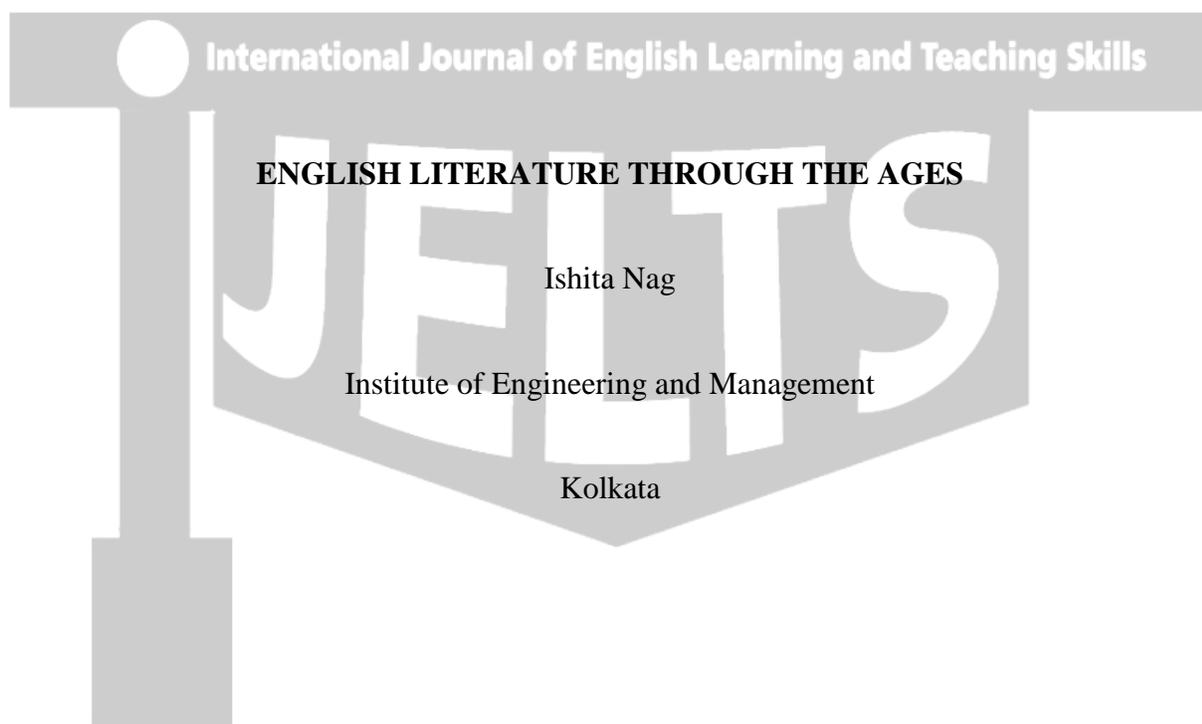


Running Head: ENGLISH LITERATURE THROUGH THE AGES

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ABSTRACT

This review paper deals with the development of the English language through time starting with the Old English literature (450-1066), Middle English Literature (1066-1500), English Renaissance (1500-1660), the Restoration Age (1660-1700), the 18th century, Romanticism (1798-1837), Victorian literature (1837-1901), and the 20th century.

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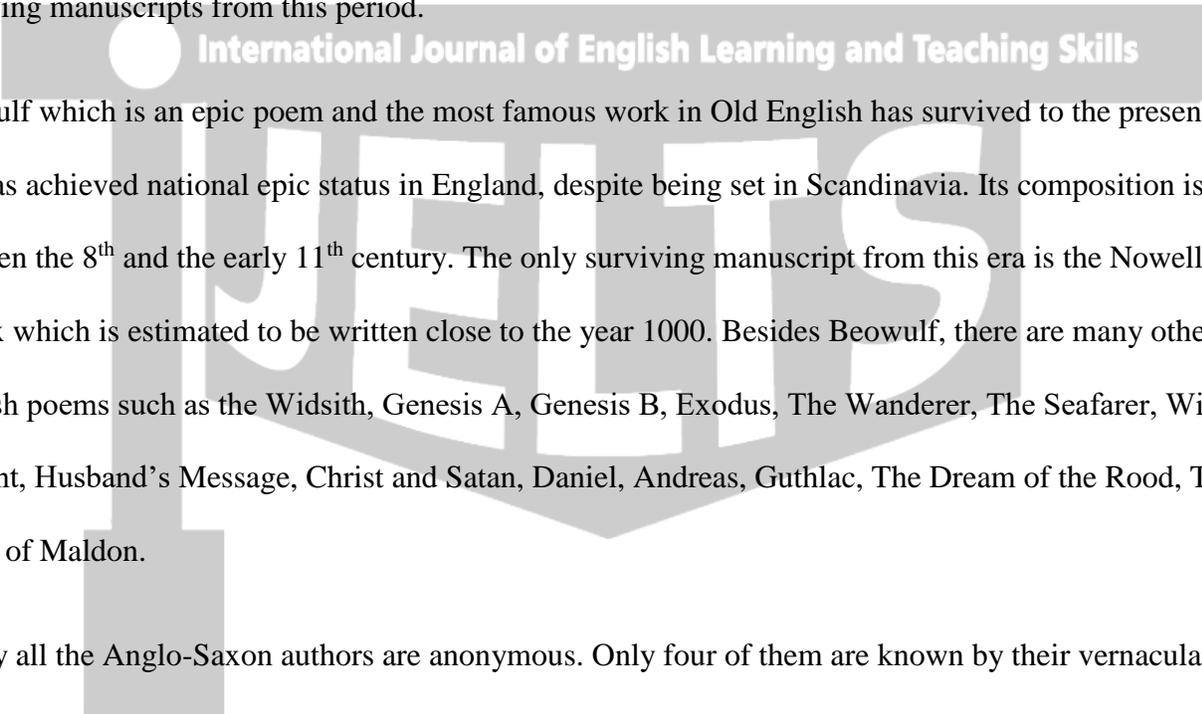
INTRODUCTION

