emotionalism exhibiting vivacity, love of novelty, bravery, but an impractical nature. The second characteristic is the exhibition of a delicate sensitivity to beauty and fantasy.

Ans to Q3: This had far-reaching consequences in the mediaeval period when a common religion bound Britain with Rome, resulting in spiritual efflorescence

Ans to Q4: *Beowulf* consisting of about three thousand lines is one of the most well-known Anglo Saxon epic poems.

Ans to Q5: The Norman Conquest at the Battle of Hastings in 1066 marks the end of this early Anglo Saxon literature which would now enter into a new phase after the death of King Harold, the last Anglo Saxon ruler.

Ans to Q6: With the Norman Conquest, French emerged as the language of the elite.



1.7 FURTHER READING

1) Chowdhury, Aditi. and Rita Goswami. *A History of English Literature: Traversing the Centuries*.

2) Hudson, William Henry R.D Fulk, and Christopher M. Cain. *A History of Old English Literature*.

3) Sanders, Andrew. *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*.

1.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q1. Give a detailed explanation on the history of the Anglo-Saxon period

Q2. Discuss the major literary forms of the Anglo-Saxon Period

Q3. Write short notes on the following:

a. Anglo-Saxon Poetry

b. Oral Forms of Story-telling in early Anglo-Saxon period

c. Anglo-Norman Literature

*** *** ***

UNIT 2: THE MEDIEVAL AGE

UNIT STRUCTURE

2.1 Learning Objectives

2.2 Introduction

2.3 Literary Features of the Age

2.4 Major Literary Forms

- 2.4.1 Poetry
- 2.4.2 Drama
- 2.4.3 Prose

2.5 Important Writers

2.6 Let us Sum up

2.7 Further Reading

2.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

2.9 Model Questions

2.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the social context of the Medieval age
- explain the various literary forms of the Medieval age
- list the important writers and their works of the age
- analyse the significance of the literature produced during the Middle age

2.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit will acquaint you with the Medieval Age in the History of English literature. The Medieval age comprises of very interesting and important works which is said to have extended roughly from 1066 (the Norman Conquest) to the end of the fourteenth century (about 1500). It is important for you to know that the Normans were sea rovers originally from Scandinavia. They conquered a part of northern France, which is called

Normandy, in the tenth century and adopted the French culture and language. The Norman Conquest began with the defeat of Harold, last of the Saxon kings at the hands of William, Duke of Normandy at the battle of Hastings. (1066).The conquest of England by the Normans first seemed to destroy the literature and language of the English people because French was the language of the upper class, of courts and schools and literature following three centuries after the battle of Hastings. However centuries of contact with the Saxon made them accept the English language and finally English became the language of the people. The Norman people brought with them a rich cultural heritage and the practical ideals of Roman (French) civilisation to England. They were also responsible for bringing in a centralised government in England thereby developing nationality among the people that also had a major inference on the growth of a national literature. English which became the medium of literature has changed in form as it had been when the *Homilies* of **Aelfric** were written. Thus, English came to be known by the term 'Middle English'.

2.3 LITERARY FEATURES OF THE AGE

Before proceeding to a discussion of the literary features of the Medieval age, it is important for us to know about the social and political context of the Medieval age which is responsible for shaping the literary context of the period. William, the Conqueror introduced feudalism in England under which the land became the property of the King. The feudal system also implemented rules under which all 'vassals' (holders of land) owed military service to the king, thereby, affirming the strength of the monarchy. It is to be noted that the Roman Catholic Church was the unifying force of the age. It led towards the integration of belief and practice of the medieval men. Medieval literature is replete with religious writings.

Now let us proceed towards the discussion of the effect of Black Death and the Peasants' Revolt during the Medieval period. The Black Death was a bacteria-born disease and the origin of this plague was traced to the Gobi desert in Mongolia. The great Plague approximately reduced one-

third of the English population thereby leading to a depopulation. The cities were primarily affected by the plague because of its overcrowding and lack of sanitation facilities. The Peasants' Revolt or the Great Rising of 1381 was the effect of the various economic and political tensions generated by the Black Death. As a result of the plague, there was scarcity of labour, which in turn was responsible for the increase in wages. The landlords appealed to the Court for solution of the problem. Thus, the ***Statute*** of Labourers was passed in the Parliament which favoured the landowners by giving them full control over labourers. The imposition of tax on the peasants eventually triggered the Revolt. These are some of the aspects which we should keep in mind while reading the unit. As it has been mentioned above, 'religion' played a major role in Medieval literature. Literature during the age was closely related to the social condition of the people to a large extent. An attempt has been made to provide an outline of the important features of the age.

The Transition: It refers to the period of ***transition*** and experiment. French influence was predominant in the works of English writers but many writers followed the Old English tradition also.

Domination of Poetry: Poetry was the dominant literary form during the Middle English period. Much of the surviving works were in the form of poetry. The development of rhymed metres is one of the important features of this period.

Standardisation of English: English was the language which overthrew French as a language of the upper class and that of literature. French was the language of the rulers following the Norman Conquest and Latin was the language of the clergy and scholars. English was only spoken by the servants and serfs. The loss of Normandy in 1204 encouraged the nobles to learn English and by 1300 it became established the language for all classes.

Anonymous Writing: A notable amount of medieval literature were **anonymous**. Anonymous nature of writing could not be traced to a particular writer as evident in the literature of the period. Medieval authors, instead of inventing new stories, often re-told and embellished stories they had heard

or read from the classical writers and the Church Fathers. The names of the individual authors seemed much less important, and therefore, many important works were never attributed to any specific person.

Development of Prose: Although, the number of prose works were less in comparison to poetry, during the late fourteenth century the foundation of English style was considerably found to be in practice. The early prose works were either experimental or ***imitative***, but the later works were both original as well as individual as those in the works of Malory and Mandeville.

Beginning on a Modern Note: As the age progresses a modern note becomes apparent. It is modern in the sense that literature has become ***complacent*** of the established order. A spirit of criticism and 'a more searching interest in man's affairs' pervaded the literature of the period.

2.4 MAJOR LITERARY FORMS

The various literary forms of the Medieval Age are as discussed below:

2.4.1 Poetry

The most predominant literary form of the Medieval Age is poetry. It may be divided into the following points for convenience:

Chronicles: Chronicles are record of facts or events, in order of date. This period comprises of a number of ***verse*** chronicles. The scope of a chronicle ranges from universal to local. Personal judgments along with legendary and mythical elements were included. The chronicles are distinguished by their use of stories and inventiveness. It is important to note that these chronicles seem to fit into the romance category for its use of incredible adventures. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* is the earliest example of an Anglo-Saxon or Old English chronological registry. Layamon's *Brut* is the most important of the English rhyming chronicles. It was written by Layamon, a monk of Arley Kings in Worcestershire. The 16,000 long alliterative lines of this chronicle narrates the history of Britain from the landing of Brutus to the death of Cadwallader.

The vocabulary is archaic and the poem is refined in its characteristic Anglo-Saxon bearing a French influence. Robert of Gloucester is known for his rhyming chronicle. There is a possibility of attributing more than one writer to this work, but one was certainly Robert, a monk of Gloucester who wrote towards the end of the thirteenth century. In this work a true love for his country is reacted. He drew largely on the works of Geoffrey of Monmouth, William of Malmesbury and other chroniclers. In his two-part *Chronicle of England* (1338) Robert Manning of Brunne traces the history of mankind from the Biblical Noah to the death of Edward I in 1307 and incorporates the Arthurian material. To conclude, the chronicle by its very nature was created not to entertain but to inform. The factual information that the chronicles supplied is invaluable and the sole extant source of particular facts. Little knowledge of English origin would have been available without the chronicles.

Religious and Didactic Poetry:

A vast majority of poetry written during the Middle Ages was religious or didactic in nature. The *Ormulum* written by Orm is a paraphrase of the gospel lessons for the year. This work is lengthy and the dialect is of the north-east Midlands. However, the work lacks originality and claims little literary quality. *The Cursor Mundi* (1320) is a religious work of an ***encyclopedic*** nature dealing almost with all the stories of the Old and New Testament. It is a very long poem which displays considerable ability in the handling of so much material. Besides these, the literature also shows the development of an enormous number of fables. The most famous of these are “The Owl and the Nightingale”, the authorship of which still remains doubtful. It was probably written in the early part of the thirteenth century. The ***fable*** is written in short rhyming couplets and consists of a long argument between the nightingale and the owl where the nightingale represents the lighter joys of life whereas the owl represents wisdom. “Land of Cockaygne” that is, “Luxury Land” is a keen ***satire*** on monks and monastic religion. There are four poems, namely “Pearl”, “Purity”, “Patience” and “Sir Gawain and the Greene Knight” which are remarkable for their allegorical nature.

The first three poems are religious in theme. The date, as well as, authorship of these poems remains uncertain. It is clear from the ideals, peculiarities of style and manner that these three poems were written by the same author who wrote "Sir Gawain and the Greene Knight". The "Pearl" is an intensely human and realistic picture of a father's grief for his little daughter, Margaret. Of all the three ***alliterative*** poems, the "Pearl" is undoubtedly the finest. "Purity" moralises on the basis of Biblical stories, while "Patience" is a paraphrase of the book of Jonah. These two poems are of less interest and beauty in comparison to "Pearl". "Sir Gawain and the Greene Knight" is one of the finest metrical romances of the age. It is popular for its mastery of plot handling, characterisation, realism and the use of alliteration.



LET US KNOW

Geoffrey of Monmouth: Geoffrey is one of the most significant authors in the development of the Arthurian ends. He was a cleric and one of the major figures in the development of British historiography. It was Geoffrey who, in his *Historia Regum Britanniae* (completed in 1138) located Arthur in the line of British kings.

William of Malmesbury: William of Malmesbury is one of the major historians of the medieval age. His best-known works are the *Gestaregum Anglorum (Deeds of the Kings of England)* and its sequel, *Historia novella (Recent History)*. These works are the record of English history from the Anglo-Saxon invasion of 449 to the period of 1142.

Biblical Noah: According to the Biblical account, Noah was the tenth of the pre-Flood Patriarchs. He was the only righteous man who pleased God in a world overtaken by corruption and evil. Noah was instructed by God to save a remnant of life by building an ark since God has planned for a catastrophic flood to destroy all life on earth. He died 350 years after the Flood, at the age of 950. He was a hero of the Christian faith.

Book of Jonah: The Book of Jonah is an Old Testament story which narrates how the prophet Jonah refused to follow the Lord. The book of Jonah emphasises on God's patience and loving kindness, and His willingness to give a second chance to those who disobey him. However, God convinced him to obey and carry out the Lord's plan by creating some supernatural events. Thus, Jonah did what he was asked to do by the Lord but the book ends by projecting or highlighting Jonah as a bitter man.

Romance is one of the most famous medieval genres. It refers to an extended narrative involving one or more episode depicting an adventure undertaken by a knight. The three literary ideals which pervaded the medieval romances are love, chivalry and religion. The enormous number of verse romances of this period can be divided into three categories on the basis of the subject-matter. These are the romances (or matter) of France, Rome and Britain. "The Matter of France" largely deals with the exploits of Charlemagne and his ***peers*** and ***Chanson de Roland*** is the most important of its type. It is a national ***epic*** celebrating the heroism of Roland in his last fight against the Saracens at Ronceval. The other noteworthy work of this category is ***Sir Ferumbras.*** "The Matter of Rome" comprises of a large number of romances dealing with classical themes, that is, tales from Greek and Roman sources such as the exploits of Alexander the Great and the sieze of Troy. ***King Alisaunder*** and ***The Destruction of Troy*** are works of average merit.

The "Matter of Britain" deals with English history and is heroes. The most interesting of these romances are those dealing with the exploits of Arthur and his ***Knights***. The cycles of Arthurian romances are Gawain, Launcelot, Merlin, the Quest of Holy Grail and the Death of Arthur. It is important to note that the early English romances were either copies or translations of the French. The French poets are the ones who originated the ***metrical*** romances.

LET US KNOW



Dream Vision: It is a literary genre of the Medieval Age. Like romance, the main principle of dream vision is the 'quest'. The difference between dream vision and romance is that the journey to the other world is a conscious quest in case of romance where as the dream vision is an unconscious quest that occurs or takes place in the state of sleeping and dreaming. Among the dream visions in Medieval English literature, the most prominent ones are- William Langland's "Piers Plowman", the "Pearl" and Geoffrey Chaucer's four dream visions namely, "The Book of Duchess", "The House of Fame", "The Parliament of Fowls" and the "Prologue to the

Canterbury Tales". Other 14th century dream visions include John Gower's ***Confessio Amantis***. In dream vision the narrator falls asleep usually in a spring landscape and dreams of the events in which he is often guided by a human or an animal with some of the dream elements being allegorical.

Lyric Poetry:

In the original Greek, 'lyric' signifies a song rendered to the accompaniment of a ***lyre***. In some current usages, lyric still retains the sense of a poem even as it is written in a musical form. For example, the 'hymn' is a lyric on a religious subject that is intended to be sung. The lyrics are seen to mirror the history of English literature. The ***sheer*** bulk of extant anonymous lyrics demonstrate the popularity of this genre. By 1310, there was a ***collated*** collection of some forty different lyrics. The earliest lyrics composed shortly after the Norman Conquest of 1066 were shorter and frequently accompanied by musical notations, indicating that they were intended to be sung or danced to. By the end of the 14th century there was a distinct change in style and content of the lyric. Of the best known lyrics are: "Luve Rone" of Thomas de Hales (1250), 'Springtime' (1300), etc. The 12th century St. Godric (died 1170) is the earliest known lyricist. Three hymns are attributed to him including the devotional Sainte Marye Virgine, which is addressed to the Virgin Mary, asking her to receive him, defend him and cleanse him from sin so that he can be brought back to God. Geoffrey Chaucer was also a skillful lyric poet who was well-known lyric poetry namely are "To Rosemounde, Truth", "Complaint to His Purse", among others.

Ballad: A ballad is a song which tells a story and is orally transmitted and deals with a theme which is often tragic. Ballads were simple poems and were initially intended only for the upper classes. Traditional ballads are communicated orally and are simple poems compared to the literary ballads like Keats' "La Belle Dame Sans Merci". "Merrie Greenwood Men" is one of the ballads which help us in understanding about the common people of England during that time. Dramatic and impersonal in nature,

ballads deal with public event. The tales are told by means of action and dialogue without any personal feelings or attitudes.

The most common stanza form- called the ballad stanza- is a ***quatrain*** in alternate four and three stress lines and this form is applied in the ballad namely, "Sir Patrick Spens". However, many ballads employ set formulas which help the singer remember the course of the song. Although, many ballads originated in the later Middle Ages, they were not collected and printed until the 18th century. The basic modern collection is Francis J. Child's *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (1882-98) which includes 305 Ballads.

Allegory: Allegory was often taken to be the proper and characteristic mode of expression in the Medieval age. It was a vital element in the ***synthesis*** of biblical and classical traditions. There was a rise of allegory especially in the age of Chaucer affecting all the branches of poetry. It is a literary device to ***expound*** moral and religious lessons. In the high Middle Ages, allegory was however, more of a characteristic than a mode. Chaucer's "House of Fame", "The Parliament of Fowls", "Dances of the Seven Deadly Sins" are examples of allegory. "The Wanderer" and "The Seafarer" usually classified as ***elegies***, are allegories of the journey of human life toward a Christian afterlife. Similarly, "*The Panther*" and "*The Whale*" are allegorical descriptions of different aspects of the Christian deity. It is noteworthy that the allegorical works runs across the the literary forms of elegy, epic, lyric, ballad etc. instead of limiting itself as allegory. Thomas Malory's ***Morte d'Arthur*** is a comprehensive combination of spiritual vision and several levels of allegory. Allegory also dominates the most famous of Medieval Morality plays, ***Everyman***. It is seen that the popularity of the allegorical form increases the following century and later, till it reached its climax in Spencer's "*The Farie Queene".*

Descriptive and Narrative Poems: *The Canterbury Tales* by Chaucer is an outstanding example of this form of poetry. The works of Langland and Gower also bears the example of this form. These poems are marked by features such as rapidity of narration and humour that quickly catches the interest of readers or listeners.

The Fabliau: The fabliau which flourished in England during the 14th century is a verse tale. Amusement is the main concern of a fabliau. Generally comic or sometimes satiric, a fabliau deals with characters belonging to the middle class or lower class. The ***cuckolding*** of an unsuspecting husband is one of the popular topics of a fabliau. The fabliau exploits the story for its own sake, being solely intended to amuse the listener. It illustrates no moral precept and has no ***didactic*** purpose. The fabliau, with few exceptions, is concerned with the ordinary people. The most important feature of fabliau is that it is always a humorous tale. "The Miller's Tale" and "The Reeve's Tale" by Chaucer are a few examples of fabliau.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: State whether true or false:

a) Poetry was the dominated literary form during the Middle English period. **(true/false)**

b) Layamon's ***Brut*** is an example of a ballad. **(true/false)**

c) *The Cursor Mundi* (1320) is a religious work of an encyclopedic nature dealing almost with all the stories of the Old and New Testament. **(true/false)**

d) A fabliau is a short comic or satiric tale in prose. **(true/false)**

Q 2: Fill in the blanks:

a) The Norman Conquest began with the defeat of Harold, last of the Saxon kings at the hands of William, Duke of Normandy at the battle of ……..

b) Chronicles are record containing facts or events, in order of …….

c) The three literary ideals which pervaded the medieval romances are love, chivalry and ……..

d) "The Miller's Tale" and "The Reeve's Tale" by Chaucer are examples of ….....…

Q 3: What are the general characteristics of the literature during Medieval age?

