunday Times*. His job was to manage all the paper's journalists who were based in foreign countries. During his time in this job, he stayed in contact with the world of British intelligence agents.

At this time, Fleming built an impressive house in Jamaica, a Caribbean island which was then a British colony. He went there every year to escape the cold of the British winter.

In 1952, Ian Fleming got married. He had known his wife, Ann, for some years, but she had been married to other people. In 1948, she had a child whose father was Fleming, but the child died when it was only a few hours old. When Anne was finally free, she and Fleming had another child – a son called Casper.

As soon as he was married, Ian Fleming started to write novels. He decided to write about intelligence agents and their world because that was what he knew about. His first novel, in which he introduced his hero, James Bond, was *Casino Royale*, published in 1953. *Live and Let Die* followed soon after. After this, he wrote a new Bond novel each year. Ann hated them, but the books sold well, and in 1959 Fleming gave up

his job on *The Sunday Times*. After that he spent more of the time in Jamaica. Fleming's health had always been poor, and he smoked and drank far too much. When he died, on August 11th, 1964, he was only 56.

Two years before Fleming died, the first James Bond film was produced. This was *Doctor No*, and it starred Sean Connery. Soon James Bond became a kind of industry. Other writers wrote Bond novels to add to Fleming's list and films were made of these novels as well as Fleming's.

Screenwriters produced new Bond film scripts. Bond, forever middle aged, has escaped from his creator and now has a life of his own.

### A selection of works by Ian Fleming

*Casino Royale* (1953)

*Moonraker* (1955)

*From Russia With Love* (1957)

*Goldfinger* (1959)

*Thunderball* (1961)

*On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (1963)

*The Man With the Golden Gun* (1965)

*Live and Let Die* (1954)

*Diamonds Are Forever* (1956)

*Doctor No* (1958)

*For Your Eyes Only* (1960)

*The Spy Who Loved Me* (1962)

*You Only Live Twice* (1964)

*Octopussy and The Living Daylights* (1966).

(For a list of Ian Fleming's novels that have been simplified for the Macmillan Readers Series, see a copy of the current Readers catalogue.)