The English language has developed over a course of more than 1400 years. The earliest forms of English were a set of Anglo-Frisian dialects which went through an enormous change over the course of years. In the middle ages, the Old English Literature was combined with Latin and Anglo-Norman writings flourished during this time. From this combination emerged a flexible and subtle linguistic instrument exploited by Geoffrey Chaucer and brought to supreme application by William Shakespeare.

The English language spread throughout the world with the development of the British Empire between the late 16th and early 18th centuries. At its height, it was the largest empire in history. Due to these imperial activities, by 1913, the British Empire held sway over 412 million people, 23% of the world population at the time. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries these colonies and the USA started to produce their own significant literary traditions in English.

OLD ENGLISH LITERATURE (450-1066)

The earliest form of literature or the Anglo-Saxon literature descends from the language spoken by the two Germanic tribes: the Angles and the Saxons after their settlement in England circa 450. Until the 7th century, oral tradition was very popular in the English culture. These works include genres like epic poetry, hagiography, sermons, Bible translations, legal works, chronicles and riddles. There are about 400 surviving manuscripts from this period.



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Beowulf which is an epic poem and the most famous work in Old English has survived to the present day and has achieved national epic status in England, despite being set in Scandinavia. Its composition is dated between the 8th and the early 11th century. The only surviving manuscript from this era is the Nowell Codex which is estimated to be written close to the year 1000. Besides Beowulf, there are many other Old English poems such as the Widsith, Genesis A, Genesis B, Exodus, The Wanderer, The Seafarer, Wife's Lament, Husband's Message, Christ and Satan, Daniel, Andreas, Guthlac, The Dream of the Rood, The Battle of Maldon.

Nearly all the Anglo-Saxon authors are anonymous. Only four of them are known by their vernacular works with any certainty: Caedmon, Bede, Alfred the Great and Cynewulf, Aelfric. Caedmon, the earliest English poet whose name is known is famous for his Caedmon's Hymn and it probably dates from the late 7th century. This poem is one of the earliest attested examples of Old English and is, with runic Ruthwell Cross and Franks Casket inscriptions, one of three candidates for the earliest attested example of Old English poetry. Cynewulf wrote religious poems and the four poems: Juliana, The Fates of the Apostles, Christ and Elene are always credited with him. Alfred enriched Old English prose with his translations especially Bede's Ecclesiastical History. Aelfric, another important prose writer is famous for

This era came to an end in 1066 with the introduction of French vocabulary following the conquest of England by Norman France, under William.

MIDDLE ENGLISH LITERATURE (1066-1500)

After the Norman Conquest in 1066, French became the standard language of courts, parliament and polite society. Ideas and themes from both the French and Celtic literature appear in English writing at about this time and the Norman dialects of the ruling classes became Anglo-Norman and thus the Anglo-Saxon language underwent a gradual transition until the 12th century into Middle English. As with the Old English Literature, much of the Middle English writings were religious in nature and hagiographies were written, adapted and translated, for example: *The Life of Saint Audrey* and *Eadmer's* (c.1060- c.1126); however, from 1350 onwards, secular literature began to rise.

At the end of 12th century, Layamon in *Brut* adapted the Norman-French of Wace to produce the first English-language work to present the legends of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. Under the directions of John Wycliffe, Middle English Bible translations, Wycliffe's Bible helped to establish English as a literary language and these group of Bible translations appeared between 1382 and 1395.

Another literary genre, that of Romances, also appears in the 13th century, with *King Horn* and *Havelock the Dane*, but it was in the 14th century that the major writers in English first appeared. These were William Langland, Geoffrey Chaucer and the so-called Pearl Poet.

William Langland (born c. 1330- died c. 1400) was the author of *Piers Plowman* or *Visio Willelmi de Petro Plowman* is one the greatest examples of Middle English allegorical narrative poem, written in

alliterative verse. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is a late 14th-century Middle English alliterative romance. Preserved in the same manuscript with *Sir Gawain* were three other poems, now generally accepted as the work of the same author, including an intricate elegiac poem, *Pearl*. Where *Piers Plowman* is tough and gritty, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (dating from the same period) are more polished in its manner and courtlier in its content. The characters derive partly from Arthurian legend.

