UNIT 6: INTRODUCTION TO NEO-CLASSICAL CRITICISM

UNIT STRUCTURE:

6.1 Learning Objectives

6.2 Introduction

6.3 History of Neoclassical Criticism

6.3.1 Major Exponents in Neoclassical Criticism

6.3.2 Important Concepts

6.4 Let us Sum up

6.5 Further Reading

6.6 Answers to Check Your Progress (Hints Only)

6.7 Possible Questions

6.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- *Understand* the basic concepts of Neoclassical criticism
- *Identify* the major exponents of Neoclassical criticism
- *Situate* and contextualise Neoclassical criticism in the history of English literature

6.2 INTRODUCTION

This is the first unit of Block 2 and in this unit, we shall discuss Neoclassical criticism. The term 'Neoclassicism' refers to a tendency in the field of literature, art and culture in Europe predominant in the period from the early 17th century until the middle of 18th century. Despite variations across different cultures, Neoclassicism was marked by certain common concerns and characteristics. Neoclassicism is the return to the classical models in literature and literary styles, and a revisiting of the values of ancient Greek and Roman authors as models. Neoclassicism was a sharp reaction against the use of extravagant styles, superfluous ornaments, and overtly sophisticated languages by some of the Renaissance writers. The neoclassic also rejected the extravagance of the Gothic and Baroque styles.

This unit offers you a brief introduction to this approach of literary criticism, along with an attempt at locating Neoclassicism in the socio-cultural contexts of the literature of the time. Very brief introductions to the major critics along with their critical ideas have also been provided in this unit. However, it is always advisable to read the major critical texts of each critic in order to understand the characteristics of each critic and the period or school s/he represents.

6.3 HISTORY OF NEOCLASSICAL CRITICISM

Neoclassicism can be understood as a form of reaction against many Renaissance tendencies in art and literature in Europe. While the work of most of the major medieval and Renaissance authors like Dante, Ariosto, More, Spenser, Giraldi, and Milton centred round the representation of the fantastic and mythical beings, the 'marvellous' and unreal elements, poets like Sidney and others, echoed Plato by emphasising that a poet's duty was to create an ideal world. The neoclassicists vehemently rejected this neo-Platonic idealistic tendency in Renaissance poetics by taking recourse to the Aristotelian notions of art and literature. Scholars like Minturno, Scaliger, Castelvetro, showed new interest on Aristotle's *Poetics* and promoted the Aristotelian notions of probability, and the three 'unities'. The transgression from Renaissance to Neoclassicism is marked by the transformation from the maintenance of individualism of outlook and expression to the celebration of the classical values of objectivity, impersonality, rationality, decorum, proportion, and moderation, from the stress upon invention and creativity in literature to the rational and rule-bound nature of literature. Whereas the Renaissance scholars were promoting new and mixed genres, the neoclassicists were more interested in separating poetry from prose, maintaining the purity of each genre.

The root of Neoclassical literary criticism can be traced in France from where it diffused to England and other parts of Europe. The works of the Italian Aristotelian scholars Castelvetro and Scaliger, after being introduced to the French scholars by Jean Chapelain, developed a new interest in classical studies in France. King Louis XIV, during this time, was an enthusiast for poetry and drama. The socio-political conditions were

relatively more peaceful and prosperous than that during period of religious wars in the 16th century. French Academy was established in 1635 with a chief intention, among many others, to standardize language through the development of a dictionary and grammar. The Academy also started to work on rhetoric and poetics. Such an environment resulted in the birth of literary figures like Corneille, Racine, Molière, and La Fontaine, who are representatives of French Neoclassicism.

Neoclassicism dominated the field of English literature from the Restoration in 1660 until the end of the 18th century, or more specifically, till the publication of Lyrical Ballads in 1798, which marks the beginning of the Romantic period. The Neoclassical period in English literature can be divided into three parts: the Restoration Age (1660 – 1700) dominated by Milton, Bunyan, and Dryden; the Augustan Age (17001750) dominated by Pope, Defoe, Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett; and the Age of Johnson (17501798), dominated by Dr. Samuel Johnson. Neoclassicism, to some extent, is a reaction against the optimistic and enthusiastic Renaissance idea of man as fundamentally good with limitless possibilities for spiritual and intellectual growth. On the other hand, the Neoclassical theorists, viewed man as an imperfect, inherently sinful being with limited potentials. The Renaissance emphasis on imagination, invention, experimentation, and mysticism is replaced by the emphasis on order, reason, restraint, common sense, as well as on religious, political, economic and philosophical conservatism. The neoclassicist's emphasis rested on the selection of proper subject matter; on the employment of the concepts like symmetry, proportion, unity, harmony, and grace; and on the basic function of art in delighting, instructing, educating.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: How is neoclassicism connected to Renaissance?

