
BLOCK-1 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

OBJECTIVES

The prime objective of the following Block is to brief the students and enhance their knowledge on 17th and 18th Century Literature. A lot of Political, Historical, Social and Economic changes have taken place during these two major centuries. It won't be wrong if we say that these two centuries were responsible in offering a myriad of Literary Gems to the world, be it Edmund Spenser or Ben Jonson or William Shakespeare. A lot of renowned literary movements have also taken in between these two centuries. The Learners are also going to get an insight on the Art and Literature, Styles and Evolvement of each of the centuries. There is always a backdrop that acts as a catalyst to the plays, poems and narrations written by the then writers of the 17th and 18th centuries.

INTRODUCTION

The Restoration refers to the restoration of the monarchy when Charles II was restored to the throne of England following an eleven-year Commonwealth period during which the country was governed by Parliament under the direction of the Puritan General Oliver Cromwell. This political event coincides with (and to some extent is responsible for) changes in the literary, scientific, and cultural life of Britain.

During this time, a premium was placed on the importance of human reason and on an empirical philosophy that held that knowledge about the world was through the senses and by applying reason to what we take in through our senses. Reason was an unchanging, uniquely human characteristic that served as a guide for man. Thus this time is often also called the Age of Reason or Enlightenment. Characteristics of this period included observing human nature and nature itself which were considered unchanging and constant.

The age is also known as the Neoclassical period. Writers of the time placed great emphasis on the original writings produced by classical Greek and Roman literature. The literature of this period imitated that of the age of Caesar Augustus, writers such as Horace and Virgil, with classical influences appearing prevalent in poetry with the use of rhyming, and in prose with its satirical form. The Augustans deemed classical literature as natural, that these works were the idealized models for writing. The Neoclassical "ideals of order, logic, restraint, accuracy, 'correctness,' decorum, . . . would enable the practitioners of various arts to imitate or reproduce the structures or themes of Greek or Roman originals" (Victorian Web). Alexander Pope furthers this idea as he says "Learn hence for ancient rules a just esteem; to copy Nature is to copy them" (Essay on Criticism). The way to study nature is to study the ancients; the styles and rules of classical literature. Closely allied with the emphasis placed on the classics and the unchanging rules of nature was the belief that reason was an unchanging and unique human quality that served as a guide for man.

UNIT-1 AN INTRODUCTION TO THE AGE OF RESTORATION

Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Language during Restoration
- 1.3 Restoration Drama and Novels
 - 1.3.1 The Drama
 - 1.3.2 The Novel
- 1.4 Restoration Diarists
- 1.5 The Augustans and the Age of Reason
- 1.6 Let us Sum up

1.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- Know about the period of Restoration, its evolution and its history
- Learn about a few famous Restoration Novelists, Dramatists and Diarists.
- Get a keen idea on the 'Age of Reasoning'.
- Know about a few major incidents that took place during this time and changed the face of the country.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

After the death of Oliver Cromwell, his son Richard Cromwell attempted to assume his father's leadership position but soon proved unequal to the task. Negotiations began between the English Parliament and the son of the executed King Charles I. In 1660 the monarchy was restored, and Charles II became king. Having escaped to France following his father's execution, Charles II had found refuge in the court of France, and when he returned to England brought with him a love of an extravagant, frivolous lifestyle that many, accustomed to the Puritan era, found offensive. Others delighted in the less repressive behaviours the new king encouraged.

Only five years after the Restoration, the reestablishment of the monarch in England after the Puritan Revolution, England suffered an outbreak of plague. Modern estimates suggest that around 100,000 people died in London alone. Then in 1666, the Great Fire of London devastated the city, destroying over 13,000 houses, significant structures such as St. Paul's Cathedral and the Royal Exchange, many warehouses full of goods, and businesses. The BBC

History site allows viewers to see the same two engravings side by side in order to compare the before and after scenes in its “Great Fire of London Skyline Animation.” Luminarium reproduces a painting of London on fire, an engraving of St. Paul’s burning, and a map of the fire’s progress. Some considered these two tragedies acts of God, punishment, according to some, for destroying God’s established order, the Great Chain of Being, by executing the divinely appointed King Charles I. According to others, the punishment was for abandoning the Puritan government and returning a licentious king to power. Almost immediately suspicion of setting the fire fell upon the Roman Catholics. With memories of the Gunpowder Plot and the religious persecution present since the time of Henry VIII and the Reformation, many Protestants were quick to accuse Catholics of a plot to destroy London.

Upon the death of Charles II, his brother James succeeded as King James II. Because James had earlier publicly converted to Roman Catholicism, the religious turmoil of the preceding century was renewed. As a result, Parliament forced James II to abdicate the throne and offered the crown to his daughter Mary and her husband, William of Orange. Her uncle King Charles II had arranged Mary’s marriage to William of Orange, whose mother was a sister of Charles II and James II and who was a staunch Protestant. In what was known as the Glorious Revolution, a peaceful revolution, William and Mary replaced James II on the throne and ensured the dominance of the Protestant religion in England. William and Mary also agreed to a stronger role for Parliament in the governing of Great Britain. The age of the absolute monarch had ended.

In literature, the Enlightenment appears as neoclassicism, which literally means new classicism and emphasizes order, symmetry, elegance, and structure in the arts, including literature. As apparent in the term neoclassicism, neoclassical writers, artists, and architects looked back to ancient Greece and Rome for classical forms featuring symmetry and geometrical precision in everything from poems to buildings.

1.2 LANGUAGE DURING RESTORATION

The Restoration and 18th century was a time of standardization of the English language. During the Elizabethan Age, Shakespeare created new words and new expressions, and spelling was erratic. During the early 17th century, the metaphysical poets created elaborate, unusual metaphors. In the 18th century, writers favoured a more common sense, prescriptive approach to language. Dr. Samuel Johnson created one of the early and most influential English dictionaries. One of the goals of Johnson’s dictionary was to help create rules of grammar, usage, and spelling previously lacking in the English language, an idea in line with the preference for structure that characterized neoclassicism and with the scientific approach to all subjects typical of the Age of Reason. Although the feudal system had long ago faded into the past, British society of the 18th century maintained a strict social class system reflected in the language.

1.3 RESTORATION DRAMA AND NOVELS

1.3.1 The Drama

With the Restoration of the monarchy came the restoration of the theatre. After being shuttered during the Puritans' rule, theatres opened almost immediately. Charles II hired companies of actors to provide court entertainment, as his grandfather James I had been patron of Shakespeare's troop The King's Men. Plays from the Elizabethan Age were revived and new dramatists emerged although none produced work of the high calibre of Shakespeare's age. Among the new generation of playwrights were several women, most notably Aphra Behn. Another innovation in 18th-century theatre was that women were allowed on stage.

During the 18th century, the comedy of manners, a play which presents aristocratic characters, exaggerating their obsession with high society manners, social position, fashion, and wealth, flourished. These plays are noted for their witty dialogue and satiric manner. The plots generally involve amorous, usually scandalous, affairs and the characters' amoral reactions to them. Familiar stock characters were the fop or dandy, a vain young man obsessed with fashion, and the rake, a young man devoted to wine, women, and scandalous conduct. Richard Sheridan's "The Rivals" and "The School for Scandal" and Oliver Goldsmith's "She Stoops to Conquer" were among the more popular comedies of manners.

1.3.2 The Novel

The 18th century gave birth to the novel, an extended fictional prose narrative, as a form of literature. Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moll Flanders* are considered the first novels. Defoe's works were followed by Samuel Richardson's epistolary novel (a novel written in the form of a series of letters) *Pamela*, and Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*. The novel continued to develop into a major literary form of the 19th century.

1.4 RESTORATION DIARISTS

Just as many people in the 21st century record the details of their daily lives on Facebook or Twitter, people in the 18th century recorded their lives in diaries, works which now provide information and insight into the events of that time period. Some of the more well-known diarists were Samuel Pepys, John Evelyn, Daniel DeFoe, and Celia Fiennes.

Pepys provides detailed descriptions of London during the plague and the fire as well as daily life in the Restoration era.

Covering a much longer period of time, John Evelyn writes a more formal diary from the perspective of a conservative supporter of the monarchy and of the Church of England.

Although actually a fictional account of the plague, Daniel Defoe's *Year* parallels Pepys's accounts of the plague while giving even more detail. Defoe's *A Tour Thsarough the Whole*

Island of Great Britain describes several journeys Defoe made early in his life, providing a comprehensive picture of pre-Industrial Revolution England.