2.4.2 Drama

The latter Middle/ Medieval Ages showed a rapid development of drama. English theatre had its formal beginnings in the Latin ***liturgical*** enactments of the Church, certain of which were dramatised for particular effect on major feast-days. Morality, Miracle and Mystery plays were written during the Medieval Age. The 'Mystery' plays include the great Biblical "cycle" of York (consisting of 48 plays), Chester (24 plays), Towneley and for an unknown Midlands town (42 plays). These plays depicted the Christian history from the Fall of the Angels to the final judgment of humanity.

The plays which dealt with the lives of saints are called 'Miracle' plays. The miracle plays like the *Digby Mary Magdalene* and *St. George Festivities* portray the lives of the saints who demonstrate the power of Christianity to convert the fallen. The subject of the miracle plays ranges from the disobedience of Adam and Eve to the events in the life of Christ, Noah and the great flood and so on. They were acted by people of the town on a kind of stage on wheels called a 'pageant'. This was moved to different parts of the town to be performed. The miracle plays written in England were of unknown authorship.

The 'Morality' plays presents virtues and vices on the stage as allegorical creations. These plays teach moral and religious lessons through personified allegorical figure like the 'Virtues' and 'Vices' who struggle over the fate of human soul. The Morality plays made a distinct advance over the Miracles in that it provided a scope of freedom to the imagination for new plots and incidents. The Devil and the Vice were the most important personages of the Morality plays which supplied humour to the common folk. Generally, these plays ended in the triumph of virtue. One of the best known morality play is *Everyman*. It is the story of the end of Everyman's life when Death calls him away from the world. Beauty, Knowledge, Strength and Good Deeds are some of the characters and only 'Good Deeds' joins him when Everyman has to go to face Death. *The Castle of Perseverance* and *Wisdom* are other notable examples of Morality plays.

Thus, the study of Medieval drama has traditionally been focused on these three M's-Mystery, Miracle and Morality. Medieval English drama is not only considered to be the predecessor of Elizabethan drama but also recognised as bearing an important tradition that held unique dramatic power.

2.4.3 Prose

During the Medieval Age, the state of prose was still in the immature stage since most of the literature of the Age found its expression through the medium of poetry. *The Ancrene Riwle* that is *Rule of the Anchoresses* (1225) is the most important of the early prose works. The book is well known for its excellent religious advice and comfort. It was written for three noble ladies who wished to live a religious life without becoming nuns or entering any religious orders. It was a ***manual*** designed to guide them in the life they had chosen. The Rule is 'moderation in everything' and a sense of broad humanity. It is worth mentioning that prose was used in the Medieval Age primarily to record information and instruct.

The Azenbite of Inwyt written by Dan Michel of Northgate in 1340 is a translation of a French work. However, it is of little importance. The prose was practical in purpose. It is interesting to note how the field of prose had extended. Sir John Mandeville's *Travels* presents a departure from the earlier prose works for its amusing quality rather than instructional value. The travels are full of incredible descriptions and ***anecdotes***. Apart from this, there was the translation of Bible which was attributed to John Wycliffe and also a prose version of Hidgen's *Polychronicon* by John of Trevisa. To conclude Wycliff's prose was not much refined or polished though at times it seemed to be precise and vigorous. Moreover, John Lydgate's ***Sermon*** was noteworthy.

2.5 IMPORTANT WRITERS

Let us discuss the notable writers of the Medieval or the Middle Age:

Geoffrey Chaucer: Geoffrey Chaucer (1340?-1400) is the most prominent writer and regarded as the 'Father of English Poetry' and the first of the great moderns. His works can be divided into three classes corresponding to the three periods of his life. The best known poems of the first period are *"The Romaunt of the Rose"* (translated from the *"French Roman de la Rose"*), *"The Book of Duchess"*, an *"ABC"* and *"The Compleynt*

of Mars". This period shows considerable French influence on his works and exhibits a zest for life.

The chief works of the second period shows the influence of Italian masters like Boccaccio, Dante, Ovid and Virgil. *"Troilus and Criseyde"* (a poem of 8000 lines) and *"The Legend of Good Women"* are works of this period. *"The Hous of Fame"* shows a combination of ***lofty*** thought and simple language as influenced from the great Italian masters. This period shows a growing keenness and originality.

The third or the English period comprises of the greatest individual accomplishment. His greatest masterpiece. *The Canterbury* Tales was written during this period. Through this work, Chaucer had provided a picture of ***contemporary*** English life. He draws together twenty-nine ***pilgrims***, including himself to represent the wide sweep of English life. He let each class of society narrate its own favourite stories to pass the time on their journey from London to Canterbury with its great church and the grave of Thomas Becket. Apart from this poem, Chaucer also has two prose works to his credit- "The Tale of Melibeus" and "The Parson's Tale". In his tales, Chaucer realistically presented the political conditions of his time; he referred to the 'Peasants Revolt' in "The Clerk's Tale" and in "The Nun's Priest Tale". His "Canterbury Tales" represents contemporary society by realistically portraying the rise in trade and commerce, the religious environment (creating ecclesiastical characters in The Prologue), the condition of women, the condition of the inns of his times and the table-manners of the pilgrims. Chaucer is faithful in his representation of the love for display of the spirit of new learning of his times. His art of characterisation is excellent. He draws different classes of society together by presenting the pilgrims which ranges from the upper class to the lower class of society. His characterisation is markedly detailed. In order to preserve the difference among his characters of the English society, he points out the difference in their clothes and manners which ultimately enables him to present life-like characters. As a narrative poet, Chaucer borrowed his plots from Latin, French and Italian sources. Although he borrowed his plot, the style was his own. His greatness as a narrative poet lies in his infusion of humour.

Chaucer enlarged the scope of the poet by introducing humour, pathos, excellent characterisation and minute observation. These Chaucerian features contributed towards the development of a new form and shape in English literature.

William Langland: There is very little information about Langland. The Vision (something seen in the imagination as if in a dream) of *"Piers the Plowman"* is a poem written in verse (most of the parts written by Langland). It is narrated in the dream sequence on how most people preferred the false treasures of this world to the true treasures of heaven.

John Gower: The three major works of Gower are- *Speculum Meditantis* (written in French), *Vox Clamantis* (written in Latin) and *Confessio Amantis* (written in English). His works are noteworthy because of the illustration of the unstable state of contemporary English literature.

Sir John Mandeville: Sir John Mandeville whose identity is anonymous was a knight who crossed the sea in 1322 and travelled to many strange regions. He compiled and published a French book of *Travels* between 1357 and 1371. This French work was very popular and it has been translated into several languages, including English.

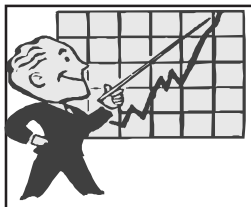
John Wycliffe: John Wycliffe was a priest who attacked many of the religious ideas of his time. He was born in Yorkshire in 1320. He wrote many Latin books in support of his revolutionary opinions. He is credited with his English translation of the Bible.

Sir Thomas Malory: He is best known for his prose work, *Morte D'Arthur*. Nearly all we know about Malory is found in the preface of Caxton, the first printer of the book. Many tales gathered around Arthur and his knights. Malory's prose expresses deep feelings in musical sentences.



LET US KNOW

William Caxton (1422?-91) set up the first English printing press in 1476. He printed not only the works of other writers but also books from other countries which he himself translated into prose. Caxton is credited with standardising the English language through printing.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: Choose the correct answer:

a) *The Ancrene Riwle* that is *Rule of the Anchoresses* (1225) is the most important of the early works of Medieval literature. In what literary form is it written?

i. Drama
ii. Poetry
iii. Prose

b) Chaucer's works can be divided into three classes corresponding to the three periods of his life. To which period do the *Canterbury Tales* belong?

i. French period
ii. English period
iii. Italian period

Q 5. Give an account of the Medieval English drama.



2.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have been acquainted with the Medieval period in English literature. The literature of this period is evident of the radical changes in the language, life and culture of England when 'English' became the standard literary language. As discussed earlier, the Norman Conquest had influenced medieval society to a great extent. The first half of this period is sometimes referred to as the Anglo-Norman period because the literature was in Anglo-Norman, a French dialect. 'Middle English' came into general literary usage in the thirteenth century as a vehicle for religious and homiletic writings. It was during the second half of the fourteenth century that medieval literature reached its peak.

After having gone through the unit, you will certainly gain an idea on the ways in which the Church and religion played a significant role in the literature of this period. By now you must have gained an idea on the various forms of poetry which was the dominating literary form and also on Medieval drama and prose. The distinguished writers of the Medieval age like Chaucer, Gower, Langland and others are also discussed here. Apart from this, we get to know that books were printed for the first time by Caxton

during this period. We are also aware of how most of the literature produced during this period was allegorical in nature. However, a modern note appeared in the writings of Chaucer in the course of time. His *"Canterbury Tales"* is an example which set the tone of realism in literature and is a representative work of the period.



2.7 FURTHER READING

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4) Long, William J. (2007). *English Literature: Its History and Significance for the Life of English Speaking World.* Delhi: A.I.T.B.S Publishers.

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2.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: a. True

b. False

c. True

d. False.

Ans to Q No 2: a. Hastings.

b. date.

c. religion.

d. fabliau.

Ans to Q No 3: The general characteristics of the medieval literature are that French influence was predominant in the English writers. Poetry was the dominated literary form. Anonymous nature of writing is evidenced

in the literature of the period. The spirit of criticism and 'a more searching interest in man's affairs pervaded the literature of the period.

Ans to Q No 4: a. Prose b. English period

Ans to Q No 5: English theatre had its formal beginnings in the Latin liturgical enactments of the Church. Morality, Miracle and Mystery plays were written during the Medieval Age. The miracle plays portray the lives of the saints. The subject of the miracle plays ranges from the disobedience of Adam and Eve to the events in the life of Christ. They were acted by people of the town on a kind of stage on wheels called a 'pageant'. The 'Morality' plays presents virtues and vices on the stage as allegorical creations. One of the best known morality play is *Everyman*. Mystery plays depicted the Christian history from the Fall of the Angels to the final judgment of humanity. Mystery plays include the great biblical "cycle" of York, Chester, Towneley and for an unknown Midlands town.



2.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: Write short notes on the following:

a) Fabliau

b) Lyric

c) Ballad

Q 2: What do you mean by allegory? Explain with examples.

Q 3: Discuss in details the Middle English Romances.

Q 4: What are the effects of Norman Conquest on Medieval literature?

Q 5: Give an account of the development of medieval English prose.

Q 6: What are the main forms and tendencies in middle/medieval English poetry?

Q 7: Consider the important writers of the age and analyze their contribution in the literature of the period.

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UNIT 3: THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH

UNIT STRUCTURE

3.1 Learning Objectives

3.2 Introduction

3.3 The Role of the Church in Medieval Age

3.4 The Influence of the Church on English Literature.

3.5 Let us Sum up

3.6 Answers to Check Your Progress

3.7 Further Reading

3.8 Model Questions

3.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- describe the role of the Church in the Medieval Age.
- discuss the influence of the Church on English Literature.
- highlight the growth of English drama and poetry through the Medieval Age.

3.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit takes up the role played by the Church during Middle Age in the growth and development of English Literature. The developments in English Literature what we see today, trace its origin in the Medieval Period. The Church became very powerful during Middle Age. Organised religion, linguistic system, growth of art and dramatic performances were some of the major features of the Middle Age. There was political chaos due to extreme power struggle among the leaders in the realm of the social structure during this Age. It is in this context that the Church had acquired an important place for medieval man. The Church became so dominant in their lives, that they were blinded in terms of their own rational perspectives. Most of the Codes of Conduct were drawn from the Church's Doctrine.

The Church, other than imparting moral values, imposed social order that paved the way through belief system, towards progress and prosperity of the medieval man.

However, the overwhelming influence of the Church on medieval man's life was not confined to his spirituality alone. The Church was an institution of extremely rewarding advantages. The Church members enjoyed social, political and economical advantages compared to the other people in the society. The members associated with the Church enjoyed the benefits of exercising power across its ranks in any profession. It is because the various agencies and modes of appropriation that contributed to the wide ranging influence of the Church. Preaching and scriptural readings, story -telling, enactment of chosen episodes from The Bible during feast and festival days or other occasions took control of the medieval mind. This unit also attempts to unearth the role played by the Church towards the growth of English Literature. In being a powerful institution exerting a dominant control over all walks of medieval life, the Church, particularly in medieval England greatly affected the growth of English Literature. The Middle English as a Linguistic phenomenon can be divided into "Early Middle English" (1100-1300), and Later Middle English (1300-1500).Geoffrey Chaucer, known as the 'Father of English Literature,' lived in Middle English Period. William Langland was another important person who contributed a lot in the development of English Literature. John Gower cannot be forgotten in this regard.



LET US KNOW

Medieval Age: Medieval Age covers the time period of 8th to 15th Century. In literature the use of archaism for the works and the values associated with the medieval society such as chivalry, religious faith and the social hierarchy were witnessed. The major literary works however were accomplished during the age of Geoffrey Chaucer. Apart from Chaucer without assessing the works of John Gower (1332-1408), William Langland (1330-1400), William Dunbar, and Thomas More, the study of the Medieval Age remains incomplete. They remain as the most influential writers of the time.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1: Who is considered to be the father of English Literature?

Q2: Make a list of the major writers of the Medieval English Literature.

Q3: Do you think Church is responsible for the growth and development of the English Literature?

Q4: Do you think Medieval English Literature is nothing but a Christian moral teaching?

Q5: State whether True or false:

a) Chaucer is the playwright of *Everyman*.

b) In "Piers Ploughman" Ploughman is the symbolic representation Jesus Christ.

c) John Gower belongs to the Age of Chaucer.

d) Medieval Age is also known as the Age of Chaucer.

e) Monastery of Iona was founded by Columba in 563A.D.

3.3 THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN MEDIEVAL LIFE

In Britain the advent of Christianity trace back to the 563A.D, the time when the Monastery of Iona was founded by Columba in Northern England. However, 597 A.D marks the systematic conversion of Britain under the Roman Influence. The Second Latin Influence on old English marks the Christianisation of Britain. The introduction of Christianity opened the epoch of building churches and establishment of monasteries. Schools were established thus producing many learned intellectuals in Britain. Since then, the Church paved the way of progress and development through 'education' which in turn moulded the English Society.

The church affected the daily life of the people in England in every field. The prevalence of the ceremonies in all the social and cultural institution, norms and codes of conduct drawn from the church's Doctrines moulded the medieval society. The church affected human behaviour itself. It became the single most influential and powerful institution in the medieval

England. A kind of discipline was enforced upon the society through its Scriptural teaching by upholding the Holy Sacraments that brought together the Faith and the daily conduct directing medieval man's domestic life.

The three most important events of a person's life from birth to grave was also directly affected by the Sacraments among the Christian community. Soon after the birth 'The Sacrament of Baptism' initiates a person to the Church Community and thus to the society itself. Through the 'Sacrament of Matrimony' a couple is blessed in marriage. The 'Sacrament of Extreme Unction' or the Anointment of the Sick is an assurance to the spiritual passage from a material life to afterlife. Thus the Church entirely encompassed the medieval man's life. The Parish Church and the marketplaces became the centers of great social interactions at that time.

The political scenario of the time also helped the Church to be more powerful in Medieval Age. Historically the medieval age, particularly the Age of Chaucer, was most turbulent periods in British History. During the reign of Edward III (1327-1377) there was continuous war between France and England. The Victory of England over France in the Hundred Years War fostered Nationalism and patriotism among the English people. The battles were mostly won by the English Yeomen and they ushered in a note of Democratisation in England. This made the lowly archers a part of the English middle class in the national life. In such situation of chaos the Church played an important role in bringing together all the sections of people under one single banner of faith.

Another important thing about England during Medieval Age is the outbreak of the Black Death in 1348-49. England lost its one third population due to this plague. The aftermath of Black Death, besides social and economic factors, had moral and religious implications. The population had increased in England since the Norman Conquest from two million to four million. After the Black Death, England was left with only two and a half million people. The people being religious accepted it as a punishment for sins and intensified their prayers and devotions. Thus the "Brotherhood of Flagellant" was revived. They went about town to town scourging and

chanting mournful hymns. Such situation helped the church to emerge as a powerful factor and thus influenced a lot in the growth of literature.



LET US KNOW

i. The Sacraments: The Catholic Church has Seven Holy Sacraments. The Sacraments are Sacrament of Baptism, Sacrament of Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Confession, Anointment of the Sick, Priesthood and the Sacrament of Matrimony. A Catholic Christian is entitled to have only the six Sacraments. The Sacraments of the Ordination and Matrimony are not given to a same person. A person ordained Priest is not allowed to hold the Sacrament of Matrimony.

ii. The Seven Deadly Sins: According to Christianity, there are Seven Deadly Sins which are deadly. It means it leads one to hell. These are Pride, Envy (jealousy), Anger, Sloth (laziness), Covetousness, Gluttony and Lust.



ACTIVITY

i. Read any one works of the writers of the Medieval age mentioned above. See for yourself whether they reflect the religious influence of the age.ii. Try to find out other writers of the Medieval Age not mentioned in this unit from related sources and make an assessment of them to serve your purpose.

3.4 THE INFLUENCE OF THE CHURCH ON LITERATURE

It is often said that Literature reflects the contemporary society like a mirror. A close analysis of the medieval man's existence reveals the overwhelming influence of the Church. Both the Town and the village life was directed and determined by the Church in medieval period. The Parish Church, just like the towns and the market places, became the busy centre

of social interaction. The rich growth of English literature that we witness today had developed from the cradle of the Medieval Age. The history of the growth of regular English drama and poetry claim its origin to the Medieval age.