Q 2: How do you divide the neoclassical period in English literature?

Q 3: In what way can the root of Neoclassical literary criticism be traced in France?

6.3.1 Major Exponents of Neoclassical Criticism

French Writers:

We have already found that the root of Neoclassicism in Europe can be traced in French literature. Authors like Corneille, Boileau-Despréauxh have made immense contribution to the development of Neoclassical theories in French literature, which later influenced other literatures including English. So let us begin our discussion with the discussion of these major French authors.

Pierre Corneille (1606–1684):

Pierre Corneille, primarily a playwright, wrote the most influential text of literary criticism, *Trois Discourssur le poème dramatique* (*Three Discourses on Dramatic Poetry*, 1660), as a defence to his own dramatic practice, specifically his most renowned play *Le Cid* (1637). This play, despite being popular among the audiences, faced diverse criticisms from the French literary and political establishment. The allegation was that the play failed to observe the rules of theatre like the classical unities and the Aristotelian precepts of probability and necessity, and the play ignored the educational function of drama. Corneille reacted to these allegations by producing his *Three Discourses*. This book is an important document in the history of Western literary criticism in the sense that here Corneille re-interpreted and modified most of the Aristotelian concepts like 'three unities', plot and its division: 'beginning, middle and end', 'complication and resolution' etc.

Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux (1636–1711):

Boileau was basically a poet, satirist, and a critic having tremendous influence on French as well as English and German writers and critics. His major work *L'Art Poétique* (*The Art of Poetry*), (1674), was translated by John Dryden into English. This book drew heavily on Aristotle and Horace and influenced directly some of the English Neoclassical writers like Pope. Boileau was the spokesperson of classical rationality, "good sense," and proportion.

His *Art of Poetry*, like Pope's *Essay on Criticism*, documents some of the major socio-cultural, intellectual and political that the contemporary Europe was undergoing. His book vehemently rejected the feudal system, ignored the Middle Ages, viewed human being as essentially social, and sought to restore the classical principles of reason and nature. Just as Molière's plays affect a balance between religious belief and rationalism, arguing for an enlightened rather than authoritarian religion, so Boileau's text is marked by a central affirmation of the importance of reason, as well as observation. Boileau's text, written as a poem in the tradition of Horace's *Ars Poetica*, offers advice in various genres such as tragedy, comedy, epic, and ode, along with commenting on various aspects of literary history. The principle of reason takes the central stage in this text.

English Writers:

John Dryden (1631–1700):

John Dryden, who was considered as 'the father of English criticism' by Samuel Johnson is the most influential Neoclassical critic in the history of English literature. His critical works touched upon diverse genres including epic, tragedy, comedy, satire, along with topics like relative virtues of ancient and modern writers, the nature of poetry as well as translation. About his *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* (1668), Johnson commented that 'modern English prose begins here.' Apart from his *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, numerous prefaces, reviews, and prologues composed by him construct the vast edifice of his critical writings that shaped the poetic and critical developments of his successors like Pope and Johnson in the same era as well as Matthew Arnold and T. S. Eliot in later periods of English literature. Dryden was born just before the outbreak of the English Civil War between King Charles-I, and the Parliament. The works of Dryden as a poet, dramatist, and translator, mark his shift in religious and political allegiances from the Parliament, led by Cromwell and other Puritan leaders, to Charles-II after his restoration to the throne

in 1660. Dryden celebrated the restoration of the king in his poem *Astrea Redux* (*Justice Restored*). After being appointed as the poet laureate in 1668 he composed a good number of important poems "Mac Flecknoe", "Absalom and Achitophel", "Religio Laici" etc. His important plays include *Marriage a la Mode* (1671), *Aureng Zebe* (1675), *All for Love* etc. Besides, he also translated Ovid, Boccaccio and Chaucer.