In a similar fashion but a much more daring endeavour, Celia Fiennes, the daughter and granddaughter of Puritan supporters, wrote what is perhaps the most unusual and interesting of the 18th century diaries. Not published until 1888, her journals document trips she made through every county in England as well as into parts of Scotland and Wales. Riding side saddle, Fiennes travelled most of the time with only one or two servants as companions. For a woman to travel without a father or husband as escort was extraordinary in this time period and dangerous as well. Fiennes records encounters with highwaymen and falls from her horse as she forded rivers and travelled England's rough roads. Ostensibly traveling for her health, Fiennes observed local industries and described the landscape, both natural and manmade. Her family's Puritan views are apparent in her comments about the churches, clergymen, and local religious conventions.

(<https://2012books.lardbucket.org> › books › british-literature-through-history)

1.5 THE AUGUSTANS AND THE AGE OF REASON

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CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

a) What happened after the death of Oliver Cromwell?

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b) When did England suffer an outbreak of Plague? What happened after that?

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c) Mention the names of a few novelists, diarists and dramatists of the Restoration period.

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d) Write a few lines about Alexander Pope.

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1.6 LET US SUM UP

The following unit shall help you to know about the history of the period of Restoration. You may also get acquainted with a few famous novelists, dramatists and diarists that ruled this era. This era stood as the era of standardization of English Language. There were also a few devastating incidents that took place during this period simultaneously like the outbreak of plague and the Great Fire of London also became one of the most mournful incidents during the Restoration era. This period also marked the presence of women writers actually evolved, in fact this age was famous because this was the time when ‘women were allowed on the stage’.

UNIT 2 NEOCLASSICISM AND ITS ASPECTS

Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
 - 2.1.1 History of Neoclassical Criticism
 - 2.1.2 Major Exponents of Neoclassical Criticism
- 2.2 John Dryden (1631–1700)
- 2.3 Alexander Pope (1688–1744)
- 2.4 Aphra Behn (1640–1689)
- 2.5 Samuel Johnson (1709–1784)
- 2.6 Heroic Poetry
- 2.7 Let us Sum Up

2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- Analyse the history of Neoclassical age and its history.
- Know about the famous writers who made their prominent places in the Neoclassical age.
- Analyse the major exponents of that age.
- Get acquainted with Neoclassical criticism.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

2.1.1 History of Neoclassical Criticism

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

invention and creativity in literature to the rational and rule bound nature of literature. Whereas the Renaissance scholars were promoting new and mixed genres, the neo-classicists were more interested in separating poetry from prose, maintaining the purity of each genre. The root of Neoclassical literary criticism can be traced in France from where it diffused to England and other. The works of the Italian Aristotelian scholars Castelvetro and Scaliger, after being introduced to the French scholars by Jean Chapelain, developed a new interest in classical studies in France. King Louis XIV, during this time, was an enthusiast for poetry and drama. The socio-political conditions were relatively more peaceful and prosperous than that during period of religious wars in the 16th century. French Academy was established in 1635 with a chief intention, among many others, to standardize language through the development of a dictionary and grammar. The Academy also started to work on rhetoric and poetics. Such an environment resulted in the birth of literary figures like Corneille, Racine, Molière, and La Fontaine, who are representatives of French Neoclassicism. Neoclassicism dominated the field of English literature from the Restoration in 1660 until the end of the 18th century, or more specifically, till the publication of Lyrical Ballads in 1798, which marks the beginning of the Romantic period. The Neoclassical period in English literature can be divided into three parts: the Restoration Age (1660 – 1700) dominated by Milton, Bunyan, and Dryden; the Augustan Age (1700-1750) dominated by Pope, Defoe, Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett; and the Age of Johnson (1750-1798), dominated by Dr. Samuel Johnson. Neoclassicism, to some extent, is a reaction against the optimistic and enthusiastic Renaissance idea of man as fundamentally good with limitless possibilities for spiritual and intellectual growth. On the other hand, the Neoclassical theorists, viewed man as an imperfect, inherently sinful being with limited potentials. The Renaissance emphasis on imagination, invention, experimentation, and mysticism is replaced by the emphasis on order, reason, restraint, common sense, as well as on religious, political, economic and philosophical conservatism. The Neoclassicist's emphasis rested on the selection of proper subject matter; on the employment of the concepts like symmetry, proportion, unity, harmony, and grace; and on the basic function of art in delighting, instructing, educating.

2.1.2 Major Exponents of Neoclassical Criticism

French Writers: We have already found that the root of Neoclassicism in Europe can be traced in French literature. Authors like Corneille, Boileau-Despréaux have made immense contribution to the development of Neoclassical theories in French literature, which later influenced other literatures including English. So let us begin our discussion with the discussion of these major French authors. Pierre Corneille (1606–1684): Pierre Corneille, primarily a playwright, wrote the most influential text of literary criticism, *Trois Discours sur le poème dramatique* (Three Discourses on Dramatic Poetry, 1660), as a defence to his own dramatic practice, specifically his most renowned play *Le Cid* (1637). This play, despite being popular among the audiences, faced diverse criticisms from the French literary and political establishment. The allegation was that the play failed to observe the rules of theatre like the classical unities and the Aristotelian precepts of probability and necessity, and the play ignored the educational function of drama. Corneille reacted to these allegations by producing his *Three Discourses*. This book is an important document in the history of Western literary criticism in

the sense that here Corneille re-interpreted and modified most of the Aristotelian concepts like ‘three unities’, plot and its division: ‘beginning, middle and end’, ‘complication and resolution’ etc. Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux (1636–1711): Boileau was basically a poet, satirist, and a critic having tremendous influence on French as well as English and German writers and critics. His major work *L’Art Poétique* (*The Art of Poetry*), (1674), was translated by John Dryden into English. This book drew heavily on Aristotle and Horace and influenced directly some of the English Neoclassical writers like Pope. Boileau was the spokesperson of classical rationality, “good sense,” and proportion.

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

2.2 JOHN DRYDEN (1631–1700)

He was considered as ‘the father of English criticism’ by Samuel Johnson is the most influential Neoclassical critic in the history of English literature. His critical works touched upon diverse genres including epic, tragedy, comedy, satire, along with topics like relative virtues of ancient and modern writers, the nature of poetry as well as translation. About his *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* (1668), Johnson commented that ‘modern English prose begins here.’ Apart from his *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, numerous prefaces, reviews, and prologues composed by him construct the vast edifice of his critical writings that shaped the poetic and critical developments of his successors like Pope and Johnson in the same era as well as Matthew Arnold and T. S. Eliot in later periods of English literature. Dryden was born just before the outbreak of the English Civil War between King Charles-I, and the Parliament. The works of Dryden as a poet, dramatist, and translator, mark his shift in religious and political allegiances from the Parliament, led by Cromwell and other Puritan leaders, to Charles-II after his restoration to the throne in 1660. Dryden celebrated the restoration of the king in his poem *Astrea Redux* (*Justice Restored*). After being appointed as the poet laureate in 1668 he composed a good number of important poems “*Mac Flecknoe*”, “*Absalom and Achitophel*”, “*Religio Laici*” etc. His important plays include *Marriage a la Mode* (1671), *Aureng Zebe* (1675), *All for Love* etc. Besides, he also translated Ovid, Boccaccio and Chaucer. As a critic, in Dryden an interest in the general issues of criticism can be noticed rather than the close reading of any particular text. In his *An Essay on Dramatic Poesy*, written in the form of a debate on drama, Dryden not only carried out his critical thoughts effectively but also left some room for difference of opinion from other critics. One of the characters in this book, Neander, expresses that, for the development of literary standards, norms can be added to make a work

ideal; but the norms are not enough if the work does not contain some degree of perfection. Dryden himself believes that despite disobeying the rules, Shakespeare was undoubtedly superior to any writer. However, in a classic manner, he was very coherent in detailing his formulations of the rules.

2.3 ALEXANDER POPE (1688–1744)

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

2.4 APHRA BEHN (1640–1689)

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

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

2.5 SAMUEL JOHNSON (1709–1784)

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

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- Write a few lines on the Neoclassical age.

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- Write a few lines about Samuel Johnson and his works.

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- Mention about a few works by Aphra Behn.

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- Write about a few famous works of Alexander Pope.