The theatrical practice in the Medieval Age was primarily religious. The three dominant dramatic forms were 'The Mysteries', 'The Miracles' and 'The Moralities'. The Mystery Plays were based on the Biblical stories. Mystery plays are also known as the ''Corpus Christi'' Plays. These plays were usually enacted during the Feast of Corpus Christi across England. The Miracle Plays dealt with the stories associated with the lives of saints stories related to the Virgin Mary. Initially these plays were performed during Easter. But, later these plays were presented in the form of cycles such as Coventry, Chester, York and Wakefield. The cycles begin with the Fall of Man, The Great Flood Abraham's Sacrifice of Isaac, The Last Judgement and the life of christ.

The Miracle Plays dealt with a real or fictitious presentation of the Miracles or any significant episode of a Saint's life such as Martyrdom. In other words these plays were dramatisation of a legend reflecting forth the life or the martyrdom or the miracles of a saint. Therefore Medieval Miracle Plays can be divided into the following categories: (a) plays that dramatise the life of a saint (b) plays that dramatise the life of a saint on the basis of historical accounts; (c) plays dealing with just an episode or incident of a saint's life; (d) plays representing the miracles wrought by Saint Nicholas and Virgin Mary or some other saints; (e) plays dealing with Martyrdom such as "St. Katherine" (c1110), "Life and Repentance of Mary Magdalene", "The Conversion of Saint Paul", "St. Meriasek" and "Play of the Sacrament" are some of the best known miracle plays.

The Morality plays were based on the dramatisation of abstract conditions such as man's struggle in spiritual journey where conflicting issues of Vice and Virtue, works of The Seven Deadly Sins and the issues of Death were dealt with. "Everyman" is the best example of morality play existing in medieval age. In Everyman, the Summoning of Everyman by God to give account of his life through the agency of Death and his realisation

that only Good Deeds will stand by him on his spiritual journey engages many conflicting issues of human life. The conditions of materialism/ spiritualism, good/evil, hell/heaven and corruption /salvation etc. as depicted in the play, teaches one to perform Good Deeds. Morality plays were immensely influential and many of the elements of the morality plays were incorporated in the later theatrical structures of the Elizabethan Playwrights like Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe. Some of the existing Morality Plays are *The Castle of Perseverance, Mankind* etc.

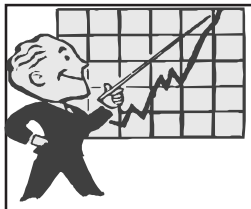
Christian moral teaching became the most essential purpose of literary works during Medieval Period. Prominent writers of English Literature like Geoffrey Chaucer, William Langland, John Gower, and William Dunbar dominated the age. Their works were directly or indirectly influenced by Christian teachings. They played an important laying a strong foundation to the English poetry. Chaucer's "The Canterbury Tales" He reveals both the good and bad effects of the Church in his "The Canterbury Tales". John Gower's *The Speculum Medantis* written in Latin is an elaborate allegory of the attacks of The Seven Deadly Sins and their Offspring upon the mankind. The poet, with a purpose of presenting moral development shows the wickedness of London; its dram-shops cheating merchants and shopkeepers, its slothful monks and friars, its vulture-like lawyers, and its lazy a rebellious labourers. His *Confessio Amantis* written in East Midland Dialect covering forty thousand octosyllabic lines illustrate the Seven Deadly Sins affecting love and lovers.

The main framework of story-telling through the introduction of stereotyped characters represents every walk of society except the two extremes of upper and the lower class, Chaucer highlights the influence of the Church in medieval England. The twenty nine pilgrims travelling to the Tomb of St. Thomas Becket, is initiated by the religious implications. However, the act of story-telling and the stories move beyond religion and becomes an important part of literary agenda. Chaucer is very particular in observing the human condition. The upper Class people are not bothered by the religious implication and the lower class people are innocent recipients of what is told. The complexity of religious influence upon the society is seen in the life of middle class people. Thus through the representation of the middle class society, Chaucer vividly highlights the influence of the

Church on Medieval Man's life. Events like going on a had pilgrimage served two purposes. It maintained the religious tradition and also provided a space for social gathering which became the source of literary growth.

William Langland is an important medieval poet. His "The Vision Concerning Piers the Ploughman" (1362), is purely religious which contains eleven Visions. This poem concerns the human conditions of struggle in his life journey from birth to death and the promised eternal life thereafter. According to christian teaching is heaven, hell and purgatory. Soul is permanent and the human activities of this life will determine the place of soul after death. Good works were believed to lead a soul to heaven and works of Sin will leading it to Hell. The poet in his dream saw a lofty tower, beneath it a dungeon and between them were the folks representing various sections of the community. The tower stood for Heaven, the dungeon stoods for Hell. Field is the world where all manner of types of men and rich live side by side in fierce competition.

Piers stood for the honest labour. Later he is transfigured in the very figure of Jesus Christ himself. A person is made to ponder upon the Visions of Do-Well, Do-Better and Do-Best in this poem. This constitutes the basis of Christian teachings. However as students of literature we need to move beyond the religious nature of such work. Its purpose was to give a Christian moral teaching. But as a literary form these works remain one of the best influential texts of the Medieval Age. The style and method of composition are also of the highest degree.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.6: How did Church affect the medieval life?

Q.7: Write a note on the role played by the Church during Medieval Age towards the growth of English Literature.

Q.8: What is Corpus Christi?

Q.9: What do you mean by Easter?

Q.10: Who is Everyman?

Q.11: Define a Mystery Play?

Q.12: How many pilgrims were there in *The Canterbury Tales?*

Q.13: Where did the pilgrims go in *The Canterbury Tales.*

Q.14: Who is the poet of the poem "Confessio Amantis"?

Q.15: Who wrote the Visions Concerning *Piers the Ploughman*?



3.5 LET US SUM UP

After having gone through the unit, you have learned that the most read literary works of the Medieval Age were saturated by the religious ingredients. The literary history reveals that the origin of recent dramatic performances dates back to the Medieval Age. Great literary figure like Chaucer whom the world recognises today as the Father of English Literature lived in Medieval Age and laid the strong foundation of the English Literature. Also the influence of the Church in the growth of English Literature cannot be undermined. Translation of the Bible by Wycliffe in about 1380 into English made it possible for the common people to know the Bible by themselves. This helped in the growth of conscious reader.

Almost all the literary works of Medieval Age possess religious implications. In dramatic performances, “Everyman” an anonymous text, played an important role in moulding the society. Everyman as a text survived as one of the oldest and the best read morality plays of the time. Thus, as it is said that literature is the mirror of the society, the medieval literature is a reflection of the Christian medieval society as Christianity had a strong hold upon the medieval man. Church and religious dictates was the ultimate authority and moulded the society with Christian morality. The Christian code of conduct determined the behaviour of the people. And its extensive influence also found a significant reflection in the thematic content, style of language symbolism and the overall characteristics of literature in the Medieval period.



3.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q. 1: Geoffrey Chaucer

Ans to Q. 2: Ref to 3.4 of the unit

Ans to Q. 3: Ref to unit 3.4 of the unit.

Ans to Q. 4: Ref to unit 3.4 of the unit

Ans to Q. 5: False

5.a): True .b) True. c) True. d) True. e) True.

Ans to Q. 6: Ref. 3.3. of the unit

Ans to Q. 7: Ref. 3.4 of the unit

Ans to Q. 8: Feast of the Body of Christ

Ans to Q. 9: The Sunday following the Good Friday or the day of Jesus' Resurrection is known as the Easter Sunday.

Ans to Q.10: The Medieval plays dealing with the Biblical stories are known as the mystery plays.

Ans to Q. 11: There were twenty nine pilgrims. Including Chaucer the poet they were 30 in number.

Ans to Q. 12: The pilgrims went to visit the Shrine of St. Thomas Becket situated at Canterbury.

Ans to Q.13: John Gower.

Ans to Q.14: William Langland.



3.7 FURTHER READING

1) Baldick, Christe. (2008) *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*

2) Birch, Dinah, (2009) *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, Seventh Edition

3) Bauch, C. Albert & Cable Thomas, (2006) *A History of the English Language* Fifth Edition

4) Choudhury, Bibhash, (2009) *English Social and Cultural History*, PHI Learning Private Ltd.

3.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q1. Discuss the role of Church on Medieval Life.

Q2. Give a detailed explanation on the influence of Church on English Literature

Q3. Write a short note on the following aspects :

i. The age of chaucer as a turbulent period

ii. Theatrical practices in the Medieval age

iii. Difference between mystery and miracle plays

Q. 4. Gow was Christain moral teaching reflected in some of the works of prominent writers of the Medieval Age?

Q. 5. Describe the characteristics of the works by chavcer and Langland in the Medival Age.

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UNIT 4: THE RENAISSANCE I

UNIT STRUCTURE

4.1 Learning Objectives

4.2 Introduction

4.3 The Intellectual Context

4.4 Impact of the Renaissance on English Literature

4.5 Let us Sum up

4.6 Further Reading

4.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

4.8 Model Questions

4.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the **Renaissance** as a major period in the revival of learning.
- explain how the period of 'Reformation' and 'Humanism' stemmed from the Renaissance.
- gain an idea on the ways in which the multiplicity of the Renaissance across Europe and how it influenced English Literature.

4.2 INTRODUCTION

The **"Renaissance"** first began as a cultural movement in Italy in the 14th century with renewed interests, in the fields of Classical learning and spread about a century later to the rest of Europe. You will be interested to know that the word **Renaissance** (***Rinascimento*** in Italian), means **"rebirth"** or **"to be reborn"** and it refers to the rebirth and the revival of learning. It also refers to the concept of **"enlightenment"** and how the Renaissance is likened to the emergence of man into the "light" of knowledge of the New world, from the assumptions of the Dark ages. The revival of classical antiquity started with the **fall of the Byzantine Empire** who were considered as the "**librarians of the world**" for their great collections of

classical manuscripts and the great number of humanist scholars that resided in Constantinople, who had to flee to Italy after their homeland was *sieged* by the Ottoman Turks. The Greek and Roman classical models that reached Italy, engaged the Italian minds with an intense pursuit and the love for wisdom.

The important contributions of the Renaissance were the invention of the printing press, modern navigation, new approach to the study of history and the modern sciences, the rise in industrial and commercial activities and the restructuring of the social classes. **Giorgio Vasari**, a Tuscan had invented the term "Renaissance" in his book *Lives of the Most Excellent Italian Architects, Painters and Sculptors from the Cimabue to Our Own Times* (1550). In the words of an accomplished representative of the Italian Renaissance **Leon Battista Alberti** (1404-1472), had said "**a man can do all things if he wills**". That is why the gifted people of the Renaissance sought an all-round development in all the areas of knowledge, in the arts, emphasising on physical growth and social accomplishments.

This unit introduces you to the Age of Enlightenment, when widespread cross-fertilisation of knowledge and learning flourished as an intellectual development and a way of life, all across Europe.

4.3 THE INTELLECTUAL CONTEXT

The intellectual and cultural movement of the Renaissance began in Italy in the late Middle Ages, spanning roughly from the 14th to the 17th century, and gradually spreading to the rest of Europe. It was only in the 19th century when the historian **Jacob Burckhardt** popularised the term "Renaissance" to refer to this distinct historical period. Many historians today, study the Renaissance as a strong reaction against the middle ages.

The Medieval world was more **theocentric** or in other words, centered around the divinity of **God** and the supreme authority of the Church, the *dictates* of which no man could question. But the Renaissance world was a **homocentric** one in which, man as an individual claimed his liberty

and the right to question and thereby open the doors to knowledge and new learning. The binding authority of religion was replaced by Man and his free will. Reason and not religion became the driving force in the search to define the centrality of human beings in the Renaissance world. Thus, the Renaissance scholars and artists reacted strongly against the medieval conventions in theology, literature, art, history, philosophy and all fields of learning and intellectual life. From the late 15th century, the invention of the printing press facilitated the widespread dissemination of knowledge but you must note, that the changes of the Renaissance took time and were not uniformly experienced all across Europe.

Taken as a whole, the Renaissance could be viewed as an intellectual approach in studying the secular and the worldly, through the revival of classical learning and the novel approaches to thought. There was a time when many Greek and non-Greek intellectuals fled to Italy during the 1453 **siege,** when the Ottoman Turks had captured Constantinople (now known as Istanbul) causing the fall of the Byzantium Empire. Historians often argue that these **émigré** intellectuals who had brought with them precious manuscripts in ancient Greek, had helped in fuelling the Renaissance. Some even mark the end of the Middle Ages with the fall of the Roman city and the Empire.

During this time, the money provided by the rich patrons, helped in the growth of interest and creativity in the liberal arts. From the 14th to the 16th century, wealth was brought into Italy through expansion of trade and commerce in Asia and Europe. Silver mining in Tyrol increased the flow of money and similarly the luxuries of the East brought home during the Crusades or the Holy Wars, added to the prosperity of the Italian cities of Genoa and Venice. The wealth in turn enabled the rich patrons like the Medici, an Italian Banking family to sustain geniuses and promote art and culture. **Lorenzo De Medici** promoted an enormous amount of art work and encouraged his own country men like **Leonardo Da Vinci**, **Sandro Botticelli** and **Michelangelo Buonarroti** to commission works from Florence's leading artists.

Throughout this early modern period, Humanist scholars shaped the intellectual landscape. **Humanism** was more a method of learning and different from the medieval scholastic mode. The Humanists adopted an empirical approach to assess the value of the ancient original texts. It is important to note that the Humanists based their education on the study of five areas of humanities which was also known as the '**Studia Humanitatis**'. These five important areas were: **Grammar, Poetry, Rhetoric, Moral Philosophy and History**. The Humanists asserted the unique and extra-ordinary ability of the human mind and the ability to transcend in the afterlife with a perfect mind and body through education. Based on the ancient Greco-Roman ideology known as the ***il umomo universal***, their purpose was to create a **universal man**, whose personality had combined intellect and physical excellence with the ability to act honorably in any circumstances. Thus, the education during the Renaissance was mainly composed of ancient literature and history as it was believed that the Classics provided moral instruction and a thorough understanding of human behaviour. The difference was that the medieval scholars of the 12th century had focused on studying Greek and Arabic works of natural sciences, mathematics and philosophy rather than the cultural texts.

Humanists like **Pico della Mirandola** made critical contributions to the Italian Renaissance and wrote the famous text *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, as a defense of thought on the grounds of reason. This work consisted of a series of theses on philosophy and natural thought and is often considered as a manifesto of the Renaissance. **Matteo Palmieri** another humanist drew largely from Roman philosophers and theorists especially Cicero and Quintillian and advocated civic humanism in his well known work *Della Vita Civile* (*On Civil Life*). He systematically analysed the qualities of the ideal citizen and moral conduct in civil life. Political philosophers like **Niccolo Machiavelli** drew from the ideas of Greek and Roman thinkers and applied them, along with the importance of rational thought in the critiques of contemporary government in his two major works *Discourses on Livy* and *The Prince*. Humanist **Poggio Bracciolini** had sought out in Europe's monastic libraries the Latin literary, historical and oratorical Classical texts.

The first artistic return to Classicism was seen in the *exemplary* sculpture of **Nicolo Pisano**. The Florentine painters led by **Masaccio** developed techniques to portray the human body more realistically and to create a more naturalistic effect in light and perspective in their art.

In the 1330s Petrarch referred the ancient or '**antiqua**' to pre-Christian times and the new or '**nova**' to the Christian times. By the 15th century there was a self awareness and knowledge about the transformations of the time that were taking place among the intellectuals, the writers, scholars, artists and architects in Italy. They were using phrases such as '**modi antichi**' meaning 'in the antique manner' and '**alle romana et alla antica**' meaning 'in the manner of the Romans and the Ancients.' Thus, in employing the humanist mode of study, the Renaissance scholars searched with a new focus on the aspects of realism and human emotions in art.

There was a revival of **Neo-Platonism** which incorporated the works and the teachings of Plato, Aristotle and other Greek philosophers. The ideals of the harmony of the Universe and the possibilities of perfection in mankind that it contained had opened up the humanist ways of thinking. **Marsilio Ficino** and **Giovanni Pico della Mirandola** were the primary figures who brought together strands of mystic thought and Christianity together with an emphasis on Platonic ideas. Although it was dominant during the Renaissance, humanists did not reject Christianity although there was a difference in the way intellectuals approached religion as reflected in several areas of cultural life.

The Greek Christian works including the **Greek New Testament** which were brought back from Byzantium to Western Europe engaged the Western scholars. This new engagement with the great classical religious texts was promoted by humanists **Lorenzo Valla** and **Erasmus**. This paved way for the **16th century Protestant Reformation** which was initiated by **Martin Luther**, **John Calvin** and other early Protestant reformers who protested the fake doctrines, rituals, malpractices within the Church and the systemic corruption of the Church's Roman hierarchy. The focus on

the Bible also called for the importance of education because some form of basic literary knowledge would familiarise the people to its teachings.

The importance of this movement was huge because the centuries of religious faith, attitudes and beliefs were suddenly replaced by a new way of thinking. **Protestantism** had originated with **Martin Luther's 95 theses** in Wittenberg in 1517 and his *excommunication* (1521) caused the further spread of **religious individualism** in Northern Europe including Wales, Scotland and England. It is against this background of the most radical change in religions faith and belief that we have to study, how the Renaissance along with the Reformation affected an entire Catholic nation like England. The Renaissance which had reached its peak in Italy in the early 16th century, happened much later in England during the reign of **Queen Elizabeth I** from 1558 to 1603.

