MAR GREGORIOS COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCE

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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

SUBJECT NAME: BACKGROUND TO ENGLISH LITERATURE -I

SUBJECT CODE: AG31A

SEMESTER: I

PREPARED BY: PROF.INDHUMATHY

TITLE OF THE COURSE

Allied - ENG- DSA 01 -Background to English Literature-Paper-I

Objectives:

- To introduce basic concepts about English history, literary forms and literary periods with linguistic, historical and Legendary background
- To enable students understand the contexts and background from Medieval British literature up until the Elizabethan and Jacobean Age

Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this course students will be able to:

- Identify and define basic terms and concepts which are needed for advanced courses in British literatures
- Describe the distinct periods of British literature
- Write brief notes on seminal literary forms and devices
- Write brief essays on seminal writers and their period from Medieval Europe up to the Britain of the Elizabethan and Jacobean Age
- Write brief essays on the historical background of the same period

Unit I

Literary Forms

- Poetry – Metrical Romance, Ballad [Folk, Literary, Mock], Lyric, Sonnet [Petrarchan, Spenserian, Shakespearean], Allegory
- Drama [Mystery and Morality Plays, Tragedy [Classical, Senecan, Romantic, Heroic, Neo-Classical,], Masque and Anti-Masque
- Prose- Fable, Parable, Essay [Aphoristic, Personal, Periodical, Critical]

o Fiction [Short-story, Novel], Non- Fiction [Biography, Auto-Biography]

Unit II

Impact of the History of language on Literature from 11th to 17th Century

Origin of Language- pages 1-7

- The Descent of the English Language – pages 8-16.
- The Old English (Anglo-Saxon) Period – pages 17-41
- The Middle English Period – pages 42-67

Text. History of English Language by F.T. Wood. Trinity Press. Revised edition, 2016.]

Unit III

Impact of Socio- Political History in Literature from 11 to 17 Century

MEDIEVAL EUROPE

Western Christendom, Papacy, Charlemagne, Carolingian heritage, Mediterranean Europe, Vikings, Anglo-Saxon ENG-land – pages 120- 138

[Text – *The PENGUIN History of Europe* by J.M. Roberts, 1996.]

CRUSADES [1095- 1291]

- Ottoman Wars [1265-1453]
- Fall of Constantinople [1453]

- European Renaissance, Reformation and Counter- Reformation– pages 222 – 230

[Text: *A History of ENG-land.* John Thorn, Roger Lockyer and David Smith. AITBS Publishers, India. 2012.]

- Modernity and modern history[End of Medieval Period] – pages 233-238
- Enlightenment – pages 267-271

[Text – *The PENG-uin History of Europe* by J.M.Roberts, 1996.]

MEDIEVAL ENGLAND

- The Norman Conquest [1066] – pages 80-84
- A Struggle for Power – Magna Carta [1215] – pages 126-128
- Henry VI and the Wars of Roses [1421- 71] – pages 199-212

TUDOR DYNASTY

- Henry VIII and the Break with Rome. – pages 231- 253
- Queen Mary– pages 261-264
- Elizabeth I and the Succession – pages 265-274
- The Conquest of the Armada– pages 275- 286
- The English Renaissance – pages 287-291
- Elizabethan England – pages 292- 310

CIVILWAR AND CROMWELL [1642 – 58]

"Charles I and Parliament" – pages 311-317

- "Civil War" – pages 326-340
- [Text Book: *A History of ENG-land.* John Thorn, Roger Lockyer and David Smith. AITBS Publishers, India. 2012

Unit IV

- **Literary History**
- **Anglo-Saxon Literature** – Romanized Britons, Arthurian romance, alliterative verse, development of English Christianity - pages 3- 6. "Development of Middle English Prose and Verse"- The Norman conquest, Anglo-French language, French cultural domination of Europe, French as the courtly language, west Saxon dialect – pages 31- 35.
- **Middle English Literature** - Courtly French romance, the fable as a famous medieval literary form – pages 68 – 70. "Chaucer" – pages 89 – 91; "Gower" – pages 121 - 123
- **The Early Tudor Scene** – new geographical discoveries and their impact on literature, beginning of the idea of national state - pages – 147 – 148.
- **Spenser and his Time** – pages 165 – 166 first paragraph.
- **Drama from the Miracle Plays to Marlowe** - English poetic drama, dramatic elaborations of the liturgy, transition from liturgical drama to miracle play – pages 208 – 210; "University Wits" – Elizabethan popular drama –page 226; "Christopher Marlowe" – „Tamburlaine, the Great" - page 235.
- **Shakespeare** – professional man of the theatre - page 246
- **Drama from Jonson to the Closing of Theatres** – Shakespeare and Ben Jonson – pages 309 – 311 first paragraph; analysis of English Poetic drama – 344 last paragraph.

- **Poetry after Spenser: the Jonsonian and the Metaphysical Traditions** – page 360; Donne‟s influence – page 368.
- **John Milton** – seventeenth century political background, effects of Civil war, Milton‟s formative years – pages 390 – 392
- **Prose in the 16th and 17th Centuries** - pamphleteering, colloquial prose formalised – pages 458-459; Bible translations – pages 461-472; Holinshed‟s „Chronicles‟ – page 474; Walter Raleigh‟s „History of the World‟ – page 475; Francis Bacon – pages 485 – 488; Thomas Hobbes – pages 495-496

[Text - *A Critical History of English Literature- Volume I – From the Beginning to Milton* by David Daiches. Revised. Indian Edition 2010. Supernova Publishers.]

Periods of English Literature – pages 279-285 [Text - *A Glossary of Literary Terms* by M.H. Abrams.]

Unit V

Impact of European and British Legend on Literature

[Text – Bulfinch‟s Mythology]

- Valhalla – the Valkyrior
- Thor‟s Visit to Jotunheim
- The death of Baldur – the Elves – Runic Letters – Skalds – Iceland
- The Druids – Iona
- Beowulf
- Robin Hood and his Merry Men
- King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table

-Sir Gawain, Launcelot of the Lake ,Perceval, Tristram and Iseult

UNIT 1

Literary Forms - POETRY

Metrical Romance

A metrical romance is otherwise known as romantic poetry. The poem tells a story in verse form and depicts the adventures of romantic poetry.

A **metrical romance**, or chivalric **romance**, is a type of narrative poem which typically centers on courtly love, knights, and chivalric deeds.

Metrical romances were originally written in Old French and later translated into German and English, and they were brought to England by the Normans. Once transported onto English soil, they became very popular. An example is *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

A **metrical romance** poem is a type of prose poem that was especially popular during the Renaissance. These poems do not rhyme and deal with themes such as **love**, rites of passage, chivalry, adventure and interpersonal relationships. Knights, fair maidens and epic journeys appear frequently in **metrical romance** poems.

Ballad

A ballad is a form of verse, often a narrative set to music. Ballads derive from the medieval French chanson balladée or ballade, which were originally "dance songs". Ballads were particularly characteristic of the popular poetry and song of Britain and Ireland from the later medieval period until the 19th century.

13 Characteristics of a Ballad

- It is a song that tells a story.
- The beginning is often surprising.
- Its language is simple.
- It concentrates on a single episode.
- The theme is often tragic & sad.
- The story is told through dialogue & action.
- It lacks specific detail.
- It has a surprising ending.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's Rime of the Ancient Mariner is one of the best **examples of a ballad**. The **poem** is very strictly structured in terms of meter and rhyme, and tells a story of an old sailor who stops people on their way into a party.

Lyric

A lyric poem is a short, emotionally expressive poem with a songlike quality that is narrated in the first person. Unlike narrative poetry, which recounts events and tells a story, lyric poetry explores the emotions of the speaker of the poem.

Lyric poetry originated in ancient Greek literature and was originally intended to be set to music, accompanied by a musical instrument called a lyre, which resembles a small harp. Lyric poetry traditionally follows strict formal rules, but because there have been many different types of lyric poetry over centuries, there are now various different forms of lyric poetry.

Petrarchan

Denoting a sonnet of the kind used by the Italian poet Petrarch, with an octave rhyming *abbaabba*, and a sestet typically rhyming *cdcdcd* or *cdecde*.

The **Petrarchan sonnet**, was not developed by Petrarca himself, but rather by **a** string of Renaissance poets.

The **sonnets of Petrarch and Shakespeare** represent, in the history of this major poetic form, the two most significant developments in terms of technical consolidation—by renovating the inherited material—and artistic expressiveness—by covering a wide range of subjects in an equally wide range of tones. Both writers cemented the sonnet's enduring appeal by demonstrating its flexibility and lyrical potency through the exceptional quality of their poems.

The most noted **difference** is the one **between** the rhyming patterns of the two.

The **Shakespearean sonnet** follows the ABAB CDCD EFEF GG scheme. In **Spenserian**, the quartains are interlocked with the rhyming scheme of ABAB BCBC CDCD EE. ... The Volta: The Volta or the turn is an important component of any **sonnet.**

Allegory

Allegory, a symbolic fictional narrative that conveys a **meaning** not explicitly set forth in the narrative. **Allegory**, which encompasses such forms as fable, parable, and apologue, may have **meaning** on two or more levels that the reader can understand only through an interpretive process. **We can distinguish between two different types of allegory:**

- the historical or political **allegory**,
- the **allegory** of ideas.
- **Is 'Romeo and Juliet' an allegory**? The entire book of **Romeo and Juliet** is written in an **allegorical** style. This story is popularly known as a tragedy. ... The Christian imagery

throughout the story suggests that **Romeo and Juliet's** love is an **allegory** to the relationship of people with God or Christ.

DRAMA

Morality plays taught lessons of **morality** through the use of allegorical characters. **Mystery plays** told stories from the Bible and gave way to large **mystery** cycles in which many stories were told sequentially on the same day.

Together with the mystery **play** and the miracle **play**, the **morality play** is one of the three main types of vernacular drama produced during the Middle Ages. ... Among the oldest of **morality plays** surviving in English is The Castle of Perseverance (c. 1425), about the battle for the soul of Humanum Genus.

There were three **different** types of **plays** preformed during medieval times; The **Mystery Play**, the **Miracle Play** and the Morality **Play**. **Mystery plays** were stories taken from the Bible. ... The **Miracle play** was about the life or actions of a saint, usually about the actions that made that person a saint.

Tragedy

Tragedy, branch of drama that treats in a serious and dignified style the sorrowful or terrible events encountered or caused by a heroic individual. By extension the term may be applied to other literary works, such as the novel.

Classical tragedy. **Tragedy**, branch of drama that treats in a serious and dignified style the sorrowful or terrible events encountered or caused by a heroic individual. By extension the term may be applied to other literary works, such as the novel.

The four types of tragedy:

- Domestic tragedy.
- **Tragicomedy**.
- Unities.
- Senecan tragedy.
- **Hamartia**.
- Revenge tragedy.
- Catharsis.
- Heroic play.

Senecan tragedy, body of nine closet dramas (i.e., **plays** intended to be read rather than performed), written in blank verse by the Roman Stoic philosopher **Seneca** in the 1st century ad. Rediscovered by Italian humanists in the mid-16th century, they became the models for the revival of **tragedy** on the Renaissance stage. **Heroic Tragedy** is a name given to the form of **tragedy** which had some vogue in the beginning of the Restoration period (1660-1700). It was **drama** in the epic mode – grand, rhetorical and declamatory at its best and often bombastic at its worst. ... When the conflict ends in a disaster, the effect is a **tragedy**.The characteristics of the Senecan tragedy were: 1. a division into five acts with Choruses—and in the English imitations often a dumb show expressive of the action; 2. a considerable retailing of ‘horrors’ and violence, usually, though not always, acted off the stage and elaborately recounted; 3. a parallel violence of language and expression. Gorboduc is a good example of a Senecan tragedy

in English. The fashion, which developed in learned rather than popular circles, was short-lived, and was displaced by a more vital and native form of tragedy. But its elements persisted in Elizabethan drama and may be traced in such plays as Tamburlaine the Great and Titus Andronicus. More than a century later traces of Senecan influence are apparent in Dryden's Troilus and Cressida (1679).

Romantic tragedy are differences in the status and the. structure of the theaters, in the structure and technique. of the plays themselves, in their spirit and their mnotive, and in their conceptions of art and of life.

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Neo-Classical

Playwrights and actors in the **Neoclassical** period officially recognized just two types of plays: comedy and **tragedy**. ... Comedies, which were either satires or comedies of manners, tended to focus on the lower ranks of society, while **tragedies** portrayed the complex and fateful lives of the upper classes and royals. The **three principles** derived by French classicists from Aristotle's Poetics; they require a play to have a single action represented as occurring in a single place and within the course of a day. These **principles** were called, respectively, unity of action, unity of place, and unity of time.

Masque

The salient **features** of a **Masque** are: (1) The use of Allegorical and mythical subjects. (2) The characters are usually gods and goddesses of classical mythology, or personified **qualities** such as Delight, Grace, Love, Harmony, Revel, Sport, Laughter.A **masque** is a form of courtly entertainment containing music, dancing, singing and acting out a story.

Antimasque - Wikipedia

An **antimasque** (also spelled antemasque) is a comic or grotesque dance presented before or between the acts of a **masque**, a type of dramatic composition. ... It was also contrasted with the **masque** by the use of the lower class as characters. This then was supposed to harmonize with the king and the higher class.

PROSE

FABLE is a literary genre: a succinct fictional story, in prose or verse, that features animals, legendary creatures, plants, inanimate objects, or forces of nature that are anthropomorphized, and that illustrates or leads to a particular moral lesson (a "moral"), which may at the end be added explicitly as a concise maxim or saying.. A fable differs from

a parable in that the latter *excludes* animals, plants, inanimate objects, and forces of nature as actors that assume speech or other powers of humankind.
Fables are timeless literary devices because of their ability to deliver moral messages in a simple way that can be understood and enjoyed by readers of all ages. In fact, the fable is one of the oldest and most lasting methods of both written and oral storytelling. They can be found in the literature of almost all countries and languages, and are a fundamental part of the folklore of must cultures. Morals and lessons that would normally be difficult for children or even adults to understand are easily communicated through the fictional examples that fables provide, which makes them an extremely valuable way to of teaching through storytelling.

PARABLE

A parable is a short tale that illustrates a universal truth; it is a simple narrative. It sketches a setting, describes an action, and shows the results. It may sometimes be distinguished from similar narrative types, such as the allegory and the apologue.[10]

A parable often involves a character who faces a moral dilemma or one who makes a bad decision and then suffers the unintended consequences. Although the meaning of a parable is often not explicitly stated, it is not intended to be hidden or secret but to be quite straightforward and obvious.[11]

The defining characteristic of the parable is the presence of a subtext suggesting how a person should behave or what he should believe. Aside from providing guidance and suggestions for proper conduct in one's life, parables frequently use metaphorical language which allows people to more easily discuss difficult or complex ideas. Parables express an abstract argument by means of using a concrete narrative which is easily understood.

The allegory is a more general narrative type; it also employs metaphor. Like the parable, the allegory makes a single, unambiguous point. An allegory may have multiple noncontradictory interpretations and may also have implications that are ambiguous or hard to interpret. As H.W. Fowler put it, the object of both parable and allegory "is to enlighten the hearer by submitting to him a case in which he has apparently no direct concern, and upon which therefore a disinterested judgment may be elicited from him, ..."[10] The parable is more condensed than the allegory: it rests upon a single principle and a single moral, and it is intended that the reader or listener shall conclude that the moral applies equally well to his own concerns.

