A. Biography of the Author.

**Dame Catherine Cookson**, DBE (27 June 1906 – 11 June 1998) was an English author. She became the United Kingdom's most widely read novelist, with sales topping 100 million, while retaining a relatively low profile in the world of celebrity writers. Her books were inspired by her deprived youth in South Tyneside, North East England, the setting for her novels.

Born as **Catherine Ann McMullen** (registered as Catherine Ann Davies) at 5 Leam Lane in Tyne Dock, South Shields, Tyne and Wear, she was known as "Kate" as a child. She moved to East Jarrow, Tyne and Wear which would become the setting for one of her best-known novels, *The Fifteen Streets*. The illegitimate child of an alcoholic named Kate Fawcett, she grew up thinking her unmarried mother was her sister, as she was brought up by her grandparents, Rose and John McMullen. Biographer Kathleen Jones tracked down her father, whose name was Alexander Davies, a bigamist and gambler from Lanarkshire.
She left school at 13 and, after a period of domestic service, took a laundry job at Harton Workhouse in South Shields. In 1929, she moved south to run the laundry at Hastings Workhouse, saving every penny to buy a large Victorian house, and then taking in lodgers to supplement her income.

In June 1940, at the age of 34, she married Tom Cookson, a teacher at Hastings Grammar School. After experiencing four miscarriages late in pregnancy, it was discovered she was suffering from a rare vascular disease, telangiectasia, which causes bleeding from the nose, fingers and stomach and results in anemia. A mental breakdown followed the miscarriages, from which it took her a decade to recover.