As a critic, in Dryden an interest in the general issues of criticism can be noticed rather than the close reading of any particular text. In his *An Essay on Dramatic Poesy*, written in the form of a debate on drama, Dryden not only carried out his critical thoughts effectively but also left some room for difference of opinion from other critics. One of the characters in this book, Neander, expresses that, for the development of literary standards, norms can be added to make a work ideal; but the norms are not enough if the work does not contain some degree of perfection. Dryden himself believes that despite disobeying the rules, Shakespeare was undoubtedly superior to any writer. However, in a classic manner, he was very coherent in detailing his formulations of the rules.



LET US KNOW

Dryden's *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy* is written in the form of a debate between four speakers, Eugenius, Crites, Lisideius, and Neander, who are conventionally identified with four contemporaries of Dryden. It was the result of a public dispute, as Dryden himself admits later, with Sir Robert Howard (Crites in the *Essay*) over the use of rhyme in drama. Though the essay was targeted to the blind followers of French literature, it later extended its scope to certain larger debates connected to the idea of nature and concerning dramatic composition.

Alexander Pope (1688–1744):

Pope is an important name in 18th century English poetry, especially for his satirical verse, his use of the heroic couplet and the translation of Homer. Being a Catholic in an anti-Catholic state headed by the Protestant King William III of Orange, Pope failed to obtain university education, hold public office, and even reside in London. Diseases and deformities handicapped his personal life. Despite such socio-political and personal obstacles, he authored some of the phenomenal pieces of poetry such as *The Rape of the Lock* (1712; 1714), *The Dunciad* (1728) as well as the philosophical poem *An Essay on Man* (1733–1734). His *An Essay on Criticism* is an important document of Neoclassical criticism in English literature. It is a synthesis of Roman Catholic elements with principles of classical aesthetics. He wrote it in verse, following the tradition of Horace's *Ars Poetica*. The poem is a response to an ongoing debate on the question of whether poetry should be natural, or written according to predetermined artificial rules inherited from the classical past. He discusses the laws to which a critic should adhere while critiquing poetry, and points out that critics serve an important function in aiding poets with their works. *An Essay on Criticism* provides a space for him to develop much of the philosophical ideas he discusses in *An Essay on Man*, which is often called a study and defence of 'nature' and of 'wit'.



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In his *Essay on Criticism* Pope has delineated the scope and nature of good literary criticism along with redefining classical virtues in terms of an exploration of nature and wit. While much of Pope's essay laments the void into which his contemporary literary criticism has fallen, he does not denounce the practice of criticism in any means. Pope specifies a few guidelines for the critic: the first is to recognize the overall unity of a work, and thereby to

avoid falling into partial assessments based on the author's use of poetic conceits, ornamented language, and meters, as well as those which are biased toward either archaic or modern styles or based on the reputations of given writers. Secondly, a critic needs to possess a moral sensibility, as well as a sense of balance and proportion, as indicated in these lines: "Nor in the Critick let the Man be lost! / Good Nature and Good Sense must ever join" (ll. 523–525). In the interests of good nature and good sense, Pope urges the critic to adopt not only habits of self-criticism and integrity, but also modesty and caution. For him, to be truthful is not enough; "Good Breeding" must accompany truth or else it will lose its effect. For Pope, the qualities of a good critic are primarily attributes of humanity or moral sensibility rather than aesthetic qualities. These virtues have a theological ground, resting on the ability to overcome pride. Pope's specific advice to the critic is grounded on virtues whose application extends far beyond literary criticism, into the realms of morality, theology, and art itself. In other words, Pope sees criticism itself as an art. Hence, most of the guidance he offers is applicable equally to poetry and criticism. His writings suggest that criticism must be a part of the creative process, that poets themselves must possess critical faculties in order to execute their craft in a self-conscious and controlled manner.

Aphra Behn (1640–1689)

Aphra Behn, as one of the first ladies to support herself financially as a writer, as one of the founders of the English novel, was a pioneer in many respects. As a playwright, her views about drama were highly unorthodox and controversial. She expressed her views basically in the prefaces to her plays like *The Dutch Lover* (1673), *The Rover* (1677), *The Lucky Chance* (1687) etc. Being herself a witness to all the obstacles that a woman might face in her times, her views were highly affected by her personal experiences.

