

Newclassical period as a period of prose and reason.

Generated: Jan 26, 2026

The Neo-classical period (1660-1785) is also known as the 18th Century. It is a time in English literature that emphasized reason, order, and clarity. This period was marked by a return to classical ideals. The creation of prose was clear, logical, and focused on society. Famous writers like Alexander Pope, Jonathan Swift, John Dryden, and Daniel Defoe were key figures during this time. Their works reflected the values of the era. Let us explore how their writings reveal the Neoclassical period's focus on prose and reason.

The Note will cover the following questions:

- **Discuss the eighteenth century as a period of prose and reason.**
- **New-classical period as a period of prose and reason.**

Rise of Prose:

At that time, authors imitated the ancient Greek and Roman styles in writing. They gave less emphasis on emotion than reality. During this period, prose was the best medium for sharing ideas. Unlike the complex and ornate language of the Renaissance, Neo-classical writers, including Defoe and Swift, produced straightforward and clear prose. This change was reflective of the intellectual conditions that appreciated reason and practicality.

Emphasis on Logic and Clarity: During the Neoclassical period, writers focused on logic and clarity in their works. They believed that literature should be understandable and instructive. For example, Alexander Pope, in his famous work "An Essay on Criticism," emphasized the importance of clear expression:

A little Learning is a dang'rous Thing;

This quote shows how writers of this time valued careful expression. This reflects their commitment to reason.

Realism and Practicality: Another recurrent theme of the Neo-Classical period is realism and practicality. Neo-classical literature welcomed realism and illustrated life devoid of excessive adornments. Defoe, in particular, is praised for his realistic depiction of the protagonist's

struggles in "Robinson Crusoe." This passion for practicality and realism is an authentication mark of the Age of Prose. Here is a quotation to reveal the realism and practical attitude of Daniel Defoe.

It is better to have a lion at the head of an army of sheep than a sheep at the head of an army of lions.

Here, he says having a strong leader, like a lion, is better than a weak one, like a sheep. Lions encourage and guide well, but sheep struggle. Good leaders face challenges and motivate others.

Moral Instruction: Neoclassical writers believed that literature should serve a moral purpose. They used their works to teach lessons about virtue, proper behaviour, and the importance of reason. Samuel Johnson, in his "Rasselas," explores themes of happiness to convey moral lessons. Johnson's work reflects the Neoclassical belief that literature should not only entertain but also educate readers. Pope, in his "Essay on Criticism," provides a complete guide to the principles of good literary criticism. He says,

To err is human, to forgive divine,

Focus on Human Nature and Universal Themes:

Writers of the Neoclassical period often focused on universal themes, such as human nature, society, and morality. They believed that by exploring these themes through reason, they could uncover truths that applied to all people. For instance, Alexander Pope's An Essay on Man explores the nature of humanity and the universe. In "An Essay on Man," Pope explores the nature of humanity, the existence of God, and the concept of universal order. He advises people to know themselves, saying,

Know then thyself, presume not God to scan,

The proper study of mankind is man.

Prose Over Poetry:

During this period, simple writing (prose) became more popular than poetry. Writers like Pope, Swift, Dryden, and Defoe wanted to reach a wider audience. So, they wrote in a way that was easy to understand. They believed that clear and simple writing was the best way to spread

ideas and make people think. This shows how important reason and logic were to them.

In conclusion, the Neoclassical period was truly a time of prose and reason. Writers of this era valued clarity, logic, and moral instruction in their works. Through these methods, they explored universal themes and human nature. This makes the Neoclassical period a significant chapter in the history of literature.

LxNotes