Thus England had a new dynasty, the Tudors in power after the War of Roses (1453-85). The King rather than the Pope became the head of the Church and Protestantism came to be the national religion of England. This was when **King Henry VII** in a reaction against the Catholic Church's ruling on his marital separation had taken a major step to establish himself as both the head of the Church and State, ending the rule of Catholic Church in England. These changes had influenced every aspect of English life and culture. The monasteries which had been the seats of learning, history and culture for centuries were closed and mostly destroyed.

After the Reformation, in the new expanding world, the relationship between man and God and the place of man in the world had to undergo re-examining. **The English Renaissance (1485-1660)**, a cultural and artistic movement in England dating from the late 15th century to the early 17th century brought the rapid growth of modern science, mathematics, astronomy and navigation. The **beginning of the English Renaissance is taken to be 1485,** when the **Battle of Bosworth Field** brought the **Tudor dynasty** into power. Like most of the Northern Europe, England saw these changes for more than a century later.

The fourth decade of the 16th century saw the Renaissance astronomer **Copernicus** replace Aristotle's theory, declaring the 'sun' and

not the earth as the center of the Universe. It was the curious and exploratory bent of the 'Renaissance mind' that led to many such path breaking explorations and discoveries across Europe. The beginning of 17th century led to various discoveries of clocks, compasses, telescopes, microscopes, thermometers and all instruments that helped in investigating and exploring the opening worlds. It was not as if the new world rejected the old but it built upon the foundation of the old, with a new focus on man's abilities. In the case of new discoveries, the English physician **William Harvey** on the basis of a 16th century work in Italy, discovered the circulation of blood in the human anatomy in 1628. The Englishmen who made an impact in exploration and navigation of the seas were **Sir Francis Drake**, **Sir Richard Hawkins**, **Sir Richard Grenville**, **Thomas Cavendish** and **Richard Hakluyt**. The visual arts were less significant in the English Renaissance than the Italian Renaissance. The dominant art forms of the period were **literature and music**.



LET US KNOW

University Wits: The generation educated at Oxford and Cambridge Universities were collectively and popularly known as the University Wits. The names include Christopher Marlowe, Robert Greene, George Peele, Thomas Nashe and Thomas Lodge. Their works contributed to a wider popular appeal and using their poetry to make theatre, they breathed life into old classical models by dramatising issues and conflicts of the time and ushering in a new audience to the Renaissance theatres. Christopher Marlowe who was a major Elizabethan dramatist was considered the greatest of the group. The University Wits were the chief contributors to the rich heritage of pre-Shakespearean drama.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: State whether True or False:

a. Renaissance began as a cultural movement in Italy in the 14th century **(true/false)**

b. The Medieval world was a more homocentric in nature**. (true/false)**

c. The invention of printing press facilitated the widespread dissemination of knowledge. **(true/false)**

d. Changes of the Renaissance were uniformly experienced all across Europe. **(true/false)**

Q 2: Fill in the blanks:

a. In Humanist education the five humanities: Grammar, Poetry, Rhetoric, History and……...

b. The 16th century Protestant Reformation was initiated by ……, John Calvin and other Protestant reformers.

c. The English Renaissance is taken to start from the year ……. to the year1660.

d. The new engagement with great classical religious texts was promoted by humanists like …… and Erasmus.

Q 3: When and how did the Italian Renaissance reach and affect the Renaissance in England?

4.4 IMPACT OF THE RENAISSANCE ON ENGLISH LITERATURE

Literature after the Renaissance and the Reformation introduced a **new quest for individual expression** and meaning replacing the conventional modes of expression, which reflected defined ideals on modes of religious, heroic or social behaviour. In a world where old conventions were no longer valid, where scientific discoveries questioned age-old hypotheses and where man became the central interest, **Renaissance**

writing explored 'the geography of the human soul'. Within a short period of time there was an enormous variety of literary and linguistic innovations.

The Reformation gave cultural, philosophical and an intellectual impetus to the English Renaissance writing. The writers of the time had the freedom to explore and re-define all the concerns of humanity. Their writing was more an extension of the exploration of the human mind and this had led English literature to a new socio-religious and a moral identity. **English** became one of **the richest and most varied of world literatures** and still remains so. The literature of the English Renaissance contains some of the greatest names in world literatures. **William Shakespeare is known as the father of English Literature today**. Shakespeare along with the dramatists **Marlowe, Webster** and **Jonson** took English theatre to newer heights. Among the leading poets were **Sidney**, **Spenser**, **Donne**, **Milton** and the prominent prose writers were **Bacon**, **Nashe**, **Raleigh**, **Browne** and **Hooker**.

You must note that the Reformation and the century's cultural conflicts and changes were important in re-defining English literatures multiple identities. The **Authorised Version of the Bible (1611)** and the language of the ***Book of Common Prayer*** **(1549)** were also central to the interests of the time and had enduring effects on the English consciousness. The prayer book also served as a model of English prose and the Bible led to the development of contemporary Linguistics. The tradition of English literature gained strength and importance with the coming of the printing press by the mid 16th century. All the Tudor monarchs of the century were highly educated and so were most of the nobility and Italian literature had a considerable following and also provided much of the source of Shakespeare's plays**.**

Queen Elizabeth was herself a product of Renaissance humanism trained by **Roger Ascham** and wrote poems at critical moments of her life. There were women writers like **Anne Askew**, **Elizabeth Carey**, **Emilia Lanier**, **Martha Moulsworth** and **Lady Mary Wroth** but they were not well known or widely received during the period. This was because the male canons dominated English Literature.

The Tudor period saw the popularity and growth of the **Sonnet**, a fourteen lined form both as independent poems and part of sequences. It drew some major exponents like **Shakespeare**, **Spenser, Sidney, Drayton** and **Daniel**. It was **Wyatt** and **Surrey** who had originally brought the Italian form of the sonnet to England and it was made popular in the continent by Francesco Petrarch. This Italian sonnet form had Shakespearean and Petrarchan variants in the Renaissance period. Surrey was also responsible for suggesting the potential of **blank verse** in English poetry.

There was interestingly the development of **travel writing** too, with works by the major geographer of the time, **Richard Hakluyt's** titled *The Principall Navigations, Voiages, and Discoveries of the English Nation* (1589) which is also considered as an important historical document. There was a growth of the exotic and imaginative texts in travel writing, from the earlier tradition of Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) in Latin.

Pamphleteering was a common Elizabethan vocation and many writers were engaged in it. **Greene** and **Thomas Dekker** were prolific pamphlet writers and Dekker's pamphlets were interesting for the insights they provided about contemporary social and cultural life. Some of Dekker's pamphlets include *The Gull's Horn Book* (1609), *The Seven Deadly Sins of London* (1606), *The Bellman of London* (1608) and *Lantern and Candlelight* (1608). There were newly emerging trends in prose and poetry and above all, the plays of English Renaissance theatre were the outstanding legacy of the period. The English theatre scene received considerable royal patronage and was the most crowded in Europe as the performances were not only for the court or the nobility but also for a wider public.

Elizabeth's reign saw the nation's growth in terms of wealth and political importance because of which London developed as the nation's capital. The growing population could not read or write but went to the theatres for which the stage became the forum of debate, spectacle and entertainment. Thus, with the growth in theatrical expression, there was the growth of modern English as a national language. Also, Literature and philosophy were never so actively and thoroughly made a part of everyday debate and discussion like in the English Renaissance during the Elizabethan and the Jacobean period.



4.5 LET US SUM UP

After having gone through this unit, you will gain a broad idea on the Renaissance and what makes it is such a major historical period in the revival of learning. The Renaissance had significantly generated the 'Humanist' interests and the movement called 'Reformation'. It is important to note that the Renaissance cannot be studied in isolation and that all the movements have to be studied together. Significantly, the major contribution of the Renaissance period was the invention of the 'printing press' because it defined the ideas of the Renaissance, through the wide dissemination and cross-fertilisation of knowledge across continents. The unit provides you an idea of the intellectual context of the time while also discussing the Humanist emphasis on the combination of intellect and physical body.



4.6 FURTHER READING

1) Carter, Ronald and Rae, Mc. John (ed). (1991). *The Routledge History of Literature in English.* Britain and Ireland: Routledge.

2) Choudhury, Bibhash. (2005). *English Social and Cultural History: An Introductory Guide and Glossary*, New Delhi: Prentice Hall of India.

3) Daiches, David. (2007). *A Critical History of English Literature. Volume 1,* New Delhi: Random House.

4.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: a. True.

b. False.

c. True.

d. False.

Ans to Q No 2: a. Moral Philosophy.

b. Martin Luther.

c. 1485

d. Lorenzo Valla.

Ans to Q No 3: Renaissance peaked in Italy in the 16th century and took place much later in England The beginning of English Renaissance in taken to be Battle of Bosworth. During this time, the Englishmen made wide discoveries and explorations and gradually dominant art forms of the Renaissance began to develop.



4.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: What do you understand by the term Renaissance and why is it a major historical period?

Q 2: How did the intellectual context change from the Medieval to the Renaissance period?

Q 3: Discuss the significance of the development of the 'Reformation' and 'Humanism', as two important movements alongside the Renaissance.

Q 4: Critically analyse the impact of the Renaissance on the English Renaissance?

*** *** ***

UNIT 5: THE RENAISSANCE II

UNIT STRUCTURE

5.1 Learning Objectives

5.2 Introduction

5.3 Major Literary Forms

5.4 The Renaissance Ideal

5.5 Let us Sum up

5.6 Further Reading

5.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

5.8 Model Questions

5.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the major literary forms of the English Renaissance.
- learn more about some of the important writers of the Renaissance and their works
- explain the Renaissance ideal and the Renaissance man.
- appreciate the emergence of the Renaissance from the Medieval Ages.

5.2 INTRODUCTION

In continuation with the previous unit, the present unit takes up the major literary forms of the English Renaissance which have are namely, Early Tudor and Elizabethan poetry, the Elizabethan sonnet tradition, Renaissance prose (fictional and non-fictional) and Renaissance drama. Through the discussion of these major literary forms, the learner will also gain a glimpse of some of the prominent writers of the Renaissance period. The unit thus, provides a broad idea on the flowering of literary forms and trends during the period of the Renaissance in the History of English literature.

5.3 MAJOR LITERARY FORMS

Some of the major literary forms are as discussed below:

Early Tudor and Elizabethan Poetry:

The practitioners of newly emerging poetic trends in the Tudor age were the poets **Thomas Wyatt** and **Henry Howard**, **Earl of Surrey**. Wyatt's success lies in his ability to merge the English tradition with the imported verse forms that he had adopted. Wyatt had a distinct role in the evolution of English poetry because he introduced a Continental influence into the English literary scene, which asserted the Renaissance spirit. His first published work was titled *Certain Psalms …Drawn into English Metre* (1549) which do not bring in the continental flavour that is seen in the joint collection of both Wyatt and Surrey titled *Tottel's Miscellany* (1557). He was well-versed with the two verse forms **rondeau** and **terza rima** which grew popular with the Elizabethans.

Wyatt was also a competent translator like Surrey, who was commended Virgil's *Aeneid* for accurate translation. Surrey's translated sonnets that drew from the original Petrarchan sonnets, retained the classical temper and also the demands of the English language. Surrey introduced and popularised the **blank verse** in English literature and also the pattern of circulating the new verse-form through anthologies.

Thomas Churchyard was a versatile poet of the time with his collection of *Churchyard's Chips* (1576). **George Gascoigne** was a poet and a dramatist who's *The Steel Glass* (1576) a blank verse satire was one of the first in the genre. **George Whetstone** who was the biographer of Philip Sidney wrote a eulogy in verse (1577) in praise of his contemporary George Gascoigne. **George Turberville** wrote *Epitaphs, Epigrams, Songs and Sonnets* (1567) which contained translations from original works of Ovid and Mantuan. **Barnaby Googe** a poet and a translator with his collection *Eclogues, Epitaphs and Sonnets* (1563) was one of the first poets to have composed **eclogues** in English.

In the Elizabethan poetic scene was **Edmund Spenser** who brought into vogue a new kind of **pastoral poetry** that drew from the classical tradition with a definite English character. His first major pastoral was *The Shepherd's Calendar* (1579) which ran into many editions and drew from the classics such as Theocritus's *Idylls* and the *Eclogues* by Virgil. It concerns with the loss of the golden ages of the past and the themes of love, morality, ethics and God. It is also one of the few Elizabethan texts experimenting with English diction. **Pastoralism** was one of the themes to dominate English Renaissance of which *The Shepherd's Calendar* was an example. However, Spenser's six books of *The Faerie Queene* which was a prologue to the same, the reference to Elizabeth, remains his masterpiece. The first book of the poem is about Redcross the holy knight, the second on Guyon, the knight of temperance, the third and the fourth centers on the female knight Britomart's quest for her future husband Arthegall. The fifth book continues the same story with emphasis on friendship and the sixth book deals with the adventures of Calidore against the Blatant Beast.

Spenser's other works include the two sonnet collection of 1595, *Amoretti* and *Epithalamion* (a marriage song), the autobiographical pastoral *Colin Clout's Come Home Again* (1595), *Four Hymns* (1596) and *Prothalamion* (double betrothal)(1596). **Philip Sidney**, who contributed as a writer of romance, literary critic and dramatist wrote the first major text of English criticism, *An Apology for Poetry* (1595). His Arcadia (pub.1926) explores the potential of an evolving form of the romance. **Walter Raleigh** was as versatile and his work *Cynthia* remained incomplete and in fragments.

The poetry of the two Elizabethan greats **William Shakespeare** and **Christopher Marlowe** was remarkable. Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594) present great drama in verse. Marlowe drew from Ovid's *Metamorphosis* to create his verses in *Hero and Leander* that reflected the genre of the **long poem.** The appearance of long poems either individual or in collections like **Thomas Lodge's** *Glaucus and Scylla* (1589), **Michael Drayton's** *Endimion and Phoebe* (1595) or

John Marston's *Metamorphosis of Pygmalion's Image* were familiar to the Elizabethan readers.

The Sonnet Tradition:

Sonnets found a fertile ground in the Elizabethan England. By adapting a foreign form into native language, Wyatt and Surrey introduced the sonnet form in English as one of the major poetic genres of the time. The origin of the form is in the Sicilian Court of Frederick II in the years 1220-30 and the structure of the poem owes to another Sicilian form called the **strambrotto.** The Italian form of the sonnet was brought to England by Wyatt and Surrey, which was popularised across the continent by Petrarch. The 14 lined **Petrarchan sonnet** contained an octave (8 lines) and a sestet (6 lines) and this was modified by the English poets such as Shakespeare. The **Shakespearean sonnet** contains three quatrains of four lines each and a couplet, which forms the last two rhyming lines of the sonnet.

The Tudor period saw considerable output of the forms among the poets of the time such as **Shakespeare**, **Spenser**, **Sidney**, **Drayton** and **Daniel**. Shakespeare who is known for his sonnets had them first published in 1609.His sonnet sequences can be divided into two parts 1-126 that concerns with the speaker's male friend and 127-54 that concerns the speaker's mistress. The themes revolve around time, love, fidelity, friendship, art, the artist, death and immortality. Philip Sidney's 108 sonnets included in *Astrophil and Stella*, composed in the early 1580s is an example of one of the earliest attempt with the form. It can also be read as one of the critiques against love poetry of the contemporary period. Other contributions to the form were from **Samuel Daniel's** sonnet collection *Delia* and **Michael Drayton** *Idea's Mirror* (1594).

Elizabethan Prose:

The classical influences found in both poetry and drama is reflected in Elizabethan prose in different ways. Various prose genres from the **picaresque** to the **pamphlet** were experimented with and this can be divided into **fictional** and **non-fictional** prose, which also engaged the minds of the **University Wits.** The **essay** form found its greatest exponent in **Francis Bacon** who was the major figure of Humanism in England. He perfected

the form drawing from the French model of Montaigne that reflected in his works *Essays* (1597), *The New Atlantis* (1626) and *The Advancement of Learning* (1605). Bacon's works which he called " dispersed meditations" dealt with various themes such as law, science, history, government, politics, ethics, religion, colonialism, society and the individual. These meditations which were often only a page –long, raised questions on the traditional concepts and assumptions and also provided a remarkable insight into the issues of the time. The same issues are reflected in the works of theologian **Richard Hooker**, whose *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (1593) advocating intellectual liberty in place of extreme dogma, was one of the first major prose classics in Modern English**. John Lyly,** who was influenced by Boccacio, introduced the **euphuistic style** through his works *Eupheus* (1578-80), *Anatomy of Wit* (1578) and *Eupheus and his England* (1580). **Robert Greene** continued the same in his works *Eupheus, his Censure of Philautus* (1587).He also wrote prose romance *Menaphon (*1589) and pamphlets such as *Groatsworth of Wit*, *Brought with a Million of Repentance* (1592).

Thomas Dekker was a prolific writer of pamphlets that centered on low life in London and contemporary social life. His best satirical work is considered to be *The Gull's Horn Book* (1609) and his pamphlets include *The Seven Deadly Sins of London* (1606), *The Bellman of London* (1608) and *Lantern and Candlelight* (1608). **Thomas Nashe** who is remembered today for his fictional work *The Unfortunate Traveller* (1594) had critiqued the contemporary superficial romances in his prose work *The Anatomy of Absurdity* (1589). **Philip Sidney** reacted and defended against the abuse of poetry in his work *An Apology for Poetry* (1595) which is also one of the first critical works in English, presenting the aesthetic principles central during the Renaissance. Sidney also wrote Arcadia that survives in two versions, the first known as the old Arcadia.

Travel writing also became a popular genre of the period and **Walter Raleigh** wrote his ambitious *The History of the World* (1614) among other works such as *A Discovery of the Empire of Guyana* (1596) and *A Report of the Truth of the Fight about the Isle of Azores* (1591).

