

# Ian Fleming

**The Complete Man**

**Nicholas Shakespeare**

Nicholas Shakespeare is a prolific writer, he was a visiting faculty at Oxford and is a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature

In the US alone, James Bond has been invoked as a model by successive Presidents from JF Kennedy to Reagan to George Bush Jr and Donald Trump. “James Bond is a man on honor” said Reagan, “Maybe I sound old fashioned but he is a symbol of real value to the free world”

Bond was conceived as a post war British fantasy, as a balm for a demoralized imperial power on its uppers, James Bond has evolved into an immaculate agent of escapism. The lower the sun has sunk on the British empire, the more radiant is his(Bond's) glow

Fleming was an influential figure in his own right, someone world leaders wanted to consult.

Following the allied victory in 1945, Fleming continued to play an undercover role in the cold war from behind the *Sunday Times* desk.

Fleming's talent and business was to know the movers and shakers on close terms. Winston Churchill was a family friend and Churchill wrote the obituary of Fleming's father.

Ian Fleming was the son of wealth, but the grandson of poverty.

His father owned a 2000 acres of county estate and deployed in 1928 as a banker the equivalent of today's trillion pounds



Eton college, founded in 1440 by Henry VI on the edge of Windsor, principally for the education of 70 poor boys. When Fleming arrived at Eton, it had 1118 pupils, all male, distributed amongst 29 boarding houses.

Fleming was strong in athletics and won five of the six events. His sporting achievements became a part of his college legend

After Fleming failed to get into the Foreign office, he went to Reuters.  
He covered sport, business, motor racing, obits and politics.

When Fleming left Reuters he wrote” everyone has the revolver of resignation in his pocket. This shoots twice. With one barrel it makes a small hole in his boss and with the other, a hole in himself. With each shot there is an element of murder and suicide”

Flemings first piece of non fiction was a corporate history of Rowe and Pitman, a stockbroking firm he joined.

On his first trip to New York, Fleming visited JP Morgan Jr who happened to be his fathers friend.

Fleming was a fanatical admirer of Hemingway and read all his books.

Women were not put off by Flemings image as a lady killer, in fact plenty were drawn to it. Flemings reluctance to commit defined his personal life.



As someone said of Fleming “ you cant do with him, he’s so selfish, you cant help liking him, he so alive”

Maud Russell (the inspiration for female M) was not only privy to Flemings love life, she was intimately involved with his career. After stockbroking, she got him into naval intelligence.

Flemings six years in Naval intelligence gave him the material to write his novels.

If there was one rule Fleming absorbed and that suited his character, it was the imperative for sealed lips and leaving no traces.

When Fleming died, Admiral Godfrey wrote to his Fleming's wife Ann and said "the country and the allies owe him one of those great debts that can never be repaid"

Fleming was one of the people used by Churchill to get USA involved with Britain against Hitler.

Fleming was also one of three people to help America start the CIA

In May 1963, Fleming sold the rights to a script to MGM for 1 pound. This became the hugely popular Man from U N C L E which later became Charlies Angels.

Ian Fleming had been the second largest lender of books after John Maynard Keynes to an exhibition in May 1940 to commemorate the quincentenary of the Gutenberg's invention of the printing press.



Fleming transferred his sexual identity into the character of Bond, who regards homosexuals as a 'herd of sexual misfits-barren and full of frustration'

In 1944, Fleming presided over a secret committee to organize the flow of cryptographic material from Bletchley to the allied forces commanders for the vast operation ahead.

In 1944, Fleming took a global tour of Ceylon, India, Australia, Honolulu and America.

The war changed Fleming. The glamorous boy was looking tired and strained

Fleming had no estate or capital to fall back on, he got some hand outs from his mother. There was an absurdity about his poverty, his suits were immaculately cut, his cigarettes were custom made etc., he played golf, he lived well and was still a partner at Rowe and Pitman.