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2.6 HEROIC POETRY

Heroic verse consists of the rhymed iambic line or heroic couplet. The term is used in English exclusively. In ancient literature, heroic verse was synonymous with the dactylic hexameter. It was in this measure that those typically heroic poems, the Iliad and Odyssey and the Aeneid were written. In English, however, it was not enough to designate a single line of iambic pentameter (an iambic line of five beats) as heroic verse, because it was necessary to distinguish blank verse from the distich, which was formed by the heroic couplet. In French the alexandrine has always been regarded as the heroic measure of that language. The dactylic movement of the heroic line in ancient Greek, the famous ρυθμός ἥρωος, or "heroic rhythm", of Homer, is expressed in modern Europe by the iambic movement. The consequence is that much of the rush and energy of the antique verse, which at vigorous moments was like the charge of a battalion, is lost. It is owing to this, in part, that the heroic couplet is so often required to give, in translation, the full value of a single Homeric hexameter. The couplet, not the single line, which constitutes heroic verse. The Latin poet Ennius, as reported by Cicero, called the heroic metre of one line *versum longum*, to distinguish it from the brevity of lyrical measures. The current form of English heroic verse appears to be the invention of Chaucer, who used it in his Legend of Good Women and afterwards, with still greater freedom, in the Canterbury Tales. Here is an example of it in its earliest development:

And thus the lone day in fight they spend,
Till, at the last, as everything hath end,
Anton is shent, and put him to the flight,
And all his folk to go, as best go might."

This way of writing was misunderstood and neglected by Chaucer's English disciples, but was followed nearly a century later by the Scottish poet, called Blind Harry (c. 1475), whose *The Actes and Deidis of the Illustre and Vallyeant Campioun Schir William Wallace* holds an important place in the history of versification as having passed on the tradition of the heroic

couplet. Another Scottish poet, Gavin Douglas, selected heroic verse for his translation of the Aeneid (1513), and displayed, in such examples as the following, a skill which left little room for improvement at the hands of later poets:

One sang, "The ship sails over the salt foam,
Will bring the merchants and my leman home";
Some other sings, "I will be blithe and light,
Mine heart is leant upon so goodly wight."

The verse so successfully mastered was, however, not very generally used for heroic purposes in Tudor literature. The early poets of the revival, and Spenser and Shakespeare after them, greatly preferred stanzaic forms. For dramatic purposes blank verse was almost exclusively used, although the French had adopted the rhymed alexandrine for their plays. In the earlier half of the 17th century, heroic verse was often put to somewhat unheroic purposes, mainly in prologues and epilogues, or other short poems of occasion; but it was nobly redeemed by Marlowe in his *Hero and Leander* and respectably by Browne in his *Britannia's Pastorals*. Those Elizabethans who, like Chapman, Warner and Drayton, aimed at producing a warlike and Homeric effect, however, did so in shambling fourteen-syllable couplets. The one heroic poem of that age written at considerable length in the appropriate national metre is the *Bosworth Field of Sir John Beaumont* (1582-1628).

Since the middle of the 17th century, when heroic verse became the typical and for a while almost the solitary form in which serious English poetry was written, its history has known many vicissitudes. After having been the principal instrument of Dryden and Pope, it was almost entirely rejected by Wordsworth and Coleridge, but revised, with various modifications, by Byron, Shelley (in *Julian and Maddalo*) and Keats (in *Lamia*). In the second half of the 19th century its prestige was restored by the brilliant work of Swinburne in *Tristram* and elsewhere.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- What is a Heroic Poetry and a Heroic Couplet?

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- Mention about a few heroic poetry writers and also state their famous works.

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2.7 LET US SUM UP

This unit shall help you to have a clear picture of the Neoclassical age and the major writers who were responsible to mark this age as another remarkable age in the history of English Literature. There were many famous writers like Alexander Pope, Aphra Behn, John Dryden and Samuel Johnson who actually marked this age with their most anticipated works. The neoclassicists were more interested in separating poetry from prose, maintaining the purity of each genre. The root of Neoclassical literary criticism can be traced in France from where it diffused to England and a few other parts of Europe. In this unit, you'll also be able to picture out Heroic Poetry that also became one of the significant genres of that era.

UNIT 3 RESTORATION COMEDY

Structure

- 3.0 Objective
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 William Congreve
- 3.3 William Wycherley
- 3.4 George Etherege
- 3.5 John Vanbrugh
- 3.6 John Crowne
- 3.7 Comedy Of Manners
- 3.8 Let us Sum up

3.0 OBJECTIVE

After going through the following unit, you will be able to:

- Get an overall portrait of Restoration Comedy on a whole.
- Know about the writers/playwrights who've made an unavoidable place in the history of English Literature.
- Get a broader idea on 'Comedy of Manners'.
- Analyse how comedy became a major genre in the Literary world.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The Restoration period, during the reign of King Charles II from 1660 to 1685, is mostly celebrated for its satiric comedies. Relative to English Renaissance theatre, these comedies are characterized by looser mores, especially of a sexual nature. Young and brilliant gallants dominate the stage and the women, played by actresses, unlike the previous generation when women were played by boys, are alluring and often promiscuous. While in Shakespearian comedies, authoritarian old men are mostly respected, old men in Restoration comedies are often rakes, fools, or both. In "The country wife", Sparkish complains of modern poets: "Their predecessors were contented to make serving-men only their stage-fools: but these rogues must have gentlemen, with a pox to 'em, nay, knights; and, indeed, you shall hardly see a fool upon the stage but he's a knight. And to tell you the truth, they have kept me these six years from being a knight in earnest, for fear of being knighted in a play, and dubbed a fool."

3.2 WILLIAM CONGREVE

The main dramatist in the Restoration period was William Congreve (1670-1729), whose comedies include "The old bachelor" (1693), "The double-dealer" (1693), "Love for love" (1695), and "The way of the world" (1700), characterized by stunning wit, sharp repartees, cynical outlooks, egotism losing control, man-woman relations based on sex appeal, justly celebrated and comparable in quality to the best of Molière for acute observations in foibles and follies. Dobrée (1924) commented that "mingling with this harsh world which enables us to understand Leigh Hunt's comment that 'there is a severity of rascality in some of his comedies that produces upon many of their readers far too grave an impression', we have the world of the Froths, the Plyants, and Brisk. This is the very culmination of social tomfoolery" (pp 128-129). Dobrée is puzzled by the enormous variety of personages, seeming to belong to different worlds. Yet that is because Congreve drew a picture of universal comedy.

"In *The Way of the World*, each character is defined by an individual distinct language, but five major characters especially reveal Congreve's s tic achievement. Anthony Witwoud, like his forebears Brisk of *The Plain Dealer* and Tattle of *Love for Love*, attempts the refinement of fashionable speech. Lady Wishfort's language reveals her as excessive, extreme passions, and socially aberrant- a prisoner of her own eccentric individualism. Fainall, in some ways the most interesting character of the play, is a malicious wit who speaks the language of gentlemen, but who reveals a destructive perverse ill-will based on a cruel cynicism concerning the conditions of human existence. These three characters derive from, but are not entirely define the older humours tradition, which Congreve reinvigorates and makes dramatically powerful. Mirabell and Millamant are true wits; their speech is informed by intelligence, irony, self-awareness. Although they are themselves laughable at times, in the main they are sympathetic, and by their awareness of the ways of the world (and a certain degree of luck), they are able to escape ever-present dangers" (Kaufman, 1973 p 412). Knight (1962) pointed out the bisexual nature of the very name of Mirabell (male with a female-type name) and Millimant (female with a male-type name) (p 135), this critic like many men preferring to contemplate the latter and to be biased against the former. Nettleton (1914) described Millamant as "Congreve's most brilliant character creation" having "commanded Hazlitt's eulogy and George Meredith's tribute to the 'perfect portrait of a coquette'. They had been anticipated, however, by an earlier critic, her lover Mirabel: 'I like her with all her faults; nay, like her for her faults. Her follies are so natural, or so artful, that they become her; and those affectations which in another woman would be odious, serve but to make her more agreeable' (I, 2). She enters with a flash, and goes off in a blaze of wit. Even amid the ceaseless pyrotechnics of Congreve her departure seems like the extinction of a brilliant rocket. Yet Millamant is an artificial creation beautiful and fragile as Dresden china. She has the wit, but not the humanity, of Shakespeare's Beatrice" (pp 130-131). Dobrée (1924) was especially attuned to the character of Mrs Fainall. "She remains loyal to Mirabell, and even helps him in his advances to Millamant (what profound psychology is here!), but at the same time her heart aches at not being loved by her husband. 'He has a humour more prevailing than his curiosity, and will willingly dispense with the hearing of one scandalous story to avoid giving an occasion to make another by being seen to walk with his wife,' she says with an affectation of lightness. But how bitter it is! How full of unnecessary

