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In the past twenty years our understanding of the novel's emergence in eighteenth-century Britain has drastically changed. Drawing on new research in social and political history, the twelve contributors to this Companion challenge and refine the traditional view of the novel's origins and purposes. In various ways each seeks to show that the novel is not defined primarily by its realism of representation, but by the new ideological and cultural functions it serves in the emerging modern world of print culture. Sentimental and Gothic fiction and fiction by women are discussed, alongside detailed readings of work by Defoe, Swift, Richardson, Henry Fielding, Sterne, Smollett, and Burney. This multifaceted picture of the novel in its formative decades provides a comprehensive and indispensable guide for students of the eighteenth-century British novel, and its place within the culture of its time.