In November 1945 Fleming was appointed as Foreign manager of Kemsley newspapers and thus went back to his first love – journalism. Kemsley owned the Sunday Times, the Sunday graphic etc.

In the 1940s people communicated in pubs and restaurants. A lot of classified information was shared here

In the 1950s, there were many reunions of all types- old army friends, regiments, college etc. and these became a hot bed to exchange information



The idea for Bond came to him as he swam in his bay in Jamaica where he had a house on a 14 acre plot.  
He felt that if Bond married and settled down, he would be useless to the secret service.

Fleming wrote Casino Royale after reading Mickey Spillane's My Gun is quick on the Jamaica flight

Fleming used a strict routine- 3 hours of writing in the morning followed by one hour in the evening.  
His ideal reader was a crewman

Fleming finished his first book a week before he got married.

On his return to London in 1952, Fleming stayed at Chelsea and TS Eliot lived two floors below him.

Fleming was the first author to understand the benefits of marketing and sales promotion in launching a book.

Casino Royale and James Bond debuted on 15 April 1953. It was hoped that royale would lift sales in a coronation year. The first print run was 4750 hardbacks. By May all copies were sold out and a second print run of 2500 was ordered.

All the reviews were positive because Fleming picked the reviewers for most newspapers.



The more popular Bond became, the more attention was riveted on his personal details – how he made the sun rise on the wrong side of Jamaica, how he muddled the bosphorus and the golden horn.

Fleming always answered all the complaints his readers sent him

Bond represented for Fleming and his readers a model of independence, unconstrained by marriage and family and pram in the hall.

In 1956 Fleming started thinking of finishing of agent 007. He wanted to kill him off in one final book.

In 1955 Fleming published three Bond novels – live and let die sold 7500 copies. His publisher wanted him to cross 10,000 copies

So Fleming tried to get many endorsements for his books – he failed with Somerset Maugham, Graham Greene but got Raymond Chandler to endorse his book.

What saved Bond was the Suez crisis. Fleming had predicted way back in 1944 that the canal would be a future flash point.

From Russia with love released in 1957 gave  
Fleming his first bestseller

Fleming gained another fan – a young American senator who was convalescing from a back injury.



The moment that locked Ian Fleming to his legendary status happened at a dinner party in Washington in march 1960.

That was JFK, JFK, Bobby Kennedy and Jackie Kennedy were all Bond fans.

John F Kennedy asked Ian Fleming after dinner  
‘ what would Bond do in the Cuba situation’?  
“ Make Castro look ridiculous” was Fleming’s  
answer

Kennedy was a Bond fan and said so and that sold Bond books in America  
The last book that Lee Harvey Oswald ,  
President Kennedy's assassin took from the library was a Bond book. In fact he borrowed four Bond books from the New Orleans library.

Kennedy chose from Russia with love as one of his favorite books in a list he compiled for Life magazine.

Fleming signed with Harry Saltzman and Cubby Broccoli in June 1961 leading to the most successful series in films – the Bond series.

Ian Fleming liked golf and had a handicap of 9, he said he liked golf because it needed skill, concentration and focus.

Fleming negotiated his most important deals on the golf course.

Thunderball was supposed to be the first Bond movie, but the producers changed it to Dr No. The original choice for Bond was Ingemar Johansson a Swedish heavy lifting champion.

The producers decided to take a newcomer and offer him a ten year deal. Sean Connery made Bond and Bond made Sean Connery.



Incredible to relate, the James Bond theme tune originated in a cast off song composed for a musical based on VS Naipaul's novel – A house for Mr. Biswas.

In America, Dr No opened not in New York but  
an Oklahoma drive in.

Kennedys endorsement, Russian media took pot shots at Fleming and Bond and the massive sales of Bond books created a sensation for the movie. Many brands wanted to be associated with Bond.

There were proposals for James Bond Ties, raincoats, socks, belts, polo shirts, straw hats, key rings, et al.

Kids wanted a 003 1/2 set of pajamas.

On 12 August 1964, Fleming died of a heart attack in the Canterbury hospital