

The Periods of English Literature

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The Periods of English Literature

The history of English literature is very closely related to the history of the English people. It began with the emergence of the English nation and continued evolving along with its social development. Each of the phases, known as Age or Period. It has been given a particular name, sometimes after the name of the king or queen, sometimes after the name of a great writer, and sometimes according to the spirit of the time. The names and time span of the ages of English literature differ from historian to historian; the following list derived from M. H. Abrams is dependable:

The Old English Period or The Anglo-Saxon Period (450-1066)

The Middle English Period (1066-1500)

- a) The Anglo-Norman Period (1066-1340)
- b) The Age of Chaucer (1340-1400)

The Renaissance Period (1500-1660)

- a) Elizabethan Age (1558-1603)
- b) Jacobean Age (1603-1625)
- c) Caroline Age (1625-1649)
- d) Commonwealth Period (1649-1660)

The Neoclassical Period (1660-1785)

- a) The Restoration Period (1660-1700)
- b) The Augustan Age or The Age of Pope (1700-1745)
- c) The Age of Sensibility or The Age of Johnson (1745-1785)

The Romantic Period (1798-1832)

The Victorian Period (1832-1901)

- a) The Pre-Raphaelites (1848-1860)
- b) Aestheticism and Decadence (1880-1901)

The Modern Period (1901-1939)

- a) The Edwardian Period (1901-1910)
- b) The Georgian Period (1910-1936)

The Post-modern Period (1939 - Present)

Dominating Genres in Different Periods

You must remember the following diagram because these branches will be taught to you in the next years. It will help you to explore literary knowledge in many ways.

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Dominating Genre in Different Periods

- **Old English Period:** Epic poem
- **Middle English Period:** Poetry
- **Renaissance Period:** Drama, [Poetry](#), Essay
- **New-classical Period:** Drama, Novel, Poetry (All are based on Satire), Non-Fictional Prose especially Essay/Literary Criticism
- **Romantic Period:** Poetry, Non-Fiction, Novel
- **Victorian Period:** Novel, Poetry, Drama, Non-Fiction
- **Modern Period:** Novel, Poetry, Drama, Short Story, Non-Fiction
- **Post-Modern Period:** All

Striking Name and Object of the Periods

Old English Period

Beowulf Anglo-Saxon Chronicles German Tribes Anonymous Writing

Middle English Period

Norman Conquest Chaucer The Canterbury Tales Hundred Years War Black Death

Renaissance Period

Renaissance Comedy Tragedy Tragicomedy
Comedy of Humor Beast Fable William Shakespeare Christopher Marlowe
Ben Johnson Edmund Spencer Francis Bacon John Webster
Humanism

Neo-classical Period

Comedy of Manners / Restoration Drama Age of Prose and Reason Dr. Samuel Johnson
Satirical Writing Literary Criticism Addison and Steele
Epic Mock Heroic Poem Alexander Pope
Jonathan Swift Dictionary Aphra Ben
Daniel Defoe Novel John Milton

Romantic Period

French Revolution

Imagination

Pantheism

Biographia Literaria

Lyrical Ballads

Supernaturalism

The Romantics

Negative Capability

Escapism

Fancy

Romantic Movement

Pastoral Elegy

Victorian Period

Victorian Compromise

Dramatic Monologue

Mathew Arnold

The Bronte Sisters

The Origin of Species

Robert Browning

Pre-Raphaelitism

Oxford Movement

G.M. Hopkins

Adv

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Modern Period and Post-Modern Period

Stream of Consciousness

Modernism

G. B. Shaw

Sylvia Plath

One-Act Play

Modern Trends of Poetry

J. M. Synge

Drama of Ideas

World War I & II

Wole Soyinka