Her forerunners like Pierre Corneille's emphasis on experience took drama a few steps away from the classical authorities; her appeal to experience, more specifically to female experience, was far more radical. Moreover, she adds another dimension to drama – the performative aspect of drama. In her "Epistle to the Reader", she defends the value of drama by contrasting it with traditional learning as taught in the universities. Behn's opinion about drama is that it represents the best entertainment that "wise men have"; so it is a valueless affair to discourse formally about its rules. She clarified that her own purpose, in writing her plays was "only to make this as entertaining as I could".



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For Behn, women are just as capable of acquiring knowledge as men. Again, citing Shakespeare and Jonson as examples, she argues that successful plays do not rest on the learning, which is men's point of advantage over women. Further, she argues that had women been given the same education as men do, women might well reach the heights attained by men. In her preface to *The Lucky Chance*, after its huge success, Behn states that she will defend her comedy against the critics who "load it with all manner of Infamy" just because it has been written by a woman. She further asserts that many works of poetry have indecently mistreated the subject of women; but critics overlook it "because a Man writ them." She appeals the critics to examine her work by "reading, comparing, or thinking" rather than out rightly rejecting it because of the femininity of the writer. Behn here effectively places the virtues of good judgment, critical reading, and thinking beyond the confines of traditional masculine learning and the conventional male literary establishment.

Behn, as a woman writer, does not attempt to subvert male assumptions about women writers; rather, she appropriates for women's use the categories of common sense and reason, extricating them from the tradition of male prejudice. Thus, her approach cannot directly be viewed as representative of feminism. She does not attempt to see herself as outside the male literary tradition; rather she pleads to be included in it. However, her works need to be read in the context of her having scorned both male learning and classical rules of literary composition.

Samuel Johnson (1709–1784)

Johnson, as a literary critic, had a huge impact on English letters in his time and in future. His "Preface" to an edition of Shakespeare's plays was vital to the establishment of Shakespeare's reputation; his discussion of the lives of English poets contributed to the forming of the English literary canon. As a critic, he was enormously well read, witty, acerbic, provocative and sometimes radical. Johnson's classical commitment to reason, probability, and truth was complemented by his equally classical insistence on the moral function of literature. He argued that the modern writers require not only the learning that is to be gained from books but also "that experience which can never be attained by solitary diligence, but must arise from general converse, and accurate observation of the living world" (*Rambler*, 10). However, he argues that the prime concern of the author should not be verisimilitude but moral instruction. Johnson acknowledges that "the greatest excellency of art" is to "imitate nature; but it is necessary to distinguish those parts of nature, which are most proper for imitation" (*Rambler*, 12–13). Hence the "realism" that Johnson advocates is highly selective, constrained by moral imperatives. Johnson's position appears to be solidly entrenched within the tradition of classical realism: like Aristotle, he desires literature, even the newly emerging genre of the novel, to express truth in general and universal terms.



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Most of Johnson's views on criticism and literature have been taken up in the "Preface" to his edition of Shakespeare's plays. Three basic concerns inform this preface: how a poet's reputation is established; the poet's relation to nature; and the relative virtues of nature and experience of life as against a reliance on principles established by criticism and convention. After intervening in the debate on the relative virtues of ancient and modern writers, he affirms that the excellence of the ancient authors is based on a "gradual and comparative" estimate, as tested by "observation and experience". Johnson admits that Shakespeare had no regard for the unities of time and place; but Johnson defends Shakespeare in this matter by questioning the very unities themselves. Like Corneille, he views these unities as having "given more trouble to the poet, than pleasure to the auditor". Johnson sees these unities as arising from "the supposed necessity of making the drama credible.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: Discuss Dryden's idea of the nature of poetry.

Q 5: Mention the significance of Pierre Corneille's *Three Discourses on Dramatic Poetry.*

Q 6: Why is Alexander Pope's "An Essay on Criticism" considered an important document of Neoclassical criticism?

Q 7: How did Aphra Behn succeed as a writer in a male dominated intellectual environment?

6.3.2 Important Concepts

Dryden's idea of the nature and function of Poetry:

In general, terms, Dryden accepts the Aristotelian notion of poetry as a process of imitation; but he did make some modifications to this idea by adding some qualifiers to it. In his time, the generally accepted view was that poetry had to be a close imitation of facts past or present. Dryden was not against the prevalent Neoclassical interest in 'verisimilitude', but he was an advocate for more liberties and flexibilities for poetry. In the *The Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy* he explains that a poet is free to imitate "things as they are said or thought to be", apart from, as what he adds, his right to imitate what could be, might be or ought to be. He draws examples of Shakespeare who so deftly exploited elements of the supernatural, popular beliefs and superstitions. Dryden categorised such exercises within the scope of 'imitation' since they are also drawn on "other men's fancies".