pain is the way of the world!" Of Millamant's bargain with Mirabell before marriage, he exclaims: "And this is commonly considered the behaviour of an errant coquette! In reality it is a vision of the conflict in all marriage, of the desire to maintain one's own personality fighting vainly with the desire to love wholeheartedly. Her appeal has all the earnestness of real life about it, it is vocal of all the hopes and fears of lovers when they see the bright face of happiness tarnished with the shadow of possible disillusion. It must not happen that they are very proud of one another the first week, and ashamed of one another ever after. Each of them has seen the rocks which bring most marriages to ruin, and will strive to avoid them. And this was to a Thackeray 'a weary feast, that of banquet wit where no love is!' (pp 140-146). "Very important in Congreve's management of the bargaining scene as well as in the whole treatment of the love-affair is the irony. On one plane it is the irony of lovers doing the opposite of what is expected of them, namely, haggling over rights and privileges and working out itemized contracts. On another plane, there is the ironic contrast between the unimportance of many (not all) of the minutiae discussed and the real importance of the deeper implications. If the details are trivial, the realism of the lovers is not trivial; and there is a real wistfulness intensified by and yet, at the same time, protected from sentimentality by the humor in Millamant's exclamation, 'Let us be as strange as if we had been married a great while, and as well-bred as if we were not married at all'. Thus Congreve has Mirabell and Millamant approach all issues through teasing and banter. They are aware of each other's faults, as they well may be, for they are also aware of their own. The amusing little scene in Act I in which Mirabell says 'I like her with all her faults nay, like her for her faults,' is significant. Mirabell is laughing at his mistress and also being ironic about his infatuation for her. Note the climax, in which he says of her frailties 'They are now grown as familiar to me as my own frailties, and in all probability in a little time longer I shall like 'em as well.' To like her faults risks the sentimental, but the risk is completely countered by the playful, and yet shrewdly realistic, statement of his devotion to his own faults. His love is real, but he remains ironically perceptive (Brooks and Heilman, 1945 p 447). Few writers who were famous for this genre are.

3.3 WILLIAM WYCHERLEY

The nearest to Congreve's strong wine is William Wycherley (1640-1715) and "The country wife" (1675), but with puritan disdain, many critics such as Knight (1962) view "The country wife" as an exhibition of "shameless indecency". (p 136) Similar was the view of Nettleton (1914). "In *The Country Wife*, Wycherley reveals at once perhaps the height of his dramatic power and the depth of his moral degradation. Borrowing from Molière's *Ecole des Femmes* [School for Wives] something of the general situation for his main plot, he transformed the real ingenue Agnes into Mrs. Pinchwife, whose nominal purity at the outset is due to lack of opportunity to sin. The progress of her corruption when she is transferred from the country to the fashionable world of London is detailed without sympathy either for the degraded wife or for the dishonoured husband. Homer, who prosecutes his vices through an assumption perhaps the most atrocious in all Restoration comedy, is Wycherley's real hero. Ingenuity is prostituted in the service of animal license. From Molière's *Ecole des Maris* [School for Husbands], Wycherley took the device of making an unsuspecting lover the bearer of a love letter to another, but in his hands the mild deception of a would-be husband becomes grim tragedy,

when Mrs. Pinchwife makes her husband the bearer to Horner of the message of his own dishonour. And when, at the end of the play, Pinchwife remains unconscious of the ruin wrought, and the curtain falls to a mocking dance of cuckolds, one sees the gulf between even the lowest decadence of Elizabethan drama and what the Restoration age termed 'comedy.'" (pp 79-80) The offended Agate (1944) upbraided that "Wycherley's coarseness of language is neither here nor there— even Macaulay was not troubled about a matter of fashion. But the coarseness of mind is more difficult to overlook. There is hardly any pretence that the satirist does not enjoy the state of things satirized; indeed, it is obvious that he revels in it. Congreve saved our faces with some polite pretence as to passion; there is none in Wycherley, whose characters are given up to uncontrolled appetite. No moral laws are broken in this play, not because it takes place in fairyland, but because its author has no conception of morality." (p 25)

A saner view was provided by Dobrée (1924), for whom the play "compressed all that his forceful character had shown him in Restoration society. It is the one play in the whole period equal to 'The Way of the world' in completeness of expression. It is a masterpiece, and here Wycherley did attain unity of atmosphere. It is a staggering performance and never for one instant did he swerve from his point of view. From beginning to end Wycherley saw clearly what it was he wanted to do, for now he understood that the real point of interest in Restoration society was the sex question. He took scenes from [Molière's School for Wives] and the [School for Husbands], but the theme throughout is the failure to rationalize sex. Horner, the principal figure, takes a leaf out of the 'Eunuch' of Terence, and declaring himself impotent, devotes himself to living up to his name. From this we get the whole gallery of Restoration figures: the jealous man who is proved wrong to be jealous; the trusting man who is a fool to be so trusting; the light ladies concerned for their honour; the gay sparks devoted only to their pleasure; the ignorant woman seduced; the woman of common sense baffled, the only triumphant figure Horner himself, the type of all that is most unselectively lecherous, and who seems to derive such a sorry enjoyment from his success. We never laugh at Horner, just as we never laugh at Tartuffe, though we may on occasion laugh with each of them. Both are grim, nightmare figures, dominating the helpless, hopeless apes who call themselves civilized men" (pp 93-94). Likewise, Wilson (1937) pointed out that "Wycherley is generally regarded first and foremost as a writer of witty dialogue, and secondly as a clever creator of character. But in this play he proves himself also a brilliant dramatist. The three plots are interwoven with such skill that they blend perfectly into a composite whole and lead up without the least irrelevance to the ultimate climax" (p 119). Palmer (1913) pointed out that the sexual innuendoes in "The country wife" include physical facts, unlike many other plays of this and other periods (p 132), as when Mrs Squeamish cries out to Horner: "Oh, lord, I'll have some china too. Good Mr Horner, don't think to give other people china, and me none; come in with me too." Then play "is perhaps the most amusing treatment of jealousy in the English language and Mistress Margery Pinchwife is an ingenue who has not often been surpassed" (Gassner, 1968 p 59).

3.4 GEORGE ETHEREGE

George Etherege (1635-1692) was charmingly bubbly with "The man of mode" (1676).

"One of the structural devices of "The man of mode" is the opposition of private and public scenes. Before the arrival of Sir Fopling in the middle of the play, most scenes are private ones in which the major characters, Dorimant, Loveit, and Harriet, are seen (and heard) facing the private mirror of their dressing room. They are all getting ready for the public meetings (in the Mall, at Lady Townley's masquerade, in her drawing-room). Seeing and being seen in public (and conversely, not being seen in private) comprised that society's major activity, and Sir Fopling, who only exists when seen, can understandably rejoice that "all the world will be in the park tonight" (III. 2), even if he also wishes that this world be only that of the happy few ("'Tis a pity there's not an order made that none but the 'beau monde' should walk here," III, 3, p 79)" (Ogé, 1989 p 87). In "The man of mode", "two points are striking: its extremely slight intrigues and its emphasis on display of character...Within this almost static plot we find four loci of interest: (1) Fopling, who has no necessary connection to any other part of the play; (2) Dorimant's affairs with Loveit and Bellinda; (3) The courtship of Dorimant and Harriet; (4) The marriage of Young Bellair and Emilia. For these last two, Lady Woodvill, Old Bellair, and Lady Townley provide some slight interconnections, but the parental opposition is utterly pro forma: Old Bellair gives in to his son's marriage and accepts his own disappointment with hardly a murmur, while Harriet's mother is so charmed by Dorimant (posing as "Mr Courtaige") that she drops her objections to him. Seldom has the course of true love run so smooth. Indeed, the story is incredibly thin, and its pieces are only loosely patched together. Not only is Fopling irrelevant to the action, but the Young Bellair-Emilia plot has little factual connection to the two involving Dorimant, which in turn are almost independent of each" (Hume, 1972 p 2). "The female characters in the play each present the libertine with a call to love. In mounting progression he breaks through each definition, because each is false, until he comes to the final true challenge, which is Harriet's. We are presented successively with love as simple appetite or commodity (Molly the true-bred whore) whose appeal the fastidious Dorimant has long since outgrown; love as power over the other and the attempt to arrest nature's mutability by outworn language and oath (Mrs Loveit), love as deception and self-deception (Bellinda), and finally love as self-knowledge and surrender to Fate (Harriet)" (Zimbaro, 1981 p 380).