The period also exhibits a fascination with books on manners such as *The Courtier* (1561) translated from Castiglione's work, which focuses on the ideal gentleman of the time. There were numerous such **'how-to-books'** for all levels of society, from books for Statesmen like **Sir Thomas Elyot's** *The Book Named Governor* (1531) to books for confident tricksters like **Thomas Dekker's** *The Gull's Hornbook* (1690).

The prose writings of the period in general, revolved around the major themes of religion, voyage, discovery and London life. The growing range of prose is reflected in the effectiveness of prose as both an argumentative and a descriptive genre. Prose work such as sermons, religious tracts, versions of the Bible were frequently written, as you are also aware that the *Book of Common Prayer* and The Authorised Version of the Bible formed a central interest to the Elizabethan mind.

Renaissance Drama:

Pre- Shakespearean drama is characterised by a gradual movement from the religion-based theatre of the Moralities and the Mysteries to a more secular structure of the 16th century. The **interlude** was very popular, which was a form of interval presentation for entertainment and did not have any 'action' and nor did it require much stage props. It was slightly different from the religious temper of the three other forms of the Mystery, Miracle and Morality plays. The interludes suggest the Renaissance emphasis on intellectual curiosity. The broad humor, the use of ballad, poetry, dance and music and its tendency towards allegory and symbolism contributed to the development of Renaissance drama. The English folk tradition had another form called the **mummer's play** at the start of the sixteenth century and these mummings or performances like the Robin Hood plays and other folk performances were to pull crowds during the folk-festivals.

Henry Medwall's comic interlude *Fulgens* and *Lucrece* (1497) is generally held to be the most successful of early Tudor Drama. **The University Wits** were the major contributors to pre-Shakespearean drama. A University Wit, **John Lyly** caused a stir with his *Eupheus* (1578) and *Eupheus and His England* (1580) and some of his major works include *Campaspe*, *Sappho and Phao, Gallathea, Endymion*. **Thomas Kyd**, another

of the group is famous for one play of intrigue and 'tragedy of blood', *The Spanish Tragedy* (1592) that is associated with the tradition of Elizabethan revenge tragedy. **Robert Greene's** works saw the return of the folk comedy along with romantic adventure, magic, and country jests. His *The Comical History of Alphonsus* and *King of Aragon* (1587) are full of **stage directions**, the first instance of such detailing in an Elizabethan play.

A prolific playwright and University Wit, **George Peele** wrote the historical *The Battle of Alcazar* (1589), *The Love of King David* and *Fair Bathseba* (1594), *The Arraignment of Paris* (1584) and the famous *Old Wives' Tale* (1590), a combination of farce and romantic folk tale. **Thomas Lodge** is known for the two plays that drew from classical themes, *The Wounds of* Civil *War* (1586) and *A Looking Glass for London and England* (together with Robert Greene, 1594). **Christopher Marlowe**, the greatest of the University Wits, introduced the popularity of the **blank verse** in Elizabethan drama. He was consistent in his use of dignified themes and his serious drama was characterised as **Marlovian**. Marlowe's short career includes his first historical play *Tamburlaine* (1587), *The Jew of Malta* (1590), *Dido, Queen of Carthage* (together with Thomas Nashe, 1585) and the popular *Doctor Faustus* (1592). Based on the German legend of Faust, the brilliant play Doctor Faustus deals with the theme of the Renaissance intellect and individuality.

Thus, the development of pre-Shakespearean drama was subject to major influences drawn from outside the native tradition. The 16th century was a time, when the social demonstration of English nationalism and Protestantism was presented on the public platform of a diverse theatre.

The 16th century was the golden age of the English drama

John Heywood's *The Four PP* that dates from the early 1540s was the precursor of the realistic comedies. The early 16th century saw secular performances, some of which were initiated by the school masters were influenced by the classical models of Plautus and Terence. **Nicholas Udall's *Ralph Roister Doister*** (1541) based on Terence's *Eunuchus* and *Miles Gloriosus* is usually considered to be the first English comedy. The **Senecan model** which was very different from that of the English practice

with its grand speeches, gory elements, supernatural aspects, influenced the English playwrights. This was adopted in the play *Gorboduc* (1561) by **Thomas Norton** and **Thomas Sackville** in what is known as the **first major example of an English Tragedy.**

William Shakespeare (1564-1616) has been admired for his creative genius, 'knowledge of the human heart', his excellent poetry, idea of popular taste, an unsurpassable stagecraft, as a man of the theatre and for his intuitive understanding of human psychology and passions. He was Marlowe's successor who showed no reluctance to collaborate with other playwrights. He wrote for the theatre and became a part of the Lord Chamberlain's Men. Usually his plays are considered in terms of the development of his works in phases. His early **comedies** include *The Comedy of Errors* (1593), *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (1593), *The Taming of the Shrew* (1594) which has great comic timing. The 1590s also concerns the middle comedies like *Love's Labour Lost* (1594), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1596) and *The Merchant of Venice* (1596). In the same century his interests were seen in the **tragic** and **bloodletting** *Titus Andronicus* (1590), *Richard III* (1594), his three *Henry VI plays* and *Romeo and Juliet* (1595). The **historical themes** were seen in the plays *Richard II* (1595), *Henry IV* 1 and 2 (1597-8) and *Henry V* (1599).

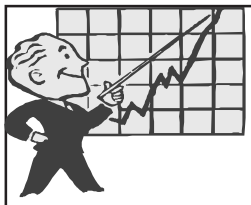
Shakespeare's tragedies bring out the structures of power and the key political issues of the time on to the stage. **The four great tragedies include: *Hamlet* (1601), *Othello* (1604), *King Lear* (1605), and *Macbeth* (1606)**. Among other tragedies were *Julius Caesar* (1599), *Antony and Cleopatra* (1607), *Coriolanus* (1608) and *Timon of Athens* (1607). His **last plays** *Pericles* (1608), *Cymbeline* (1610), *The Winter's Tale* (1611) and *The Tempest* (1611) introduced a quieter temper. It is the exquisite beauty of language and his technical expertise that brought brilliance to his works, which are characterised as **Shakespearean**, in terms of reference.

There was a particular form of comedy called the **comedy of humours** with which **Ben Jonson** was associated. The human personality was believed to be governed by the presence of four kinds of humours and his plays were characterised as **Jonsonian**. Two such works include *Every*

Man in his Humour (1598) and *Every Man Out of His Humour*, which show its characters with follies resulting from the over presence of humours. The satiric comedies are also seen in his other plays *Cynthia's Revels* (1600), *The Poetaster* (1601) and the power of his comedies are seen in works such as *Volpone* (1605), *The Silent Woman* (1609), *The Alchemist* (1610) and *Bartholomew Fair* (1614). Jonson was the major Elizabethan playwright to adhere to the **idea of unities** and was also a successful writer of **masques**, which was a common feature in Shakespeare's work.

John Webster's careful use of language in his tragedies of bloodletting revenge finds expression in two of his best works *The White Devil* (1612) and *The Duchess of Malfi* (1613). **John Marston** who tied up with a boy's company wrote *The Dutch Courtesan* (1604) and *The Malcontent* (1604) which deal with disguise, fraud and duplicity. **Thomas Dekker** was a successful dramatist who collaborated with several contemporary dramatists and a versatile artist who wrote pamphlets and masques too. *The Shoemaker's Holiday* is considered to be his masterpiece. The other playwrights of the **early Jacobean period** were **Thomas Middleton**, known for his comedies; **Thomas Heywood**, known for his domestic tragedies; **Francis Beaumont** and **John Fletcher**, the dramatist duo of the King's Men and **John Ford**, known for his tragedies. The playwrights who had collaborated with several other playwrights were **Henry Chettle**, **Anthony Munday**, **Philip Massinger** and **James Shirley**, also considered to be the forerunner of the Restoration Comedy of Manners. You would be interested to know, that during the early years of English stage history, many of the theatres were located outside the city walls of London. This was because the authorities did not permit theatrical activity inside the city. The London theatres in the Elizabethan age occupied the south bank of the river Thames and the northeast part, through Finsbury field. The theatre house Blackfriars where many of Shakespeare's plays were staged was placed within the walls of London. The **theatre houses** of the time were the first playhouse **The Theatre** (opened in 1576), **Red Lion** (1567), **Globe Theatre** (1599), **The Rose** (1587), **The Fortune** (1600), **The Red Bull** (1661) and **Blackfriars Theatre** (1597).The **theatre**

companies were **Leicester's** (1576-8), the **Queen's** (1583-89), the **Admiral's Men** (1590-91) and the **Lord Chamberlain's Men** (1594-6). This will give you an idea of how the English theatre flourished during the period.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: a. The Authorised Version of the Bible and the language of the *Book of Common Prayer* had enduring effects on the

a. English consciousness.

b. Italian consciousness.

c. Greek literatures.

b. The Tudor period saw the popularity and growth of a fourteen lined form of poetry called the-----

a. Sonnet

b. Eclogue

c. *Terza Rima*

Q 2: Discuss briefly the major literary forms of the English Renaissance.

5.4 THE RENAISSANCE IDEAL

Modern Historians are of the opinion that the Renaissance, much a precursor of the characteristics of the modern period, constituted **a 'multiplicitous culture'**. These features include the parallel Protestant Reformation, the invention of the New Philosophy, the Hermetic and Neo-Platonic traditions and an all round development of Art and Culture. As an intellectual and academic movement, Humanism came to be closely associated with the Protestant Reformation which laid great emphasis on the dissemination of the religious scriptures in all vernacular languages. And with the technological advance of the printing press, spread the effects of both the movements.

The Humanists had a rounded approach to education and also the ideals for the Renaissance gentleman or courtier. According to the

Renaissance ideal, such a figure was expected to speak several languages, play a musical instrument, write poetry and basically to imbibe many talents. The idea of a universal education was central to achieve the **polymath** like quality. That is why the word **University** was used to describe **a seat of learning** and at this time the Universities which were highly regarded did not specialise in specific areas but provided a broader education. After the students received such an education, they could choose to master a specific field.

During the Renaissance, **Baldassare Castioglione** wrote in his *The Book of the Courtier* about how an **ideal courtier** should have polymathic traits and the attitude or **Sprezzatura** to achieve the same. With such an attitude a courtier was to have a detached and calm attitude, possess good oratorical skills, recite poetry, be athletic, be well versed in the Humanities and classics and be able to paint with many other talents. The Renaissance ideal differed slightly from the "polymath" ideal, in its emphasis on more than intellectual development. The **Renaissance man** represented a person who strived to "develop his capacities as fully as possible" both mentally and physically.

Leon Battista Alberti said that, **"a man can do if he wills"** and he himself was gifted in many fields. He was a Roman Catholic priest, architect, sculptor, painter, poet, scientist, mathematician, inventor, an archer and a skilled horseman. The common term 'Renaissance man' is used to describe a person who is well-educated or who excels in diverse fields and subjects. There were exemplary figures like Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Galileo, Copernicus and Francis Bacon among others, who defined the concept of the Renaissance man, excelling in multiple fields of Humanities and the Sciences.

List of some of the prominent literary Figures of the English Renaissance:

Francis Bacon, Thomas Dekker, John Donne, John Fletcher, John Ford, Ben Jonson, Thomas Kyd, Christopher Marlowe, Philip Massinger, Thomas More, Thomas Nashe, William Rowley, William Shakespeare, James Shirley, Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser, John Webster, Thomas Wyatt.



5.5 LET US SUM UP

With man as the center of the Renaissance world, the unit traces how the Renaissance man evolved in every aspect and across diverse fields. It is important to understand how the period had multiple receptions at different periods of time, all across Europe. It specifically focuses on the English Renaissance and its influence on 'English Literature', which is considered to be one of the richest Literatures in the world. Historians use the term **"early modern"** for the Renaissance which highlights the period as a transitional one, leading to the Modern world. Thus, unit will enable you to appreciate the emergence of the Renaissance Movement from the Medieval or the Dark Ages.



5.6 FURTHER READING

1) Carter, Ronald and Rae, Mc. John (ed). (1991). *The Routledge History of Literature in English.* Britain and Ireland: Routledge.

2) Choudhury, Bibhash. (2005). *English Social and Cultural History: An Introductory Guide and Glossary*, New Delhi: Prentice Hall of India.

3) Daiches, David. (2007). *A Critical History of English Literature. Volume 1,* New Delhi: Random House.

5.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1:

a. 1. The English consciousness

b. 1. Sonnet

Ans to Q No 2: Refer to 5.3



5.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: What were the major trends in English poetry?

Q 2: Assess the significance of the Elizabethan stage and the Elizabethan drama.

Q3. Write a short note on the following:

a. Practitioners of Tudor poetry

b. William Shakespeare and Shakespearean Drama

c. John Webster as a dramatist

Q4: a. What is meant by the Renaissance ideal?

b. Who is considered as a 'polymath'?

*** *** ***

UNIT 6: THE RESTORATION AGE

UNIT STRUCTURE

6.1 Learning Objectives

6.2 Introduction

6.3 Literary Features of the Age

6.4 Major Literary Forms

- 6.4.1 Poetry
- 6.4.2 Restoration Drama
- 6.4.3 Prose

6.5 Important Writers

6.6 Let us Sum up

6.7 Further Reading

6.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

6.9 Model Questions

6.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- describe the background of the Restoration age
- explain the various characteristics of the restoration age
- analyse the different literary forms
- appreciate the contribution of the eminent writers of the period

6.2 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you shall be introduced to the context of the Restoration age. The Puritan age dominated the life and literature of England before the Restoration age. Thus, let us start our discussion by getting to know about the Puritan age. Under the Puritan **regime** of **Cromwell**, Charles I was banished in 1649. There was little political stability during the period from 1649-1660. These turbulent years saw the establishment of the

Commonwealth under the leadership of Oliver Cromwell. The Puritans were intolerant of earthly tyranny in any form and believed in the supremacy of God. They aimed at personal **righteousness** and civil liberty. The Puritan regime was very severe and thus, repressed many natural pleasures. In the year 1642, theatres were closed under Puritanism. They remained closed until the restoration of Charles II in 1660.

The period from 1660 to 1700 is known as the Restoration age. The Restoration age is marked by the restoration of Charles II and the beginning of a new era both in the life and literature of England. The change of government from the Commonwealth to Kingship changed the mood of the entire nation. Moral earnestness and decorum, the two most important features of Puritanism were thrown away during the Restoration replacing the importance of natural instinct. The age witnessed social transformation as the earlier atmosphere of freedom was restored and this gave way to licentiousness in the society of the time. There was also a stern reaction against the morality of the Puritans. Now let us discuss the literary features of the Restoration age.

6.3 LITERARY FEATURES OF THE AGE

There was a literal break away from old standards in literature similarly just as the society has shifted away from the restraints of Puritanism. There was also a rapid development of science during the Restoration age. The emphasis on science led to the foundation of the Royal Society in 1662. This society included all the scientific and literary men of the age. Its main objective was to discuss and investigate scientific questions. This growing interest in science led to a rational inquiry and an objective outlook. Apart from this, the Restoration age also witnessed political upheaval. The political life was marked by the rise of two political parties- the Whigs and the Tories. The Whigs sought to limit the power of the monarchy in the interest of the people and the Parliament. On the other hand, the Tories supported the Divine Right theory of the king and restrained the power of the people. The political scenario gave impetus to the writers

of the period. Political **affiliation** was present in almost all the writers of the age. The various literary tendencies that prevailed during the restoration age are as follows:

Imitation of the Ancients: The writers of this period were not endowed with literary merit like the Elizabethans. So, they turned to the ancient writers, particularly to the Latin writers for guidance and inspiration. They **imitated** the ancients because they believed that the ancient writers were endowed with literary genius and excellence. Therefore, it was wise for them to model their writings on the ancients. The neo-classical school of poetry which based their writings on the classical masters could not penetrate into the width and depth of human imagination and human emotions. Thus, subject-matter was given less importance than imitation of rules.

French Influence: During the days of the Commonwealth, Charles II spent most of his days of **exile** in France. Thus, on his return after the restoration of the monarchy, he renounced old ideals and brought with him a new admiration for French literature. The drama, particularly the comedy is the most copious form in the restoration age which was influenced by **Moliere**, the exponent of French comedy. The famous French writers-Corneille, Racine and Boileau were imitated. But unfortunately many writers imitated the vices of French comedy omitting its wit, delicacy or abundant ideas. The French influence is seen in the coarseness and indecency of the Restoration comedy of manners. However, 'heroic tragedy' is the combination of both French and classical influence.

Correctness: 'Correctness' means to avoid enthusiasm, to moderate opinions and to be humble in imitating the style of the Latin classics with accuracy. Since the writers of the restoration period lacked originality and creativity, they imitated the ancients. However, their imitative work was **frigid** and thus low in quality. A number of 'rules' evolved which can be summarised in the **injunction** "Be Correct". Thus, in following the 'rules' the restoration writers abandoned freedom altogether and imitated the ancients. This new tendency reached its peak during the age of Pope. In fact, Pope and his immediate successors call Dryden 'copious' to hint towards Dryden's unrestrained vigour. It is very interesting to note that Dr. Samuel Johnson

has rightly applied the epithet 'Augustan' to Dryden because of his contribution. Johnson believed that what Dryden did to English literature was similar to what Augustus did to Rome. Dryden was the first representative of the new ideas that were to dominate English literature till the end of the eighteenth century.

Rise of Neo-Classicism: The writers of the restoration period 'exhibited a strong traditionalism' which was evidenced in their great respect for classical writers, that is, the writers of ancient Greece and Rome. These classical writers were thought to have achieved excellence in literature and thus the term 'classic' became applicable to any literary work that had met the standard of the classical antiquity. Hence, the term 'neo-classic' came to refer to these writers. Rules were thus established and the writers tacitly agreed upon the rules and principles in accordance to what they chose to write.