ESSAYs

An essay is nothing but **a piece of content which is written from the perception of writer or author**. Essays are similar to a story, pamphlet, thesis, etc. The best thing about Essay is you can use any type of language – formal or informal.
• An essay is, generally, a piece of writing that gives the author's own argument.
• The father of essay is Michel de Montaigne.
• The father of English essay is Francis Bacon.
• The Prince of English essay is Charles Lamb.
• Pioneers in essays include Dr. Samuel Johnson, W. H. Hudson.
• The word essay derives from the French infinitive essayer, "to try" or "to attempt".
• Dr. Johnson defines essay as ‘ a loose sally of the mind, an irregular, undigested piece, not a regular

and orderly composition.
• Essays are commonly used as literary criticism, political manifestos , learned arguments, observations

of daily life, recollections, and reflections of the author.
The concept of an "essay" has been extended to other media beyond writing.
• A film maker is a movie that often incorporates documentary filmmaking styles and focuses more on the evolution of a theme or idea.
• A photographic essay covers a topic with a linked series of photography that may have accompanying text or captions.
• Some famous examples are ‘ Good Bye to All That’ by Joan Didion, ‘Once More to the Lake’ by

E.B. White

APHORISTIC

An **aphorism** is an **essay**, an **essay** in its smallest possible form. In other words, an **aphorism** is not a truth but a kind of test (an assay), a statement you are meant to run up against to decide if you agree. ... The best aphorisms are not the most true but the most undecidable, those worth endlessly testing.
Aphoristic essays contain short and clear sentences and having teaching content with a didactic bend.
• The father of Aphoristic essay is Francis Bacon.
• He was inspired by the french writer Montaigne.
• Bacon called his essays ‘counsels civil and moral’ and ‘dispersed meditations’.
• Aphoristic essays are known for their precision of style and balancing structure.
• No superfluous words are used and sentences flow rapidly.
• A critic says, the sentences in an aphoristic essay are in a state of ‘literary undress’.
• Some famous examples are ‘To Kill a Mocking Bird’ by Harper Lee and ‘The Writing on my

Forehead’ by Nafisa Haji.

PERIODICAL

A periodical essay is **a type of prose non-fiction published in a periodical**. A periodical is a type of serial publication such as a magazine or newspaper that appears at regular intervals. It often is compiled by a publisher or editor by assembling works commissioned from or submitted by several authors.
A periodical essay is an essay published in a magazine or journal and appears as a part of a series.
• The term “periodical essay” is coined by George Colman and Bonnell Thornton.
• Pioneers of periodical essays are Joseph Addison and Richard Steele.
• It is a objective type of essay.
• It deals with the daily social life of people and talked about it as a subject.
• These are mainly used to expose false life and has a journalistic nature.
• It targets the victim indirectly through wits and witty criticism.

• These plays a major role between both the literates and illiterates.
Periodical essays are more popular than other types.
• It gained its complete popularity during the 18th century when the first periodical essays

appeared during the 1700's.
• Some examples are essays published in 'Tatler' and 'The Spectator' of Addison and Steele and 'Review' by Daniel Defoe.

CRITICAL

A critical essay is **a type of academic writing where the author analyzes and evaluates a text**. For an essay to become critical, you need to claim a text's particular ideas and then support that claim with evidence.

PERSONAL

A personal essay is **a short work of autobiographical nonfiction characterized by a sense of intimacy and a conversational manner**. Also called a personal statement. A type of creative nonfiction, the personal essay is 'all over the map,' according to Annie Dillard.
Personal essays can also be called as prose-lyric.
• Personal essay is a short work of autobiographical nonfiction characterized by a sense of intimacy and a conversational manner.
• Father of personal essays is Michel de Montaigne.
• Pioneers includes Thomas de Quincey, Leigh Hunt.
• The prince of personal essayists is Charles Lamb.
• Personal essays are often subjective.
• Lamb's essays can be called as personality translated into print.
• It was popular during the 19th century.
In personal essays, the writer quotes the emotions, thoughts, feelings, tantrums, confessions into a written form.
• It can also be called as personal statement.
• Some notable examples are 'Essays of Elia' by Charles Lamb and 'The Wishing: CapPapers' by Leigh Hunt.

TWENTIETH CENTURY ESSAYS
Essays that arose during the 20th century with the cult of modern literature as well as with significant importance for the subjects.
• Pioneers include Virginia Woolf, A.G. Gardiner, Hilaire Belloc.
• In the modern essay, the distinction between the personal and the objective is hardly noticeable.
• A modern essay may be scientific, literary, biographical or critical.
• In modern essays, personal element is predominant.
• It provides criticism of life.
• Any theme is good enough for a modern essayist.
• The language used by a modern essayist is easily accessible and is a part of everyday speech
Modern essay makes use of humour, satire and wit.
• Some notable contributions are 'Death of the Moth' by Virginia Woolf and 'At the Sign of the Lion' by Hilaire Belloc

FICTION

A work of fiction implies the inventive construction of an imaginary world and, most commonly, its fictionality is publicly acknowledged, so its audience typically expects it to deviate in some ways from the real world rather than presenting only characters who are actual people or portrayals that are factually accurate.[6] Since fiction is generally understood as not fully adhering to the real world, its themes and its context, such as if and how it relates to true issues or events, are open to various interpretations.[7] Characters and events within some fictional works may even exist in their own context entirely separate from the known physical universe: an independent fictional universe.

In contrast to fiction is its traditional opposite: non-fiction, in which the creator assumes responsibility for presenting only the historical and factual truth. Despite the usual distinction between fiction and non-fiction, some modern works blur the boundary, particularly ones that fall under certain experimental storytelling genres—including some postmodern fiction, autofiction,[8] or creative nonfiction like non-fiction novels and docudramas—as well as deliberate literary frauds, which are falsely marketed as nonfiction.[9]

SHORT-STORY

the **definition** of a **short story** is a piece of **fiction** that has a limited number of words, only a few characters and one theme. ... A kind of **story** shorter than the **novel** or novelette, characteristically developing a single central theme and limited in scope and number of characters. **definition** of a **short story** is a piece of **fiction** that has a limited number of words, only a few characters and one theme. ... A kind of **story** shorter than the **novel** or novelette, characteristically developing a single central theme and limited in scope and number of characters.

NOVEL

Novel, an invented prose narrative of considerable length and a certain complexity that deals imaginatively with human experience, usually through a connected sequence of events involving a group of persons in a specific setting. Within its broad framework, the genre of the novel has encompassed an extensive range of types and styles: picaresque, epistolary, Gothic, romantic, realist, historical—to name only some of the more important ones.

NON-FICTION

"**Nonfiction**" refers to literature based in fact. ... The **Nonfiction** Department has books and videos in many categories including biography, business, cooking, health and fitness, pets, crafts, home decorating, languages, travel, home improvement, religion, art and music, history, self-help, true crime, science and humor.

BIOGRAPHY

A **biography**, or simply **bio**, is a detailed description of a person's life. It involves more than just the basic facts like education, work, relationships, and death; it portrays a person's experience of

these life events. Unlike a profile or curriculum vitae (résumé), a biography presents a subject's life story, highlighting various aspects of their life, including intimate details of experience, and may include an analysis of the subject's personality.

Biographical works are usually non-fiction, but fiction can also be used to portray a person's life. One in-depth form of biographical coverage is called legacy writing. Works in diverse media, from literature to film, form the genre known as biography.

An **authorized biography** is written with the permission, cooperation, and at times, participation of a subject or a subject's heirs. An **autobiography** is written by the person himself or herself, sometimes with the assistance of a collaborator or ghostwriter.

AUTO-BIOGRAPHY

Autobiography is one type of biography, which tells a life story of its author, meaning it is a written record of the author's life. ... Such stories include Charles Dickens' David Copperfield, and J.D Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye. In writing about personal experience, one discovers himself.

UNIT II

IMPACT OF THEHISTORY OF LANGUAGE ON LITERATURE FROM 11TH TO17TH CENTUARY

ORIGIN OF LANGUAGE PAGE 1-7

This article is focused on **English-language literature** rather than the literature of England, so that it includes writers from Scotland, Wales, the Crown dependencies, and the whole of Ireland, as well as literature in English from countries of the former British Empire, including the United States. However, until the early 19th century, it only deals with the literature of the United Kingdom, the Crown dependencies and Ireland. It does not include literature written in the other languages of Britain.

The English language has developed over the course of more than 1,400 years.[1] The earliest forms of English, a set of Anglo-Frisian dialects brought to Great Britain by Anglo-Saxon invaders in the fifth century, are called Old English. Beowulf is the most famous work in Old English, and has achieved national epic status in England, despite being set in Scandinavia. However, following the Norman conquest of England in 1066, the written form of the Anglo-Saxon language became less common. Under the influence of the new aristocracy, French became the standard language of courts, parliament, and polite society.[2] The English spoken after the Normans came is known as Middle English. This form of English lasted until the 1470s, when the Chancery Standard (late Middle English), a London-based form of English, became widespread. Geoffrey Chaucer (1343 – 1400), author of *The Canterbury Tales*, was a significant figure in the development of the legitimacy of vernacular Middle English at a time when the dominant literary languages in England were still French and Latin. The invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg in 1439 also helped to standardise the language, as did the King James Bible (1611),[3] and the Great Vowel Shift.[4]

Poet and playwright William Shakespeare (1564 – 1616) is widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language and one of the world's greatest dramatists.[5][6][7] His plays have been translated into every major living language and are performed more often than those of any other playwright.[8] In the nineteenth century Sir Walter Scott's historical romances inspired a generation of painters, composers, and writers throughout Europe.[9]

The English language spread throughout the world with the development of the British Empire between the late 16th and early 18th centuries. At its height, it was the largest empire in history.[10] By 1913, the British Empire held sway over 412 million people, 23% of the world population at the time,[11] During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries these colonies and the USA started to produce their own significant literary traditions in English. And in the last hundred plus years numerous writers from Great Britain, both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, the USA, and members of other former British colonies have received the Nobel Prize for works in the English language, more than in any other language.

Old English (450-1.100)

The history of the English language really started with the arrival of three Germanic tribes who invaded Britain during the 5th century AD. These tribes, the Angles, the Saxons and the Jutes, crossed the North Sea from what today is Denmark and northern Germany. At that time the inhabitants of Britain spoke a Celtic language. But most of the Celtic speakers were pushed west and north by the invaders – mainly into what is now Wales, Scotland and Ireland. The Angles came from "Englaland" [*sic*] and their language was called "Englisc" – from which the words "England" and "English" are derived. Their language, now known as "Old English", was soon adopted as the common language of this relatively remote corner of Europe. Although you and I would find it hard to understand Old English, it provided a solid foundation for the language we speak today and gave us many essential words like "be", "strong" and "water".

Middle English (1.100 – 1.500)

The Viking invasion: With the Viking invasions (Vikings were a tribe of Nordic people that ransacked their way through Northern and Northwestern Europe 1,000-1,200 years ago), Old English got mixed up with Old Norse, the language of the Viking tribes. Old Norse ended up giving English more than 2,000 new words, including "give" and "take", "egg", "knife", "husband", "run" and "viking".

The French are coming: Although English was spoken widely on the British Isles by 1,000 AD, the Norman invasion established French as the language of royals and of power. Old English was left to the peasants, and despite its less glamorous status, it continued to develop and grow by adopting a whole host of Latin and French words, including everyday words such as "beer","city", "fruit" and "people", as well as half of the months of the year. By adopting and adapting French words, the English language also became more sophisticated through the inclusion of concepts and words like "liberty" and "justice".

Modern English

Early Modern English (1500 – 1800) – the tempest ends in a storm: In the 14th-15th century, following the Hundred Years War with France that ended French rule of the British Isles, English became the language of power and influence once again. It got a further boost through the development of English literature and English culture, spearheaded by William Shakespeare.

Shakespeare's influence on the development of the English language and its unique and rich culture is hard to grasp; the man is said to have invented at least 1,700 words, including "alligator", "puppy dog", and "fashionable", in addition to penning classics like Romeo & Juliet and Hamlet!

- Towards the end of Middle English, a sudden and distinct change in pronunciation (the Great Vowel Shift) started, with vowels being pronounced shorter and shorter. From the

Tips to learn English»

Home Tips to learn English A short history of the English language

The Origin of Language

Language is an ever-evolving part of lives, something that changes with each passing instance of usage. After all, it is an integral part of the culture, which is also why there are so many different languages and dialects to be found. But this also gives rise to an extremely important question: What is the origin of language? Do we learn it from our socio-cultural surroundings, or are we born with it?

Many religions provide an account of the origin of language. Since the 1960s, the theory of grammar has come to be dominated by the ideas of Noam Chomsky. For Chomsky, the central question of linguistics is the nature of the innate biological endowment which enables humans to acquire a language so rapidly and efficiently in the first years of life. Language is both a cultural phenomenon and also the most salient distinguishing characteristic of modern *Homo sapiens* as a species. A recent discovery has been evidence for a relationship between inherited language impairment and a specific gene in humans: the so-called FOXP2 gene. For one thing, it is found also in the DNA of many other species. Its role in language is at best indirect, and many other genes are relevant to the normal maturation of language in humans.

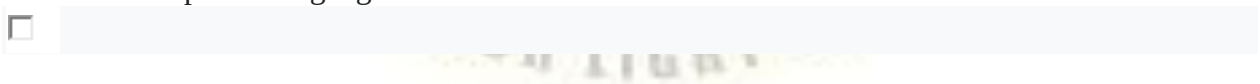
English is a West Germanic language that originated from Anglo-Frisian dialects brought to Britain in the mid 5th to 7th centuries AD by Anglo-Saxon migrants from what is now northwest Germany, southern Denmark and the Netherlands. The Anglo-Saxons settled in the British Isles from the mid-5th century and came to dominate the bulk of southern Great Britain. Their language, now called Old English, originated as a group of Anglo-Frisian dialects which were spoken, at least by the settlers, in England and southern and eastern Scotland in the early Middle Ages, displacing the Celtic languages (and, possibly, British Latin) that had previously been dominant. Old English reflected the varied origins of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms established in different parts of Britain. The Late West Saxon dialect eventually became dominant. A significant subsequent influence on the shaping of Old English came from contact with the North Germanic languages spoken by the Scandinavian Vikings who conquered and colonized parts of Britain during the 8th and 9th centuries, which led to much lexical borrowing and grammatical simplification. The Anglian dialects had a greater influence on Middle English.

After the Norman conquest in 1066, Old English was replaced, for a time, by Anglo-Norman as the language of the upper classes. This is regarded as marking the end of the Old English or Anglo-Saxon era, as during this period the English language was heavily influenced by Anglo-Norman, developing into a phase known now as Middle English. The conquering Normans spoke a Romance langue d'oïl called Old Norman, which in Britain developed into Anglo-Norman. Many Norman and French loanwords entered the local language in this period, especially in vocabulary related to the church, the court system and the government. As Normans are descendants of Vikings who invaded France, Norman French was influenced by Old Norse, and many Norse loanwords in English came directly from French. Middle English was spoken to the late 15th century. The system of orthography that was established during the Middle English period is largely still in use today. Later changes in pronunciation, however, combined with the adoption of various foreign spellings, mean that the spelling of modern English words appears highly irregular.

Early Modern English – the language used by William Shakespeare – is dated from around 1500. It incorporated many Renaissance-era loans from Latin and Ancient Greek, as well as borrowings from other European languages, including French, German and Dutch. Significant pronunciation changes in this period included the ongoing Great Vowel Shift, which affected the qualities of most long vowels. Modern English proper, similar in most respects to that spoken today, was in place by the late 17th century.

English as we know it today came to be exported to other parts of the world through British colonisation, and is now the dominant language in Britain and Ireland, the United States and Canada, Australia, New Zealand and many smaller former colonies, as well as being widely spoken in India, parts of Africa, and elsewhere. Partially due to influence of the United States and its globalized efforts of commerce and technology, English took on the status of a global lingua franca in the second half of the 20th century. This is especially true in Europe, where English has largely taken over the former roles of French and (much earlier) Latin as a common language used to conduct business and diplomacy, share scientific and technological information, and otherwise communicate across national boundaries. The efforts of English-speaking Christian missionaries has resulted in English becoming a second language for many other groups.[1][2]

Global variation among different English dialects and accents remains significant today. Scots, a form of English traditionally spoken in parts of Scotland and the north of Ireland, is sometimes treated as a separate language.