Poet Geoffrey Chaucer was born in the year 1340 and was a public servant to Countess Elizabeth of Ulster. His first major work was 'The Book of the Duchess', an elegy for the first wife of his patron John of Gaunt. His best known and most acclaimed work was 'The Canterbury Tales', written in 1387, in which a diverse group of people recount stories to pass the time on a pilgrimage to Canterbury. Other works include 'Parlement of Foules', 'The Legend of Good Women' and 'Troilus and Criseyde'. Chaucer introduced the iambic pentameter line, the rhyming couplet and other rhymes used in Italian poetry. He died in 1400 and was the first to be buried in Westminster Abbey's Poets' Corner.

Significant religious works were also created in the 14th century, including those of Julian of Norwich (*Revelations of Divine Love* (about 1393) is believed to be the first published book written by a woman in the English language) and Richard Rolle. A major work from the 15th century is *Le Morte d'Arthur* by Sir Thomas Malory, which was printed by Caxton in 1485.

Medieval theatre

In the Middle Ages, drama in the vernacular languages of Europe may have emerged from enactments of the liturgy.

- ❖ Mystery plays and miracle plays are among the earliest formally developed plays in medieval Europe and were stories taken from the Bible. These usually took place in porches of cathedrals or strolling players on feast days.
- ❖ Morality play is an allegorical drama popular in Europe especially during the 15th and 16th centuries, in which the characters personify moral attributes (such as charity or vice) or abstractions (as death or youth) and in which moral lessons are taught. The *Somonyng of Everyman* (*The Summoning of Everyman*) (c. 1509–1519), usually referred to simply as *Everyman*, is a late 15th-century English morality play.
- ❖ The mummings' plays, a form of early street theatre associated with the Morris dance, concentrating on themes such as Saint George and the Dragon and Robin Hood. These were folktales re-telling old stories, and the actors travelled from town to town performing these for their audiences in return for money and hospitality.
- ❖ Another kind of play, the Interlude was performed at court or at “great houses” by professional minstrels or amateurs at intervals between some other entertainment, such as a banquet, or preceding or following a play, or between acts.

ENGLISH RENAISSANCE (1500-1660)

The English Renaissance was a cultural and artistic movement in England dating from the late 15th to the 17th century. In a tradition of literature remarkable for its exacting and brilliant achievements, the Elizabethan and early Stuart periods have been said to represent the most brilliant century of all.

Modern lyric poetry in English begins in the early 16th century with the work of Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-1542) and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (1517-1547). Wyatt, one of the earliest English Renaissance poets, who is greatly influenced by the Italian, Francesco Petrarca (Petrarch) introduces the sonnet and a range of short lyrics to English, while Surrey (as he is known) develops unrhymed pentameters (or blank verse) thus inventing the verse form which will be of great use to contemporary dramatists.

This period is often subdivided into three parts, including the Elizabethan Period (1558-1603), the Jacobean Period (1603-1625) and the Late Renaissance (1625-1660).

❖ **Elizabethan Period**

- **Poetry-** One of the most important poets of the Elizabethan period is Edmund Spenser (1552-1599). His masterpiece, *The Faerie Queene* (1590-1596), an epic poem and fantastical allegory celebrates the Tudor Dynasty and Elizabeth-I. His poetic manifesto, *The Shepherds Calendar* (1579), covertly praised Archbishop Edmund Grindal, who had been suspended by Elizabeth for his Puritan sympathies. His other major works include *Amoretti*, *Epithalamion* and *Prothalamion*.

Sir Philip Sidney (1554–1586), another major poet of the Elizabethan period, is remembered for his prose romance *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* and his other works include *Astrophel and Stella* and *The Defence of Poetry*.

Some other poets of Elizabethan England are Michael Drayton, Sir Walter Raleigh and Sir Francis Bacon.

- **Drama-** Among the earliest Elizabethan plays are Gorboduc(1561), an English tragedy (written in blank verse), written by Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville. Thomas Kyd's The Spanish Tragedy, written between 1582 and 1592 is a Senecan play that was very influential in its time and had a lasting impression. Christopher Marlowe was another great dramatist of the Elizabethan period and his works include Edward –II, Tamburlaine the Great, The Jew of Malta, The Massacre of Paris, and Doctor Faustus.

William Shakespeare, the greatest literary figure in English was a poet and playwright and his writings are in a variety of genres. His career (dated from 1589 to 1613) corresponded exactly to the period of greatest literary flourishing, and only in his work are the total possibilities of the Renaissance fully realized. The different genres included histories (such as Richard II, Richard III, Henry IV and Henry V), the great tragedies (such as Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, and King Lear), the comedies (such as The Merchant of Venice, As you Like It, Twelfth Night, Midnight Summer's Dream, the somber plays (such as All's Well That Ends Well, Measure for Measure, Troilus and Cressida) and the Roman plays (such as Julius Caesar, Antony and Cleopatra and Coriolanus).

Other notable Elizabethan playwrights are Thomas Dekker, Thomas Middleton, Thomas Heywood, Francis Beaumont, John Fletcher etc.