3.5 JOHN VANBRUGH

The writings of John Vanbrugh (1664-1726) achieve their maximal impact in "The relapse" (1696). Dobrée (1924) compared Vanbrugh unfavorably with Congreve, but nevertheless praised "The relapse" as truly original, mostly in regard to the delineation of Lord Foppington: "If not quite delicate enough for fantasy, erring too much on the side of exaggeration, yet Lord Foppington succeeds in convincing by consistency with himself. Neither Leigh Hunt who called him 'the quintessence of nullification' nor Hazlitt who wrote of him as 'the personification of the foppery and folly of dress and appearance in full feather', quite do him justice. For at bottom he is a very sound man of business, and it is this that makes him a creation of Vanbrugh's and not a mere imitation of Sir Fopling, Sir Courtly, and Sir Novelty. He deliberately aims at absurdity because it pays, and he is proud to be the leader of the coxcombs because they form 'so prevailing a party'. All this is well carried out. One never knows what he is going to say, but once spoken, one realizes it is the only thing he could have said." Likewise, Nettleton (1914) praised this characterization, notably in comparison with Cibber's "Love's last

shift" (1696) where the character appeared under the name of Sir Novelty Fashion. "The comparison between Gibber and Vanbrugh centres in the figures of Sir Novelty Fashion and Lord Foppington. From Cibber, Vanbrugh has taken the general idea of the fop and some specific touches. In Cibber, Sir Novelty is described as 'one that heaven intended for a man; but the whole business of his life is to make the world believe he is of another species' (Act I). Cibber's character amuses for the moment; Vanbrugh's has permanent vitality. Hazlitt, who regards Lord Foppington as a 'copy from Etherege's Sir Fopling Flutter', thinks that 'perhaps Sir Fopling is the more natural grotesque of the two,' but he does not fail to regard Lord Foppington as 'a most splendid caricature.' Dr Ward remarks, 'Lord Foppington I am inclined to pronounce the best fop ever brought on the stage unsurpassed and unsurpassable, and admirable from first to last'" (p 134).

3.6 JOHN CROWNE

Success achieved by John Crowne (1641-1712) reached its height in "City politics" (1683).

"Crowne sets his play in the Naples of 1616-1620, ruled by Spain under a viceroy...The Whiggish Podesta (Paulo) and his gang are men of no principle other than self-interest, and their real desire, despite their cant about 'liberty' and such is for wealth, honours, and land. They seize any opportunity to advance themselves, even at the expense of their allies and indeed, if necessary, of their families. In the first act, the bricklayer, seized by the authorities, offers to compound: "A word with you, sir [to the Governor], in private. Procure me a pension, I'll come over to your party" (I. ii). In the last act, the Podesta, tricked into believing that he is to be made Lord Treasurer, is told that he will be expected to sacrifice his fellow conspirators. The Podesta replies 'Ay, and my father too, if he were alive; he should hang 'em all"...Another aspect of the danger represented by the Whigs is their monomaniacal insistence on the letter, but not the spirit, of the law. The insistence, repeated in the stubborn manner of Shylock, that "what we do is according to law" (I. ii), warns of a mulish legalism which in fact disguises the attempt to subvert the law...Crowne is able to define sharply the nature of the Whig rebellion through another element of the play's comedy. He utilizes the conventional dramatic action of the horning of the cit, but modifies this action to define more clearly its political implications. The old, impotent Podesta and Bartoline feel that they own and have the right to rule their zestful young wives, but because of their impotence (which is gleefully emphasized in the play), the young women turn to those who can, in Florio's words, 'pay [their] nightly pension well' (V. iii). Florio mocks Whig principles: 'Our principles are: he is not to be regarded who has a right to govern, but he who can best serve the ends of government. I can better serve the ends of your lady than you can, so I lay claim to your lady'" (V. iii)" (Kaufman, 1982 pp 72-74).

Charles Sedley (1639-1701) came to the fore with "Bellamira" (1687), unusually concise in form for a Restoration comedy, with short scenes and sentences, whose main source is Terence's "The eunuch" (161 BC).

Sedley follows his source "more closely than any English comedy had followed a classical model since Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* and Jonson's *The Case is Altered* followed their

Plautine sources a century earlier...Keepwell and Lionel are typical of the New Comedy lover whose sights are set exclusively on one woman, unlike the typical Restoration rake whose object is to bed as many women as possible...Furthermore, he adds a critical portrait of a rake in Cunningham, a character with no counterpart in Terence...Unlike the typical Restoration rake...Cunningham is mocked throughout...Sedley not only mocks rakish behaviour; he questions the entire philosophy behind it. In justifying his betrayal of Keepwell, Cunningham sounds like Horner: 'A pious Citizen that goes to Church twice a day, will play the Knave in a bargain; a lawyer take your fee, and for a good sum of money, be absent when your cause is tried; a parson marry you to a great fortune without a license; ee are all rogues in our way, and I confess woman is my weak side'

Sedley...adds pathos to the [rape] by having Isabella enter the stage after the attack and express her sorrows; her counterpart in Terence doesn't appear on stage after Gnatho brings her to Thais' house...Eustace, hearing of the rape before knowing his relationship to Isabella, seems shocked by Lionel's boldness; he peppers his friend with questions before concluding with a mild rebuke: 'Twas something a harsh way" (III, v). And while this is a gross understatement, his attitude contrasts with that of Antipho in the original, who, after hearing of the rape, asks: "What's been done about our dinner?" (McGinnis, 2013 pp 21-31). "Isabella, has from childhood repeatedly been the object of kidnap, purchase, and enforced possession. She has wandered from Jamaica to Spain, and to London. She is rescued from her life of slavery by a prostitute, Bellamira (whose motives are, however, mercenary). And, although Isabella achieves the closest approximation to a romantically satisfying marriage in the play, her bridegroom is making amends in marriage for having raped her. This is, manifestly, a worldly and cynical play. There is no moral horror about rape, but neither is it portrayed with any gloating salacity. As in so many other Restoration plays, rape is used to portray the anomalies of power far more than to exploit the delights of lustful violence. What the play does is reverse the social roles of the prostitute and the gentlewoman. The prostitute emerges as the figure of true social power: power without the contradiction and self-deception with which Behn invested the power of Angelica Bianca in *The Rover*. Whereas the gentlewoman is enslaved and raped, the prostitute is a skilled exploiter of the monetary and sexual interests that are the ruling principles in life. Bellamira is repeatedly described as exercising monarchic power over her keeper, and at the end of the play, she and he agree to support the decayed gentleman smoothly: the gentleman's place is sustained not by his ancestral estate, but by the benevolence of a successful prostitute. Rape here manifests a realignment in the distribution of social power" (Hughes, 2005 p 234).

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Write a short note on Restoration Comedy.

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2. Who were the writers associated with the Restoration Comedy? Mention few of their famous works.

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3. Write a short note on John Vanburgh and his works.

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4. Who was William Wycherly? What was he famous for?

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3.7 COMEDY OF MANNERS

A **comedy of manners** is a theatre genre that was particularly popular during the Restoration period . These comedies were daring and obscene with much hilarious dialogue that was peppered with explicit allusions to sex . The storylines revolved around adulterous wives, their lovers and their deceived husbands.

William Shakespeare's *Ado about Nothing* is often regarded as the first comedy or manners in England . However, the genre only really flourished during the Restoration Period , and was mainly influenced by Ben Jon's *Comedy of Humours* . Masterpieces of the genre were the plays of William Wycherley (*The Country Wife, 1675*) and William Congreve (*The Way of the World, 1700*). At the end of the 18th century, Oliver Goldsmith (*She Stoops to Conquer , 1773*) and Richard Brinsley Sheridan (*The Rivals, 1775, The School for Scandal, 1777*) blew in the form new life.

More modern examples of comedies or manners are Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* , Kazuo Ishiguro 's *The Remains of the Day* and the British television series *Absolutely Fabulous* . Noël Coward was a prominent representative of the genre in the first half of the twentieth century (*Private Lives* , 1930).

([https://nl.wikipedia.org › wiki › Comedy_of_manners](https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comedy_of_manners))

The **comedy of manners**, also called anti sentimental comedy, is a form of comedy that satirizes the manners and affectations of contemporary society and questions societal standards. Social class stereotypes are often represented through stock characters such as the *miles gloriosus* ("boastful soldier") in ancient Greek comedy or the fop and rake of English Restoration comedy, which is sometimes used as a synonym for "comedy of manners". A comedy of manners often sacrifices the plot, which usually centres on some scandal, to witty dialogue and sharp social commentary. Oscar Wilde's play, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), which satirized the Victorian morality of the time, is one of the best-known plays of this genre.