Proto-English[edit]

Main articles: Celtic language decline in England and Saxon Shore

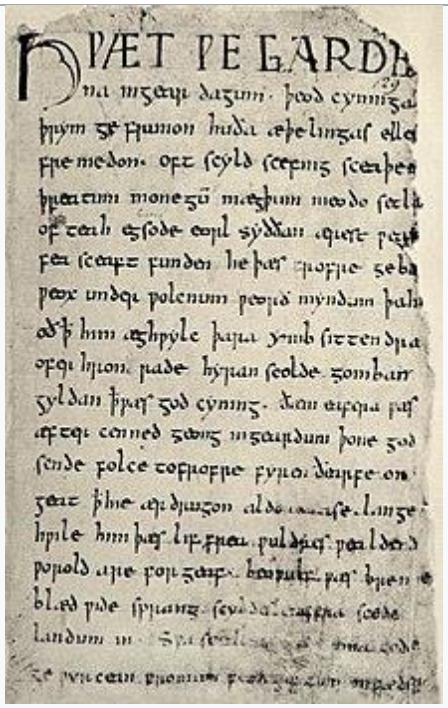
English has its roots in the languages of the Germanic peoples of northern Europe. During the Roman Empire, most of the Germanic-inhabited area (Germania) remained independent from Rome, although some southwestern parts were within the empire. Some Germanics served in the Roman military, and troops from Germanic tribes such as the Tungri, Batavi, Menapii and Frisii served in Britain (Britannia) under Roman command. Germanic settlement and power expanded during the Migration Period, which saw the fall of the Western Roman Empire. A Germanic settlement of Britain took place from the 5th to the 7th

century, following the end of Roman rule on the island. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* relates that around the year 449 Vortigern, king of the Britons, invited the "Angle kin" (Angles allegedly led by the Germanic brothers Hengist and Horsa) to help repel invading Picts, in return for lands in the southeast of Britain. This led to waves of settlers who eventually established seven kingdoms, known as the heptarchy. (The *Chronicle* was not a contemporaneous work, however, and cannot be regarded as an accurate record of such early events.)[3] Bede, who wrote his *Ecclesiastical History* in AD 731, writes of invasion by Angles, Saxons and Jutes, although the precise nature of the invasion and settlement and the contributions made by these particular groups are the subject of much dispute among historians.[4]

The languages spoken by the Germanic peoples who initially settled in Britain were part of the West Germanic branch of the Germanic language family. They consisted of dialects from the Ingvaeonic grouping, spoken mainly around the North Sea coast, in regions that lie within modern Denmark, north-west Germany and the Netherlands. Due to specific similarities between early English and Old Frisian, an Anglo-Frisian grouping is also identified.

These dialects had most of the typical West Germanic features, including a significant amount of grammatical inflection. Vocabulary came largely from the core Germanic stock, although due to the Germanic peoples' extensive contacts with the Roman world, the settlers' languages already included a number of loanwords from Latin.[5] For instance, the predecessor of Modern English *wine* had been borrowed into early Germanic from the Latin *vinum*.

Old English[edit]



The first page of the *Beowulf* manuscript

Main article: Old English

The Germanic settlers in the British Isles initially spoke a number of different dialects, which would develop into a language that came to be called Anglo-Saxon, or now more commonly Old English.[6] It displaced the indigenous Brittonic Celtic (and the Latin of the former Roman rulers)

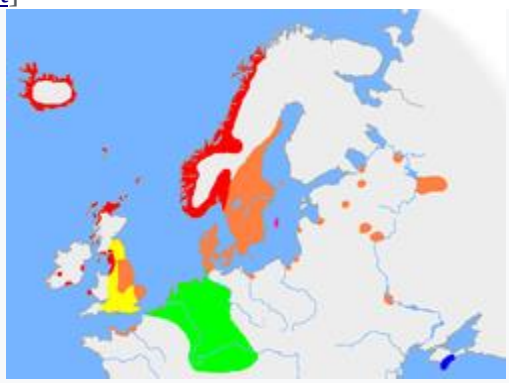
in parts of the areas of Britain that later formed the Kingdom of England, while Celtic languages remained in most of Scotland, Wales and Cornwall, and many compound Celtic-Germanic place names survive, hinting at early language mixing.[7] Old English continued to exhibit local variation, the remnants of which continue to be found in dialects of Modern English.[6] The four main dialects were Mercian, Northumbrian, Kentish and West Saxon; the last of these formed the basis for the literary standard of the later Old English period, although the dominant forms of Middle and Modern English would develop mainly from Mercian.

Old English was first written using a runic script called the futhorc, but this was replaced by a version of the Latin alphabet introduced by Irish missionaries in the 8th century. Most literary output was in either the Early West Saxon of Alfred the Great's time, or the Late West Saxon (regarded as the "classical" form of Old English) of the Winchester school inspired by Bishop *Æthelwold of Winchester* and followed by such writers as the prolific *Ælfric of Eynsham* ("the Grammarian"). The most famous surviving work from the Old English period is the epic poem *Beowulf*, composed by an unknown poet.

The introduction of Christianity from around the year 600 encouraged the addition of over 400 Latin loan words into Old English, such as the predecessors of the modern *priest*, *paper*, and *school*, and a smaller number of Greek loan words.[8] The speech of eastern and northern parts of England was also subject to strong Old Norse influence due to Scandinavian rule and settlement beginning in the 9th century (see below).

Most native English speakers today find Old English unintelligible, even though about half of the most commonly used words in Modern English have Old English roots.[9] The grammar of Old English was much more inflected than modern English, combined with freer word order, and was grammatically quite similar in some respects to modern German. The language had demonstrative pronouns (equivalent to *this* and *that*) but did not have the definite article *the*. The Old English period is considered to have evolved into the Middle English period some time after the Norman conquest of 1066, when the language came to be influenced significantly by the new ruling class's language, Old Norman.[10][11]

Scandinavian influence[edit]



The approximate extent of Old Norse and related languages in the early 10th century:
- **Old West Norse dialect**
- **Old East Norse dialect**
- **Old Gutnish**
- **Old English**
- **Crimean Gothic**
- Other Germanic languages with which Old Norse still retained some mutual intelligibility

Vikings from modern-day Norway and Denmark began to raid parts of Britain from the late 8th century onward. In 865, however, a major invasion was launched by what the Anglo-Saxons called the Great Heathen Army, which eventually brought large parts of northern and eastern England (the Danelaw) under Scandinavian control. Most of these areas were retaken by the English under Edward the Elder in the early 10th century, although York and Northumbria were not permanently regained until the death of Eric Bloodaxe in 954. Scandinavian raids resumed in the late 10th century during the reign of Æthelred the Unready, and Sweyn Forkbeard eventually succeeded in briefly being declared king of England in 1013, followed by the longer reign of his son Cnut from 1016 to 1035, and Cnut's sons Harold Harefoot and Harthacnut until 1042.

The Scandinavians, or Norsemen, spoke dialects of a North Germanic language known as Old Norse. The Anglo-Saxons and the Scandinavians thus spoke related languages from different branches (West and North) of the Germanic family; many of their lexical roots were the same or similar, although their grammatical systems were more divergent. Probably significant numbers of Norse speakers settled in the Danelaw during the period of Scandinavian control. Many place-names in those areas are of Scandinavian provenance (those ending in *-by*, for example); it is believed that the settlers often established new communities in places that had not previously been developed by the Anglo-Saxons. The extensive contact between Old English and Old Norse speakers, including the possibility of intermarriage that resulted from the acceptance of Christianity by the Danes in 878,[12] undoubtedly influenced the varieties of those languages spoken in the areas of contact. Some scholars even believe that Old English and Old Norse underwent a kind of fusion and that the resulting English language might be described as a mixed language or creole. During the rule of Cnut and other Danish kings in the first half of the 11th century, a kind of diglossia may have come about, with the West Saxon literary language existing alongside the Norse-influenced Midland dialect of English, which could have served as a koine or spoken lingua franca. When Danish rule ended, and particularly after the Norman Conquest, the status of the minority Norse language presumably declined relative to that of English, and its remaining speakers assimilated to English in a process involving language shift and language death. The widespread bilingualism that must have existed during the process possibly contributed to the rate of borrowings from Norse into English.[13]

Only about 100 or 150 Norse words, mainly connected with government and administration, are found in Old English writing. The borrowing of words of this type was stimulated by Scandinavian rule in the Danelaw and during the later reign of Cnut. However, most surviving Old English texts are based on the West Saxon standard that developed outside the Danelaw; it is not clear to what extent Norse influenced the forms of the language spoken in eastern and northern England at that time. Later texts from the Middle English era, now based on an eastern Midland rather than a Wessex standard, reflect the significant impact that Norse had on the language. In all, English borrowed about 2000 words from Old Norse, several hundred surviving in Modern English.[13]

Norse borrowings include many very common words, such as *anger*, *bag*, *both*, *hit*, *law*, *leg*, *same*, *skill*, *sky*, *take*, *window*, and even the pronoun *they*. Norse influence is also believed to have reinforced the adoption of the plural copular verb form *are* rather than alternative Old English forms like *sind*. It is also considered to have stimulated and accelerated the morphological simplification found in Middle English, such as the loss of grammatical gender and explicitly marked case (except in pronouns).[14] That is possibly confirmed by observations that simplification of the case endings occurred earliest in the north

and latest in the southwest. The spread of phrasal verbs in English is another grammatical development to which Norse may have contributed (although here a possible Celtic influence is also noted).[13]

Middle English[edit]

Main articles: Middle English and Influence of French on English

Middle English is the form of English spoken roughly from the time of the Norman Conquest in 1066 until the end of the 15th century.

For centuries after the Conquest, the Norman kings and high-ranking nobles in England and to some extent elsewhere in the British Isles spoke Anglo-Norman, a variety of Old Norman, originating from a northern langue d'oïl dialect. Merchants and lower-ranked nobles were often bilingual in Anglo-Norman and English, whilst English continued to be the language of the common people. Middle English was influenced by both Anglo-Norman, and later Anglo-French (see characteristics of the Anglo-Norman language).

Opening prologue of "The Wife of Bath's Tale" from the *Canterbury Tales*

Until the 14th century, Anglo-Norman and then French were the language of the courts and government. Even after the decline of Norman, standard French retained the status of a formal or prestige language, and about 10,000 French (and Norman) loan words entered Middle English, particularly terms associated with government, church, law, the military, fashion, and food[15] (see English language word origins and List of English words of French origin). The strong influence of Old Norse on English (described in the previous section) also becomes apparent during this period. The impact of the native British Celtic languages that English continued to displace is generally held to be very small, although a few scholars have attributed some grammatical forms, such as periphrastic "do", to Celtic influence.[16][17] These theories have been criticized by a number of other linguists.[18][19][20] Some scholars have also put forward hypotheses that Middle English was a kind of creole language resulting from contact between Old English and either Old Norse or Anglo-Norman.

English literature began to reappear after 1200, when a changing political climate and the decline in Anglo-Norman made it more respectable. The Provisions of Oxford, released in 1258, was the first English government document to be published in the English language after the Norman Conquest. In 1362, Edward III became the first king to address Parliament in English. The Pleading in English Act 1362 made English the only language in which court proceedings could be held, though the official record remained in Latin.[21] By the end of the century, even the royal court had switched to English. Anglo-Norman remained in use in limited circles somewhat longer, but it had ceased to be a living language. Official documents began to be produced regularly in English during the 15th century. Geoffrey Chaucer, who lived in the late 14th century, is the most famous writer from the Middle English period, and *The Canterbury Tales* is his best-known work.

The English language changed enormously during the Middle English period, both in vocabulary and pronunciation, and in grammar. While Old English is a heavily inflected language (synthetic), the use of grammatical endings diminished in Middle English (analytic). Grammar distinctions were lost as many noun and adjective endings were levelled to *-e*. The older plural noun marker *-en* (retained in a few cases such as *children* and *oxen*) largely gave way to *-s*, and grammatical gender was discarded. Definite article *þe* appears around 1200, later spelled as *the*, first appearing in East and North England as a substitute for Old English *se* and *seo*, nominative forms of "that."[22]

English spelling was also influenced by Norman in this period, with the /θ/ and /ð/ sounds being spelled *th* rather than with the Old English letters þ (thorn) and ð (eth), which did not exist in Norman. These letters remain in the modern Icelandic and Faroese alphabets, having been borrowed from Old English via Old West Norse.

Early Modern English[edit]

Main article: Early Modern English

English underwent extensive sound changes during the 15th century, while its spelling conventions remained largely constant. Modern English is often dated from the Great Vowel Shift, which took place mainly during the 15th century. The language was further transformed by the spread of a standardized London-based dialect in government and administration and by the standardizing effect of printing, which also tended to regularize capitalization. As a result, the language acquired self-conscious terms such as "accent" and "dialect".[23] As most early presses came from continental Europe, a few native English letters such as þ and ð died out; for some time *þe* was written as *ye*. By the time of William Shakespeare (mid 16th - early 17th century),[24] the language had become clearly recognizable as Modern English. In 1604, the first English dictionary was published, the *Table Alphabeticall*.

Increased literacy and travel facilitated the adoption of many foreign words, especially borrowings from Latin and Greek from the time of the Renaissance. In the 17th century, Latin words were often used with their original inflections, but these eventually disappeared. As there are many words from different languages and English spelling is variable, the risk of mispronunciation is high, but remnants of the older forms remain in a few regional dialects, most notably in the West Country. During the period, loan words were borrowed from Italian, German, and Yiddish. British acceptance of and resistance to Americanisms began during this period.[25]

Modern English[edit]

Main article: Modern English

The first authoritative and full-featured English dictionary, the *Dictionary of the English Language*, was published by Samuel Johnson in 1755. To a high degree, the dictionary standardized both English spelling and word usage. Meanwhile, grammar texts by Lowth, Murray, Priestly, and others attempted to prescribe standard usage even further.

Early Modern English and Late Modern English, also called Present-Day English (PDE), differ essentially in vocabulary. Late Modern English has many more words, arising from the Industrial Revolution and technologies that created a need for new words, as well as international development of the language. The British Empire at its height covered one quarter of the Earth's land surface, and the English language adopted foreign words from many countries. British English and North American English, the two major varieties of the language, are together spoken by 400 million people. The total number of English speakers worldwide may exceed one billion.[26] The English language will almost certainly continue to evolve over time. With the development of computer and online environments (such as chat rooms, social media expressions, and apps), and the adoption of English as a worldwide lingua franca across cultures, customs, and traditions, it should not be surprising to see further shortening of words, phrases, and/or sentences.

Phonological changes[edit]

Introduction

Over the last 1,200 years or so, English has undergone extensive changes in its vowel system but many fewer changes to its consonants.

In the Old English period, a number of umlaut processes affected vowels in complex ways, and unstressed vowels were gradually eroded, eventually leading to a loss of grammatical case and grammatical gender in the Early Middle English period. The most important umlaut process was *i-mutation (c. 500 CE), which led to pervasive alternations of all sorts, many of which survive in the modern language: e.g. in noun paradigms (*foot* vs. *feet*, *mouse* vs. *mice*, *brother* vs. *brethren*); in verb paradigms (*sold* vs. *sell*); nominal derivatives from adjectives ("strong" vs. "strength", *broad* vs. *breadth*, *foul* vs. *filth*) and from other nouns (*fox* vs. "vixen"); verbal derivatives ("food" vs. "to feed"); and comparative adjectives ("old" vs. "elder"). Consonants were more stable, although velar consonants were significantly modified by palatalization, which produced alternations such as *speak* vs. *speech*, *drink* vs. *drench*, *wake* vs. *watch*, *bake* vs. *batch*.

The Middle English period saw further vowel changes. Most significant was the Great Vowel Shift (c. 1500 CE), which transformed the pronunciation of all long vowels. This occurred after the spelling system was fixed, and accounts for the drastic differences in pronunciation between "short" *mat, met, bit, cot* vs. "long" *mate, mete/meet, bite, coat*. Other changes that left echoes in the modern language were homorganic lengthening before *ld*, *mb*, *nd*, which accounts for the long vowels in *child*, *mind*, *climb*, etc.; pre-cluster shortening, which resulted in the vowel alternations in *child* vs. *children*, *keep* vs. *kept*, *meet* vs. *met*; and trisyllabic laxing, which is responsible for alternations such as *grateful* vs. *gratitude*, *divine* vs. *divinity*, *sole* vs. *solitary*.

Among the more significant recent changes to the language have been the development of rhotic and non-rhotic accents (i.e. "r-dropping"); the trap-bath split in many dialects of British English; and flapping of *t* and *d* between vowels in American English and Australian English.