❖ **Jacobean Period**

- **Prose-** Many attempts were carried out to translate the Bible into English. The most important prose work of the early 17th century was the King James Bible. This, one of the

most massive translation projects in the history of English up to this time, was started in 1604 and completed in 1611. This represents the culmination of a tradition of Bible translation into English that began with the work of John Wycliff and after his death William Tyndale tried on this project. Coverdale carried on the work of Tyndale. The Authorized Version of the Bible was published in 1611.

- **Poetry-** George Chapman (c. 1559 – c. 1634) is remembered chiefly for his famous translation in 1616 of Homer's Iliad and Odyssey into English verse. The translation had a profound influence on English literature and inspired John Keats's famous sonnet "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" (1816). Shakespeare popularized the English sonnet, which made significant changes to Petrarch's model. Besides Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, the major poets of the early 17th century included the Metaphysical poets: John Donne (1572–1631), George Herbert (1593–1633), Henry Vaughan, Andrew Marvell, and Richard Crashaw.
- **Drama-** In the early 17th century, Shakespeare wrote a number of his best known tragedies and turned romance to tragicomedy and completed three more major plays including The Tempest. Some of his other notable last plays are Cymbeline and The Winter's Tale. After Shakespeare's death, the poet and dramatist Ben Jonson (1572–1637) was the leading literary figure of the Jacobean era. Jonson's comedies include Volpone (1605 or 1606) and Bartholomew Fair (1614). His essays are compiled in The Timber or Discoveries. In the Jacobean period, John Webster (1578-1632) succeeded Thomas Kyd and popularized the revenge plays. He produced pieces of great literary merit such as The White Devil (1612) and The Duchess of Malfi (1613).

❖ Late Renaissance

The Metaphysical poets John Donne (1572–1631) and George Herbert (1593–1633) were still alive after 1625, and later in the 17th century a second generation of metaphysical poets were writing, including Richard Crashaw (1613–1649), Andrew Marvell (1621–1678), Thomas Traherne (1636 or 1637–1674) and Henry Vaughan (1622–1695). The Cavalier poets were another important group of 17th-century poets and some of the best known of the Cavalier poets are Robert Herrick, Richard Lovelace, Thomas Carew and Sir John Suckling. Cavalier works make use of allegory and classical allusions, and are influenced by Roman authors Horace, Cicero and Ovid.

Herrick's poems such as 'The Country Life' and 'The Hock's Cart' gained retrospective poignancy by their implied contrast with the disruptions of the Civil Wars. Among his best known shorter poems are To Althea, To Julia, and Cherry Ripe. Richard Lovelace's *Lucasta* contains the best of his shorter pieces. Sir John Suckling's poems were generous and witty and his most famous poem was *Ballad Upon a Wedding*.

John Milton (1608–1674) "was the last great poet of the English Renaissance" and published a number of works before 1660, including *A L'Allegro* (the happy man), 1631; *Il Penseroso* (the sad man), 1634; *Comus* (a masque), 1638; and *Lycidas* (pastoral elegy on his friend), 1638. Some of his early works include *On Shakespeare* and *On Arriving at the Age of Twenty-three*. However, he is remembered for his greatest epic poem *Paradise Lost* which was composed in blank verse and published in 1677.

RESTORATION AGE (1660-1700)

The Restoration of Charles II (1660) brought about a revolution in English literature as the censorship and radically moralist standards under Cromwell's Puritan regime was broken and it allowed a fresh start to all forms of literature. The Restoration encouraged levity in rules that often resulted in immoral and indecent plays. Violent political conflict may have ceased, but the division between royalists and republicans still ran through literature of the period.

❖ **Prose**

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The greatest philosopher of the period, John Locke, explicitly acknowledges Newton and some of his fellow “natural philosophers” in the opening of his *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690). During this time, he wrote many of his philosophical works such as the *Treatises on Government* which later inspired the thinker in American Revolution.

John Bunyan stands out beyond other religious authors of the period. He wrote *Grace Abounding* (1666), while he was imprisoned in the Bedford jail for non-conformity to the Church of England. His allegorical narrative, *The Pilgrim's Progress* was a more conventionally ordered account of the processes of redemption.

Aphra Behn, author of *Oroonoko* (1688), who was not only the first professional female novelist, but she may be among the first professional novelists of either sex in England was one of the significant figures in the rise of novel in the Restoration period.

As a prose writer, Dryden's work, *An Essay on Dramatic Poesy* is worth mentioning.

❖ Poetry

John Milton's works reflected deep personal convictions and his poem *Areopagitica* reflects this passion and is written in condemnation of pre-publication licensing and censorship and is among history's most influential and impassioned defenses of free speech and freedom of the press. So he was forced to retire and during this time, he authored his epic poem *Paradise Lost* (published in 1677, revised in 1674). *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* are other two major poems of Milton.

John Dryden (1631-1700), one of the greatest literary figures of the Restoration Age. Before the Restoration he supported Oliver Cromwell but then he adapted to the change and supported Charles II during the Restoration period. He wrote *Astrea Redux* (1660) to celebrate Charles II's return. He is still remembered for his greatest mock-heroic poem, *Mac Flecknoe* which was written in satiric verse. Some of his other famous poems include *Annus Mirabilis* (Miracle Year), his satirical allegory, *Absalom and Achitophel*, *Religio Laici* and *The Hind and The Panther*.