The comedy of manners was first developed in the New Comedy period of ancient Greek comedy and is known today primarily from fragments of writings by the Greek playwright Menander. Menander's style, elaborate plots, and stock characters were imitated by the ancient Roman playwrights, such as Plautus and Terence, whose comedies were in turn widely known and reproduced during the Renaissance. Some of the best-known comedies of manners are those by the 17th-century French playwright Molière, who satirized the hypocrisy and pretension of the ancien régime in plays such as L'École des femmes ([The School for Wives], 1662), Tartuffe ([The Imposter], 1664), and Le Misanthrope ([The Misanthrope], 1666).

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- What is a 'Comedy of Manners'? Highlight it with a few prominent examples.
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- Write about a few writers who were experts in this genre and also mention their most anticipated works.
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3.8 LET US SUM UP

The above unit shall give you a clear picture about how gradually 'Comedy' became one of the most integral parts of the Restoration period. Comedy gradually took its place gradually and met a widespread. The poets/writers/playwrights who wrote during this era were very sarcastic and generally put forth the double standards of the society through their works. For instance, William Congreve's 'Way of the World' is one of the best instances where the playwright has sharply portrayed the picture of the mean world with his subtle comedy. This play has a myriad of characters, most of them are mean and are always behind money. Similarly there a lot other poets who have also showed the crooked ways of the mean world through their poetry and even novels. 'Comedy of Manners' is yet another way in which writers put forward the idea of a selfish world in a very subtle and comical manner. These comedies were daring and obscene with much hilarious dialogue that was peppered with explicit allusions to sex . The storylines revolved around adulterous wives, their lovers and their deceived husbands and why not? After all, these things are not new and still exist as a bitter reality in the present day scenario.

UNIT 4 THE ENLIGHTENMENT

Structure

- 4.0 Objective
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Glorious Revolution
- 4.3 William Made King
 - 4.3.1 Jacobite Uprisings
- 4.4 The Legacy
- 4.5 Progress in Literature in The 18th Century
- 4.6 Let us Sum up
- 4.7 Glossary
- 4.8 Terminal Questions

4.0 OBJECTIVE

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

- Know about one of the most important Literary phase and era, ‘The Enlightenment’.
- Analyse why the Enlightenment era is also well known as ‘Age of Reason’.
- Have a clear picture about Glorious revolution and its outcome.
- Analyse the rich legacy of this era and how it had affected this Literary period.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The 18th century was the age of the Enlightenment or the Age of Reason. In part a reaction against the chaos that had characterized the preceding centuries, Enlightenment thought emphasized reason, rational thinking, and order. One facet of the Enlightenment, the scientific revolution, began at the close of the Middle Ages and marked a profound change in thinking of natural phenomena as events with rational explanations rather than supernatural causes. Empirical observation and the concept of an orderly world, set up by God and run according to His laws of nature, governed philosophical thought as well as the technological development that led to the Industrial Revolution. The British Museum provides an online tour of London in 1753, the year the museum opened, an indication of the interest in science and learning. The online tour includes pictures of early manufacturing in the Industrial Revolution.

The orderly nature of the world was no longer the medieval Great Chain of Being. Instead philosophers began to postulate that all men were created equal and with innate human rights, ideas which led to both the American and French Revolutions in the 18th century. This idea is

evident in the English Parliament's insistence that William and Mary grant more authority to Parliament, the representatives of the English people.

In literature, the Enlightenment appears as neoclassicism, which literally means new classicism and emphasizes order, symmetry, elegance, and structure in the arts, including literature. As apparent in the term neoclassicism, neoclassical writers, artists, and architects looked back to ancient Greece and Rome for classical forms featuring symmetry and geometrical precision in everything from poems to buildings. After the death of Oliver Cromwell, his son Richard Cromwell attempted to assume his father's leadership position but soon proved unequal to the task. Negotiations began between the English Parliament and the son of the executed King Charles I. In 1660 the monarchy was restored, and Charles II became king. Having escaped to France following his father's execution, Charles II had found refuge in the court of France, and when he returned to England brought with him a love of an extravagant, frivolous lifestyle that many, accustomed to the Puritan era, found offensive. Others delighted in the less repressive behaviours the new king encouraged. (<https://courses.lumenlearning.com/britlit1> > chapter > the-restoration-and...)

4.2 GLORIOUS REVOLUTION

The Glorious Revolution was the overthrow of James II of England in 1688 by a union of Parliamentarians and the Dutch stadtholder William III of Orange-Nassau (William of Orange). It is sometimes called the Bloodless Revolution, although there was fighting and loss of life in Ireland and Scotland; many modern historians prefer the more neutral alternative Revolution of 1688. The revolution is closely tied to the events of the War of the Grand Alliance on mainland Europe, and may be seen as the last successful invasion of England. James's overthrow was an important stage in the evolution of modern English parliamentary democracy; never again would the monarch pretend to hold absolute power and the Bill of Rights became one of the most important documents in the political history of Britain. The deposition of the Roman Catholic James II ended any chance of Catholicism becoming re-established in England, and also led to limited toleration for nonconformist Protestants—it would be some time before they had full political rights. In the case of Catholics, however, it was disastrous both socially and politically. Catholics were denied the right to vote and sit in the Westminster Parliament for over 100 years after this and the monarch was forbidden to be Catholic or marry a Catholic, thus ensuring the Protestant succession.

The Glorious Revolution also saw a partnership of husband and wife on the English and Scottish thrones, unusual at the time. James's removal and William and Mary's accession to the throne were generally popular. Before the revolution, Parliament represented the wealthy in their contest with the king, but once the revolution had re-established Parliament's authority, the road opened up to a mature representative democracy. In the centuries that followed, Parliament would become more and more democratic. These events significantly influenced the future development of democracy in the United States. John Locke wrote his 'Two Treatises of Government' to support the Glorious Revolution. From the standpoint of history, this was a

move in the right direction—toward human freedom, human rights, and recognition of the equal worth and dignity of all people.

During his three-year reign, King James II fell victim to the political battles in England between Catholicism and Protestantism as well as between the divine right of the crown and the political rights of Parliament. James's greatest political problem was his Catholicism, which left him alienated from both parties in Parliament.

The ultra-Protestant Whigs had failed in their attempt to exclude James from the throne between 1679 and 1681, and James's supporters were the High Church Anglican Tories. When James inherited the throne in 1685, he had much support in the "Loyal Parliament," which was composed mostly of Tories. James's attempt to relax the penal laws alienated his natural supporters, however, because the Tories viewed this as equivalent to disestablishment of the Church of England. Abandoning the Tories, James looked to form a "King's party" as a counterweight to the Anglican Tories, so in 1687 James supported the policy of religious toleration and issued the Declaration of Indulgence. By allying himself with Catholics, dissenters, and nonconformists (such as Baptists and Congregationalists), James hoped to build a coalition that would lead to Catholic emancipation.

In 1686 James coerced the Court of the King's Bench into deciding that the king could dispense with religious restrictions of the Test Acts. James ordered the removal of Henry Compton (1632–1713), the anti-Catholic Bishop of London, who was also a Privy Councilor, and dismissed the Protestant fellows of Magdalen College, Oxford and replaced them with Catholics.

James also created a large standing army and employed Catholics in positions of power in the army. To his opponents in Parliament this looked like a prelude to arbitrary rule, so James suspended Parliament without gaining Parliament's consent. At this time, the English regiments of the army were encamped at Hounslow, near the capital. The army in Ireland was purged of Protestants who were replaced with Catholics, and by 1688 James had more than 34,000 men under arms in his three kingdoms.

In April 1688, James re-issued the Declaration of Indulgence and ordered all clergymen to read it in their churches. When the 79th Archbishop of Canterbury, William Sancroft (1616–1693), and six other bishops wrote to James asking him to reconsider his policies, they were arrested on charges of seditious libel, but at trial they were acquitted to the cheers of the London crowd.

Matters came to a head in 1688, when James fathered James Francis Edward Stuart; until then, the throne would have passed to his daughter, Mary, a Protestant. The prospect of a Catholic dynasty in the British Isles was now likely. Some leaders of the Tory Party united with members of the opposing Whigs and set out to solve the crisis.

In 1686, a group of conspirators met at Charborough House in Dorset to plan the overthrow of "the tyrant race of Stuarts." In 1688 a further conspiracy was launched at Old Whittington, Derbyshire, to depose James and replace him with his daughter Mary and her husband, William

of Orange—both Protestants and both grandchildren of Charles I of England. Before the birth of James's son, Mary was the heir to the throne and William was third in line. William was also stadtholder of the Netherlands, which was then in the early stages of the War of the Grand Alliance (an alliance of various German states and Holland, later joined by England) against France.