Realism: The literature of the period was marked by realism. The Restoration writers were concerned with the life, manners and fashion of the London society. They represented men exactly as they were. However, the early writers of this period sought to paint pictures of a corrupt court and society, emphasising more on the vices than virtues.

Formalism: The literary tendency was towards simplicity of expression and directness. The writers **eschewed** extravagance of thought and language which were the general tendencies of the Puritan age. Formal style of writing, emphasis on close reasoning, usage of short sentences- all these were the literary features of the age. It is largely due to Dryden that this formal style was developed by the writers.

The Prevalence of Heroic Couplet: Literature during the restoration age witnessed the adoption of heroic couplet, that is, two iambic pentameter which rhyme in pairs: aa, bb, cc and so on. It was Chaucer who first used this verse form in his *The Canterbury Tales* and *"The Legend of Good Women".* However in Chaucer the form was less important than the poetical thought. Whereas 'form' was the main focus of the restoration writers. Heroic couplet was the dominant literary fashion. But in the hands of Dryden and other restoration writers it became "closed"- that is, each couplet/pair of

lines was to contain a complete thought which needs to be clearly stated. This mechanical closed couplet was a domininant practice for a full century in England excluding all other forms of poetry.

However, the English literary scene after 1700 was dominated by prose- particularly political writing. It was a period of transition from the Restoration to the Age of Reason. As mentioned earlier, the rise of the two political parties- the Whigs and the Tories gave a fresh impetus to the writers. Thus, literature after the Restoration Age also abounded in political writing. The writers of both the Restoration and Augustan Ages (that is, 1700-1750) laid importance to the ancient literary figures as their model and together formed the neo-classical period. The writers of this period had set up ideals of conduct in accordance with reason and thus rules were established based on the literary conventions of the past writers.

6.4 MAJOR LITERARY FORMS

Drama was the dominant literary form during the Restoration period, particularly the **Comedy of Manners**. However, other forms such as poetry and prose were also written. Let us now discuss about the various literary forms that were practiced during the Restoration period.

6.4.1 Poetry

The poetry of the Restoration period was formal, intellectual and realistic. It laid more emphasis on form than on subject-matter. Since religious and political disputes continued to dominate English life even after the restoration of the monarchy, therefore, restoration poetry seemed to be dominated by political and religious infighting. The most important poet of the age was John Dryden who was appointed **Poet Laureate** by Charles II in 1668. His satire often striked us as cutting and revengeful, rather than witty. It is worth mentioning that there was nothing in his works regarding his private feelings or state of mind. He was a very impersonal poet and a commentator on matters of public concern as far as his poetry was

concerned. This is apparent in his best-known poem, "*Absalom and Achitophel*" which dealt with the political crisis of the last years of the reign of Charles II. 'Medal' is an attack on **Shaftesbury**. His '*Mac Flecknoe'* is an attack on a former friend, **Thomas Shadwell**. Dryden appears to be a great story teller in verse in '*The Fables*'. *Religio Laici* and ''The Hind and the Panther'' are the two doctrinal poems by Dryden. As a lyric poet, his fame rests on '*Song for St. Cecilia's Day*' and '*On Alexander's Feast*'. His poetry had an enormous influence on shaping neo-classical literature in the eighteenth century. It was his influence and example which lifted the heroic couplet for many years as the accepted measure of serious English poetry. Besides Dryden, the only other considerable poet of the age is Samuel Butler. During the early years of restoration age, *doggerel* verses ridiculing Puritanism were the most popular form of literature. His '*Hudibras*' is a satire on the Puritans. It is plainly modeled upon Don Quixote of Cervantes. Sir Hudibras is a Puritan knight who undergoes many absurd adventures with Ralpho, his Independent squire, to put down all innocent pleasures. In Hudibras and Ralpho, the two extreme types of the Puritan party- Presbyterians and Independents- are ridiculed mercilessly. The poem is composed artfully and the metre of the poem is remarkable. When the poem had appeared in public in 1663, it became an instant success. A second and a third part, continuing the adventures of Hudibras were published in 1664 and 1668.

The poetry of Pope must be mentioned as he was also considered as the greatest poet of the early eighteenth century. His poetry was didactic and satiric in nature, bearing a style which was polished, refined yet artificial. His many poems include "Pastorals", "An Essay on Criticism", "Windsor Forest", "Dunciad" and "The Rape of the Lock" among others which reflect the spirit of the age. His excellent use of heroic couplet is evident in "Epistle to Arbuthnot".



LET US KNOW

Cavalier Poets : The poets of the middle of the seventeenth century are divided into two groups- the religious poets and the secular poets/cavalier poets. **Robert Herrick**, **Thomas Carew**, **Sir John Suckling** and **Richard**

Lovelace are known as the Cavalier poets. Their poetry had leanings towards the court unlike the Puritans. However, poetry was not used as propaganda by them. They were lyrical poets and their poems generally dealt with love, beauty and war. Except Herrick who wrote both secular and religious poems, the other Cavalier poets wrote only secular poems.

6.4.2 Restoration Drama

With the restoration of the king there came a change in cultural direction. French fashion and ideas heavily influenced the court. The theatres reopened after their official closure in 1642 but when the theatres reopened, they were not the open-air arenas of the renaissance but indoor theatres with movable scenery. Unlike the renaissance, the audience was mainly drawn from fashionable circles. Consequently, the plays written for the playhouses were distinctly calculated by the authors to appeal to a courtly and cavalier audience. The theatres were seen as the preserve of the aristocracy and those in authority. The most famous **theatergoer** who left a record of the plays he saw was Samuel Pepys. During this period, there was a rise of the 'heroic tragedies' and 'comedy of manners'. Let us discuss them broadly:

The Restoration Tragedy or The Heroic Tragedy

The Heroic Tragedy also came to be known as the 'Love and Honour Drama'. These plays had presented a hero choosing between love and honour. They were set in faraway places associated with romance, such as Granada or Venice. The influence of French romance and drama was the utmost in the heroic plays. It owed its form the French writers like **Corneille** and **Racine.** This form was introduced by **Sir William Davenant** and popularised by Dryden. These plays appealed to the artificial and aristocratic sentiments of the upper class. Such type of plays did not offer any real probing of issues since its emotions were artificial. The principal writer of heroic tragedy was John Dryden. His famous tragedies are- *Tyrannick Love* (1669), *The Indian Emperor* (1669), *Conquest of Granada* (written in two parts, 1669 and 1670), *Aureng-zebe* (1675), and *All For Love*

(1677) which was a rewriting of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*. It is noteworthy that in this play, Dryden had limited the scope of Shakespeare's play confining it to the neo-classical taste. It is implied from this that there came an urge to 'confine', 'limit' and order life with the restoration of the monarch unlike the in the renaissance, which considered a broader scope of relevance and transcultural context as its concern. Among other restoration tragedians are- Thomas Otway, Nathaniel Lee and Nicholas Rowe.

The Restoration Comedy or Comedy of Manners

Restoration comedies are comedy of manners and morals of fashionable society. The comedies expressed a reaction against Puritanism and sexual repression that it had attempted to enforce. The dissolute court life of the period was reflected in restoration comedy which drew its inspiration from the native tradition that had flourished before the closing of theatres in 1642, particularly from the works of **Beaumont** and **Fletcher** and **Ben Jonson**. In the restoration comedies, marriage and adultery was treated with **cynicism**. The characters in the plays owed much to the courtiers, ladies of fashion, citizens and wives. These comedies were devoid of romantic passions and sentiments. It replaced emotion by **wit**; and poetry by concise prose. These plays also showed a satirical observation of life and manners of the upper class society. In these plays the follies of the refined gentlemen are exposed. Everything vulgar was eschewed, for example, a 'whore' was called a 'mistress' and a 'pimp' was called a 'friend'. The cult of refinement is carried to an extreme. In these plays, plots and sub-plots are intricate and numerous and centre upon intrigues. These plays throw a reflection of an open contempt for the ordinary standards of morality. The setting is provided by the fashionable parks, clubs, taverns and drawing rooms of the aristocratic people.

It is important to know that the Restoration Comedy was the expression of people who endeavored to readjust their values after a great upheaval. The subject of the relationship between man and woman was of prime importance. Sexual **intrigue**, thus, forms the dominant theme. The eminent writers of comedy of manners are- William Congreve, George

Etherege, George Farquhar, Sir John Vanbrugh and William Wycherley. To name a few, Wycherley's *The Country Wife* (1675), Congreve's *Way of the World* (1700) were well-known plays of this period.

A remarkable feature of the play is that it contributed towards a change in the social structure like the presence of actresses on stage by giving women a chance to earn a living in a profession and making them visible in society. In this context, we need to refer to Aphra Behn, the first major woman dramatist in England. Her first play which was staged in 1670 was *The Forc'd Marriage*. However, it is for *The Rover* (1677-81) that Behn was best known for.



LET US KNOW

Aphra Behn contributed to the "amatory fiction genre" of British literature. This type of fiction is about women, written by women and considered to be read by women; basically it deals with romance and sexual love. The other amatory fiction writers were Eliza Heywood and Delarivier Manley. It was popular chiefly during the 17th and 18th centuries.

It is noteworthy that with the rise of the middle class, the moral had standards undergone a transformation. As a result, the rise of periodicals and newspapers emerged as a protest to the immoral and anti-social influence of the Restoration Comedy. There was a change in stage productions from 1700 onwards. Jeremy Colliers who attacked the Restoration comedy wrote plays like *The Careless Husband* and *The Non-Juror*. These plays were representative of the new age. However, towards the first half of the eighteenth century, sentimental comedies were written. Sentimental comedies were marked by **melodramatic** and distressing situations- that of intrigue, pathetic heroines, rogues, gallants, etc. in sentimental comedies tears were replaced by the place of laughter. Some of the best examples of sentimental comedy were Hugh Kelly's *False Delicacy* and Richard Cumberland's *The West Indian*.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: State whether true or false:

a) The Restoration age is marked by the restoration of Charles II. **(true/false)**

b) Heroic couplet was not the dominant literary fashion of Restoration literature. **(true/false)**

c) Since religious and political disputes continued to dominate English life even after the restoration of the monarchy, therefore, restoration poetry seemed to be dominated by political and religious infighting. **(true/false)**

d) Restoration Comedy drew its inspiration from the native tradition which had flourished before the closing of theatres in 1642. **(true/false)**

Q 2: Fill in the blanks:

a) The Restoration writers turned to the ancient writers, particularly to the ……. writers for guidance and inspiration.

b) The theatres reopened after their official closure in …….

c) Dryden's poem namely ……. is an attack on a former friend, Thomas Shadwell.

d) …… also came to be known as the 'Love and Honour Drama'.

Q 3: Write a note on the Restoration Comedy.

6.4.3 Prose

The Restoration marked the beginning of modern prose. Though prose writing of the period was not great in bulk, it showed a profound change in style. The spread of the spirit of critical temper of mind and the love for definiteness and clarity contributed to the development of English prose. Various political parties and growing interest in day-to-day activities encouraged journalism which needed simple and straight forward prose style. Precision and lucidity are the essential elements of good prose style and the growing interest in rationalism contributed to it. As a prose writer,

Dryden had a remarkable influence. The general subject of his prose was literary criticism. His influence was mainly seen in writing naturally without depending on literary ornamentation. His criticisms were generally used as prefaces or introductions to his poetry instead of independent works. The most well-known of his prose work are- preface to "The Fables", "Of Heroic Plays", "Discourse on Satire" and "The Essay of Dramatic Poesy" (1668). His "The Essay of Dramatic Poesy" is in the form of a discussion between four characters and one of them was Dryden himself. Most of the major topics in which the contemporary dramatists were interested formed the discussion in this work like- the question of rhyme, blank verse, the comparison between French and English drama.

The other notable prose writers of the period were **John Bunyan**, **Thomas Hobbes**, **John Locke**, **William Temple** and the **Diarists**. All the major works of Bunyan are allegorical like "The Pilgrim's Progress" (1678), "The Life and Death of Mr Badman" (1680) and "The Holy War" (1682). His one and only non-allegorical work is "Grace Abounding" (1666) which is a kind of religious autobiography. Bunyan's work is undoubtedly based on and influenced by his reading of The Bible. Hobbes is famously known for his only one book, *Leviathan*; it is partly political and partly a philosophical book. Locke's prose is marked by simplicity and clarity. "Essay concerning Human Understanding" is one of his most important works which is a study of human mind and of the origin of ideas. William Temple has three works to his credit, namely, his *Letters*, his *Memoirs* and his *Miscellanea* (a series of essays on a variety of subjects, both literary and general). He was a politician and wrote **leisurely**.

The Diarists

John Evelyn (1620-1706) and Samuel Pepys (1633-1703) were the two most popular diarists of this period. These two diary writers provided interesting information concerning private and public affairs. Samuel Pepys was perhaps more intimate to his readers. Born in London and educated at St. Paul's and latter at Cambridge, Pepys was an English naval administrator and Member of Parliament. His *Diary* opens on Jan. 1, 1660 and continues until May 31, 1669 when he was unable to write at night because of his

failing eyesight. His diary was remarkable for the unaffected naturalness of style and narrative skill and was replete with minute details and is considered as the most open and intimate revelation of a human life. It showed his keen interest in material advancement as well as, a theatre and music lover. His jealousies, insecurities and fractious relationship with his wife- all these are revealed in his diary. His diary is one of the prime historical sources of the restoration period and provides first-hand accounts of great events like the Great Plague of London, the Second Dutch War and the Great Fire of London.

John Evelyn's diary is a finished product in terms of style. His style which is very simple and lucid is replete with accurate information. But his diary is less amusing than Pepys. The diary of Evelyn also contains details of incidents such as the Great Fire. His diary was written with an 'eye on the public.'



LET US KNOW

The **Great Fire of London** was an extremely uncontrolled fire that traversed from 2nd to 5th September 1666. This intense fire destroyed major parts of London.

Prose dominated the literary scene mainly after the Restoration age which is said to have ended roughly in 1700. Alexander Pope, Jonathan Swift, Joseph Addison and Richard Steele were some of the eminent prose writers of the age of Reason. Some of the factors behind the growing demand of prose writing were the political condition, new publishing houses and the new morality. The rise of the two political parties has already been mentioned above. Thus, political **pamphlets** were written extensively. It is worth mentioning that the interest in politics raised the number of readers which led to the setting up of new publishing houses. The immorality of the Restoration age was replaced by a new attitude to life and morals. Swift's most noteworthy book is *The Battle of the Books* (1704). The theme of this book is the strife between ancient and modern authors. *A Tale of Tub* (1704) which is a religious allegory is another of his well-known works. He is the

greatest English satirist whose writings are marked by originality, directness and vigour. Both Addison and Steele contributed essays in the little magazines, namely, the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*. Steele's essays are didactic and aimed at reformation of the society. Unlike Addison, he was incapable of irony and lacked the humour of Addison. The essays of Addison reflected the life of the period in which they are written. Satire as a literary form predominated literature during the early eighteenth century. Dr. Samuel Johnson's Dictionary was published in 1755 and his *Lives of the English Poets* (1779-81) dealt with the English literary tradition.

6.5 IMPORTANT WRITERS

John Dryden : John Dryden (1631-1700) is representative of the Restoration Age. He was born in the village of Aldwinkle, Northamptonshire. A series of heroic stanzas were first published on the death of Oliver Cromwell in 1659. "Annus Mirabilis" is one of the poems by Dryden written in 1667. The poem gives a historical account of the Great Fire and the war with the Dutch. The tone of the poem is a combination of dignity and impetus which characterise Dryden's poems. The poem is remembered for its striking imagery. His other poems include "Religio Laici" (1682), "The Hind and the Panther" (1687), "Anne Killigrew" (1686), "Alexander's Feast" (1697) and "To My Honour'd Kinsman" (1700). His most famous poem is "Absalom and Achitophel" (1691) which is a satirical allegory. He was made the Poet Laureate in 1688. His contribution to literature is immense.

William Congreve (1670-1729): William Congreve is the finest writer of the comedy of manners. He was born at Bardsley, near Leeds. A faithful reflection of the upper class of society of his time can be seen in his plays. His most famous comedies are *The Old Bachelor* (1693), *The Double Dealer* (1693), *Love for Love* (1695) and the *Way of the World* (1700). The Comedy of manners reaches its perfection in the works of Congreve. In his plays he depicts an artificial society which lacks in moral judgment. His tone in most of the plays is cynical. His style is lucid and pointed and the characters were drawn very well. His *Way of the World* is regarded as one of the most

popular Restoration Comedy. The play revolves around the two characters, Mirabell and Millamant. The love between them is based on material gains. The play reflects his skill in characterisation.

John Bunyan: John Bunyan (1628-1688) is an English Christian writer and preacher. He had very little schooling. His first book namely *Grace Abounding* which was written in 1666 is a kind of religious autobiography. In 1660, he was arrested on the charge of being an unlicensed preacher. He had to spend twelve years in Bedford **gaol**; and in 1672 on his release, he obtained a license to become a preacher. He is well-known for *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) and it is interesting to note that this work was written during his imprisonment. It is one of the best known allegories which had been translated extensively (*into 108 languages*). His other important works are *The Life and Death of Mr Badman* (1680) and *The Holy War* (1682). Most of Bunyan's works are allegorical in nature. His style was very unique and is shaped by Biblical influences. Bunyan was definitely one of the greatest prose writers of the Restoration period.

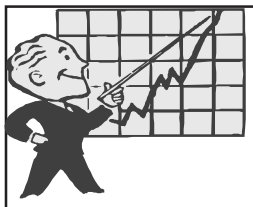
Aphra Behn: Aphra Behn (1640-1689), is a prolific dramatist of the Restoration period. She was born in Canterbury. *The Forc'd Marriage*, *The Rover, The Dutch Lover, The Town Fop,* etc. are some of her well-known plays. She was the first female writer of her time and is chiefly remembered for her novel *Oroonoko* (1688), which dealt with an enslaved African prince.

