

The Elizabethan age was the golden age of English Literature.

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The Elizabethan Age is often called the golden age of English literature. This period took place during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, from 1558 to 1603. There was a renaissance of Greek and Roman literature, mythology, and culture. Writers and poets produced works that are still famous today. This served as a source of inspiration to the countless writers of the period. Let us discuss why this era is seen as a golden age.

Golden Time for Drama: Drama was one of the most important parts of the Elizabethan Age. During this time, playwrights like William Shakespeare (1564-1616), Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593), and Ben Jonson (1573-1637) wrote plays that became classics. Shakespeare's plays, such as "Romeo and Juliet" (1594), "As You Like It" (1600), and "Hamlet" (1601) are known for their deep characters and powerful stories. In Hamlet, he remarked on frailty as our nature:

Frailty, thy name is woman.

Marlowe's "Doctor Faustus" (1592 c.) and Jonson's "Volpone" also stand out. Norton (1532-84) and Sackville (1536-1608) made "Gorboduc" (1562) the first English tragedy. These plays explored big ideas like ambition, love, and power. The theatres were full, and people loved watching these performances.

Golden Time for Poetry: Poetry also flourished during the Elizabethan Age. Poets like Edmund Spenser (1552 c.-1599) and Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586) wrote beautiful and innovative poems. Spenser's "The Faerie Queene" (1590) is an epic poem that mixes mythology and history. It was written to honour Queen Elizabeth. Sidney's "Astrophel and Stella" (1591) is a famous sonnet sequence. Shakespeare's sonnets represented his love for natural beauty, vastness, and plenty. In Sonnet XVIII, he talks about his friend,

So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,

So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

These poems discuss love, beauty, and emotions. The poets of this time experimented with new forms and ideas, which made their work exciting and fresh.

Golden Time for Prose: Prose writing also became important during this era. Writers like Francis Bacon (1561-1626) made significant contributions. Bacon wrote essays that discussed various topics, including science, politics, and human behaviour. For example, in "Of Revenge," he said,

Revenge is a kind of wild justice.

Sir Philip Sidney's (1554-86) "An Apology for Poetry" (1595) was a critical writing for defending poetry. Thomas Nashe (1567-1601 c.) made fictional prose like "The Unfortunate Traveller" (1594). These works helped shape modern thinking. The prose of this time was clear and direct, which made it easier for people to understand complex ideas.

Humanism and Classical Influences: The humanist movement greatly influenced Elizabethan literature. It emphasized the study of classical texts. Writers drew inspiration from Greek and Roman literature. For example, Christopher Marlowe revealed his interest in classical characters in "Doctor Faustus." He mentioned,

Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.

Here, Faustus is astonished by Helen's beauty and wishes to kiss her sweet lips. The Renaissance focused on rediscovering ancient Greek and Roman ideas.

Lasting Legacy: The literary works of the Elizabethan Age have a lasting legacy. This period's plays, poems, and prose are still read, performed, and studied worldwide. Shakespeare's plays are regularly performed in theatres, and his sonnets are quoted in everyday life. The works of Spenser, Marlowe, and others continue to influence writers today. Charles Lamb addressed Spenser as "**The poet of poets.**" The Elizabethan Age set a high standard for English literature, and its impact is still felt today.

In conclusion, the Elizabethan Age was a time when drama, poetry, and prose reached new heights. Writers were inspired by the Renaissance and supported by a stable society. This period laid the foundation for many literary traditions that continue to shape our world today. So, it was truly a golden age of English literature.