Jumping at the chance to ally with England, William and Mary laid careful plans over a number of months for an invasion. Landing with a large Dutch army at Brixham, Devon on November 5, 1688, William was greeted with much popular support, and local men joined his army. William's army was primarily defensive; he wanted to land far away from James' army so his English allies could take the initiative in acting against James while he ensured his own protection against potential attacks. William was prepared to wait; he had paid his troops in advance for a three-month campaign. On his banners read the proclamation: "The Liberties of England and the Protestant Religion I will maintain."

Meanwhile, in the North, many nobles also declared for William. James' forward forces gathered at Salisbury, and James went to join them on November 19. Amid anti-Catholic rioting in London, it rapidly became apparent that the troops were not eager to fight, and the loyalty of many of James' commanders was doubtful. The first blood was shed at about this time in a skirmish at Wincanton, Somerset, where Royalist troops retreated after defeating a small party of scouts; the total body count on both sides came to about fifteen. In Salisbury, a worried James was suddenly overcome by a serious nose-bleed that he took as an evil omen indicating that he should order his army to retreat. On November 23, John Baron Churchill, one of James's chief commanders, deserted to William. A few days later, James' own daughter, Princess Anne, did the same. Both were serious losses. James returned to London on November 26.

By December 4 William's forces were at Salisbury; by December 7 they had reached Hungerford, where they met with the King's Commissioners to negotiate. In reality, by that point James was simply playing for time as he already had decided to flee the country. Convinced that his army was unreliable, he sent orders to disband it. December 10 saw the second engagement between the two sides with the Battle of Reading, a defeat for the king's men. In December there was anti-Catholic rioting in Bristol, Bury St. Edmunds, Hereford, York, Cambridge and Shropshire. On December 9 a Protestant mob stormed Dover Castle, where the Catholic Sir Edward Hales was Governor, and seized it.

December 11 saw James attempt to escape, dropping The Great Seal in the River Thames along the way. However, he was captured by fishermen near Sheerness on the Isle of Sheppey. On the night of December 11 there were riots and looting of the houses of Catholics and several foreign embassies of Catholic countries in London. The night of the 12th witnessed mass panic in London during what was later termed the Irish Night. False rumours of an impending Irish army attack on London gripped the capital, and a mob of over one hundred thousand assembled ready to defend the city.

Upon returning to London on December 16, James was welcomed by cheering crowds. He took heart at this, and attempted to recommence government, even presiding over a meeting of the Privy Council. Then he received a request from William to remove himself from London. James went under Dutch guard to Rochester, Kent on December 18, just as William entered London. James then escaped to France on December 23. The lax guard on James and the decision to allow him so near the coast indicates that William might have hoped that a successful escape would avoid the difficulty of deciding what to do with him, especially with the memory of the execution of Charles I still strong. By fleeing, James helped ensure that William's grip was secure.

On December 26, William, following the advice of his Whig allies, summoned an assembly of all the surviving members of the Parliament of Charles II's reign, thus bypassing the Tories of the Loyal Parliament of 1685. This assembly called for a convention and on December 28, William accepted the responsibilities of government. Although James had fled the country, on December 30 William (in a conversation with the George Savile, First Marquess of Halifax) was threatening not to stay in England "if King James came again" and determined to go back to Holland "if they went about to make him [William] Regent."

4.3 WILLIAM MADE KING

In 1689, the Convention Parliament convened and declared that James's flight amounted to abdication. William and Mary were offered the throne as joint rulers, an arrangement which they accepted (William demanded the title of king and disdained the office of regent). On February 13, 1689, Mary II and William III jointly acceded the throne of England. Although their succession to the English throne was relatively peaceful, much blood would be shed before William's authority was accepted in Ireland and Scotland.

4.3.1 Jacobite Uprisings

James had cultivated support on the fringes of his three kingdoms—in Catholic Ireland and the Highlands of Scotland. Supporters of James there, known as Jacobites, were prepared to resist what they saw as an illegal coup by force of arms. An uprising occurred in support of James in Scotland in 1689, the first Jacobite rebellion, led by John Graham of Claverhouse known as "Bonnie Dundee," who raised an army from Highland clans.

In Ireland, local Catholics led by Richard Talbot, First Earl of Tyrconnell, who had been discriminated against by previous English monarchs, took all the fortified places in the kingdom except Derry to hold the kingdom for James. James himself landed in Ireland with six thousand French troops to try to regain the throne in the Williamite war in Ireland. The war raged from 1689–1691. James fled Ireland following a humiliating defeat at the Battle of the Boyne, but Jacobite resistance was not ended until after the battle of Aughrim in 1691, when over half of their army was killed or captured. The Irish Jacobites surrendered at the Treaty of Limerick on October 3, 1691. England stayed relatively calm throughout, although some English Jacobites fought on James's side in Ireland. The Jacobite uprising in the Scottish

Highlands was quelled despite the Jacobite victory at the Battle of Killiecrankie, due to death of their leader, John Graham of Claverhouse.

The events of 1688 and their aftermath can thus be seen as much more of a *coup d'état* achieved by force of arms than an authentic revolution. Many, particularly in Ireland and Scotland continued to see the Stuarts as the legitimate monarchs of the three kingdoms, and there were further Jacobite rebellions in 1715 and 1745 in Scotland.

4.4 THE LEGACY

The Glorious Revolution is considered by some to be one of the most important events in the long evolution of powers possessed by the Parliament and by the crown in England. With the passage of the Bill of Rights, any final possibility of a Catholic monarchy was stamped out and moves toward absolute monarchy in the British Isles ended by circumscribing the monarch's powers. The bill is considered to be a cornerstone of the unwritten British constitution. It clearly gave Parliament ultimate authority. The king's powers were greatly restricted; he could no longer suspend laws, levy taxes, or maintain a standing army during peacetime without Parliament's permission. It influenced the U.S. Bill of Rights.

Since 1689, England (and later the United Kingdom) has been governed under a system of constitutional monarchy, which has been uninterrupted. Since then, Parliament has gained more and more power, and the crown has progressively lost it. The Bill of Rights is sometimes referred to as "England's Protestant Constitution." The people of Scotland had expressed their desire for a Protestant state in their Solemn League and Covenant of 1643, which pledged to maintain the reformed (non-Episcopal) Church and to be rid of the pope and prelates.

The Williamite victory in Ireland is still commemorated by the Orange Order for preserving British and Protestant dominance in the country. The philosopher John Locke praised the Glorious Revolution in his *Two Treatises on Government* (1689), arguing that if a government does not protect the natural rights of its people, namely life, liberty and property, it can rightly and lawfully be overthrown. Locke's praise of the Glorious Revolution helped to inspire both the American and French revolutions. Locke wrote:

Our Great Restorer, our present King William...in the consent of the people, which being the only one of all lawful, governments...has more fully and clearly than any prince in Christendom...and to justify to the world, the people of England, whose Just and Natural rights, with their resolution to preserve them, saved the Nation when it was on the brink of Slavery and ruin.

([https://brewminate.com › the-glorious-revolution-a-significant-step-in-the-l...](https://brewminate.com/the-glorious-revolution-a-significant-step-in-the-l...))

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- Write a short note on the legacy of the period of Enlightenment.

- Write a short note on the Jacobite uprisings.

4.5 PROGRESS IN LITERATURE IN THE 18TH CENTURY

With English laws, customs, Protestantism, habits of thought, and methods of culture, we also inherited the English literature. So rich was already this inheritance when our colonies were settled, that there was little need or incentive for the early Americans to strike out into new literary paths, and create an original literature. Our ancestors read Milton, Bunyan, Doddridge, Butler, Dryden, Pope, and Shakespeare.

It is a noteworthy fact that American literature not only took its start from but, up to within recent times, was mainly produced by the New England and the Middle States. Even now, the noted writers in any branch of letters born south of Virginia may almost be counted upon the fingers. It is equally true that west of Ohio authors who have won a general and permanent reputation are few. If we survey American literature from the time of Cotton Mather (who may perhaps be called the first author of the country whose works are still remembered and read) to the present, we find that a majority of the best authors, both in prose and verse, have been New Englanders.

The rise of our literature having taken place in the colonies of Puritan stock, and those most fully imbued with Puritan sobriety and seriousness, it was natural that our earliest literary products should be religious and philosophical. Cotton Mather, with his extravagant "Magnolia"; Jonathan Edwards, with his stern treatise on the Will; Franklin, with his shrewd maxims, and clear, strong, unadorned essays, were about the only ante-revolutionary writers who are not by this time forgotten. It was not surprising that the period of the Revolution should develop a literature peculiarly political. There were, no doubt, already poetasters, novelists, and essayists; but even their names are strange to us of this age. Where are they and their works? What faint traces are still left of them show us that they were mostly mere imitators, and not brilliant ones, of the English authors of their day.