Jonathan Swift: Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) was born in Dublin of English parents. His first important work is *The Battle of the Books* (1704) which is a satire on the literary controversy of the classics and modern literature. His next work *A Tale of a Tub* (1704) is a religious allegory and a satire on the various churches. Swift's work mainly aimed at improving the condition of the oppressed people. His most famous work, *Gulliver's Travels i*s a delightful book. Swift was also the greatest satirist of his time. His attacks were very critical of the society at large and pointed out the faults of humanity.

Alexander Pope : Pope was born in London in the year 1688. He is the representative poet of his age and was the undisputed poet of his generation. He was deformed and this bodily infirmity led him to be educated

privately. He wrote his first poem, "Pastorals" (1709) when he was just sixteen years of age. His second poem appeared in 1711, namely, "Essay on Criticism". His other poems also include "Windsor Forest" (1713) and "The Rape of the Lock" (1712). Pope also has translations to his credit. He translated the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey.* His "Essay on Man" is a philosophical poem and is a discussion of man's place in the world. As you know that imitation of the ancients is a characteristic feature of the period, Pope's *Imitations of Horace* is an important work in this context. Pope has based this work on the Latin satirist to attack the corruption of his period. His "Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot" (1753) is the best example of Pope as a satirist. Pope's work is very limited in its subject matter and style. He used the heroic couplet which restricted the style of his work. Basically, his works deal with the people of his own social class. His works are devoid of any kind of lyrical quality and is generally didactic.

Samuel Johnson: Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) was a son of a book-seller who was a devout Tory. His *Dictionary* and his *Lives of the Poets* are two of his most popular works. His *Lives of the Poets* is replete with biographies and critical assessment of fifty-two poets of the eighteenth century. The only short story written by him is "Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia". Thus, he is an essayist, a **lexicographer**, a biographer and a poet whose contribution to English literature is significant.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: Choose the correct answer:

a) **The Comedy of Manners** reaches its perfection in the works of which Restoration writer?

i. John Dryden

ii. William Congreve

iii. John Evelyn

b) *The Battle of the Books* is a satire upon the literary controversy of the classics and modern literature. Who wrote it?

i. Aphra Behn

ii. Joseph Addison

iii. Jonathan Swift

Q 5: Trace the development of prose during the Restoration period.



6.6 LET US SUM UP

After having gone through the unit, the learner will gain an idea on the Restoration age and the diverse literary production during the age. As mentioned above, the age is named after the Restoration of Charles II. By now, it is clear that restoration literature is dominated by political writings. The tremendous social reaction against the constraints of Puritanism is a significant factor of the Restoration age. Thus, writers focused on realism, formalism and literature became concise and formal. For example, the use of heroic couplets enables the writers to lay emphasis in the form of writing. This unit has also acquainted you with the most prominent figures of the Restoration age like John Dryden and others. The unit will enable you to gain a broad idea on the Restoration age as an age of transition from the enthusiasm and dynamism of Renaissance literature to the formalism of the Augustan age, the dominant forms of which were satire, heroic couplets and comedy of manners.



6.7 FURTHER READING

1) Abrams, M. H. (1999). *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Singapore: Thomson Asia Pvt. Ltd.

2) Albert, Edward (1979). *History of English Literature*. (5th edition) New York: Oxford University Press.

3) Choudhury, Bibhash. (2005). *English Social and Cultural History: An Introductory Guide and Glossary*. New Delhi: Prentice Hall of India.

4) Long, William J. (2007). *English Literature: Its History and Significance for the Life of English Speaking World.* Delhi: A.I.T.B.S Publishers.

6.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: a. True

b. False

c. True

d. True

Ans to Q No 2: a. Latin

b. 1642

c. “Mac Flecknoe”

d. The Heroic Tragedy

Ans to Q No 3: Restoration comedies are a reflection of the manners and morals of fashionable society. It drew its inspiration particularly from the works of Beaumont and Fletcher and Ben Jonson. The comedies are devoid of romantic passions and replaces emotion by wit; and poetry by concise prose. In these plays, plots and sub-plots are intricate and numerous and revolves around intrigues. The setting is provided by the fashionable parks, clubs, taverns and drawing rooms of the aristocratic people. The major writers of Restoration Comedy are William Congreve, George Etherege, George Farquhar, Sir John Vanbrugh and William Wycherley.

Ans to Q No 4: a. William Congreve

b. Jonathan Swift

Ans to Q No 5: The spread of the spirit of critical temper of mind and the love for definiteness and clarity contributed to the development of English prose. Precision and lucidity are the essential elements of good prose style. Dryden, Bunyan, Hobbes, Locke, William Temple and the Diarists had a remarkable influence on the literature of the age. Growing interest in rationalism widely contributed to the development of prose which particularly dominated the literary scene after the Restoration period.



6.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: Discuss the historical and social background of the Restoration period.

Q 2: What are the literary characteristics of the Restoration period? Explain.

Q 3: Give a brief account of Restoration drama with special reference to Restoration comedy.

Q 4: Trace the development of prose during the Restoration period.

Q 5: Write a brief essay on the diarists of the Restoration period.

Q 6: "Restoration age is also known as the Age of Dryden". Analyse the contribution of Dryden and his influence in the literature of the Restoration age.

Q 7: Give an account of the political tendencies of the Restoration age and its influence on Restoration literature.

Q 8: What are the characteristics of the Heroic tragedy of the Restoration period? Evaluate the works of the prominent writers of heroic tragedy.

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UNIT 7: THE NEOCLASSICAL AGE I

UNIT STRUCTURE

7.1 Learning Objectives
7.2 Introduction
7.3 The Socio-Intellectual Context
7.4 Literary Features of the Neoclassical Age
7.5 Let us Sum up
7.6 Further Reading
7.7 Answers to Check Your Progress
7.8 Model Questions

7.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the Neoclassical Age of English Literature.
- define the term Neoclassical.
- learn how the Neoclassical age derived its character from the Enlightenment and Scientific Rationalism that was prevalent across Europe.
- grasp the various literary features of the Neoclassical age.
- explain the reasons for which Eighteenth century literature predominantly reflects the supremacy of logic and reason.
- appreciate the trends in the age of prose and reason.

7.2 INTRODUCTION

The Neoclassical Age is an era that has produced literary creations excelling in both reason and form. The term Neoclassical Age refers to the first half of the eighteenth century literary period of England when the poets and critics imitated the works of the Classical Latin poets and critics and the Latin literature that flourished in the Roman Empire. There was a new

revival of interests in the Classics during this period and hence the nomenclature "Neoclassical" is justified. It was a matter of pride for the English poets and critics of this age to imitate the Classical poets and while creating their works of art they expressed absolute faith in the rules and laws prescribed and practiced by the Classical poets. As per the Neoclassical writers, the best works are those that have moved nearest in its imitation of the ancient classicals. The Neoclassical age is also popular as the Augustan Age since the literature of this age reflected the works of Virgil, Horace and Ovid during the reign of the Roman Emperor Augustus which was a period of brilliant literary creations. This Neoclassical or Augustan Age of English Literature refers to the literary period spanning the early part of the eighteenth century. We need to note here that critics have broadly divided the eighteenth century literature into the Age of Pope and the Age of Johnson. The Age of Pope spans from 1700 to 1745 and the latter half of the eighteenth century that spans from 1745 to 1798 is known as the Age of Johnson.

The eighteenth century literature displayed the predominance of logic and reason and was marked by a suppression of passion and emotion. The supremacy of logic and reason made way for the emphasis on form rather than on the spirit. The poetry of this Neoclassical age have been known for its satirical overtone and didactic features and the satires included social, political and even personal issues.

The closing of the Neoclassical age in the latter half of the 18th century marks a steady change in the social political, religious and literary values that were cherished in the Age of Pope. With the maturing of the Neoclassical age Samuel Johnson appeared as a personality of "extraordinary vigour of utterance." As David Daiches mentions in "Poet, critic, essayist, journalist, editor, and great literary personality, Johnson was one of the first full-dress professional men of letters in England." Unlike many the men-of-letters of his age, Johnson refused political patronage and embarked on a writing career "with the author negotiating with the publisher from a position of vantage." The growing concept of democracy made the public aware of the notions of liberty, equality and the rights of

man. This change in outlook reflected directly on the literature of the time. As a result, we find that the literature of the Age of Johnson varied from the literature of the Age of Pope with regard to matter, spirit and form.

7.3 THE SOCIO-INTELLECTUAL CONTEXT

To trace the socio-intellectual context of the Neoclassical age, we definitely need to refer to the Enlightenment and the Scientific Rationalism that was brewing all over Europe. Europe had seen remarkable achievements in the scientific field in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. These scientific enterprises made way for the logical thought processes and thinkers started believing that reason can substantiate faith. The Renaissance in the sixteenth century Europe was the time when art forms mingled with science. A revolution in scientific thought was witnessed all over Europe and England had also felt its impact. There was a spurt of scientific writings. Astronomy, physics, mathematics, chemistry and the medical sciences had seen many pioneering works. A fascination for the human body was vividly seen in the art works and Leonardo da Vinci is the most famous example. This European intellectual phenomenon called the Enlightenment made huge impact in the social and cultural life of the eighteenth century. Intellectual discourses evolved and philosophers and thinkers laid much emphasis on 'reason' to prove their arguments. The Enlightenment placed human reason at the apex of all thought processes. The Enlightenment thinkers tried to organise knowledge into one composite whole and held strongly to the view that there is nothing in this world that could not be explained by reason. In other words, the Enlightenment brought in its fold "diverse areas like politics, state, individual, economy, culture, equality, reason, and faith in the abilities of the human spirit. The Neoclassical age thus consequently cherished reason and intellect and became the age of reason.

The Neoclassical Age also evolved as a reaction to the Restoration Age. As the Restoration period was known for the corruption, moral depravity and irrational sentimentalism, the Age of Pope or the Age of Neoclassical

literature showed a general disapproval of these. The works of this age displayed the attempt of the writers to usher in moral regeneration and controlled passion in the society. The term 'Classic' as associated with this age evolved as the poets and the critics of this age believed that the writings of the classical antiquity or the Latin writers of the Roman Empire presented the ultimate models and high standards of literary taste. Another reason why this age is considered classical is that the critics and poets of this age conformed to what the Latin writers of the Roman Empire believed regarding the laws and rules. The Neoclassical writers strictly followed the laws and rules imposed by the principles of classicism or the literary authority of the past. The writers of the Neoclassical period were well-trained in the literature of Greece and Rome. The writers believed that the classical models encouraged restraint and conformity to norms.

When we move towards the socio-political milieu of the eighteenth century England, we note that it was a period of rapid social and political developments. The Glorious Revolution of 1688 established in England the constitutional monarchy and Parliamentary democracy, thus shifting the power and influence into the hands of the politicians which were hitherto exercised by the king and the courtiers. The Whig and the Tory- the two political parties- were constantly locking horns and to advance their cause they employed men of letters who were placed at high positions in the state. These litterateurs because of using their literary abilities in the political context won the support of the politicians who employed them to create satires and pamphlets to ridicule their opponents. Thus the satirical writings flourished and along with poetry, prose emerged as a strong medium of expression. This was the period when the London coffee-houses bloomed where the politicians and the writers discussed literature, as well as, the current topics related to politics. As prose flourished, the Neoclassical period saw the emergence of the periodicals, journals and newspapers. This was the age when formal education became popular among the common masses and as a result the writers found a wide readership.

Thus, we see that the social and political developments in the eighteenth century influenced the writings of the period and new literary

genres were created which gave much importance to reason along with form and style.

GLOSSARY

Coffee houses: In the later part of the seventeenth and early part of the eighteenth centuries coffee houses became very popular in England. The coffee house culture was responsible for the introduction of tea and coffee in England. The earliest coffee house started in Oxford in 1650 and the first London Coffee House started in 1652. Every coffee house had different groups of people frequenting it. Within a short time the coffee houses became centres where news was circulated. These coffee houses were also known for many business transactions. In the latter part of the eighteenth century, London had more than five hundred coffee houses. As the entry fee was just a penny, the general public could have easy access to these where they read newsletters, talk and gossip over a cup of coffee. These coffee houses became communication centres which provided a platform for gathering and disseminating news. The coffee house culture had an impact on the literary productions of the age. This coffee house culture was a primary reason for the popularity of the periodical essay.

Text Box:

Satire: Satire is defined as the art of "diminishing or derogating" a subject in literature by making it look ridiculous and evoking the feelings of amusement, contempt, scorn or indignation. Satires are created with a purpose of correction. It acts as a corrective of human vice and folly. Satire was a major literary form in the eighteenth century. The members of the two political parties, Whig and Tory, employed important writers of the age to create satirical writings to ridicule their political opponents.

7.4 LITERARY FEATURES OF THE NEOCLASSICAL AGE

The literature of the Neoclassical age, like the literature of all other ages display certain features. These literary features are prominent enough to give this age its own flavour which can be characterised as follows:

Predominance of Logic and Reason: The Neoclassical age is also called the Age of Reason. The age that preceded this age is the Restoration period which was known for moral depravity, corruption, uncontrolled passion, extravagance and irrational sentimentalism. This Neoclassical age is a reaction to the Restoration age and there was a general disapproval to all the indecencies and irrationality. Good sense prevailed over in the writings of the time. Good sense here means love of the reasonable and supremacy of logic and reason.

Age of "dissociation of sensibility": The eighteenth century literature was a literature of intelligence and wit. The writings of the time saw a clear suppression of passion and emotion. This was the age when reason and emotion was not allowed to balance themselves and get expressed together. Emotion was considered inferior and hence yielding to the demands of the senses was dissociated or kept away from reason. Hence the term "dissociation of sensibility".

Strict Adherence to the Rules and Norms: It is because of the strict adherence to rules and norms that the Neoclassical age received its name. Since the poets and the critics of this age believed that the writings of the classical antiquity or the Latin writers of the Roman Empire presented the ultimate models and high standards of literary taste, they stuck to these norms while they created their works. The critics and poets of this age shared the same beliefs with the Latin writers of the Roman Empire regarding the laws and rules. The Neoclassical writers fully agreed to the laws and rules imposed by the principles of classicism or the literary authority of the past.

Importance to Form and Style: The writers of the Neoclassical period gave much importance to form and style. The content of the writings

of this age was much unimaginative and it seemed that the reading public was not bothered . Adherence to a proper style and form was most essential. The greatest poet of this age Alexander Pope used the Heroic Couplet to express his satirical ideas. The Heroic couplet was recognised as the only medium of expression which gave much importance to correctness and precision. In the hands of Alexander Pope the Heroic Couplet became polished Pope pruned whatever seemed irregular and rough.

Satirical and Didactic Writings: Satire as a form of literature became very popular during the Neoclassical age. In the hands of the poets of this age, satire reached newer heights. During the earlier period, that is, the Restoration period, satire as a prominent form of literature had already gained ground in the hands of Dryden. John Dryden and his disciple and successor Alexander Pope are the two names which are inseparable in the history of classicism in English Literature. Their satiric talent which they expressed with the help of the Heroic Couplet remain unmatched.

As most of the writings of the Neoclassical age was satirical, a strong didactic or moral overtone is commonly noticed. This was a kind of poetry with argument and criticism of politics and personalities. The satires of this age were social, political and even personal. Writers tried to express good sense or the love of the reasonable, and with the supremacy of logic and reason, the works of this age were didactic. These works tried to send a moral message and thus establish propriety in society.

Reflection of Social and Political Life of the 18th Century: A feature specific to the literature of this age in the words of Pope is “to follow nature”. However, nature here does not mean the natural environment. It means human nature and Pope believed that “the proper study of mankind is man”. Hence, the satires of the eighteenth century beautifully portrayed human nature and the manners of society thus reflecting the socio-political life of the age. We see a fine reflection of the social and political life of the eighteenth century in Alexander Pope’s “The Rape of the Lock”.

The Growing Reading Public and the Emergence of Prose Style: Right from the days of the Enlightenment and the Renaissance, the awareness on the need of education was seen in the English society.

Eighteenth century England saw a rapid spread of education among the common masses. This accounted for a wide appeal and popularity for the periodical literature which was written in the prose form. Thus, the Neoclassical age saw the emergence of the periodicals, journals and newspapers, leading to the growth of the conversational prose style.

Literature on Town-life: The literature of the Neoclassical age, in their quest for elegance of form, reason, good sense and social mannerisms, was confined to the expression of town life. It was essentially an expression of urban life and setting of the eighteenth century English society and the poets seemed to draw their inspiration from the coffee-house and the drawing-room discussions on politics and day-to-day life in the towns.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1. State whether True or False:

a) The Neoclassical writers did not give importance to form and style.

b)Emperor Augustus ruled during the eighteenth century.

c) The Neoclassical age is known as the age of reason.

Q2. Fill in the blanks:

a) "***The Rape of the Lock"*** was written by……

b) The ……writings were the most popular form of writing during the eighteenth century.

c) Critics have broadly divided the eighteenth century literature into the age of …… and the age of …….

Q 3. Why did the writers of the Neoclassical age lay much importance to the classical rules?



LET US KNOW

The Heroic Couplet: The poets of the Neoclassical age used to write their verses in a particular form known as the heroic couplet .From the age of John Dryden till the time of Samuel Johnson the heroic couplet was the predominant measure



GLOSSARY

Conformity: Behaviour or action that follow the accepted rules of society.

Didactic: Telling people and teaching them do what is right through moral teachings.