Alexander Pope who was heavily influenced by Dryden was an undisputed master of both prose and poetry.

❖ Drama

The most famous plays of the early Restoration period are the unsentimental or "hard" comedies of John Dryden, William Wycherley, and George Etherege, which reflect the atmosphere at Court, and celebrate an aristocratic macho lifestyle of unremitting sexual intrigue and conquest.

John Dryden's dramatic masterpiece *All for Love* (1677) was inspired from Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*. *Aurengzeb*, *The Rival Ladies*, *The Conquest of Granada*, *Don Sebastian* etc. are some of his famous tragic plays but his greatest achievement, *Amphitryon* (1690) is a comedy.

George Etherege who introduced the *Comedy of Manners* wrote some of his noteworthy plays such as *She Would If She Could*, *The Man of Mode* (1676) and *Love in a Tub*. William Congreve, the greatest of the Restoration comedy writers wrote *Love for Love*, *The Old Bachelor*, *The Way of The World* and *The Double Dealer*. Some of William Wycherley's notable plays are *Country Wife* (1675) and *Love in a Wood* and *The Plain Dealer* (1676). Sir John Vanbrugh's best three comedies are *The Provoked Wife* (1697), *The Relapse* (1696) and *The Confederacy*.

18th CENTURY

❖ **Augustan Literature (1700-1750)**

During the 18th century literature reflected the worldview of the Age of Enlightenment (or Age of Reason): a rational and scientific approach to religious, social, political, and economic issues that promoted a secular view of the world and a general sense of progress and perfectibility. Literary life in England flourished so impressively in the early years of the 18th century that contemporaries draw parallels with the heyday of Virgil, Horace and Ovid at the time of the emperor Augustus.

- **Prose, including the novel**

Sir Richard Steele worked along with Joseph Addison for many years. They worked on many periodicals together such as *The Tatler*, *The Spectator*, *The Guardian*, *The English Man* and *The Reader*.

Daniel Defoe came to sustained prose fiction late in a career of quite various, often disputatious writing. *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) was an immediate success and is considered to be his greatest work. His *A Journal of The Plague Year* deals with the plague in London in 1665. His novels *Moll Flanders* (1722) and *Roxana* (1724) depict fictional criminal lives. Jonathan Swift (1667-1745), one of the greatest satirists in English literature wrote a number of noteworthy books such as *The Battle of the Books*, *A Tale of a Tub* (1704) is a religious allegory, *The Drapier's Letters* (1724-1725), *A Modest Proposal* (1729). Although he had a wide-range of satiric works, *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) is his most famous work.

An effect of the Licensing Act of 1737 was to cause more than one aspiring playwright to switch over to writing novels. Some of the other noteworthy prose writers of this period were Henry Fielding (1707-1754), Samuel Richardson (1689-1761), Tobias Smollett (1721-1771), Dr. Samuel Johnson (1709-1784), Edward Gibbon, Edmund Burke etc.

- **Poetry**

During this time, James Thomson (1700-1748) produced his melancholy *The Seasons* (1728-1730) which describes the phenomena of nature and was written in blank verse. His

poem *The Castle of Indolence* (1748) is Spenserian, and its wryly developed allegory lauds the virtues of industriousness and mercantile achievement.

The most outstanding poet of the age Alexander Pope (1688-1744) published his mock-heroic poem *The Rape of The Lock* in 1712 and is considered to be one of the most brilliant poems in English language. His *An Essay on Criticism* (1711) combines ambition of argument with great stylistic assurance. The *Duncaid* written in 1743 is an attack on dullness. But the prime focus of his labours between 1713 and 1720 was his energetically sustained and scrupulous translation of Homer's *Iliad* (to be followed by the *Odyssey* in the mid-1720s). His *Iliad* secured his reputation and made him a considerable sum of money.

Edward Young (1681-1765) produced a large amount of literary work of variable quality such as *The Last Day*, *The Love of Fame*, and *The Force of Religion and the Night Thoughts* (1742).

Other notable poets of this era are Oliver Goldsmith, Robert Blair, Thomas Gray, William Blake, Robert Burns and so on.

- **Drama**

Drama in the early part of the period featured the last plays of John Vanbrugh and William Congreve, both of whom carried on the Restoration comedy with some alterations. George Lillo and Sir Richard Steele both produced highly moral forms of tragedy, where the characters and the concerns of the characters were wholly middle class or working class. Opera also began to be popular in London, and there was significant literary resistance to

this Italian incursion. The Licensing Act 1737 brought an abrupt halt to much of the period's drama, as the theatres were once again brought under state control.

❖ Age of Sensibility (1750-1798)

The Age of Sensibility is also known as the “Age of Johnson”. He made huge contributions to English literature. His finest poem was *The Vanity of Human Wishes* was written in 1749. After nine years of work, *A Dictionary of the English Language* was published in 1755. His *The Lives of the Poets* introduces fifty-two poets including Donne, Dryden, Pope, Milton and Gray.

