

The Neo-Classical Period (1660 - 1785)

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The Neo-Classical period began in 1660 and ended in 1785. Another name for the Neo-classical period is

Pseudo Classical Age

. This period is basically divided into three parts.

- **The Restoration Period (1660 - 1700)**
- **The Augustan Age (1702 - 1745)**, was named after Emperor Augustus of Italy. Sometimes it is also called the Age of Pope.
- **The Age of Sensibility (1745 - 1785)**, for Reason and Sensible Views. It is also called the Age of Johnson.

Restoration

is a very important sub-period. The reason this period is called the Restoration is because the monarchy was restored in 1660. Charles II, son of Charles I, fled to France during the Commonwealth period. When Richard Cromwell died, the people of England brought him from France and made him king of England. When he died in 1685, his brother James II succeeded him. But because James II was Catholic, many Protestants in England rose up to depose him. In 1688, he (Glorious Revolution) fled to France as a victim of the bloodless revolution. King William III of France was James II's son-in-law. As a result, King William of France ruled England and France until 1702.

From this, it is basically clear that there are two groups of Christians facing each other. They are Catholics and Protestants. People of this era were divided into two political parties named Whig and Tory. Whig supporters are Protestant and Tory's supporters are Catholic. The current name of the Whig Party is the Liberal Party, and the current name of the Tory Party is the Conservative Party.

The neo-classical period is **called neo-classical** because the writers of this period followed the tradition of Greek and Latin literary works. Writers of this era have always written about human

behavior. They presented aristocratic subjects in their literary works and neglected nature. In this era, writings were always for upper-class people. Middle-class or lower-class people were not written about. Because the writers of this era thought that literary works were only for upper-class people. This is why the writings of this era are written in aristocratic language. Literary works are not written in the way people speak in ordinary language. The settings in the literary works of this era were the places where upper-class people interacted.

It was during this era that scientists like Sir Isaac Newton showed their innovative power. In this era, a massive campaign of science began. The steam engine was invented in 1769 by James Watt in the neo-classical period. Jonathan Swift in his *Gulliver's Travels* criticizes science's attempt to make some impossible things possible. The Industrial Revolution produced a variety of inventions that greatly influenced literature.

It was during this period that the novel began to flourish and flourished in the Victorian period. The 18th century saw the growth of the novel. Earlier, poetry and drama were more popular. But now, people wanted stories about real life. Novels started to talk about middle-class people, their problems, and emotions. Writers like Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding wrote long stories with characters and plots. This became the start of modern fiction.

During this period, we get several literary terms such as Restoration Drama or Restoration Literature, Literary Criticism, Comedy of Manners, Satirical Verse, etc. Also, some literary associations were started like Scriblerus Club, Kit-cat Club, Spectator's Club, Johnson's Literary Club, etc. Writers like Pope, Swift, Addison, Steele, Samuel Johnson, Burke, Goldsmith, etc. were in these clubs.

Restoration comedy was full of fun and wit. It showed the manners of rich people. The plays had clever dialogues. They talked about love, marriage, and cheating. Women were allowed to act on stage for the first time. Famous playwrights include William Congreve and George Etherege.

The 18th century is also called the **Age of Prose and Reason**. Writers used clear and direct language. They believed in logic and order. Prose works like essays, articles, and novels became more important than poetry. Writers like Dr. Johnson, Addison, and Steele gave great value to prose writing.

The first English daily newspaper "**The Daily Courant**" appeared in 1702. During this period, we have two famous epics written by John Milton. In this period in 1755, The English Dictionary was written by Dr. Samuel Johnson.