Milieu: The social environment.

Nomenclature: Naming things

Overtone: An emotion or attitude that is suggested.

Pamphlets: Avery thin book with a paper cover that contains information about any subject.

used for poetic expressions in English. The heroic couplet consists of lines of iambic pentameter (a line having five feet where an unstressed syllable is followed by a stressed syllable) which rhyme in pairs, for instance, *aa,bb,cc*. The term "heroic" was coined in the late seventeenth century as such couplets were used frequently in heroic poems and heroic dramas. Geoffrey Chaucer in *The Legend of Good Women* and *The Canterbury Tales* first used this verse form in English. The heroic couplet was extensively used by Alexander Pope who composed all his verses using this form. It was in his hands that the heroic couplet was polished to the its best. In the closed heroic couplets, used by the Neoclassical poets, two lines serve the function of a stanza.



7.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have learned about the Neoclassical age and why it is such a relevant period in the history of English Literature. The Neoclassical age was the age of logic and reason. The Enlightenment that spread all across Europe and was the primary reason for the scientific rationalism of the eighteenth century. The early eighteenth century was called the Neoclassical age because the poets and critics of this period imitated the works of the Classical Latin writers of the Roman Empire and they had complete faith in the rules and laws prescribed and practiced by the Classical poets.

The unit gives you an idea of the socio-intellectual context of the age and the popularity of education among the common masses. With the growth in awareness among the reading public the publication of the periodical journals, newspapers flourished. Prose writings became a prominent literary form. In this unit, you also learn about the political and social milieu of the Neoclassical age. The growth of the coffee houses and the opinions that flowed from the discussions in there greatly shaped the

literature of this age. The unit will enable you to gain a better idea on the important literary features of this age.



7.6 ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q1: a. False b. False. c. True.

Ans to Q2: a. Alexander Pope b. Satirical c. Pope; Johnson

Ans to Q3: The Neoclassical writers imitated the Classical Latin writers. The 18th century writers believed Classics as the standard and some of the unparalleled best works thereby being highly influenced by the Classics.



7.7 FURTHER READING

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2) Choudhury, Bibhash (2005) *English Social and Cultural History: An Introductory Guide and Glossary*, Prentice Hall of India: New Delhi.

3) Daiches, David (1999) *A Critical History of English Literature*: *Volume 3.* Allied Publishers Limited: New Delhi.

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5) Website: faculty.winthrop.edu/kosterj/engl201/neoclassicism.htm



7.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q1. Why is the early part of the eighteenth century called the Neoclassical age?

Q2. How did the Enlightenment influence the Neoclassical age?

Q3. Discuss the features of the Neoclassical literature.

Q4. Critically analyse the impact of the socio-political milieu in shaping the literature of the age of reason.

Q5. Why do you think the satire became the most popular form of literature during the Neoclassical age?

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UNIT 8: THE NEOCLASSICAL AGE II

UNIT STRUCTURE

8.1 Learning Objectives
8.2 Introduction
8.3 Major Literary Forms in the Neoclassical Age
8.4 The Age of Prose
8.5 Important Writers
8.6 Let us Sum up
8.7 Further Reading
8.8 Answers to Check Your Progress
8.9 Model Questions

8.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the literary forms of the Neoclassical Age.
- explain the major forms of literature prevalent in the Neoclassical Age.
- learn the ways in which satirical writings became much popular.
- learn the various forms of satirical writings of the age in prose and poetry
- grasp the reason for which the eighteenth century is also known as the ‘age of prose’.
- appreciate the emergence of periodical essays and novels as popular forms of prose writings of the age.

8.2 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, the learner was familiarised with the socio-intellectual characteristics of the Neoclassical age together with its literary characteristics that adhered to the principles of classicism and supremacy

of logic and reason. The present unit will introduce you to the major literary forms and the major writers of the age who significantly contributed to the bulk of literary treasures through their prose works.

8.3 MAJOR LITERARY FORMS IN THE NEO CLASSICAL AGE

Satire: The Neoclassical age saw the prominence of satirical writings. Satire as a form of art had already started gaining ground in the Restoration period. The stalwart of this form John Dryden (1631-1700) had polished the art of satire and took it through his verses in the previous age and influenced the writers and thinkers of the succeeding age, the Neoclassical period. In this genre Dryden's able successor is Alexander Pope who embellished satire to newer heights. Through the satirical works ridicule a subject yet it is seen that satires are created with a purpose - the corrective of "human vice and folly". In most of his works, Alexander Pope followed the formal Horation satire where the speaker is an urbane, witty and tolerant person who is amused by the human follies, pretentiousness and hypocrisy. The Neoclassic writers produced works which were satiric and didactic which attacked human pride. These poets admired the great genres of epic and tragedy but created their own masterpieces in satiric forms. This gave rise to the **Neoclassic poetic diction**.

The **Neoclassic poetic diction** was mainly derived from the characteristic diction of the earlier poets like Virgil, Edmund Spenser and John Milton. This form of poetic diction was based primarily on the principle of "decorum" and this style demanded that the poets "adapt the level and type of his diction to the mode and status of a particular genre". For instance, Alexander Pope's formal satire "An Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot" is a representation of a poet's direct commentary on everyday matters and hence it required the use of language actually spoken by the "urbane and cultivated' people of his times.

To maintain the decorum of the form that the satirical writings of the age demanded, the Neoclassic poets used a befitting style called the **mock**

epic or mock-heroic poem. The mock epic or mock-heroic poem imitates the serious manner and characteristic features and ceremonious style of the epic genre to narrate a commonplace and trivial subject matter. The very well known masterpiece of this type of satiric writing is Alexander Pope's creation "*The Rape of the Lock*". This was a poem where Pope followed the grandiose epic style and views through the "epic perspective a quarrel between the belles and elegant of his day over the theft of a lady's curl". The subject matter of the poem was very commonplace but it was being expressed in the grand epic form; hence it was a mock epic or mock-heroic poem. The rhyming style that was popular among the Neoclassic writers was the **heroic couplet**. The **closed heroic couplet** was best suited to enhance the satiric element of the mock-heroic poem. Almost the entire body of writings of the Neoclassical poetry of the early eighteenth century was written in the closed heroic couplet.

Poetry in the neoclassical age had its own grandeur. Although, the prominent figure was Alexander Pope yet, it was John Dryden who inspired the neoclassic poets. It was Dryden who adopted the satiric mode by imitating the Classical ancients. The major works of John Dryden are ***Mac Flecknoe*** , ***Absalom and Achitophel***, ***Hind and the Panther***, ***Alexander's Feast***, ***The Secular Masque***, ***Annus Mirabilis***, ***Heroic Stanza's on the Death of Oliver Cromwell'***, and several others.

The major works of Alexander Pope are ***Pastorals***, ***An Essay on Criticism***, ***Windsor Forest***, ***The Rape of the Lock***, ***The Dunciad***, ***Essays on Man***, ***Moral Essays***, ***An Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot***, ***Satires and Epistles of Horace Imitated***, to name a few. Apart from Dryden and Pope, the other names that must be mentioned in the sphere of neoclassical poetry are James Thomson and Samuel Johnson. Thomson's poetry gives a new direction to the Augustan poetry. Along with political satire and social conditioning in Thomson's poetry nature occupies center-stage. Thomson's famous work ***The Seasons*** was written in four phases- ***Winter*** (1726), ***Summer*** (1727), ***Spring*** (1728), and ***Autumn*** (1730). Thomson's *The Seasons* is believed to be the first major 'nature' poem in English language. Thomson's works are known for the sense of thematic orientation in which

the poem is structured. In ***To the Memory of Isaac Newton*** (1727), Thomson stuck to the intellectual climate of the times and expressed the union of God and reason. ***Liberty*** and ***The Castle of Indolence*** are the other well known poems of Thomson.

Samuel Johnson's first major poem ***London*** (1738) satirised the decaying culture of England in those times. This satiric poem was based on Juvenal's third satire, through which Johnson attacks the intellectual and moral poverty of the age by targeting the members of the elite class. It is an interesting account of the poverty and chaos seen in the urban setting of London of his times. ***The Vanity of Human Wishes*** (1749) draws a similar picture and it is based on the tenth satire of Juvenal.

The Emergence of Prose as a Serious Form of Literature: The beginning of the eighteenth century saw the rapid growth of prose. This Neoclassic age was the period when the ever-increasing reading public had made considerable progress in the art of circulating facts and ideas. The new social and political conditions prevailing in England gave rise to a "multitude of practical interests". Such interests could not be expressed through books only and poetry often could not cater to the needs. Hence, several forms of prose literature like pamphlets, magazines and newspapers had emerged.

The Periodical Essays: The trend of the periodicals or the periodic essays started in the previous century and reached its peak of popularity in the early eighteenth century. Though several authors made considerable contributions to this form, yet two names stand apart; they are Richard Steele and Joseph Addison. The essay as a new form evolved in the hands of Richard Steele in the periodical essay that he launched, ***The Tatler***, (1709-11). Steele then with the able collaboration of Joseph Addision launched ***The Spectator***(1711-12).

The Guardian: *The Guardian* was another venture that Steele started with Addison's contributions. These productions were called periodicals because the appeared at regular intervals. ***The Tatler*** appeared three times a week. This journal was brought out with the objective of presenting stories of gallantry and entertainment along with both local and international news

items. Gradually, it suggested views on decorum and taste. Through the essays in *The Tatler*, an attempt was made to set parameters to determine good sense. It was successful in influencing people to form opinion on the burning issues of those times. *The Tatler* was launched by Steele and Addison had joined as a contributor later on.

The Spectator followed the *The Tatler*. ***The Spectator*** was also launched by Richard Steele in collaboration with Joseph Addison. An important feature of *The Spectator* was the fictitious club named '**The Spectator Club**'. Much of the narrative of the journal was designed and organized through 'The Spectator Club'. The characters of this club were imaginary representations of various sections of the contemporary society like men of commerce, the army men, the town dwellers and the country folk. These characters were placed in different situations and discussions were created on selected topics. This new mode of presenting views through the characters of a club was a new idea and many believe that it had inspired many future novelists. The essays published in *The Spectator* were sometimes grave and serious and at other times they were witty.

The Novel: The novel evolved as a major literary form in the hands of the eighteenth century novelists. Daniel Defoe's ***Robinson Crusoe*** is considered as the first instance of the proper English novel though beginnings of the English novel were traced in earlier experiments in fictional narratives and travelogues. His novels ***Robinson Crusoe*** and ***Moll Flanders*** were in the form of narratives that focused on the protagonist's movement and fortunes. Defoe's next work ***Roxana*** is more sophisticated than his earlier works but they follow the same plot movement. Daniel Defoe's other works are ***Colonel Jack***, ***The Memoirs of a Cavalier***, ***Captain Singleton*** to name a few.

Samuel Richardson is another major novelist of the eighteenth century. Richardson tried to inculcate morality in society through the medium of his novels. His first novel ***Pamella*** was a huge success. In his novels like ***Pamella*** and ***Clarissa Harlowe*** he tried to reveal the feminine heart. Richardson's other major novels are ***Clarissa or The Adventures of a Young Lady*** and ***Sir Charles Grandison***. Jonathan Swift is a major novelist

of the eighteenth century whose satirical writings provided a different view. Swift's most famous work ***Gulliver's Travels*** is often read as children's tales but at a deeper level they were designed to represent the corruption of man. It is a satirical work and Swift weaves the social and political issues of the times in the tales. Another major work of Swift is ***Tale of a Tub*** was also a criticism of English culture and society of his times.

Henry Fielding was the next important novelist who shaped his novels in the form of sentimental romances. Through his novels like ***The Adventures of Joseph Andrews***, ***Tom Jones***, ***Amelia*** and ***Jonathan Wild the Great***, he tried to present a realistic picture of the contemporary society. ***A Journey from this World to the Next*** and ***Voyage to Lisbon*** are his other important works.

Tobias Smollett in his novels presented not only a sarcastic picture of life but also a wild and boisterous one. He loved to present the sea life through his novels. Smollett's major works are ***The Adventures of Roderick Random***, ***Peregrine Pickle*** and ***Humphry Clinker***. Laurence Sterne had produced two major works in his career as a novelist but his works are a landmark in their own way as they introduced the impressionistic method of storytelling. As such his novels do not follow a regular pattern of plot development. His novels are ***Tristram Shandy*** and ***A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy***.

8.4 THE AGE OF PROSE

The Eighteenth century is known as the **age of prose** too. Regarding the development of prose in the neoclassical age**,** Dante remarks that it is 'a development which astonishes us by its rapidity and excellence.' The popularity and growth of prose during this age is accounted by many reasons. Right from the days of the Enlightenment and the Renaissance, the awareness about the need for education was seen in the English society. During this phase there was a spurt of scientific writings. Astronomy, physics, mathematics, chemistry and the medical sciences had seen many pioneering works. As a result the eighteenth century England saw a rapid

spread of education among the common masses. There was a substantial increase in the number of reading public. This accounted for a wide appeal and popularity for the periodical literature which was written in the prose form. The scientific writings and the periodicals and journals required a form of writing which could express their ideas and arguments with clarity and the prose form was the best medium. Thus, the Neoclassical age saw the emergence of the periodicals, journals and newspapers, leading to the growth of the conversational prose style.

There were certain socio-political aspects that resulted in the development of the prose style in the eighteenth century. After the Glorious Revolution of 1688 in England, constitutional monarchy and Parliamentary democracy was established and the power and influence shifted into the hands of the politicians which were till then exercised by the king and the courtiers. The two political parties, the Whig and the Tory were always at loggerheads. These parties used the literary abilities of many important personalities placed at high positions in the state to advance their cause. These litterateurs were kept in good humour by the politicians and in return they created satires in pamphlets to ridicule their opponents. There was a rapid growth in satirical writings and along with poetry, prose emerged as a strong medium of expression.



LET US KNOW

Horatian and Juvenalian Satire : Satire has been broadly divided by critics into formal or direct satire and **indirect** satire. In formal satire the "satiric *persona*" speaks in the first person. Formal satire **is further divided into two types Horatian and Juvenalian satires.**

Horatian satire derives its name from the great Roman satirist Horace. The speaker in Horatian satire is presented as an urbane character who is witty and tolerant man of the world who gets amused at the spectacle of "human folly, pretentiousness, and hypocrisy." The language used in Horatian satire is relaxed and informal. Horatian satires aim at evoking a wry smile from the readers at human failings and absurdities. Alexander Pope wrote all his satires in the Horatian form.

Juvenalian satire derives its name from the great Roman satirist Juvenal. The speaker in Juvenalian satire is a character who is a serious moralist. This moralist speaker uses a dignified and public style to speak to the readers about the "modes of vice and error" by presenting them as ridiculous. Juvenalian satires aim at evoking contempt, moral indignation, and sadness in the readers. Samuel Johnson's "London" and "The Vanity of Human Wishes" are examples of Juvenalian satire.

8.5 IMPORTANT WRITERS

Poets: Some of the major poets of the neoclassical age are namely John Dryden, Alexander Pope, Samuel Johnson and James Thomson.

Prose Writers and Novelists: Some of the major writers of the age are namely Daniel Defoe, Jonathan Swift, Richard Steele, Joseph Addison, Dr Samuel Johnson, Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding, Tobias Smollett, Laurence Sterne, Oliver Goldsmith, Horace Walpole.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1. State whether True or False:

a. Alexander Pope followed the Horatian form of satire.

b. There were very few people among the common masses who could read in the Neoclassical age.

c. The Tatler and *The Spectator* were periodical essays.

Q2. Fill in the blanks:

a. The two political parties of eighteenth century England were the ……and the ……..

b. The ……..couplet was best suited to enhance the satiric element of the mock-heroic poem.

c. The novel ***Robinson Crusoe*** was written by ……..

d. The Spectator Club was a ……club.

Q3. How did prose emerge as a strong medium of expression in the eighteenth century?



8.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have learned about the major literary forms of the Neoclassical age. The Neoclassical age was known for the satirical forms of writing. You have learnt about the most famous writers of satire and their works. These writers laid much importance on form and used a characteristic diction popularly known as the neo-poetic diction. The unit gives you an idea on why this age is known as the age of prose and how prose became a major form of literature. The important forms of prose writings like the periodical essays are discussed in this unit. You know about the major contributors in this field and their works. You now know that the novel had gained popularity as a major literary form in this age. This unit gives you an idea of the important novel writers of this age and their major works.



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4) Website: http:// en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neoclassicism.

5) Website: faculty.winthrop.edu/kosterj/engl201/neoclassicism.htm

8.8 ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answer to Q1: a. True. b. False. c. True.

Answer to Q2: a. Whig Tory b. Heroic c. Daniel Defoe. d. fictitious

Answer to Q3: There were certain socio-political aspects that resulted in the development of the prose style in the eighteenth century. After the Glorious Revolution of 1688 in England, constitutional monarchy and Parliamentary democracy was established and the power and influence shifted into the hands of the politicians which were till then exercised by the king and the courtiers. The two political parties, the Whig and the Tory were always at loggerheads. These parties used the literary abilities of many important personalities placed at high positions in the state to advance their cause. These litterateurs were kept in good humour by the politicians and in return they created satires in pamphlets to ridicule their opponents. There was a rapid growth in satirical writings and along with poetry, the literary genre of prose and prose-writing emerged as a strong medium of expression.



8.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q1. Discuss about the major literary forms of the Neoclassical age.

Q2. What was the diction that the Eighteenth century poets used for their satiric writings called?

Q3. Why are the mock-epic or the mock-heroic poems so called?

Q4. Analyze the reasons for the growth of prose as a major literary form in the Neoclassical age.

Q5. Write a note on the periodical essays.

Q6. Discuss about the novel in the eighteenth century and the major novelists and their works.

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