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The eighteenth century/The Neo-classical age (1660-1785) is known as the Golden Age of Satire. Writers used satire to mock and criticize society, politics, and human behavior. Satire is a powerful tool to expose foolishness and corruption in a humorous way. Four great satirists of this time were John Dryden, Alexander Pope, Daniel Defoe, and Jonathan Swift. Their works made people think and laugh while addressing serious issues.

Satire: Satire is a type of writing that mocks or criticizes human weaknesses. Writers use humor, irony, and exaggeration to show the faults of people, society, and politics. Satire aims to correct mistakes by making them look ridiculous. It often exposes hypocrisy, foolishness, and corruption.

Alexander Pope: Alexander Pope (1688-1744) is one of the most important poets of the eighteenth century. He is a master of poetic satire. He is famous for his wit and satire. His works criticize society, bad writers, and human faults. Pope used clever language and humor to teach lessons about life, art, and morality.

"The Rape of the Lock": Pope's "The Rape of the Lock" stands as a satirical masterpiece. This iconic epic mocks the fanciful nature of the aristocratic society of 18th-century England. It tells the story of a young woman, Belinda. Her lock of hair is cut by a nobleman, the Baron. He makes fun of high society and their silly customs. The poem teaches us that people often focus too much on unimportant things. It is one of the best examples of satire in English literature.

"Essay on Criticism": In his poem "Essay on Criticism," Pope provides a complete guide to the principles of good literary criticism. It is written in heroic couplets. The poem gives valuable advice for writers. It highlights the importance of criticizing literary works, not poets. Pope knows about the faults of human creativity. So, he says,

To err is human, to forgive divine

This highlights his generosity as a wise critic. Pope also highlights how writers should follow classical rules in their literary works.

"The Dunciad": Pope's "The Dunciad" is a satirical epic. Pope attacks bad poets and critics of his time. He calls them foolish and harmful to literature. The poem shows ignorance and incompetence in various fields, particularly literature. Pope uses this work to comment on the intellectual decline and the expansion of modest writing. His satirical pen is razor-sharp. It is shown in the poem "A Little Learning" in such a way,

A little Learning is a dang'rous Thing;

John Dryden:

John Dryden (1631–1700) is a great English poet and satirist. He uses humor, irony, and wit to criticize politicians, bad writers, and society. His satire is not only sharp and powerful but also clever and entertaining. He has written many famous satirical works. The most important ones are "Absalom and Achitophel," "Mac Flecknoe," and "The Medal."

"Absalom and Achitophel": This is Dryden's most famous political satire. It is about King Charles II and his enemies. Dryden compares them to characters from the Bible. Absalom represents the King's illegitimate son, James Scott. He is the Duke of Monmouth. He is handsome and brave but is used by bad people. Achitophel represents Lord Shaftesbury, a politician. He wants to take the throne from Charles II. Dryden criticizes Shaftesbury and shows how he tries to turn people against the King. Dryden says,

Beware the fury of a patient man.

"Mac Flecknoe":

This is a mock-heroic poem. This poem makes fun of Thomas Shadwell, a bad poet. Dryden calls him the king of dullness. Dryden says Shadwell will rule over the land of bad poetry. The poem describes how Shadwell is chosen as the dumbest poet in England. Dryden uses grand, epic language to describe something silly, which makes it funny. He calls Shadwell slow and boring. Dryden says Shadwell's chapter will come to an end very soon in such a way,

All human things are subject to decay

"The Medal":

This is another political satire. Dryden attacks Lord Shaftesbury for trying to remove King Charles II. The title comes from a medal made in Shaftesbury's honour, which Dryden found ridiculous. He calls Shaftesbury a traitor. He says Shaftesbury is not a hero but a dangerous man. Dryden uses strong words to make fun of him.

Daniel Defoe: Daniel Defoe (1660–1731) is a great writer, journalist, and satirist. He is famous for writing "Robinson Crusoe,". He also writes many satirical works. His satire is sharp and clever. He uses humor and irony to criticize society, politics, and human behavior.

"Robinson Crusoe": "Robinson Crusoe" is not just an adventure story. It also contains satire on society, colonialism, and human nature. Crusoe is a European man who believes he is superior to others, especially the natives. This reflects the colonial mindset of the time. He calls the native man "Friday". He teaches him to behave like a European. He says,

I [Crusoe] likewise taught him [Friday] to say Master,

This shows how colonialists forced their culture on others. Defoe mocks the idea that Europeans thought they had the right to rule over other lands.

"The Review": This was a weekly newspaper that Defoe wrote for nine years. He mocked corrupt politicians, bad business practices, and wars. He used fake letters and funny stories to expose problems in England. This was one of the first modern newspapers. It shows Defoe's sharp wit and intelligence.

"The True-Born Englishman": This is a satirical poem. Here Defoe attacks racism and pride among the English people. Some people said King William III (who was from Holland) should not rule England because he was not "truly English." Defoe mocks this idea by saying that no one in England is truly "pure English" because England is a mix of many different people. He writes about gaining virtue. He says,

It's personal virtue only makes us great.

This poem is funny but serious. It supports unity. It has become very popular and has made Defoe famous.

Jonathan Swift: Jonathan Swift (1667–1745) is a great satirist and writer. He uses humor, irony, and exaggeration language to criticize human foolishness, politics, and society. His satire is harsh and shocking. This makes people think about serious problems. Some of his most

famous satirical works are "Gulliver's Travels," "A Modest Proposal," "The Battle of the Books," and "A Tale of a Tub."

"Gulliver's Travels": "Gulliver's Travels" is a novel that mocks human nature, politics, and science. It tells the story of Lemuel Gulliver. Gulliver travels to different strange lands. Each place represents a problem in real life. In Lilliput, the tiny people fight over silly things, just like European kings and politicians. He mocks how wars are often fought for foolish reasons. In Brobdingnag, the giant king laughs at Gulliver when he describes European wars and government. The king calls humans,

The most pernicious race of little odious vermin.

In Laputa, the scientists do useless experiments. Gulliver mocks scientists who ignore real-world problems. In Houyhnhnmland, noble horses rule over ugly, stupid humans (Yahoos). This shows Swift's disappointment in mankind.

"The Battle of the Books": This is a satire about a fight between old books and new books. The old books represent classical literature. However, the new books represent modern writers. Swift supports old literature. He mocks modern writers who lack depth and wisdom. He says the moderns cannot stand their ground against the ancients. This means that classical writers are greater than new ones.

"A Modest Proposal": This is one of the most shocking satirical essays ever written. Ireland was suffering from poverty and hunger, and the English rulers did not care. Swift pretended to offer a solution. He suggested eating poor children! Of course, Swift did not really mean this. He used dark humor to criticize the cruel treatment of the poor. His real message was that the English government needed to help the starving people.

The eighteenth century was the Golden Age of Satire. Dryden, Pope, Defoe, and Swift used satire to attack corruption, hypocrisy, and ignorance. Their works are still studied today because they teach lessons through humor and wit. Satire remains an important literary tool for criticizing and improving society.