The second half of the 18th century saw the emergence of three major Irish authors: Oliver Goldsmith (1728–1774), Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751–1816) and Laurence Sterne (1713–1768). Goldsmith is the author of the popular novel, *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), the poems *The Traveller* (1764), *The Deserted Village* (1770) and the incomplete *Retaliation* (1774) and two plays, *The Good-Natur'd Man* (1768) and *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773). He also wrote at least eight journals between 1759 and 1773 and his *Citizen of the World* was published in *The Public Ledger* in 1760-1761. Sheridan who went on to become the most significant London playwright of the late 18th century wrote his first play, *The Rivals* (1775) and was performed at Covent Garden and was an instant success and became famous with the play *The School for Scandal*. Both Goldsmith and Sheridan reacted against the sentimental comedy of the 18th-century theatre, writing plays closer to the style of Restoration comedy.

Laurence Sterne is now remembered for his masterpiece *Tristram Shandy* in 1760. Another important work of Sterne is *A Sentimental journey through France and Italy*. Frances Burney (1752-1840) was one of the most engaging and minor novelists of the period and was famous for her novels *Evelina* (1778) and *Camilla* (1796).

ROMANTICISM (1798-1837)

A movement in philosophy but especially in literature, romanticism is the revolt of the senses or passions against the intellect and of the individual against the consensus. This period brought about one of the major social changes in England and Wales and during this time the Agricultural Revolution and the Industrial Revolution took place due to the movement of so many people in England. The French Revolution was an especially important influence on the political thinking of many of the Romantic poets.

Robert Burns (1759-1796) was a pioneer of the Romantic Period.

❖ **Romantic Novel**

Sir Walter Alva Scott was a Romantic novelist and was responsible for some of the masterpieces of this period such as *Waverley* (1814), *Guy Mannering* (1815), *The Antiquary* (1816), *Old Mortality* (1816), *Rob Roy* (1817), and *The Heart of Midlothian* (1818).

Jane Austen (1775-1817) is one of the greatest novelists of this time. Three of her novels—*Sense and Sensibility* (first published in 1811; originally titled “*Elinor and Marianne*”), *Pride and Prejudice* (1813; originally “*First Impressions*”), and *Northanger Abbey* (published posthumously in 1817)—were drafted in the late 1790s. Three more novels—*Mansfield Park* (1814), *Emma* (1815), and *Persuasion* (1817, together with *Northanger Abbey*)—were written between 1811 and 1817.

Other great novelists of this era are Henry Mackenzie, Charles Lamb, Horace Walpole, Ann Radcliffe, Matthew Lewis and so on.

❖ Romantic Poetry

William Blake (1757-1827) who was one of the early Romantic poets was unrecognized during his lifetime but has become a seminal figure in the history of both poetry and visual arts of the Romantic Age. Some of his most important works are the satirical poem *An Island in the Moon* (written 1784-1785), *Songs of Innocence* (1789), *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790-1793) and *Songs of Experience* (1794).

After Blake, among the earliest Romantics were the Lake Poets, including William Wordsworth (1770–1850), Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834), Robert Southey (1774–1843) and journalist Thomas de Quincey (1785–1859). However, at the time Walter Scott (1771–1832) was the most famous poet.

William Wordsworth was a nature poet. His most famous works include *An Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches*, *The Prelude* (autobiographical epic) and some of the best lyrical poems of English language such as *The Solitary Reaper*, *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud*, *Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*, *Resolution and Independence* etc. Lines composed a *Few Miles above the Tintern Abbey* is one of the greatest poems of Wordsworth. He worked along with Samuel Taylor Coleridge in the *Lyrical Ballads*.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote four poems for the *Lyrical Ballads* from which *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is the most noteworthy. His other noteworthy poems include *Kubla Khan* (1797 or 1798, published 1816), *Dejection: An Ode* (1802), *Christabel*, *The Pains of Sleep* (published in 1816).

Robert Southey was closely associated with Wordsworth and Coleridge and was a “Poet Laureate” for over 30 years. Some of his noteworthy poems are the Oriental narrative poems *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1801) and *The Curse of Kehama* (1810), but his fame is based on his prose work- *Life of Nelson* (1813), *the History of the Peninsular War* (1823–32).

Thomas de Quincey, a journalist of this era was best known for his work in *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (1821).

Sonnets were reintroduced to the English Literature in 1784 when Charlotte Turner Smith (1749-1806) wrote *Elegiac Sonnets*. William Lisle Bowles wrote the *Fourteen Sonnets* in 1789.

Second Generation

The second generation of Romantic poets includes Lord Byron (1788–1824), Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822), Felicia Hemans (1793-1835) and John Keats (1795–1821).

Lord Byron’s *Don Juan* is considered to be one of his greatest satirical works. *The Vision of Judgment* is also a fine political satire written by him.

Shelley was a revolutionary figure of the Romantic Period. This is shown in his poems *Queen Mab* (1813), *Laon and Cythna* (renamed *The Revolt of Islam*, 1818). His other best known works are *Ode to the West Wind*, *To a Skylark*, *Adonais* (an elegy on the death of John Keats), *The Cloud* and *To Night*.

Mary Shelley (1797–1851) is remembered as the author of *Frankenstein* (1818).