Vowel changes[edit]

The following table shows the principal developments in the stressed vowels, from Old English through Modern English (*C* indicates any consonant):

Old English (c. 900 AD)	Middle English (c. 1400 AD)	Early Modern English (c. 1600 AD)	Modern English	Modern spelling	Examples
ɑː	ɔː	oː	oʊ əʊ (UK)	oa, oCe	oak, boat, whole, stone
æː, æːɑ	ɛː	eː	iː	ea	heal, beat, cheap
eː, eːo	eː	iː		ee, -e	feed, deep, me, be
iː, yː	iː	əi or ɛi	aɪ	iCe	ride, time, mice
oː	oː	uː	uː	oo, -o	moon, food, do
uː	uː	əu or ɔu	aʊ	ou	mouse, out, loud
ɑ, æ, æɑ	a	Æ	æ	a	man, sat, wax
	aː	ɛː	eɪ	aCe	name, bake, raven
e, eo	E	ɛ	ɛ	e	help, tell, seven
	ɛː	eː	iː	ea, eCe	speak, meat, mete
i, y	ɪ	ɪ	ɪ	i	written, sit, kiss
o	O	ɔ	ɒ ɑ (US)	o	god, top, beyond
	ɔː	oː	oʊ əʊ (UK)	oa, oCe	foal, nose, over

u	ʊ	ɤ	ʌ	u, o	buck, up, love, wonder
		ʊ	ʊ		full, bull

The following chart shows the primary developments of English vowels in the last 600 years, in more detail, since Late Middle English of Chaucer's time. The Great Vowel Shift can be seen in the dramatic developments from c. 1400 to 1600.

The Debate in Linguistics

An argument very similar to this one has been going on in the world of linguistics for quite some time now. On the one hand, there is the belief that language is a part of the culture, in fact, that language is an extension of culture itself, and therefore is completely dependent on it.
This notion corroborates with the fact that language has always evolved hand in hand with the environmental culture.

The other side of the argument, however, is that there is a strong biological element in language.

Of course, such an argument is only possible when we trace language to the spoken form and not the artificial latter-day representation in the form of writing. In the spoken form, language has been observed to be a product of natural selection, almost Darwinian in Nature.

The person who propagated this idea the farthest is Noam Chomsky, an American writer, most popular for his liberal political work, also credited with significant advances in linguistics.

Learn more about **How Language Changes**.

Chomsky's Hypothesis

Noam Chomsky, in the late 1950s, proposed the idea that we are genetically imbibed with the sense of speech.

This idea comes with a notion of 'Universal Grammar', a specific attribute that helps us with syntax and semantics. This notion creates the Chomskyan view that we must be genetically programmed for speech: rather than imitation from our environment and culture, speech is based on a blueprint that is imbibed in us by birth.

This idea found a great number of supporters, as a result of which, the theory has been derived upon, and reasoned for, greatly.

Reasons that support the Innateness of Speech

The fundamental fact that all humans eventually learn to speak favors Chomsky's idea.

The *speed of acquisition* argument adds to this, by essentially bringing forth the fact that a mentally healthy child is always able to learn to speak within a few years of being exposed to a language.

Further, the *critical – age hypothesis,* which elucidates on how the ability to learn to speak diminishes with age, substantiates this argument, mimicking natural maturational stages, and signaling towards biological involvement to the process of learning a language.

Neurobiological findings, such as those found by conducting research on instances of damage to the speech center of the brain, also validate the notion of 'innateness' in linguistic ability.

Finally, the discovery of the 'FOXP2' gene, believed to contain aspects that give us the ability to speak, all but confirms the presence of a biological component to language.

However, this idea met its fair share of criticisms as well, garnering support for the notion that language is all to do with culture and society.

Arguments Supporting Language's Cultural Roots

The fundamental support to the idea of language coming from culture arises from the very nature of language: it is a socio-cultural element and an important one at that. Theorists belonging to this school of thought believe that cultural understanding is all there is to language, with no biological impetus.

Empirically, it has been seen that children who were isolated from sociocultural sources of language for their formative years, were unable to learn how to speak, ever. Apart from validating the critical – age hypothesis to a certain extent, this observation also questions the idea that there is an innate understanding of language within us.

There are also strong questions regarding the role of intelligence in linguistic abilities. As a strong dependence on the ability lies in intellect, it has also been established that the converse is true as well, positing an intelligence gradient upon which language lies, thus weakening several of Chomsky's arguments.

Learn more about **Does Culture Drive Language Change?**

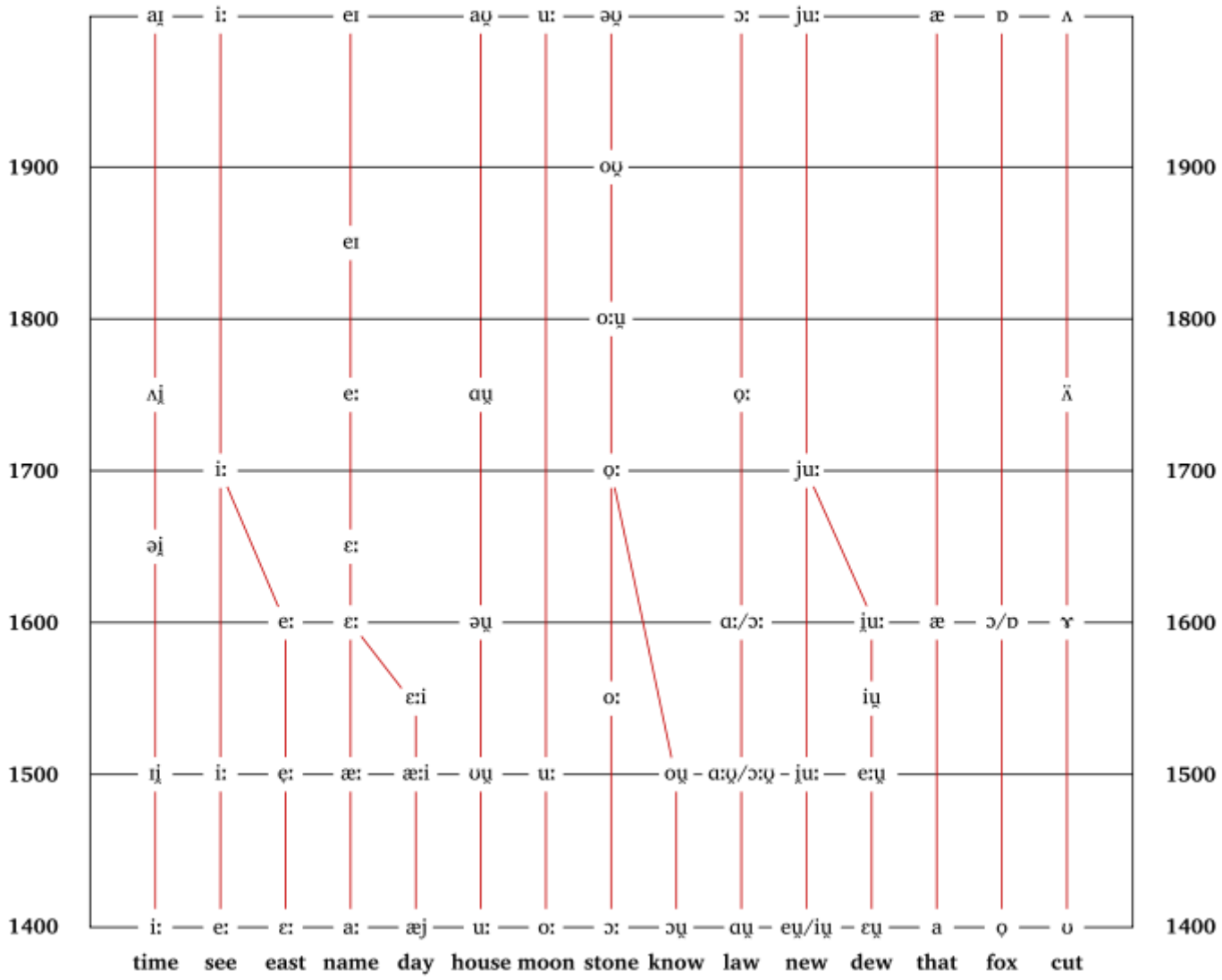
The Case for Innate Linguistic Abilities

Even though there are arguments for both sides of the debate, the idea that language is innately coded into our genes finds a lot of suitors, perhaps because the evidence for the same is easily available around us every day.

For instance, the notion that there is not a single group of humans, at least discovered thus far, not even the remotest of tribes, that do not communicate.

Instinctively, babies babble, almost as if they are trying to speak, and eventually learn to talk. In contrast, even though some animals can understand human emotions, and some can even mimic a few words or sentences, they do not have a sense of language.

Even though the emergence of this ability is questioned, research has virtually confirmed that it evolved before humans had moved out of Africa.
This is a transcript from the video series ***Story of Human***



Ottoman wars in Europe

The **Ottoman wars in Europe** were a series of military conflicts between the Ottoman Empire and various European states dating from the Late Middle Ages up through the early 20th century. The earliest conflicts began during the Byzantine–Ottoman wars, waged in Anatolia in the late 13th century before entering Europe in the mid 14th century, followed by the Bulgarian–Ottoman wars and the Serbian–Ottoman wars waged beginning in the mid 14th century. Much of

this period was characterized by Ottoman expansion into the Balkans. The Ottoman Empire made further inroads into Central Europe in the 15th and 16th centuries, culminating in the peak of Ottoman territorial claims in Europe.[1][2]

The Ottoman–Venetian Wars spanned four centuries, starting in 1423 and lasting until 1718. This period witnessed the fall of Negroponte in 1470, the fall of Famagusta (Cyprus) in 1571, the defeat of the Ottoman fleet at the Battle of Lepanto in 1571 (at that time the largest naval battle in history), the fall of Candia (Crete) in 1669, the Venetian reconquest of Morea (Peloponnese) in the 1680s and its loss again in 1715. The island of Corfu under Venetian rule remained the only Greek island not conquered by the Ottomans.[3]

In the late seventeenth century, European powers began to consolidate against the Ottomans and formed the Holy League, reversing a number of Ottoman land gains during the Great Turkish War of 1683–99. Nevertheless, Ottoman armies were able to hold their own against their European rivals until the second half of the eighteenth century.[4] In the nineteenth century the Ottomans were confronted with insurrection from their Serbian (1804–1817) and Greek (1821–1832) subjects. This occurred in tandem with the Russo-Turkish wars, which further destabilized the empire. The final retreat of Ottoman rule came with the First Balkan War (1912–1913), followed by the signing of the Treaty of Sèvres at the close of World War I.

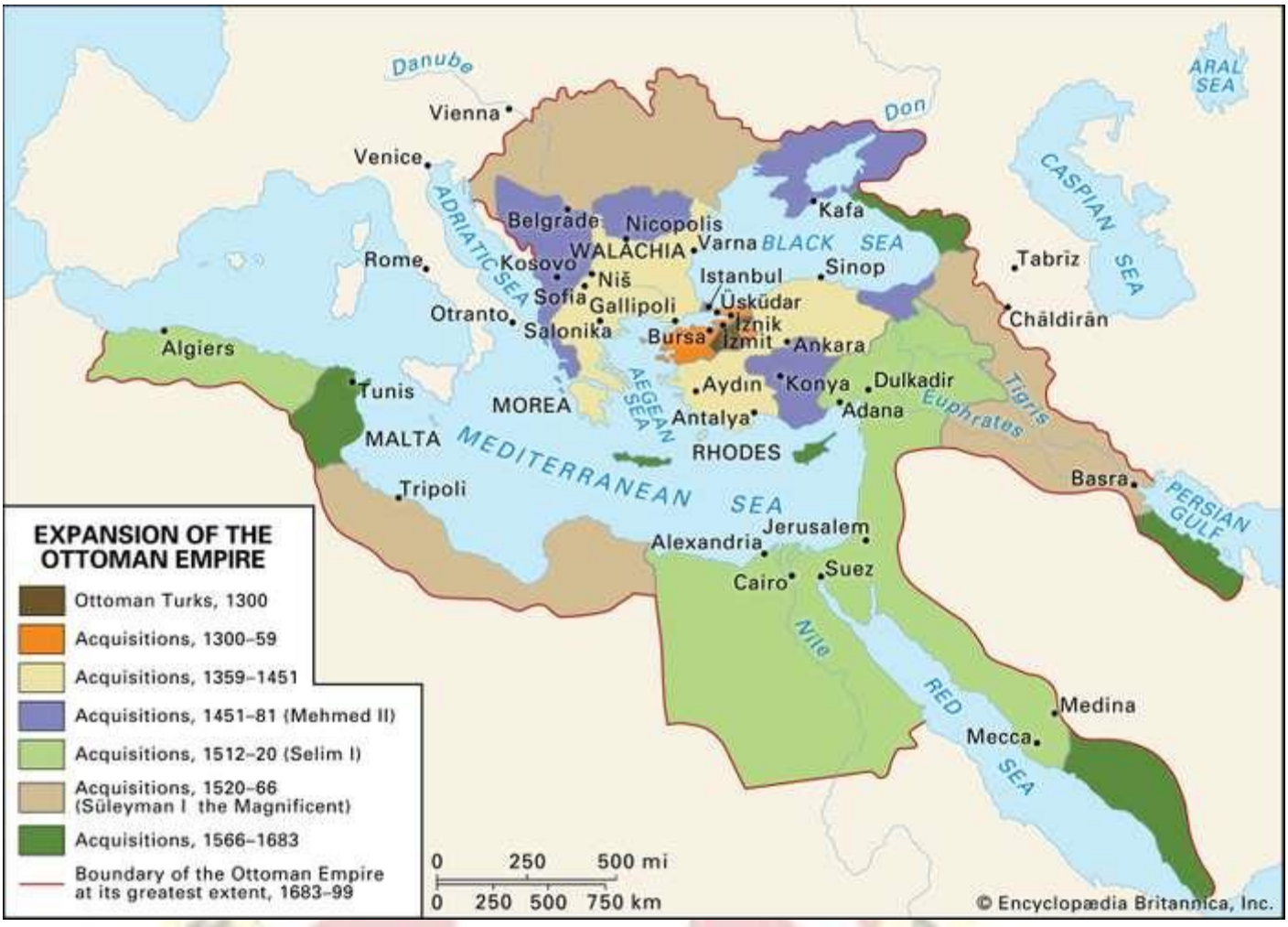
What does fall of Constantinople mean?

Fall of Constantinople, (May 29, 1453), conquest of Constantinople by Sultan Mehmed II of the Ottoman Empire. The dwindling Byzantine Empire came to an end when the Ottomans breached Constantinople's ancient land wall after besieging the city for 55 days. Mehmed surrounded Constantinople from land and sea while employing cannon to maintain a constant barrage of the city's formidable walls. The fall of the city removed what was once a powerful defense for Christian Europe against Muslim invasion, allowing for uninterrupted Ottoman expansion into eastern EuropeContext

By the mid-15th century, constant struggles for dominance with its Balkan neighbours and Roman Catholic rivals had diminished Byzantine imperial holdings to Constantinople and the land immediately west of it. Furthermore, with Constantinople having suffered through several devastating sieges, the city's population had dropped from roughly 400,000 in the 12th century to between 40,000 and 50,000 by the 1450s. Vast open fields constituted much of the land within the walls. Byzantine relations with the rest of Europe had soured over the last several centuries as well: the Schism of 1054 and the 13th-century Latin occupation of Constantinople entrenched a mutual hatred between the Orthodox Byzantines and Roman Catholic Europe. Nevertheless, just as deeply entrenched was the understanding that Byzantine control of Constantinople was a necessary bastion against Muslim control of land and sea in the eastern Mediterranean.

Byzantine Empire*Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.*

In contrast to the Byzantines, the Ottoman Turks had extended their control over virtually all of the Balkans and most of Anatolia, having conquered several Byzantine cities west of Constantinople in the latter half of the 14th century. Constantinople itself became an Ottoman vassal during this period. Hungary was the primary European threat to the Ottomans on land, and Venice and Genoa controlled much of the Aegean and Black seas. Sultan Murad II laid siege to Constantinople in 1422, but he was forced to lift it in order to suppress a rebellion elsewhere in the empire. In 1444 he lost an important battle to a Christian alliance in the Balkans and abdicated the throne to his son, Mehmed II. However, he returned to power two years later after defeating the Christians and remained sultan until his death in 1451.



Ottoman Empire

Map showing the expansion of the Ottoman Empire (c. 1300–1700).

Now sultan for the second time, Mehmed II intended to complete his father's mission and conquer Constantinople for the Ottomans. In 1452 he reached peace treaties with Hungary and Venice. He also began the construction of the Boğazkesen (later called the Rumelihisarı), a fortress at the narrowest point of the Bosporus, in order to restrict passage between the Black and Mediterranean seas. Mehmed then tasked the Hungarian gunsmith Urban with both arming Rumelihisarı and building cannon powerful enough to bring down the walls of Constantinople. By March 1453 Urban's cannon had been transported from the Ottoman capital of Edirne to the outskirts of Constantinople. In April, having quickly seized Byzantine coastal settlements along the Black Sea and Sea of Marmara, Ottoman regiments in Rumelia and Anatolia assembled outside the Byzantine capital. Their fleet moved from Gallipoli to nearby Diplokionion, and the sultan himself set out to meet his army.