But our political literature became, with the Revolution and its sequel, most vigorous, philosophical, eloquent, and profound. The Declaration itself was a masterpiece of political style, as well as of substance; and Jefferson, its author, continuing for years after to discuss political questions with a lucidity and vigor which were unrivalled in America, took his place in literary history as perhaps our greatest political writer. Close behind him came writers like Hamilton, Jay, Madison, Ames, Freneau, and Tom Paine, all of them holding high rank in this department of letters.

When we became an independent nation, literature naturally felt the impulse and inspiration of the new national life. Poets and novelists came up of a higher type than their ante-revolutionary predecessors; writers like Dwight, Hopkinson, Trumbull, Barlow, Brockden Brown, and Paine. But no one of these attained the rank of genius, nor did any of them establish a great reputation; and if they are remembered at all, it is rather by happy isolated pieces than by the general excellence of their works. The American novels of the last century, unlike the English novels of Swift, Fielding, and Goldsmith, have one and all passed into oblivion.

The position of American literature in 1886 may, especially in the departments of history and poetry, fairly bear comparison with that of England. Yet the first really great American authors, if we except the theological and political writers of whom mention has been made, published their first works at a period quite within the memory of men still living. Our first great poet was William Cullen Bryant, who survived to old age to observe to what vast proportions our literary productions, both in quality and quantity, had grown. Our first great biographer and essayist, Washington Irving, may be remembered as living by the man of thirty-five. Our first eminent novelist, James Fenimore Cooper, would only be ninety-seven if he were still among us. And our first great historian, Prescott, died but twenty-seven years ago.

The new career of American letters, indeed, may be said to have been begun when William Cullen Bryant published "Thanatopsis," in the year 1816. Our writers then began to feel the influence of the vigorous schools of English poetry of which Byron, Wordsworth, and Coleridge were the shining lights. Like these, our own writers shook off the poetic dominion of Pope and declared form to be subordinate to the thought and the feeling. Bryant, the enthusiastic disciple of Wordsworth, set the bold example, and from that moment American literature received an element of vitality which was given it its noble and rapid growth. It is almost always the case that, in young nations, poetry is the first branch of letters to be developed. The earliest masterpieces of Greek and English literature are the "Iliad," the "Canterbury Tales," and the "Faerie Queene." Perhaps the best German literature before Lessing, worth remembering, was the songs of the Minnesinger.

In the United States, Bryant was soon followed by a succession of poets whose productions clearly revealed the magnetism of the English revival, and gave promise of the rise of that poetic art which we have seen reach its culmination in our own day. Richard H. Dana wrote the "Buccaneer"; Fitz-Greene Halleck, "Marco Bozarris"; Edgar A. Poe "The Raven"; the painter Allston turned easily from brush to pen, and added more than one fine poem to our literature; Emerson rose to found a school of transcendental poetry as well as philosophy; N.P. Willis became the lyrical likeness of Moore on this side of the Atlantic; Percival reached a brief

popularity and wrote some things well worthy of remembrance, and the banker-poet Sprague filled a worthy place in our group of bards. In the next generation came the poets of the highest culture and most widely extended popularity: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, John Greenleaf Whittier, James Russell Lowell, and Oliver Wendell Holmes.

The United States have produced a race of historians whose works and names may not unfairly be ranked with those of Hume, Macaulay, Hallam, and Froude. Prescott and Irving have been followed by Bancroft, Motley, Parkman, Adams, Kirk, Goodwin, Young, and Ticknor. Sydney Smith, were he now living, would find his question, "Who reads an American book?" speedily answered; for in English drawing-rooms and on English book-stalls "Evangeline" and "The Wayside Inn" are to be found quite as often as "In Memoriam" and "Idyls of the King"; and "Ferdinand and Isabella" and the "Rise of the Dutch Republic," as often as the histories of Macaulay and Froude.

Our theologians have kept pace, in the amount and intellectual force of their writings, with those of the older continent. It is not astonishing that, in a nation established by a sect for the purpose of doing God honour, a race of great theological authors should arise. The names of Hopkins and Emmons, of Dwight, Channing, Norton, Theodore Parker, Wayland, Bacon, Park, Bushnell, and many others, will recur, to remind us how active religious philosophy and speculation have been from the time of Jonathan Edwards to the present.

In other departments of letters our progress during the century, though less marked, has been very distinct. Webster, Everett, Sumner, Winthrop, and, it may well be added, Lincoln, have made a literary art, as well as a practical career, of politics. American legal writers, like Greenleaf, Kent, Story, and Parsons, are quoted in the English as in the American courts, as authorities worthy of respect and trust. In the domain of searching literary criticism, England has perhaps produced no author since the days of Gifford and Jeffrey superior in learning, acuteness, and grace to Edwin P. Whipple.

Humourists have been many; in this field, we count not only Lowell, Neal, and Holmes, but the younger band, which includes Artemas Ward, Mark Twain, Nasby, Bret Harte, Warner, and Leland. In the department of essays and miscellaneous belles-lettres, the names of George William Curtis, Thoreau, Tuckerman, Higginson, Marsh, and many more, crowd upon the mind. Foremost among writers of fiction may be classed Cooper and Nathaniel Hawthorne; and though in this field America can scarcely contest the palm with the mother country, and the great purely national novel has not yet appeared, the fertility of our novelists affords promise that in time great and national romances will come. Meanwhile, Mrs. Stowe, Donald G. Mitchell, T.B. Aldrich, William D. Howells (a poet as well as a novelist), Henry James, Julian Hawthorne, Stockton, Miss Phelps, E.E. Hale, and others, have delighted thousands by their imaginative works.

To present even a list, indeed, of American writers who may be called noted, would much more than occupy the limits assigned to this chapter. The multitude that crowds upon the memory, even in a cursory glance over our history, is so large that even in mentioning any names at all one runs the risk of some unjust omission. Suffice it to say that no field of letters has remained

wholly uncultivated in this country and that literary invention in the United States, though sometimes at a pause, on the whole advances with their population and civilization. We have philosophers, men of science, poets, critics, essayists, art writers, theologians, fully able to cope with their literary brethren in the old world. Let it be added that America has produced the two dictionaries which are to-day paramount authority in every English school, college, and university; and that in the science of language George P. Marsh and William D. Whitney have carried their studies to depths as profound, and have given the world results as valuable, as have any old-world philologists.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- Write a short note (in not more than 100-150) words about the progress in Literature in the 18th Century.

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4.6 LET US SUM UP

The period of enlightenment is one of the most talked about and prominent ages in the history of Literature. One facet of the Enlightenment, the scientific revolution, began at the close of the Middle Ages and marked a profound change in thinking of natural phenomena as events with rational explanations rather than supernatural causes. Empirical observation and the concept of an orderly world, set up by God and run according to His laws of nature, governed philosophical thought as well as the technological development that led to the Industrial Revolution. This period also portrays one of the major facets of the Literary period called ‘Glorious Revolution’. The 18th Century Literature marks unforgettable changes in the world of English Literature. It year marks as one of the most vibrant years that brought out a lot of changes. One of the most important factors that came along with the 18th Century period (and that may not be discussed in the content above) is the enlightenment of women writers/narrators/essayists/poets. In this unit we shall be analysing the period of 18th century. The changes that took place and the movements that came into being. This unit shall broaden your understanding about the larger portrait of the 18th century. You will also get to know about the various famous writers of that era who happened to make a forever mark in their genres and have made their names immortal.

4.7 GLOSSARY

- **MYRIAD**- a countless or extremely great number of people or things.
- **VERISIMILITUDE**- the appearance of being true or real.
- **MONARCHY**- a form of government with a monarch at the head.
- **STAGGERING PERFORMANCE**- deeply shocking; astonishing performance
- **ADORNMENTS**- a thing which adorns or decorates; an ornament.
- **THEOLOGIANS**- a person who engages or is an expert in theology.
- **CONGREGATIONALISTS**- a form of Protestant church government in which each local religious society is independent and self-governing.
- **PROFOUND**- very great or intense.
- **REPARATION**- the action of making amends for a wrong one has done, by providing payment or other assistance to those who have been wronged.
- **UNRIVALLED**- better than everyone or everything of the same type.

4.8 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Name at least 5 famous novelists of the 18th century and write at least two lines about them.

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2. Write at least 5 lines about the ‘Progress in Literature’ of the 18th Century.

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3. What are the major components of the Neoclassical Literature?

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4. Write a few lines on Restoration Drama.

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5. Write at least 6 lines about the Glorious Revolution.

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