UG EG S3-01
(DSC/DSE)

FOUR YEAR BACHELOR'S DEGREE COURSE

(CBCS in Accordance with NEP 2020)

SEMESTER-III

HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

ENGLISH



Padmanath Gohainbaruah School of Humanities

KRISHNA KANTA HANDIQUI STATE OPEN UNIVERSITY

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HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

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COURSE INTRODUCTION

The paper titled 'History of English Literature' in the third semester introduces the learner to the major historical periods that enriched and influenced the changing literary trends and development in English literature.

UNIT 1: The introductory unit begins with the Anglo-Saxon period in the History of English Literature which covers the period of mid 5th century to the Norman conquest of 1066. In the early treasures of Anglo-Saxon history, we will find the roots of English Literature. The unit will provide you with a broad idea on the synthesis of many different linguistic groups and how the forms of poetry, story-telling, prose and Anglo-Norman Literature had gradually developed.

UNIT 2: In this unit, you will be provided with an idea of the social context pertaining to the Medieval Age which roughly extended from 1066 to the end of fourteenth century. You will be acquainted with the Norman Conquest which has extensively shaped the literature of the period. The social condition defined the literature to a great extent which explains the influence of the feudal system, Black Death and the Peasants' Revolt have also been highlighted with in this unit. The significant works of the important writers of the period have been highlighted in this unit laying emphasis on the widely practiced literary forms of the time.

UNIT 3: The unit delves into the influential role of the Church during the Middle Ages in the development of English Literature. The Bible and the doctrines of the Church was a constant source of reference in the daily lives of people in the medieval society and thus, it is no surprise that their religious adherence or rather confirmation went a long way in influencing their literary practices as well. In fact, the theatrical practices in the Medieval Age were primarily religious and had a considerable influence on the literature of the time. As a linguistic phenomenon- the period is divided into the Early and Late Middle English period for the convenience of reference.

UNIT 4: The unit enlightens you on the broad intellectual and cultural movement known as the 'Renaissance' which was an Age of Enlightenment that spanned across Europe from the 14th to the 17th century. It discusses the influence of Humanism and the 'Renaissance ideals' alongside the zeal of Protestant Reformation. The English Renaissance has been emphasised in the same context, also highlighting the ways in which English literature emerged as one of the richest and widely varied world literatures.

UNIT 5: The unit takes up the major literary practices and writers of the period such as the early Tudor and Elizabethan poetry, the Sonnet tradition, Elizabethan prose and Renaissance Drama at

length, Significantly, it also takes up a discussion on the 'Renaissance ideal' which drew its influence from the rounded approach towards education of the Humanists and defined the ideal characteristics of a Renaissance individual.Also, it provides a list of some of the prominent literary figures of the English Renaissance.

UNIT 6: The unit deals with the restoration of Charles II to the throne. This Age marks a transition in the life and literature of England. Literature seemed to have shifted towards cheerfulness and licentiousness during this period. The Age is also marked for its interest in science and politics. You will find that literature during this period had a major French influence and also gain an idea of the political nature of writings during the Restoration period.

UNIT 7: The unit takes up the literary practices of the age which displayed a predominance of logic and reason with a strict regard for literary form, style and conventions, reflecting the socio-political life and developments during the period. During this time, most of the writings were satirical in nature with a strong didactic overtone that was apparent in the literary works that had developed in the hands of the literary masters.

UNIT 8: The unit takes up a discussion on neoclassical poetic diction, mock-epic, or mock-heroic poetry, emergence of prose as a serious form of literature, the neoclassical novel, periodical essays, the role of the major periodicals of the time such as *The Guardian*, *Tatler* and *Spectator.* It also highlights the period as the 'age of reason' which owed its development to the socio-political aspects of the age together with the spurt of scientific writings, as well as, the development of periodicals and journals.

UNIT 9: The unit introduces you to the Romantic Age that extolled the virtues of passion, imagination, freedom, the natural, supernatural and the spiritual. By stirring the imagination and the subjective experience, the Romantic in literature came to be characterised in Victor Hugo's phrase by "liberalism in literature". The English Romantic movement was paved by the two poets, Wordsworth and Coleridge with their publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798, which became a significant milestone in the development of Romanticism in English literature.

UNIT 10: The unit takes up some of the prominent writers of the Romantic age with a brief highlight on their life and literary contributions that defined the literature of the period. It also highlights the conceptual role of Coleridge's 'fancy and imagination' that literally defined the Romantic imagination, as well as, literary practices of the age. Also, the unit provides a list of some of the other important writers associated with the period.

UNIT 11: The unit introduces you to the Victorian Age, a period under the reign of Queen Victoria when English life had undergone tremendous changes. Although the period was characterised by human progress with the oncoming of the industrial revolution, religious doubt and a loss of faith pervaded the Victorian age. At the same time, Victorian literature in essence moved away from the romantic in literature towards realism.

UNIT 12: The unit takes up some of the major writers of the Victorian age with a brief sketch of their life and contributions to the dominant literary forms of the age namely the Victorian novel, poetry and prose.

UNIT 13: The unit discusses the historical roots and basic characteristics of the ideals and practices in European history which had an extensive conditioning on English literature across the globe. A contextual understanding of these changes is essential in order to grasp the potent factors that defined colonial literature in a major way. It also provides a brief overview on the impact of imperialism and colonialism on Indian English Literature (IEL).

UNIT 14: The unit deals with the context of the Modern Age and the new forms of experimental modes that shaped the literature of the period. The modern men were interested in the close reading of the 'self' and this gets reflected in literature. This unit intends to give you an understanding of the Modern period, laying emphasis on the decadence and isolation that characterised modern literature.

UNIT 15: The unit takes up some of the major writers of the period with a brief idea on their life and literary contributions that defined the emerging literature of the modern age.

While going through a unit, you may also notice some text boxes, which have been included to help you know some of the difficult terms and concepts. You will also read about some relevant ideas and concepts in "LET US KNOW" along with the text. We have kept "CHECK YOUR PROGRESS" questions in each unit which have been designed to self-check your progress of study. The hints for the answers to these questions are given at the end of the unit. We strongly advise that you answer the questions immediately after you finish reading the section in which these questions occur. We have also included a few books in the "FURTHER READING" which will be helpful for your further consultation. The books referred during the preparation of the units have been added at the end of the SLM. However, this SLM is not an end in itself and the learners are strongly advised to consult the books and other resources recommended for reading.