Rumeli Fortress, Istanbul
Rumeli Fortress (RumeliHisarı) on the European bank of the Bosporus, Istanbul.
© *William J. Bowe*

In the meantime, Byzantine Emperor Constantine XI Palaeologus entreated major powers in Christendom to aid him in the impending siege. Hungary refused to assist, and, instead of sending men, Pope Nicholas V saw the precarious situation as an opportunity to push for the reunification of the Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches, a priority of the papacy since 1054. Orthodox leaders voted in favour of union, but the people of Constantinople were adamantly against it and rioted in response. Military support came from Venice and Genoa. An Ottoman attack on a Venetian ship in the Bosporus prompted the Venetian Senate to send 800 troops and 15 galleys to the Byzantine capital, and many Venetians presently in Constantinople also chose to support the war effort, but the bulk of the Venetian forces were delayed for too long to be of any help. For Genoa's part, the city-state sent 700 soldiers to Constantinople, all of whom arrived in January 1453 with Giovanni Giustiniani Longo at their head. Emperor Constantine XI named Giustiniani commander of his land defenses and spent the rest of the winter strengthening the city for a sieg.

----------The European Renaissance

The Renaissance started in Florence, **Italy**, a place with a rich cultural history where wealthy citizens could afford to support budding artists. Members of the powerful Medici family, which ruled Florence for more than 60 years, were famous backers of the movement.

Historians have identified several **causes** for the emergence of the **Renaissance** following the Middle Ages, such as: increased interaction between different cultures, the rediscovery of ancient Greek and Roman texts, the emergence of humanism, different artistic and technological innovations, and the impacts of conflict

The **Renaissance changed the world** in just about every way one could think of. ... Behind it was a new intellectual discipline: perspective was developed, light and shadow were studied, and the human anatomy was pored over – all in pursuit of a new realism and a desire to capture the beauty of the **world**

Christopher Marlowe, an English poet and playwright, has been called the true child of the Renaissance.
What were the 3 core values of the Renaissance period?
Renaissance people had certain common values, too. Among them were humanism, **individualism**, skepticism, well-roundedness, secularism, and classicism (all defined below). These values were reflected in buildings, writing, painting and sculpture, science, every aspect of their lives.

What were the characteristics of the Renaissance?g

Characteristics of the Renaissance include a renewed interest in classical antiquity; a rise in humanist philosophy (a belief in self, human worth, and individual dignity); and radical changes in ideas about religion, politics, and science.

Thereof, what are the 3 most important characteristics of the Renaissance?
Top 5 Characteristics of Renaissance Art that Changed the World

- A positive willingness to learn and explore.
- Faith in the nobility of man- Humanism.
- The discovery and mastery of linear perspective.
- Rebirth of Naturalism.
- Secularism.
- 12 Paintings Around the Theme of Beauty in Art.

Furthermore, what are the 7 characteristics of Renaissance art? **Terms in this set (7)**

- Rebirth of Humanism. -way of thought that focuses on human beings and their potential for achievement.
- Rebirth of Naturalism.
- Perspective and Depth in Art.
- Create Non Religious Themes.
- Privately Owned Art.
- Sculpture and Architecture.
- Artists Became Popular with their Art.

Additionally, what were the characteristics of a Renaissance man?
" (And women?) Master of many fields of work, charming, witty, well-educated, well mannered, athletic, and self controlled. (Women **were** to inspire art, not to create it.)
What are the 4 characteristics of Renaissance art?
(1) A reverent revival of Classical Greek/Roman art forms and styles; (2) A faith in the nobility of Man (Humanism); (3) The mastery of illusionistic painting techniques, maximizing 'depth' in

a picture, including: **linear perspective**, foreshortening and, later, quadratura; and (4) The naturalistic realism of its faces

What are the main ideas of the Renaissance?

The 6 ideals of the Renaissance (BELIEFS)

- Humanism. belief that the humans and their activities as significant.
- Individualism. belief in the importance of the individual and in the virtues of self-reliance and personal independence.
- Skepticism.
- Versatility.
- Secularism.
- Classicism.
- Humanism (NOTE)
- Individualism (NOTE)

The **Norman conquest of England** was a military invasion of England by William the Conqueror in 1066.

William was Duke of Normandy, a country on the other side of the English Channel, now a region in France. He invaded England after the death of King Edward the Confessor because he believed he had the most right to be King of England, but King Harold II had himself crowned king instead. King Harold, with his Saxon army, and Duke William fought at the Battle of Hastings on October 14, 1066. King Harold was killed in the battle and his army left. On December 25, 1066 William was crowned the new King of England.

The Norman conquest was an important change in English history. The conquest linked England more closely with Continental Europe, and made Scandinavian influence less important. It created one of the most powerful monarchies in Europe. The conquest changed the English language and culture, and set the stage for rivalry with France, which would continue (with a few breaks) until the 19th century.

England has never been successfully invaded since the Norman invasion nearly 1000 years ago.

When did the Renaissance came in Europe?

14th century

However, it is generally believed to have begun in Italy during the **14th century**, after the end of the Middle Ages, and reached its height in the **15th century**. The Renaissance spread to the rest of Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries**Causes of Renaissance:**

ADVERTISEMENTS:

There were many causes behind ‘Renaissance’. The fall of Constantinople was its main cause. It was the centre of learning. Although, it was under the clutches of the Christians, many Greek scholars were living there. They became famous by teaching Greek language and literature to the people.

In 1453 A.D., Muhammad II of Ottoman Empire occupied Constantinople and devasted it. Out of fear, the Greek intellectuals left Constantinople and entered into different cities of Italy like Venetia, Milan, Naples, Sicily, and Rome etc. They taught mathematics, history, geography, philosophy, astronomy, medicine etc. to the people of Italy. This gave birth to Renaissance.

Secondly, the invention of printing machine was responsible for Renaissance. In 145 A.D. John Gutenberg of Germany invented printing machine and letters and printed book. William Caxton brought this machine to England in 1477 A.D. With the march of time, printing machines were established in Italy, France, Belgium and other European countries. Thus, books could be published very easily with a short span of time. People could easily get books for study and learnt many things. This galvanised Renaissance.

Thirdly, many kings, nobles and merchants encouraged new literature and art. Francis I, the ruler of France, Henry VIII, the king of England, Charles V of Spain, Sigismund I, the king of Poland invited many persons having new ideas to their courts and patronised them. Loronjo-de-Medicci, the ruler of Florence invited many artists to his court and decorated his palace with new paintings. The progressive idea of these rulers galvanised Renaissance. Finally, the men with new thoughts paved the way for Renaissance. They advised not to accept anything blindly which is not proved properly. Peter Abelard of the University of Paris inspired his contemporaries to create enthusiasm among themselves for research. He advised his students not to accept any doctrine blindly as God's version.

They should accept anything if it is convinced by reason. His book 'Yes and No' inspired the youths as it revealed the defects of church system. He was compelled by Christian Priests to withdraw his view and he did it.

Another wiseman of the time was Roger Bacon of Oxford University who said that nothing should be accepted without proper experiment and observation. He had to spend some years in the Church prison because of his radical view. Thus, these persons with new ideas paved the way for Renaissance.

Results of Renaissance:

The results of the Renaissance were far reaching. This gave birth to new literature, art and science.

Literature:

The Renaissance literature had its birth in Italy. The first notable creation in this direction was Dante's 'Divine Comedy'. This book was written in Italian language and it was meant for the common people. In the book he describes about the heaven, hell and the other world. It introduced new themes like love of one's country, love of nature as well as the role of individual. Another pioneer of Renaissance thought was Francesco Petrarch. The medieval thought was monastic, ascetic and other worldly. In contrast, Petrarch glorified the secular or Worldly interests of life and humanism through his 'Sonnet', a form of poetry. His notable works were 'Familiar Letters' and 'Lovers of Illustrious Man'. Another great writer of Italy during that period was Boccaccio.

In his world famous book 'Decameron' (Ten Days), he denounced God which brought a revolutionaiy change in the Christian World. The famous philosopher of Italy was Machiavelli who in his famous book 'The Prince' described the principle of the 'Lion and the Fox'. Aristo's 'Orlandofuriso' and Tasso's 'Jerusalem Delivered' were two other great works for the Italian literature.

In other countries of Europe different kind of humanism spread in Renaissance period. In England Thomas Moore's 'Utopia', Milton's 'Paradise Lost' and 'Paradise Regained' were very famous which were created during this period. During Renaissance, William Shakespeare, the great playwright of England became famous for his plays like 'Julius Caesar', 'Othello', 'Macbeth', 'As you Like it', 'Romeo and Juliet', 'Hamlet', 'Merchants of Venice', 'King Lear',

'Mid-summer Night's Dream', 'The Tempest' etc. Christopher Mario of England wrote his famous drama 'Doctor Frastress'.

During this period, the Spanish writer Cerventis 'Don Ruixote' the works of Lope de Vaga and Calderon were very famous. By this time Martin Luther of Germany translated the 'Bible' into German language. The writings of famous Dutchman Desiderious Erasmus like 'In Praise of Folly', 'Handbook of a Christian Soldier' and 'Familiar Colloquies' gave new dimension to the literature. Robelai's 'Ganganchua' and the writings of Racine, Sevigne and La Fontain created 'Golden Age' in the French literature. The Portuguese writer Camoen's 'Lusaid' was admired by the people to a great extent.

Art:

The bold departure from medieval tradition was nowhere more clearly revealed than in Art of Renaissance period. Before Renaissance, the chief art of the middle age was essentially Christian. Art was intimately associated with religion. The artists used to draw the pictures of monks, bishops and priests and the church had restricted their freedom of thought and action. One example of such unrealistic representation was of the priests who were carved with long necks to prove that they had easy access to heaven. However, the Renaissance artists and painters developed a growing interest in classical civilisation and accordingly, the European art of fifteenth and sixteenth centuries underwent a great transformation and became more and more secular in spirit.

Architecture:

The Architecture of Italy was largely influenced by the spirit of Renaissance. The builders of this time constructed many churches, palaces and massive buildings following the style and pattern of ancient Greece and Rome. The pointed arches of the Churches and Palaces were substituted by round arches, domes or by the plain lines of the Greek temples.

'Florence', a city of Italy became the nerve centre of art-world. The 'St Peter's Church of Rome' the 'Cathedral of Milan' and the 'Palaces of Venice and Florence' were some of the remarkable specimens of Renaissance architecture. In due course of time, Renaissance architecture spread to France and Spain.

Sculpture:

Like architecture, Sculpture also underwent a significant change during the Renaissance Period. The famous sculptor of Italy during this period was Lorenzo Ghiberti, who carved the bronze doors of the Church at Florence which was famous for its exquisite beauty. Another Italian Sculptor named Donatello is remembered for his realistic statute of 'St. George' and 'St. Mark'. As a Sculptor Luca deliaRobbia was famous for his classic purity and simplicity of style who had established a school of sculpture in glazed terracotta. Michel Angelo's huge marble statute of 'David' at Florence speaks of his greatness as a Sculptor. He had also made the grand statute of 'Moses'. He had also completed the construction of 'Basilica of St. Peter' at Rome.

Painting:

In Painting, the painters of Italy during Renaissance brought excellence and became world famous. Among the painters of the world, 'Leonardo-da-Vinci' occupied a unique position. The hidden expression in his paintings made them attractive. Leonardo has become immortal for his famous painting of 'Monalisa'.

The smile on the lips of Monalisa is so mysterious that it is beyond the comprehension of man. 'The Holy Supper', 'The Virgin of the Rock' and 'The Virgin and Child with Saint Anne' are his other immortal paintings which are appreciated all over the world.

Michael Angelo was a painter, sculptor, architect, poet and engineer in one. His paintings like 'Creation of Adam' and the 'Last Judgment' bear testimony of his superb skill. He was invited and rewarded by King Henry VIII of England and Francis I of France. His paintings bore the stamp of originality in every aspect.

Another great painter of that time was Raphael. His paintings portray an air of calmness and beauty. His practice Madonna made him world famous painter. The Vatican palace also bears testimony of his paintings.

Titian was the official painter of the city of Venice. His oil painting was very famous. His painting 'Christ Carrying the Cross' appeared real and lively.

In due course of time the paintings of Italy became world famous. It entered into Germany and Antwerp. The famous artist of Antwerp was Massy. Another noted German artist was Albert Durer. Among other artists of that period was Holbein of Augusburg.

Fine Arts:

During Renaissance, Fine Arts also bloomed. Italy was freed from the clutches of medieval song. The use of Piano and Violin made the song sweeter. Palestrina was a great singer and musician and a composer of new songs. In Churches, old songs were discarded and new songs were incorporated in prayer. Many other countries of Europe also adopted this practice.

Science:

In the age of Renaissance, Science developed to a great extent. The development in astrology, medicine and other branches of Science made this age distinct.

The name of Francis Bacon shines like a star in the realm of science. He was a great scientist who advised to explore nature. He advised that truth was to be discerned by experiment. This idea prompted others to regard him as the 'Father of Modern Science'. While experimenting on the method of preserving food, he breathed his last.

In the realm of scientific discoveries, the name of Copernicus of Poland is chanted with reverence. In his book 'On the Revolution of the Celestial Bodies', he opined that Sun is static. The Earth and other planets revolve around the sun in a circle. His view was contrary to the medieval belief that the Earth was the centre of the universe. The Christian priests vehemently criticised Copernicus. However, he remind firm in his faith.

The view of Copernicus was supported by the famous German Scientist John Kepler. He slightly changed the view of Kepler and opined that the Earth and other planets revolve around the Sun in 'elliptical' rather than 'circular Path. This created a storm in the field of thinking.

Another great scientist of this age was Galileo of Italy. He had joined as a lecturer of mathematics in the University of Pisa and there he became a professor. He invented Telescope. Through that instrument he proved before his enthusiastic audience that the theory of Copernicus was absolutely true. He further opined and proved that the 'Milky Way' consists of stars.

His "Pendulum Theory' helped later on for inventing clock. For his radical views, he was declared by Pope as 'Out Caste'. Galelio was compelled to withdraw his view out of fear. However, later on, his views were accepted as true and he became world famous. From the leaning tower of Pisa he also proved that heavy and light objects fall to the ground at the same speed.

A great Scientist of repute of that age was Sir Issac Newton of England. In his famous book 'Principia', he stated about the 'Law of Gravitation'. His 'Theory of Motion' also made him famous as a great scientist. The 'Causes of tide' were also discovered by him.

Progresses also made in the field of Chemistry. Cordus made 'ether' from sulphuric acid and alcohol which was another astonishment of Science.

Another Scientist of that time Helmont had discovered ‘Carbon Dioxide’ gas. He explained that there are gases distinct in kind from atmospheric air. Later on, this Carbon Dioxide was used to extinguish fire and to prepare cake and cold drinks.
In case of human anatomy, the Science of the Renaissance period brought revolutionary change. Vesalius, a medical scientist described about various parts of human body like skeleton, cartilage, muscles. Veins, arteries, digestive and reproductive systems, lungs and brain. William Harvey of England had discovered The ‘Process of blood Circulation’. He pointed out that blood circulates from heart to the arteries and then to veins and back to heart. His contribution was undoubtedly a boon to the modem medical science.

Infact, the Renaissance had created humanism in man. It increased the desire in men to know more and more. This Renaissance galvanised the development in the field of literature, art and science. It illumined the world with new Knowledge.

The **Age of Enlightenment** (also known as the **Age of Reason** or simply **the Enlightenment**)[1] was an intellectual and philosophical movement that dominated the world of ideas in Europe during the 17th and 18th centuries.[2] The Enlightenment included a range of ideas centered on the pursuit of happiness, sovereignty of reason and the evidence of the senses as the primary sources of knowledge and advanced ideals such as liberty, progress, toleration, fraternity, constitutional government and separation of church and state.

The Enlightenment emerged out of a European intellectual and scholarly movement known as Renaissance humanism and was also preceded by the Scientific Revolution and the work of Francis Bacon, among others.