Dryden, as a poet and critic, was familiar with all the classical scholars like Plato, Aristotle, Longinus and Horace. While formulating his idea of the function of poetry, he was considerate to all the differences of views of these classical models. Plato emphasised on the responsibility of poetry to instruct the reader, while Aristotle concentrated on delight; Horace advocated both delight and instruction, while Longinus gave importance to the responsibility to transport. However, Dryden was of the opinion that the chief aim of poetry is delight and transport rather than instruction. For him, poetry does not imitate life but presents its own version of life. For him, the poet is neither an instructor nor a plain imitator; he is a creator, who, using life and Nature as his raw material, creates new things that resemble the original. Thus poetry, for Dryden, is much more a work of art than a mere work of imitation.

Pope's Idea of Nature:

The term 'nature' has been associated with diverse meanings through different times across various traditions. In his *An Essay on Man*, Pope's call for a "return to nature" is problematised by this complexity of meaning, and he exploits the multiple significance of the term to produce a comprehensive reinterpretation of it. First, the term 'nature' can refer to the providential order of the world and the universe. It is an order hierarchical in nature where each entity has its proper assigned place. Pope talks about the "Great Chain of Being," where everything in existence starting from God and the angels to the humans and the animals to the plants to the inanimate objects has been allotted a well-defined position in the hierarchical order. Nature also refers to what is normal, central, and universal in human experience. This definition includes all the spheres of morality and knowledge, the rules of proper moral conduct as well as the archetypal patterns of human reason.

The idea of Wit:

During the late 17th and early 18th centuries, 'wit' was the subject of a broad and heated debate. During and before the time of Pope, the term 'wit' had been used for diversity of meanings. In general, wit could refer to intelligence and intellectual sharpness; it was also used to mean 'wit' to reference to cleverness, as expressed, for example, in the ability to produce a concise and poignant figure of speech or pun. Apart from these connotations, wit designated the capacity to differentiate similarities between different entities and to perceive the hidden relationships underlying the appearances of things. Thus in the debate over the meaning of wit, various parties contested the right to define it and to invest it with moral significance. A number of writers such as Nicolas Malebranche and Joseph Addison, and philosophers such as John Locke, argued that wit was a negative quality, associated with a corrupting imagination, distortion of truth, profanity, and scepticism, a quality opposed to "judgment,"

which was a faculty of clear and truthful insight. Literature generally had come to be associated with wit and had been under attack from the Puritans also, who saw it as morally defective and corrupting. On the other side, writers such as John Dryden and William Wycherley, as well as moralists such as the third earl of Shaftesbury, defended the use and freedom of wit. Pope developed his idea of wit in the context of this debate, and his redefinition of 'true' wit in *Essay on Criticism* was a means not only of upholding the proper uses of wit but also of defending literature itself. Thus for Pope, wit is a mode of knowing or apprehension – unique characteristic of literature.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 8: Discuss the neoclassical idea of nature.

Q 9: How is the idea of 'Wit' seen during the Neoclassical period?



6.4 LET US SUM UP

After going through this introductory unit, you must have developed a fair idea about the basic characteristics of Neoclassical criticism. Let us now have a brief overview of what we have learnt. We have learnt that Neoclassicism is the return to the classical models in literature and literary styles, and a revisiting of the values of ancient Greek and Roman authors as models. It was a sharp reaction against the use of extravagant styles, superfluous ornaments, and overtly sophisticated languages by some of the Renaissance writers. The root of Neoclassical literary criticism can be traced in France from where it diffused to England and other parts of Europe. It dominated the field of English literature from the Restoration in 1660 till the end of the 18th century. Dryden, Pope, Johnson are the most influential

critics of the era. In their understanding of art and the creative faculty, they have maintained the classical models like Aristotle, Horace as the base of their criticism. They have touched upon diverse topics starting from the nature and function of poetry to the idea of 'Nature' and reality, the idea of wit to the individual engagement with the norms of poetry, etc.



6.5 FURTHER READING

Habib, M. A. R. (2011). *Literary Criticism from Plato to the Present: An Introduction,* Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Highet, Gilbert. (1949). *The Classical Tradition.* Oxford University Press.