Keats, another great Romantic poet wrote some excellent poems in his short period of life. *The Eve of St Agnes* is regarded as his finest narrative poem. Some of his great odes are *Ode to a Nightingale*, *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, *Ode to Psyche*, *Ode on Melancholy* and *Ode to Autumn*.

Felicia Hemans's best-remembered poem, "Casabianca" appeared in her volume *The Forest Sanctuary* (1825). This was followed in 1828 by the more substantial *Records of Woman*.

Some of the important poets of this era are John Clare (1793-1864), George Crabbe (1754-1832), Thomas Lovell Beddoes (1803-1849).

❖ Romantic Drama

This was a great era of English theatre, notable for the acting of John Philip Kemble, Sarah Siddons, and, from 1814, the brilliant Edmund Kean. But it was not a great period of playwriting.

Sentimental comedy remained the dominant mode during this era, persisting in the work of Richard Cumberland (*The West Indian*, 1771), Hannah Cowley (*The Belle's Stratagem*, 1780), Elizabeth Inchbald (*I'll Tell You What*, 1785), John O'Keeffe (*Wild Oats*, 1791), Frederic Reynolds (*The Dramatist*, 1789), George Colman the Younger (*John Bull*, 1803), and Thomas Morton (*Speed the Plough*, 1800).

❖ Romanticism in America

The European Romantic movement reached America in the early 19th century. Romantic Gothic literature made an early appearance with Washington Irving's *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (1820) and *Rip Van Winkle* (1819). From 1823 the prolific and popular novelist James Fenimore Cooper (1789–1851) began publishing his historical romances of frontier and Indian life.

However, Edgar Allan Poe's tales of the macabre that first appeared in the early 1830s, and his poetry were more influential in France than at home.

VICTORIAN LITERATURE (1837-1901)

Several major figures of English Romanticism lived on into this period. Wordsworth succeeded Southey as poet laureate in 1843 and held the post until his own death seven years later. This era is seen as the age of novels as more than 60,000 novels were published in this time by more than 7000 British novelists.

❖ **The Victorian Novel**

Charles Dickens (1812-1870) began his career in 1833, originally writing tales and descriptive essays for newspapers which were collected as the Sketches by "Boz" (1836). He wrote *The Pickwick Papers* (1836-37) which is one of the funniest novels in English Literature. One of his masterpieces, *David Copperfield* (1849-50) uses the form of a fictional autobiography. Some of his other noteworthy writings are *Bleak House* (1852-53), *Hard Times* (1854), *Little Dorrit* (1855-57), *Great Expectations* (1860-61), *Our Mutual Friend* (1864-65) and his final book was *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (published posthumously in 1870).

William Makepeace Thackeray is chiefly remembered for his masterpiece *Vanity Fair* (1847-48) but *The Rose and the Ring*, *Rebecca and Rowena* and *The Four Georges* are also his works.

Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-1865) began her career as one of "Condition of England" novelists of the 1840s and her novels *Mary Barton* (1848), *Ruth* (1853) and *North and South* (1854-55) deal with social problems. Although her later work like *Sylvia's Lovers* (1863), *Wives and Daughters* (1864-66) and *Cousin Phyllis* (1864) deal with psychological complexity.

Benjamin Disraeli wrote a trilogy of novels- *Coningsby* (1844), *Sybil* (1845) and *Tancred* (1847).

The Bronte sisters grew up in Yorkshire and published many of the poems in their first pseudonymous publication, *Poems by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell* (1846). Later Anne Bronte

wrote Agnes Grey (1847) and The Tenant of Wildfell Hall (1848). Charlotte Bronte's most famous work was Jane Eyre (1847), she also wrote Shirley in 1845 and Villette in 1853 which has distinctive Gothic elements. Emily Bronte's only novel, Wuthering Heights (1847) had an extravagant Gothic theme and was a huge success.

Carlyle who was said to have initiated Victorian literature with Sartor Resartus also wrote On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History (1841). John Ruskin who was an art critic wrote about the social and economic problems in Unto This Last (1860), The Crown of Wild Olive (1866), and Fors Clavigera (1871-84). John Henry Newman wrote many of the tracts, published as The Tracts for the Times (1833-41) and this prompted the Oxford Movement.

George Meredith (1828-1909) who was a major novelist of the 1870s was best remembered for his greatest fiction works in The Ordeal of Richard Feverel (1859) and The Egoist (1879). Thomas Hardy's (1849-1928) The Mayor of Casterbridge (1886) and Tess of d'Urbervilles (1891) dealt with the changing social and political scenario.

Robert Louis Stevenson was an important Scottish writer at the end of the nineteenth century and was the author of Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886), Kidnapped (1886). He also wrote Treasure Island (1883), a classic pirate adventure.

Jules Verne (1828-1905) was a major figure in the development of the science fiction genre. H.G. Wells (1866-1946) wrote some science fiction novels in the 1890s such as The Time Machine (1895), and The War of the Worlds (1898).

Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland (1865) and its sequel Through the Looking-glass were developed as a part of a separate genre, children's literature.

Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes is a brilliant London-based "consulting detective", famous for his intellectual prowess. Conan Doyle wrote four novels and 56 short stories featuring Holmes, which were published between 1887 and 1927.