Philosophers and scientists of the period widely circulated their ideas through meetings at scientific academies, Masonic lodges, literary salons, coffeehouses and in printed books, journals, and pamphlets. The ideas of the Enlightenment undermined the authority of the monarchy and the Catholic Church and paved the way for the political revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries. A variety of 19th-century movements, including liberalism and neoclassicism, trace their intellectual heritage to the Enlightenment.[5]

In France, the central doctrines of the Enlightenment philosophers were individual liberty and religious tolerance, in opposition to an absolute monarchy and the fixed dogmas of the Church. The Enlightenment was marked by an emphasis on the scientific method and reductionism, along with increased questioning of religious orthodoxy.

Medieval England
The **Norman conquest** of England was a military **invasion** of England by William the Conqueror in 1066. ... The **conquest** linked England more closely with Continental Europe, and made Scandinavian influence less **important**. It created one of the most powerful monarchies in Europe.
Magna Carta
Magna Carta, meaning ‘The Great Charter’, is one of the most famous documents in the world. Originally issued by King John of England (r. 1199–1216) as a practical solution to the political crisis he faced in 1215, Magna Carta established for the first time the principle that everybody,

including the king, was subject to the law. Although nearly a third of the text was deleted or substantially rewritten within ten years, and almost all the clauses have been repealed in modern times, Magna Carta remains a cornerstone of the British constitution.
Most of the 63 clauses granted by King John dealt with specific grievances relating to his rule. However, buried within them were a number of fundamental values that both challenged the autocracy of the king and proved highly adaptable in future centuries. Most famously, the 39th clause gave all 'free men' the right to justice and a fair trial. Some of Magna Carta's core principles are echoed in the United States Bill of Rights (1791) and in many other constitutional documents around the world, as well as in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the European Convention on Human Rights (1950).
In 1215 Magna Carta was a peace treaty between the King and the rebel barons. In that respect it was a failure, but it provided a new framework for the relationship between the King and his subjects. The 1225 version of Magna Carta, freely issued by Henry III (r. 1216–72) in return for a tax granted to him by the whole kingdom, took this idea further and became the definitive version of the text. Three clauses of the 1225 Magna Carta remain on the statute book today. Although most of the clauses of Magna Carta have now been repealed, the many divergent uses that have been made of it since the Middle Ages have shaped its meaning in the modern era, and it has become a potent, international rallying cry against the arbitrary use of power.
Although Magna Carta contained 63 clauses when it was first granted, only three of those clauses remain part of English law. One defends the liberties and rights of the English Church, another confirms the liberties and customs of London and other towns, but the third is the most famous.

This clause gave all free men the right to justice and a fair trial. However, 'free men' comprised only a small proportion of the population in medieval England. The majority of the people were unfree peasants known as 'villeins', who could seek justice only through the courts of their own lords.

Buried deep in Magna Carta, this clause was given no particular prominence in 1215, but its intrinsic adaptability has allowed succeeding generations to reinterpret it for their own purposes. In the 14th century Parliament saw it as guaranteeing trial by jury; in the 17th century Sir Edward Coke (1552-1634) interpreted it as a declaration of individual liberty in his conflict with the early Stuart kings; and it has echoes in the American Bill of Rights (1791) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948).

Much of the remainder of Magna Carta dealt with specific grievances regarding the ownership of land, the regulation of the justice system, and medieval taxes with no modern equivalent (such as 'scutage' and 'socage'). It demanded the removal of fish weirs from the Thames, the Medway and throughout England; the dismissal of several royal servants; the standardisation of various weights and measures; and so on.

Magna Carta stated that no taxes could be demanded without the 'general consent of the realm', meaning the leading barons and churchmen. It re-established privileges which had been lost, and it linked fines to the severity of the offence so as not to threaten an individual's livelihood. It also confirmed that a widow could not be forced to remarry against her wishes.

Henry VI and War of Roses

Henry VI was a key player in the Wars of the Roses. In fact, the roots of the war began a century earlier with Henry VI's grandfather, Henry IV. Henry IV overthrew his cousin, Richard II, from the throne. They both shared a grandfather in King Edward III, each being a son of a different child of Edward. The root of the conflict of the war was which branch of the family had a better claim to the throne. While the line of succession passed peacefully from Henry IV to his son, Henry V, and to his son, Henry VI, it was during Henry VI's reign that the rival branch of Edward III's descendants came forward and stated they had the better claim to the throne. This was the beginning of the war.

Henry VI was born in 1422, the only child of King Henry V and his queen, Catherine of Valois. He was heir to the throne of England from birth, and was also born during the waning years of the 100 Years War between England and France. His father, Henry V, was a hero of that war, and is considered one of England's last warrior kings. Henry V died of dysentery while on campaign in the 100 Years War, leaving Henry VI the new king of England at only nine months old. Fortunately, his father had brothers, so the boy king had lots of powerful men to run the country for him and advise him during his youth.

Incidentally, Henry's mother, Catherine of Valois, became a beautiful young widow at the age of only 21, and soon found love again in the arms of her Welsh squire, Owen Tudor, with whom she had at least three children (though some historians say it was as many as six). They initially had a secret affair, but eventually went public with it and got married, causing a great scandal, and the passage of a new law that said any royal woman could not get married without the permission of the king. Catherine's children with Owen Tudor became Henry VI's half-siblings, and Henry Tudor, who was the the son of his half-brother Edmund Tudor and thus Henry VI's half-nephew, eventually became King Henry VII and began the Tudor royal empire in England.

Henry VI was also technically King of France for a short time as a small child, as he was the only legitimate male heir of his maternal grandfather, Charles VI, and France, unlike England, did not allow females to rule on their own. The throne of France was eventually given to a nephew of Charles in a treaty with England.

The 100 Years War went on throughout Henry VI's childhood, being managed by his uncles, and finally ended in 1453, when Henry was 31 years old. By that time, Henry had married his grandfather Charles's niece, Margaret of Anjou, and was ruling England on his own. Henry and Margaret negotiated a lasting peace with France, with Calais being England's only remaining French territory, where it once had dozens. The 100 Years War was over, but a new one in England was about to begin.

Henry VI and Margaret of Anjou were popular rulers when they were a young married couple, known for enjoying good parties and being benevolent, merciful, and generous with the people of England. However, they did not conceive a child for their first seven years of marriage, which put the English people on edge, wondering if there would be an issue with the succession.

Shortly before Margaret announced her pregnancy at last, Henry VI fell into what would be the first of his many mental health episodes, where he was either mad or catatonic. In this first instance, he was catatonic for more than a year. Margaret gave birth during this time, and Henry VI was not able to verbally acknowledge the boy as his son. According to English custom, the acknowledgment of the king in order to be considered legitimate. The new prince, Edward, was left in limbo for the time being.

While Henry was suffering from madness for the first time, Margaret tried to keep it a secret from all but their closest advisors. However, Henry VI's cousin, Richard of York, from a rival branch of Edward III's family, suspected what was going on. Henry eventually recovered from

his bout of madness and acknowledged his son, but he did not stay well long. His second bout of madness was not as easily hidden, and Richard of York took over the running of the kingdom from Margaret, who fled with her son into the countryside. During her absence, where she took refuge in Scotland Richard of York exacted a promise from Henry VI to name him as his heir, instead of Henry's own son.

Margaret of Anjou was a warrior queen and not one to let her son's birthright be taken from him. When Henry VI was well again, she came back and saw to it Richard of York was banished from court and from the king's council. It was only a temporary victory, however. Henry VI's bouts of madness became more frequent, and Richard of York was at the ready to take control of the kingdom and the king, along with an army of his own to back him up. What followed was a constant battle back and forth between he and Margaret of Anjou for physical custody of the mad king Henry VI that eventually erupted into full war.

This was the beginning of the English civil war known as the Wars of the Roses (and, to contemporaries, as the Cousins' War).

Richard of York was eventually killed in one of the early battles of this war, and so never got to become king in name, though he acted as king in deed a few times. His second eldest son, Edmund, was killed in the same battle as him. But, his eldest son, Edward, succeeded shortly after Richard's death in overthrowing Henry VI and proclaiming himself King Edward IV, getting the crown his father always wanted for himself, but never managed to fully grab.

Henry VI lost the crown in March 1461 and was taken to Scotland by his wife. However, he was captured by forces loyal to Edward IV in 1465 and returned to England, where he was imprisoned in the Tower of London. Forces loyal to Henry VI, who was referred to as Lancastrians (the name of Henry's branch of Edward III's family) briefly took the crown back on Henry's behalf in October of 1470, but Henry lost the crown again to Edward IV's forces in April of 1471. He never got it back. His son was killed in the battle that put Edward IV on the throne for good (Edward IV's branch of the family were called Yorkists), and Margaret of Anjou was captured and kept in the Tower of London for years until her relatives in France ransomed her and obtained her freedom. She went back to France, where she spent the rest of her life as a poor relation to the French crown.

Henry VI was put back in the Tower of London when Edward IV took the throne the second time. He was killed in the Tower the very night Edward IV was officially restored to the throne. Edward IV told the people of England it was merely a tragic coincidence. But, most historians believe Henry VI was killed by Edward IV and his brothers, or by someone they hired.

The Wars of the Roses raged on until 1485, when Edward IV's brother, King Richard III was killed on the battlefield and lost the throne to the last legitimate Lancastrian heir, Henry Tudor, who became King Henry VII. Henry VII married Edward IV's daughter, Elizabeth of York, uniting the two warring family branches and ending the Wars of the Roses.

Tudor Dynasty

Henry VIII and the Break with Rome

King Henry VIII's break with the Catholic Church is one of the most far-reaching events in English history. During the Reformation, the King replaced the Pope as the Head of the Church in England, causing a bitter divide between Catholics and Protestants.

The reformation of the church under Henry VIII was sparked both by personal desire* and by political concern* about the succession.

When Pope Clement VII refused to annul his marriage with Catherine of Aragon, Henry responded by enacting legislation which limited papal jurisdiction and revenues in England. In February of 1531 the Commons acknowledged the king as their "only and supreme lord and, as far as the law of Christ allows, even supreme head." In the Act of Supremacy* of 1534, the caveat "as far as the law of Christ allows" was deleted.

Henry's religious beliefs

Although Henry's reformation broke with the papacy, his own religious beliefs were orthodox, and the Church of England remained essentially Catholic in doctrine under his rule. He was not concerned with religion so much as power.

Henry VIII did not seek Protestant reform, but the abolition of papal jurisdiction inevitably encouraged the emergence of Protestant sympathizers. In 1539 Henry issued the Act of Six Articles, against those who advocated such Protestant reforms as marriage for the clergy or the denial of the doctrine of transubstantiation.

Queen Mary

England’s first female monarch, Mary I (1516-1558) ruled for just five years. The only surviving child of Henry VIII and his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, Mary took the throne after the brief reign of her half-brother, Edward VI. She sought to return England to the Catholic Church and stirred rebellions by marrying a Spanish Habsburg prince. But she is most remembered for burning nearly 300 English Protestants at the stake for heresy, which earned her the nickname “Bloody Mary.”

Mary I: Early Life

Mary Tudor was born on February 16, 1516. She was the fifth child of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon but the only one to survive past infancy. Educated by an English tutor with written instructions from the Spanish humanist Juan Luis Vives, she excelled in Latin and, like her father, was an adept musician.

At age 6 she was betrothed to Charles V, the king of Spain and Holy Roman Emperor. Charles broke off the engagement after three years but remained a lifelong ally. Henry desperately wanted a son as heir and sought permission from the papacy to end his marriage. When Pope Clement VII refused to grant the annulment, Henry declared himself exempt from papal authority, asserting that England’s king should be the sole head of its church.

Mary I: The Princess Made Illegitimate

In 1533 Henry VIII married Anne Boleyn, who bore him a daughter, the future Elizabeth I. Mary was demoted from her own household and forced to take up residence with her infant half-sister.

In 1536 Catherine of Aragon died at her castle in Cambridgeshire, Anne Boleyn was accused of treason and executed, and Mary was forced to deny the pope's authority and her own legitimacy.

Henry married four more times before his death in 1547. He got his longed-for male heir in the future Edward VI, son of his third wife, Jane Seymour. Upon Henry's death, the official order of succession was Edward, followed by Mary and then Elizabeth.

Mary I: Path to the Throne

Edward VI remained a minor for his entire six-year reign. The lords of Somerset and of Northumberland served as his regents, working to expand his father's ecclesiastical changes. They also altered the order of succession to favor the Protestants, placing Henry VIII's niece Lady Jane Gray next in line to the throne. When Edward died in 1553, however, Mary had her own succession strategy planned: Proclamations were printed and a military force assembled in her Norfolk estates. Pushed by Edward's regents, the Privy Council made Jane queen but reversed course nine days later in the face of Mary's popular support.

Mary I: Reign as Queen

After taking the throne, Mary quickly reinstated her parents' marriage and executed Northumberland for his role in the Jane Gray affair. Her initial ruling council was a mix of Protestants and Catholics, but as her reign progressed she grew more and more fervent in her desire to restore English Catholicism.

In 1554 she announced her intention to marry Prince Philip of Spain, the son of Charles V. It was an unpopular choice for Protestants, who feared the permanent loss of Henry's reforms, and for those who suspected a Spanish king would herald a continental takeover of England. Nevertheless, Mary moved forward with her plan, persuading Parliament to assent after Charles consented to leave Mary in full control and to keep the throne in English hands if the union produced no heirs.

Mary's marriage to Philip was nearly as troubled as her father's unions. Twice she was declared pregnant and went into seclusion, but no child was born. Philip found her unattractive and spent most of his time in Europe.

Mary I: The Protestant Martyrs

Mary soon moved from simply reversing her father's and Edward's anti-Catholic policies to actively persecuting Protestants. In 1555 she revived England's heresy laws and began burning offenders at the stake, starting with her father's longtime advisor Thomas Cranmer, the archbishop of Canterbury. Almost 300 convicted heretics, mostly common citizens, were burned. Dozens more died in prison, and some 800 fled to Protestant strongholds in Germany and Geneva, from whence they would later import the Calvinist tenants of English Puritanism.

The events of Mary's reign—including attempts at currency reform, expanded international trade and a brief war with France that lost England its last French enclave at Calais—were

overshadowed by the memory of the so-called Marian Persecutions. After her death in 1558, the country quickly rallied behind Henry VIII's second daughter and England's second reigning queen, Elizabeth I.

Elizabeth I

Elizabeth I (1533-1603) was born to Henry VIII (1491-1547) and his second wife, Anne Boleyn (1500-1536). Her mother was executed for treason in 1536, and, by the terms of the Second Succession Act (1536), Elizabeth was declared illegitimate, removing her from the line of succession. The Act was repealed in 1543 by the Third Succession Act, which returned Elizabeth to the line of succession after her protestant half-brother Edward (1537-1553) and her Catholic older half-sister Mary (1516-1558). The legislation was controversial. Technically Elizabeth remained a bastard, albeit one who could legally succeed to the crown.

Elizabeth survived the political intrigues and religious persecution of the 1550s to claim the throne upon Mary's death in 1558. She immediately re-established the protestant Church of England after Mary's Catholic programme, and, with a new Act of Uniformity in 1559, imposed a Book of Common Prayer.

As the future of the Tudor dynasty had been a major concern of Henry VIII's reign, so too the succession dominated Elizabethan politics from the very beginning. Upon her accession, it was universally assumed that Elizabeth would marry to secure a peaceful succession to the throne. In 1559 the privy council presented the queen with a formal request that she should marry. Her response was to filibuster, asserting her marriage to the nation: 'reproach me so no more […] that I have no children: for every one of you, and as many as are English, are my children and kinsfolks'. Elizabeth had many suitors, including Philip II of Spain (1527-1598), Erik VIX of Sweden (1533-1577), and, closer to home, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester (1532-1588). Yet she never took a husband, despite mounting political pressure to produce an heir.