Important Features of the Neo-Classical Period

- **Objectivity and Imitation of Classical Models:** Neoclassical writers followed the style of Greek and Roman writers. They thought classical writing was the best. They tried to copy its style and ideas. They followed strict rules in writing. They used forms like heroic couplets in poetry. In plays, they used the three-act structure.
- **Rationality and Reason:** This period focused on reason and logic. Writers believed that everything should be based on clear thinking. They used reason in politics, society, and writing. This way of thinking helped science to grow. They loved facts and careful observation.
- **Satire and Social Criticism:** Satire was very popular in this age. Writers used humor and irony to show the bad sides of society. They made fun of rich, proud, or corrupt people. They attacked social problems and foolish behavior. Their goal was to correct people through laughter.
- **Neglecting Nature:** Writers did not write about nature. Trees, rivers, animals, and natural beauty were ignored. They mostly wrote about cities, courts, and rich people's lives. Nature was not important in their writings.
- **Neglecting Lower-Class People:** The writers didn't care about poor or common people. They wrote about kings, nobles, and upper-class life. They did not show the struggles of farmers or workers. Literature stayed far from the lives of the poor.
- **Classical Themes and Mythology:** Writers used many stories from Greek and Roman times. They brought in gods, heroes, and old legends. These classical themes made the writings look serious and important. Writers felt proud to use these old ideas.
- **Epic and Heroic Literature:** Writers wrote about great heroes and big events. They created long poems and stories. John Milton wrote *Paradise Lost*, which is about the fall of man. Alexander Pope wrote *The Rape of the Lock*, a **mock-epic**. These works used high-level language and heroic style.

Remarkable Writers and Literary Works of the Neo-Classical Period

John Milton (1608-74)

- **Paradise Lost (1667)**, the great epic in English
- **Paradise Regained (1671)**
- Samson Agonistes (1671)
- Samuel Butler (1612-80)
- Hudibras (1663), a satire in verse

John Bunyan (1628-88)

- **The Pilgrim's Progress (1678)**, the famous allegory in prose

John Dryden (1631-1700)

- **All for Love (1693)**
- **The Indian Emperor (1665)**
 - Aureng-Zebe (1675)
- **Absalom and Achitophel (1681)**
 - Mac Flecknoe (1682)
- **The Essay of Dramatic Poesy (1668)**

John Locke (1632-1704)

- An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1690)

William Wycherley (1640-1715)

- **The Country Wife (1675)**

- The Plain Dealer (1676)

Aphra Behn (1640-1689)

- The Rover (1677), a Restoration comedy

- **Oroonoko (1688), a prose fiction/Novel**

William Congreve (1670-1729)

- The Double Dealer (1693)

- **Love for Love (1695)**

- **The Way of the World (1700)**

George Farquhar (1678-1707)

- **The Recruiting Officer (1706)**

- The Beaux's Stratagem (1707)

Daniel Defoe (1659-1731)

- **Robinson Crusoe (1719)**

Jonathan Swift (1667-1745)

- The Battle of the Books (1704)
- A Tale of a Tub (1704)

- **Gulliver's Travels (1726)**

Joseph Addison (1672-1719) and Sir Richard Steele (1672-1729)

- **The Tatler and The Spectator (1709-1712)**, a total of **555** essays in which **Addison wrote 274** and Steele wrote the rest.

Alexander Pope (1688-1744)

- **The Rape of the Lock (1712)**
 - Dunciad (1728)
 - Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot (1735)
- **An Essay on Criticism (1711)**

Samuel Richardson (1689-1761)

- **Pamela or Virtue Rewarded (1740)**, the first English novel

Henry Fielding (1707-54)

- Joseph Andrews (1742), a novel
- **Tom Jones (1749)**
- Amelia (1751)

Dr. Samuel Johnson (1709-84)

- **Dictionary of the English Language (1755)**
 - The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia (1759)
- **Preface to Shakespeare (1765)**
- **The Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets (1779-81)**

Thomas Gray (1716-71)

- **Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard (1751)**

Oliver Goldsmith (1728-74)

- The Citizen of the World (1759)
- The Vicar of the Wakefield (1766)

- **She Stoops to Conquer (1773)**

Edmund Burke (1729-97)

- On American Taxation (1774)
- Speech on Conciliation with America (1775)

- **Speech on Mr. Fox's East India Bill (1783)**

Edward Gibbon (1737-94)

- The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire (1776)