American novelists

The major American novelists of this time include Nathaniel Hawthorne, Mark Twain, William Dean Howells, Samuel, Longhorne Clemens and Henry James.

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❖ **The Victorian Poetry**

Despite the growing prestige and proliferation of fiction, this age of novel was also in fact an age of great poetry.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892) was the poet laureate of the United Kingdom during most of Queen Victoria's reign. Tennyson made his mark very early with *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* (1830) and *Poems* (1832; dated 1833) publications. His volume of *Poems* contains notable poems like *The Lady of Shalott*, *The Lotos-Eaters*, *Ulysses*, *Morte d' Arthur*.

Robert Browning (1812-1889) found his individual and distinctively modern voice in 1842, with the volume *Dramatic Lyrics*. He is popularly known for his shorter poems, such as *Porphyria's Lover*, *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*. *Fra Lippo Lippi Andrea Del Sarto* and *My Last Duchess* are famous dramatic monologues. Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861) is chiefly remembered for her excellent love poems in her volume *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (1850). Her *Poems* (1844) established her as a leading poet of this age.

Matthew Arnold's (1822-1888) first volume of verse, *The Strayed Reveller, and Other Poems* (1849), combined lyric grace with an acute dark sense of the period. His greatest work, *Switzerland, Dover Beach, The Scholar-Gipsy* always had an elegiac tone.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882) was an English poet, illustrator, painter, translator in late nineteenth century England. He founded the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in 1848 with William Holman Hunt and John Everett Millais.

Other minor poets of this era include Arthur Clough, George Meredith, A.C. Swinburne, W.S.

Gilbert, and Thomas Hardy. Towards the end of the 19th century, English poets began to take an interest in French Symbolism and Victorian poetry entered a decadent fin-de-siècle phase. Two groups of poets emerged in the 1890s, the Yellow Book poets who adhered to the tenets of Aestheticism, including Algernon Charles Swinburne, Oscar Wilde and Arthur Symons and the Rhymers' Club group, that included Ernest Dowson, Lionel Johnson and Irishman William Butler Yeats.

American Poetry

The major American poets of the nineteenth century were Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) and Walt Whitman (1819-1892) whose major work was *The Leaves of Grass*.

❖ Victorian Drama

In the early Victorian era, drama was a popular art form appealing to an uneducated audience that demanded emotional excitement rather than the intellectual subtlety that was present in the productions of Shakespeare's plays and serious drama by dramatists like James Planche and

Thomas William Robertson. The mid-century saw lively comedies by Dion Boucicault and Tom Taylor. The 1890s were, however, the outstanding decade of dramatic innovation. Oscar Wilde crowned his brief career as a playwright with a comic masterpiece, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895).

The first play to achieve 500 consecutive performances was the London comedy *Our Boys*, opening in 1875. Its record of 1,362 performances was bested in 1892 by *Charley's Aunt*.

20th CENTURY

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❖ **Modernism (1901-1939)**

The 20th century opened with great hope but also with some apprehension, for the new century marked the final approach to a new millennium.

Some of the classic novelists of this era include H.G Wells, Joseph Conrad, Ford Madox Ford, Rudyard Kipling, Henry James, Dorothy Richardson, and D.H. Lawrence.

The greatest figure in the poetry of the early part of the Twentieth century was the Irish poet William Butler Yeats. Some of the other notable poets of this era include Thomas Hardy, Alfred Noyes, Ralph Hodgson, John Masefield, W.H. Davies, Walter de la Mare including the war poets such as Wilfred Owen (1893–1918), Rupert Brooke (1887–1915), Isaac Rosenberg (1890–1917), and Siegfried Sassoon (1886–1967).

The noteworthy dramatists of this era include James Barrie, George Bernard Shaw, John Galsworthy, Tom Stoppard, George Bernard Shaw, Samuel Beckett, Frank McGuinness, Harold Pinter, and Caryl Churchill.

The themes and subject matter tended to be rural or pastoral in nature, treated delicately and traditionally rather than with passion or with experimentation.

❖ **PostModernism (1940-2000)**

Postmodern literature is both a continuation of the experimentation championed by writers of the modernist period (relying heavily, for example, on fragmentation, paradox, questionable narrators, etc.) and a reaction against Enlightenment ideas implicit in Modernist literature.

Some of the great novelists of this era include Malcolm Lowry, George Orwell, Anthony Powell, Nobel Prize laureate William Golding, Muriel Spark, John Banville, Colm Toibin, Martin Amis, Pat Barker, Ian McEwan, Julian Barnes and so on.

The major poets include T.S. Eliot, W.H. Auden, Dylan Thomas, Philip Larkin, Ted Hughes, Seamus Heaney, Christopher Reid, Charles Tomlinson, Geoffrey Hill and Carol Ann Duffy.

This era saw an important cultural movement in the British theatre and some of the important playwrights include Terrance Rattigan, Noel Coward, John Osborne, Samuel Beckett, Dylan Thomas and Angela Carter.

CONCLUSION

As the 21st century got underway, history remained the outstanding concern of English literature.

Although English literature has undergone a drastic change, the future generations will witness many more changes in the literature.

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