While Elizabeth's rejection of marriage and motherhood made for her powerful 'virgin queen' iconography, it was not a prudent political move. Elizabeth was pig-headed about the succession. The identity of the heir presumptive was obscured by a confused legal situation. Henry VIII's will implied that the next in line to the throne after Elizabeth should be Katherine Grey (1540?-1568). But Elizabeth's Catholic cousin Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots (1542-1587), possessed the stronger hereditary claim, and, after her execution in 1587, the next in line was her protestant son, James (1566-1625). Elizabeth refused to support either claimant, and, in 1571, introduced a statute that outlawed any public discussion of the succession. Nonetheless, in the 1590s Elizabeth's ailing health forced the public to address the succession in a series of pamphlets and longer polemics. A new claimant was the Spanish Infanta Isabella (1566-1633), daughter of Philip II, who naturally became the favoured candidate of Catholics such as Robert Person, who, in his A Conference About the Next Succession (1594), devised some clever arguments against hereditary succession. The preferred candidate of the protestant majority, though, was James Stuart, whose allies in the Elizabethan court ensured a smooth transfer of power. In the event of Elizabeth's death on 24 March 1603, Sir Robert Carey (1560-1639) was dispatched as a messenger to Edinburgh. The succession question that had remained unanswered for 45 years

was now resolved with surprisingly little difficulty. The House of Tudor had been replaced by the House of Stuart.

Spanish Armada

The Spanish Armada was an enormous 130-ship naval fleet dispatched by Spain in 1588 as part of a planned invasion of England. Following years of hostilities between Spain and England, King Philip II of Spain assembled the flotilla in the hope of removing Protestant Queen Elizabeth I from the throne and restoring the Roman Catholic faith in England. Spain's "Invincible Armada" set sail that May, but it was outfoxed by the English, then battered by storms while limping back to Spain with at least a third of its ships sunk or damaged. The defeat of the Spanish Armada led to a surge of national pride in England and was one of the most significant chapters of the Anglo-Spanish War.

Philip and Elizabeth

King Philip II's decision to attempt an overthrow of Queen Elizabeth I was several years in the making.

Despite their family connections—Philip had once been married to Elizabeth's half-sister, Mary—the two royals had severe political and religious differences and had engaged in a "cold war" for much of the 1560s and 1570s.

Philip was particularly incensed by the spread of Protestantism in England, and he had long toyed with the idea of conquering the British Isle to bring it back into the Catholic fold.

Tensions between Spain and England flared in the 1580s, after Elizabeth began allowing privateers such as Sir Francis Drake to conduct pirate raids on Spanish fleets carrying treasure from their rich New World colonies.

By 1585, when England signed a treaty of support with Dutch rebels in the Spanish-controlled Netherlands, a state of undeclared war existed between the two powers. That same year, Philip began formulating an "Enterprise of England" to remove Elizabeth from the throne.

What Was the Spanish Armada?

The Spanish Armada was a naval force of about 130 ships, plus some 8,000 seamen and an estimated 18,000 soldiers manning thousands of guns. Roughly 40 of the ships were warships.

The Spanish plan called for this "Great and Most Fortunate Navy" to sail from Lisbon, Portugal, to Flanders, where it would rendezvous with 30,000 crack troops led by the Duke of Parma, the governor of the Spanish Netherlands.

The fleet would then guard the army as it was ferried across the English Channel to the Kent coast to begin an overland offensive against London.

England Prepares for Invasion

It was impossible for Spain to hide the preparations for a fleet as large as the Armada, and by 1587, Elizabeth's spies and military advisors knew an invasion was in the works. That April, the Queen authorized Francis Drake to make a preemptive strike against the Spanish.

After sailing from Plymouth with a small fleet, Drake launched a surprise raid on the Spanish port of Cadiz and destroyed several dozen of the Armada's ships and over 10,000 tons of supplies. The "singeing of the king of Spain's beard," as Drake's attack was known in England, was later credited with delaying the launch of the Armada by several months.

The English used the time bought by the raid on Cadiz to shore up their defenses and prepare for invasion.

Elizabeth's forces built trenches and earthworks on the most likely invasion beaches, strung a giant metal chain across the Thames estuary and raised an army of militiamen. They also readied an early warning system consisting of dozens of coastal beacons that would light fires to signal the approach of the Spanish fleet.

Led by Drake and Lord Charles Howard, the Royal Navy assembled a fleet of some 40 warships and several dozen armed merchant vessels. Unlike the Spanish Armada, which planned to rely primarily on boarding and close-quarters fighting to win battles at sea, the English flotilla was heavily armed with long-range naval guns.

Spanish Armada Sets Sail

In May 1588, after several years of preparation, the Spanish Armada set sail from Lisbon under the command of the Duke of Medina-Sidonia. When the 130-ship fleet was sighted off the English coast later that July, Howard and Drake raced to confront it with a force of 100 English vessels.

The English fleet and the Spanish Armada met for the first time on July 31, 1588, off the coast of Plymouth. Relying on the skill of their gunners, Howard and Drake kept their distance and tried to bombard the Spanish flotilla with their heavy naval cannons. While they succeeded in damaging some of the Spanish ships, they were unable to penetrate the Armada's half-moon defensive formation.

Over the next several days, the English continued to harass the Spanish Armada as it charged toward the English Channel. The two sides squared off in a pair of naval duels near the coasts of Portland Bill and the Isle of Wight, but both battles ended in stalemates.

By August 6, the Armada had successfully dropped anchor at Calais Roads on the coast of France, where Medina-Sidonia hoped to rendezvous with the Duke of Parma's invasion army.

Fireships Scatter the Armada

Desperate to prevent the Spanish from uniting their forces, Howard and Drake devised a last-ditch plan to scatter the Armada. At midnight on August 8, the English set eight empty vessels ablaze and allowed the wind and tide to carry them toward the Spanish fleet hunkered at Calais Roads.

The sudden arrival of the fireships caused a wave of panic to descend over the Armada. Several vessels cut their anchors to avoid catching fire, and the entire fleet was forced to flee to the open sea.

Battle of Gravelines

With the Armada out of formation, the English initiated a naval offensive at dawn on August 8. In what became known as the Battle of Gravelines, the Royal Navy inched perilously close to the Spanish fleet and unleashed repeated salvos of cannon fire.

Several of the Armada's ships were damaged and at least four were destroyed during the nine-hour engagement, but despite having the upper hand, Howard and Drake were forced to prematurely call off the attack due to dwindling supplies of shot and powder.

Speech to the Troops at Tilbury

With the Spanish Armada threatening invasion at any moment, English troops gathered near the coast at Tilbury in Essex to ward off a land attack.

Queen Elizabeth herself was in attendance and - dressed in military regalia and a white velvet gown - she gave a rousing speech to her troops, one that is often cited as among the most inspiring speeches ever written and delivered by a sovereign leader:

I know I have the body of a weak, feeble woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too, and think foul scorn that Parma or Spain, or any prince of Europe, should dare to invade the borders of my realm; to which rather than any dishonour shall grow by me, I myself will take up arms, I myself will be your general, judge and rewarder of every one of your virtues in the field."

Bad Weather Besets the Armada

Shortly after the Battle of Gravelines, a strong wind carried the Armada into the North Sea, dashing the Spaniards' hopes of linking up with the Duke of Parma's army. With supplies running low and disease beginning to spread through his fleet, the Duke of Medina-Sidonia resolved to abandon the invasion mission and return to Spain by rounding Scotland and Ireland.

The Spanish Armada had lost over 2,000 men during its naval engagements with the English, but its journey home proved to be far more deadly. The once-mighty flotilla was ravaged by sea storms as it rounded Scotland and the western coast of Ireland. Several ships sank in the squalls, while others ran aground or broke apart after being thrown against the shore.

Defeat of the Spanish Armada

By the time the "Great and Most Fortunate Navy" finally reached Spain in the autumn of 1588, it had lost as many as 60 of its 130 ships and suffered some 15,000 deaths.

The vast majority of the Spanish Armada's losses were caused by disease and foul weather, but its defeat was nevertheless a triumphant military victory for England.

By fending off the Spanish fleet, the island nation saved itself from invasion and won recognition as one of Europe's most fearsome sea powers. The clash also established the superiority of heavy cannons in naval combat, signaling the dawn of a new era in warfare at sea.

While the Spanish Armada is now remembered as one of history's great military blunders, it didn't mark the end of the conflict between England and Spain. In 1589, Queen Elizabeth launched a failed "English Armada" against Spain.

King Philip II, meanwhile, later rebuilt his fleet and dispatched two more Spanish Armadas in the 1590s, both of which were scattered by storms. It wasn't until 1604—over 16 years after the original Spanish Armada set sail—that a peace treaty was finally signed ending the Anglo-Spanish War as a stalemate.

The English Renaissance

The English Renaissance was a cultural and artistic movement in England dating from the late 15th to the early 17th century. It is associated with the pan-European Renaissance that is usually regarded as beginning in Italy in the late 14th century. Like most of northern Europe, England saw little of these developments until more than a century later. The beginning of the English Renaissance is often taken, as a convenience, to be 1485, when the Battle of Bosworth Field ended the Wars of the Roses and inaugurated the Tudor Dynasty. Renaissance style and ideas, however, were slow to penetrate England, and the Elizabethan era in the second half of the 16th century is usually regarded as the height of the English Renaissance.

The English Renaissance is different from the Italian Renaissance in several ways. The dominant art forms of the English Renaissance were literature and music. Visual arts in the English Renaissance were much less significant than in the Italian Renaissance. The English period began far later than the Italian, which is usually considered to begin in the late 14th century, and was moving into Mannerism and the Baroque by the 1550s or earlier. In contrast, the English Renaissance can only be said to begin, shakily, in the 1520s, and continued until perhaps 1620.

Literature

England had a strong tradition of literature in the English vernacular, which gradually increased as English use of the printing press became common by the mid 16th century. By the time of Elizabethan literature a vigorous literary culture in both drama and poetry included poets such as Edmund Spenser, whose verse epic The Faerie Queene had a strong influence on English literature but was eventually overshadowed by the lyrics of William Shakespeare, Thomas Wyatt and others. Typically, the works of these playwrights and poets circulated in manuscript form for some time before they were published, and above all the plays of English Renaissance theatre were the outstanding legacy of the period.

The English theatre scene, which performed both for the court and nobility in private performances, and a very wide public in the theatres, was the most crowded in Europe, with a host of other playwrights as well as the giant figures of Christopher Marlowe, Shakespeare and Ben Jonson. Elizabeth herself was a product of Renaissance humanism trained by Roger Ascham, and wrote occasional poems such as On Monsieur's Departure at critical moments of her life. Philosophers and intellectuals included Thomas More and Francis Bacon. All the 16th century Tudor monarchs were highly educated, as was much of the nobility, and Italian literature had a considerable following, providing the sources for many of Shakespeare's plays. English thought advanced towards modern science with the Baconian Method, a forerunner of the Scientific Method. The language of the Book of Common Prayer, first published in 1549, and at the end of the period the Authorised Version ("King James Version" to Americans) of the Bible (1611) had enduring impacts on the English consciousness.

Criticism of the idea of the English Renaissance

The notion of calling this period "The Renaissance" is a modern invention, having been popularized by the historian Jacob Burckhardt in the 19th century. The idea of the Renaissance has come under increased criticism by many cultural historians, and some have contended that the "English Renaissance" has no real tie with the artistic achievements and aims of the Italian artists (Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Donatello) who are closely identified with Renaissance visual art. Whereas from the perspective of literary history, England had already experienced a flourishing of literature over 200 years before the time of Shakespeare, during the last decades of the fourteenth century. Geoffrey Chaucer's popularizing of English as a medium of literary composition rather than Latin occurred only 50 years after Dante had started using Italian for serious poetry, and Chaucer translated works by both Boccaccio and Petrarch into Middle English. At the same time William Langland, author ofPiersPlowman, and John Gower were also writing in English. In the fifteenth century, Thomas Malory, author of Le MorteD'Arthur, was a notable figure. For this reason, scholars find the singularity of the period called the English Renaissance questionable; C. S. Lewis, a professor of Medieval and Renaissance literature at Oxford and Cambridge, famously remarked to a colleague that he had "discovered" that there was no English Renaissance, and that if there had been one, it had "no effect whatsoever."

Historians have also begun to consider the word "Renaissance" as an unnecessarily loaded word that implies an unambiguously positive "rebirth" from the supposedly more primitive Middle Ages. Some historians have asked the question "a renaissance for whom?," pointing out, for example, that the status of women in society arguably declined during the Renaissance. Many

historians and cultural historians now prefer to use the term “early modern” for this period, a term that highlights the period as a transitional one that led to the modern world, but attempts to avoid positive or negative connotations.

Other cultural historians have countered that, regardless of whether the name “renaissance” is apt, there was undeniably an artistic flowering in England under the Tudor monarchs, culminating in Shakespeare and his contemporaries.

Major English Renaissance authors
The major literary figures in the English Renaissance include:

Francis Bacon, Francis Beaumont, George Chapman, Thomas Dekker, John Donne, John Fletcher, John Ford, Ben Jonson, Thomas Kyd, Christopher Marlowe, Philip Massinger, Thomas Middleton, Thomas More, Thomas Nashe, William Rowley, William Shakespeare, James Shirley, Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser, John Webster, Thomas Wyatt, William Tyndale

Charles I, Civil War and Parliament
Charles came to the throne in 1625. Relations between Charles I and Parliament gradually got worse. There were clashes about foreign policy and many Puritan Protestants disliked Charles' religious policy. Charles married a French Catholic against the wishes of Parliament. Charles revived old laws and taxes without the agreement of Parliament. When Parliament complained in 1629, he dismissed them. Until 1640, Charles ruled without a Parliament – this period is often referred to as the 'Eleven Years Tyranny'.

War with Scotland forced Charles to recall Parliament. Instead of granting Charles money, Parliament sent him the Grand Remonstrance (1641). This was a list of 204 complaints about the way he was running the country. After Charles had tried and failed to arrest the five leaders of the Parliament, a civil war broke out.

Civil war, Charles’ execution and England as a republic
Parliament had the support of the south-east of England, merchants, London and the navy. Charles' forces were gradually worn down. After Oliver Cromwell set up the New Model Army, Parliament won decisive victories at Marston Moor (1644) and Naseby (1645).

Charles surrendered in 1646. He failed a second time to defeat Parliament during the the Second Civil War in 1648. Parliament put him on trial for treason and he was executed in 1649.

Historians in the past portrayed the Civil War as the time when Parliament defeated the power of the king. England was a republic for the next 11 years, ruled by Oliver Cromwell.

The restoration of Charles II
The Civil War, however, achieved no permanent change in the balance of power between king and Parliament.

In 1660, Charles II was restored to the throne and continued, as his father had done, trying to rule without Parliament.

Anglo-Saxon Literature

Literature is a form of entertainment, the need to tell stories, to recount important events of a community, in a given time and a specific place, has always characterised mankind for the sense of identity that it gave humans, and the Anglo-Saxons were no exception.

The oldest literary genre was poetry because with its rhythm and musical qualities it allowed quicker comprehension and it was easier to memorise, or learn by heart, since it was not written but passed on orally by the scops (it's pronounced "shop"), the scops were bards that travelled from court to court, they usually sang their poems accompanied by a lyre or harp during banquets or feasts celebrating a victory, or any public gathering. The scop sang about history, chronicles of the time and legends of their people, that is why they held an important function in Anglo-Saxon society, since they represented their living memory and passed on to others their knowledge orally. Because it was an oral tradition, poems could be embellished, modified as they were transferred from one scop to the other and that is why the authors are all anonymous.

Its Origin

The origins of these poems is Germanic as is the language they were first composed in, Old English. Anglo-Saxon, or Old English, is a very different language than modern English and it has Germanic origins, basically a mixture of the dialects spoken by the most important Anglo-Saxon tribes that colonised England. It was spoken from 700 to 1100, its main features consist of inflexional endings, such as the infinitive of verbs ending in –an- as we can see in the verb gongan for instance, later replaced by "to go" in modern English. It was based on the alphabet of the runes and it did not have any written form till the advent of the Latin alphabet. It was king Alfred the Great that began to translate in Old English many Latin literary works. When monasteries became cultural centres the monks began to collect and record in writing these poems, often adding a religious flair to them, but it is thanks to these manuscripts that we have come to know about them.

Formal and Technical Aspects

There are some formal aspects that need to be noted here such as stress and alliteration, each line was divided in two halves by a break and contained three or four stress, giving it rhythm; whereas alliteration is the repetition of the same initial consonant sound and it was used to link the two halves of the line. Some other interesting features are the kennings a sort of primitive metaphor, or formulaic phrase that is used instead of a name or noun, some examples are: whale's road for sea, battle light for sword, or storm of swords for battle. The litotes is an understatement in which an affirmative is stated by negating its opposite. Finally the riddle is a linguistic guessing game meant to mislead or mystify.
The two most important types of poetry during this time are the epic poem and the elegy.