Leitch, Vincent B. (2001). *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. New York: Norton and Company, Inc.

Wimsatt, William K. & Cleanth Brooks. (1970). *Literary Criticism: A Short History*. London: Routledge & Keegan Paul.



6.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q No 1: Neoclassicism is a return to the classical models… …provides a sharp reaction against the use of extravagant styles, superfluous ornaments, and overtly sophisticated languages by some of the Renaissance writers… … NeoPlatonic idealistic tendency in Renaissance poetics was vehemently rejected by the neo-classicists… …the Renaissance emphasis on imagination, invention, experimentation, and mysticism is replaced by the emphasis on order, reason, restraint, common sense, as well as on religious, political, economic and philosophical conservatism.

Ans to Q No 2: Neoclassicism: from the Restoration in 1660 till the end of the 18th century – can be divided into three parts: the Restoration Age

(1660 – 1700) dominated by Milton, Bunyan, and Dryden; the Augustan Age (17001750) dominated by Pope, Defoe, Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett; and the Age of Johnson (17501798), dominated by Dr. Samuel Johnson.

Ans to Q No 3: From France Neoclassicism diffused to England and other parts of Europe. The works of the Italian Aristotelian scholars Castelvetro and Scaliger, after being introduced to the French scholars by Jean Chapelain, developed a new interest in classical studies in France… …role played by French Academy in the development of a dictionary and grammar, rhetoric and poetics… …this environment gave birth to French Neoclassicists like Corneille, Racine, Molière, and La Fontaine.

Ans to Q No 4: Dryden accepts the Aristotelian notion of poetry as a process of imitation… …he advocated for more liberties and flexibilities for poetry by stating that a poet is free to imitate "things as they are said or thought to be"… …for him the chief aim of poetry is delight and transport rather than instruction.. …poetry does not imitate life but presents its own version of life… …the poet is neither an instructor nor a plain imitator; he is a creator.

Ans to Q No 5: This book is an important document in the history of Western literary criticism in the sense that here Corneille re-interpreted and modified most of the Aristotelian concepts like 'three unities', plot and its division: 'beginning, middle and end', 'complication and resolution' etc.

Ans to Q No 6: The poem is a response to an ongoing debate on the question of whether poetry should be natural, or written according to predetermined artificial rules inherited from the classical past……laws a critic should adhere to while critiquing poetry… …this poem provides a space for him to develop much of the philosophical ideas he discusses in *An Essay on Man* where he mentions the ideas of 'nature' and 'wit'.

Ans to Q No 7: In her "Epistle to the Reader" she defends the value of drama by contrasting it with traditional learning as taught in the universities. Behn's opinion about drama is that it represents the best entertainment that "wise men have"; so it is a valueless affair to discourse formally about its rules. She clarified that her own purpose, in writing her plays was "only to make this as entertaining as I could".

Ans to Q No 8: The term 'nature' refers to the providential order of the world and the universe – a hierarchical order where each entity has its proper assigned place – Nature also refers to what is normal, central, and universal in human experience – it includes all the spheres of morality and knowledge, the rules of proper moral conduct as well as the archetypal patterns of human reason.

Ans to Q No 9: Before the time of Pope, the term 'wit' had been used for diversity of meanings… …wit referred to cleverness, intelligence and intellectual sharpness… …writers such as Nicolas Malebranche and Joseph Addison, and philosophers such as John Locke, argued that wit was a negative quality, associated with a corrupting imagination, distortion of truth, profanity, and scepticism, a quality opposed to "judgment," which was a faculty of clear and truthful insight… …Alexander Pope in *Essay on Criticism* tried to discuss wit as a mode of knowing or apprehension.



6.7 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: Trace the development of Neoclassicism in the history of English criticism.

Q 2: Do you think that the Neoclassical critics blindly followed the classical masters? Explain.

Q 3: Can it be argued that Neoclassicism led to the development of Romantic criticism in English literature? How are both of the literary periods interrelated?

Q 4: Discuss how the Neoclassical critics evaluated Shakespeare.

Q 5: How did the Neo-classical critics view the idea of 'Imitation'?

Q 6: What are the major intellectual preoccupations of the writers and critics during the Neo-classical Period? Illustrate with reference to Johnson's *Preface to Shakespeare*.

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