The Epic Poem – this is a long narrative composition dealing with the recollection of a glorious past of a nation through a specific event generally regarding the magnificent deeds of a great hero who usually perishes in the noble of act of defending and protecting the land and the people. It celebrates the function and role of leadership in heroic society, the heroic ethic, meaning that

each man's actions should signify the pursuit of glory and praise. Historical events, although important, are mainly the background needed to frame the actual issues at stakes regarding supernatural folk-tales and mythological events. The society described is noble and military, the common people are never mentioned since their existence is merely linked to that of the aristocracy from where the heroes come from. There is no criticism of the ideals or customs of the society they belong to, on the contrary this poetry is specifically meant to celebrate everything about it. The language used is rich in vocabulary and elevated, and it describes vivid, pictorial flashes of scenes set in banquets, battles, journeys or funerals, it's a meditation of the event rather than a visual description.

The Pagan Elegy – this is a lyrical poem. The elegy rather than remembering the past splendour of a country, it expresses the mourning for the loss of friendship and favour and an individual glorious past. It is generally in the form of a dramatic monologue through which a single protagonist laments the fate of a lone wanderer or exiled soul. The reasons that may have led to such a dramatic situation are not openly described, on the contrary they are hinted at, or implied, the melancholic atmosphere is portrayed through a vivid and descriptive language rich in alliteration to underline the oral rhythm of the poem. The universal aspects of human condition are blended with the personal experience of the isolated speaker outlining a development of the story so that it doesn't appear static.

The idea of isolation and loss of favour is of utmost importance for the Anglo-Saxons and it seemed to have haunted their imagination. In fact, the strongest fear they perceived is that of a potential destruction of the clan or community they belonged to due to internal conflict or an attack coming from the outside. Being forced to live outside the family bonds represented for the Anglo-Saxons the worst fate since out in the wilderness without any protection even the strongest of the individuals risked his life constantly because of the many dangers that nature and other individuals could behold for them, they thus felt vulnerable and open to any menace. It is for all these reasons that any audience could easily identify with the solitary wanderer of the elegy and feel sympathy for his mishaps as they do express the truth of their condition.

Religious Poetry – The literature of the time also has some evidence of religious poetry. In order to be of any appeal to the Saxon population though, it adopts the vocabulary, the style and the modes of the elegy, often portraying Bible events and Christ as much as possible similar to the Germanic society and taste. Not many of them have survived in time, but we do have some verses of Caedmon, an uneducated lay man that was believed to be inspired by Heaven and thus composed some poems on the creation of the world, the flight from Egypt and other Old and New Testament stories. Unfortunately, only nine lines of alliterative verse, called Caedmon Hymn, are known to us. Another religious poet of the 9th century is Cynewulf, four of his poems have survived and they are: Christ, Juliana, Elene and The Fates of the Apostles. Elene is about the finding of the "True Cross" of St. Helena, mother of the Emperor Constantine. Some scholars have ascribed to Cynewulf two anonymous poems, The Dream ofthe Rood and Christ and Satan. The former is the oldest English allegory in the form of a dream vision; the latter tells the story of Christ being tempted by Satan. Satan is portrayed as an elegiac character lamenting the pain he suffers because of his exile from joys and beauty of Heaven. These poems are all much more poetic and all have artistic variety and skill.

Arthurian Romance

King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table are to this day the most familiar and beloved medieval literary characters. They continue to fascinate audiences of contemporary novels, scores of cinematic treatments—from the serious John Boorman film Excalibur to the parodic farce, Monty Python and the Holy Grail—and even print and television advertising employing the Arthurian icons of the sword Excalibur, the ideal of Camelot, and the quest for the Holy Grail. Although the figure of King Arthur known to medieval and modern audiences first took shape in the twelfth century, the product of the accumulation of almost six centuries of legend building, there is some evidence (admittedly slender) for the actual existence of an "historical" Arthur. Contemporary archeological excavation contributes to the still ongoing search for the historical foundations of the King Arthur legend. A leader of the Welsh named "Arthur" who fought against the invading Anglo-Saxons apparently lived in late fifth-to early sixth-century Britain. The historian Gildas first mentioned the battle of Badon (c. 500), which the Welsh poem "Gododdin" (c. 600), in the earliest reference to Arthur's name, later attributed as a triumph to someone named "Arthur." The Welsh historian Nennius, in the Historia Brittonum (History of the Britons; c. 800), named this Arthur "Dux Bellorum" (leader of warriors). Two tenth-century Welsh chronicles, the Spoils of Annwen, and the Annales Cambriae (Annals of the Welsh) added to the growing legend the figure of Mordred, Arthur's illegitimate son, who later kills his father. The tenth-to twelfth-century anthology of Welsh tales titled the Mabinogion added other Arthurian characters, including Yvain, whose character was amplified most extensively by Chrétien de Troyes in a romance about his adventures. In 1125, the historian William of Malmesbury wrote his Gesta Regnum Anglorum (Deeds of the English Kings), further establishing Arthur's reputation as a British hero.

Development of Middle English prose and Verse

The Middle English was spoken in England from about 100 A.D. to about 1500 A.D. It was much easier than the old English.

Poetry

The greatest poet of this period was Geoffrey Chaucer, often called the father of English poetry. He is one of the most skillful and attractive English writers of the entire history of English literature. His great work was The Canterbury Tales, which is in about 17000 lines. It is a collection of stories told by pilgrims on a pilgrimage to Canterbury Cathedral. There are more than twenty stories, but the descriptions of the characters are much more important than their stories. They represent the English life and the various professions like the knight, the merchant, the lawyer, the cook, the priest, and the plowman. Chaucer’s characters are true-to-life and they represent their own class and profession. One of the most enjoyable characters is wife of Bath. Chaucer also wrote Troylus and Cryseyde and The Legend of Good Women.

Another poet of Chaucer’s time was William Langland, who wrote The Vision of Piers the Plowman. It looks a lot older than Chaucer’s rhymed verse, though they are contemporary writers. The characters in this poem are not as real as Chaucer’s. Langland sadly says in his poem how most people prefer the false treasures of this world than the true treasures of heaven. It describes the sorrows of the poor in alliterative lines. This alliteration can be seen in another

poem, as well as in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. It is a story related to the legend of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table.

Prose

Mostly the Middle English prose was religious in nature. The Ancress is a prose work mainly written for religious women. It tells them a lot about the rules of life. Another work The Form of Perfect Living was also written by Richard Rolle probably in the thirteen century. He is very noted for his prose style and his work is important in the history of prose.

John Wycliffe, who was a priest, made the Bible available for the common man. He translated the Bible from Latin to English. His attack to the religious ideas could no longer been tolerated so he had to leave Oxford. He believed that everyone ought to be allowed to read the Bible. But the problem was that it was written in Latin and uneducated people could not read it. That is why he arranged the production of the whole Bible in English. He himself translated some part of it into English. Another important prose work is Mort D' Arthur by Sir Thomas Malory. It is about the adventure of King Arthur and his Knights. It has two themes: one is the search for the Holy Grail, and the other is Arthur's battles against his enemies.

Play

The first English plays, called Miracle or Mystery plays were religious and were performed in or near the churches. The subject matter of such plays was biblical, such as, the disobedience of Adam and Eve, Noah and the great flood, Abraham and Isaac, events in the life of the Christ and so on. They were acted by people of the town on the wheeled stages so they could be moved to everywhere and the play could be shown in different parts of the town. Though the miracles were serious and religious in intention, English comedy grew out of them.

Miracle plays were followed by Morality plays. There is no vast difference between these plays. The hero of the Morality play always represents mankind and the other characters are not people. They represent the abstract qualities like Truth, Beauty, Evil, and Greed and so on. One of the best examples of such play is Everyman. It is the story of the end of Everyman's life. When Death calls Everyman, he has to go to face Death. At this time all his friends leave him except Good Deeds. These plays taught Christian morality to the uneducated.

The interlude is the kind of short, funny and humorous play, which was common in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries were acted away from the church. Such plays were often acted between the acts of long Moralities or between the courses of a feast. Professional actors in colleges or rich men's houses or gardens showed these little dramas. The best example of it is the Four P's which was written by John Heywood.

Fable as a famous medieval literary form

Fable, narrative form, usually featuring animals that behave and speak as human beings, told in order to highlight human follies and weaknesses. A moral—or lesson for behaviour—is woven into the story and often explicitly formulated at the end.

The Western tradition of fable effectively begins with Aesop, a likely legendary figure to whom is attributed a collection of ancient Greek fables. Modern editions contain up to 200 fables, but there is no way of tracing their actual origins; the earliest known collection linked to Aesop dates to the 4th century BCE. Among the Classical authors who developed the Aesopian model were the Roman poet Horace, the Greek biographer Plutarch, and the Greek satirist Lucian.

Fable flourished in the Middle Ages, as did all forms of allegory, and a notable collection of fables was made in the late 12th century by Marie de France. The medieval fable gave rise to an expanded form known as the beast epic—a lengthy, episodic animal story replete with hero, villain, victim, and an endless stream of heroic endeavour that parodied epic grandeur. The most famous of these is a 12th-century group of related tales called Roman de Renart; its hero is Reynard the Fox (German: Reinhart Fuchs), a symbol of cunning. Two English poets reworked elements of the beast epic into long poems: in Edmund Spenser's Prosopopoia; or, Mother Hubberd's Tale (1591) a fox and an ape discover that life is no better at court than in the provinces, and in The Hind and the Panther (1687) John Dryden revived the beast epic as an allegorical framework for serious theological debate.

Chaucer

Geoffrey Chaucer was born between the years 1340-1345, the son of John and Agnes (de Copton) Chaucer. Chaucer was descended from two generations of wealthy vintners who had everything but a title and in 1357 Chaucer began pursuing a position at court. As a squire in the court of Elizabeth, Countess of Ulster, the wife of Lionel, Earl of Ulster (later Duke of Clarence), Chaucer would have served as a gentleman's gentleman—essentially a butler. A young man in this position would be in service to the aristocrats of the court who required diversions as well as domestic help. The way must have opened quickly for Chaucer, who could both tell stories and compose songs. The countess was French, so French poets such as Guillaume de Machaut and Eustache Deschamps provided an early inspiration, and Chaucer's earliest poems, The Book of the Duchess and The Parliament of Birds, rest on a heavy French base. At this time, Chaucer made the acquaintance of the man who would most deeply influence his political career: John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster. Chaucer and Gaunt married the daughters of the French Knight Sir Paon de Roet—Gaunt in order to legitimize his sons by the Roet's daughter, who had been his mistress for some time (all the English kings after Henry VI came from this line), and Chaucer to enter the world of the aristocracy. Of all the Canterbury pilgrims (and there is a "Chaucer"), the one who most closely approximates his situation is the social-climbing Franklin, a man heartily concerned with the gentility of his son. Chaucer's own son, Thomas, became one of the richest men in London, and his great-grandson (who died on the battlefield) was named heir apparent to the throne of England. Although Chaucer was close to Gaunt, he was always on the fringes of the world of courtly political intrigue of this time, a period Shakespeare dramatized in Richard II.

Known as the first English author, Chaucer wrote in English at a time when Latin was considered the grammatica, or language which would not change, and most of the upper-class English spoke French. Chaucer himself often used French translations of Latin texts; that he chose the language of the lower-class Saxons rather than Norman nobility has perplexed readers and scholars for centuries. As Sir Walter Scott pointed out, the Saxon language can name only barnyard animals on the hoof. If one fed a domestic animal, they used its Saxon name, sheep; but

if one ate it, they likely called it by its French name, mouton, which soon became mutton. This linguistic distinction was a class distinction in Chaucer's England: if one raised a farm animal, one was a Saxon and called it by its English name; if one were rich enough to eat it, one named it in French: calf/veau (veal); chicken/poulet (pullet); pig/porc (pork). Chaucer did not try, however, to impress his relatives with his French, but began to develop English into a highly flexible literary language.

Chaucer wrote many works, some of which like The Canterbury Tales (circa 1375-1400) he never finished. He pioneered many recognizably "modern" novelistic techniques, including psychologically complex characters: many claim that Troilus and Criseyde is the first English novel because of the way its main characters are always operating at two levels of response, verbal and intellectual. All of Chaucer's works are sophisticated meditations on language and artifice. Moving out of a medieval world view in which allegory reigned, Chaucer developed a model of language and fiction premised on concealment rather than communication or theological interpretation. Indeed, Chaucer misrepresents himself in his early works, creating self-portraits in The Book of the Duchess (circa 1368-1369) and The House of Fame (circa 1378-1381) as an innocent, overweight bookworm far from the canny businessman and social climber he actually was.

Chaucer's first major work, The Book of the Duchess, is an elegy on the death of Blanche, John of Gaunt's first wife. The poem, though filled with traditional French flourishes, develops its originality around the relationship between the narrator, a fictionalized version of the poet, and the mourner, the Man in Black, who represents Gaunt. Chaucer uses a naïve narrator in both The Book of the Duchess and The House of Fame, which employs a comic version of the guide-narrator relationship of Dante and Virgil in the Commedia. The talkative Eagle guides the naive "Chaucer" just as the naive Dante is guided by the gossipy Virgil. The Eagle takes "Chaucer" to the House of Fame (Rumor), which is even more the house of tales. Here Chaucer makes a case for the preeminence of story, an idea that he explored to great effect in The Canterbury Tales. The inhabitants of the House of Fame are asked whether they want to be great lovers or to be remembered as great lovers, and all choose the latter: the story is more important than the reality.

Dating Chaucer's works is difficult but scholars generally assume that his dream-vision poem The Parliament of Birds (circa 1378-1381), which is less obviously tied to source texts or events, is his third work because it marks a shift in form: he begins to use the seven-line pentameter stanza that he would use in Troilus and Criseyde (circa 1382-1386). The Parliament of Birds is an indictment of courtly love staged as an allegory with birds corresponding to social classes: the hunting birds (eagles, hawks) represent the nobles, the worm eaters (cuckoos) represent the bourgeois, the water fowl are the merchants, and the seed eaters (turtledoves) are the landed farming interests. Each class is given a distinctive voice. In The Parliament of Birds Chaucer examined themes that will pervade his later work: the conflict between Nature and courtly love will permeate Troilus and Criseyde and the experimentation with different voices for all the characters and social classes of birds presages The Canterbury Tales.

By 1374 Chaucer was firmly involved in domestic politics and was granted the important post of controller of customs taxes on hides, skins, and wool. Chaucer had to keep the records himself as well as oversee the collectors. These were prosperous times for Chaucer; his wife had gotten a

large annuity, and they were living rent free in a house above the city gate at Aldgate. After visits to Genoa and Florence in 1372-1373 and to Lombardy in 1378, Chaucer developed an interest in Italian language and literature, which influenced his poem Troilus and Criseyde. Chaucer retold the medieval romance of doomed lovers, setting his epic poem against the backdrop of the siege of Troy. The poem takes its story line from Giovanni Boccaccio's Il Filostrato (1335-1340), but its inspiration from Dante's love for Beatrice as told in the Convito (1307) and from Petrarch's love for Laura as manifested in the sonnets.

In the poem, Chaucer is presenting a case for ennobling passion which fits with the French romances he had read in his youth; only in Troilus and Criseyde this romance takes a particularly Italian turn. The poem analyzes the artifices of love as well as the complex motivations of lovers. Both Dante and Petrarch begin by seeing love as artifice and then show how love breaks free of that artifice. Petrarch's rime (poems) to Laura are in two groups divided by a simple fact, her death. The sonnets in "Vita di ma donna Laura" are artificial, conventional poems filled with such tropes as oxymoron, antithesis, hyperbole, and conceit. The style was so conventional that the French poets had a verb, Petrarquizer, to write like Petrarch. The sonnets change radically after Laura's death, as the artifices fall away in his attempt to re-create the true Laura. The same change occurs in Troilus after the absence of Criseyde. Through his trials Troilus learns, as have Dante and Petrarch before him, that loving a real woman is the only real love.

Chaucer most famous work, The Canterbury Tales, also has similarities with Italian literature: the unfinished poem draws on the technique of the frame tale as practiced by Boccaccio in The Decameron (1349-1351), though it's not clear that Chaucer knew The Decameron in its entirety. The pretext for storytelling in Boccaccio is a plague in Florence which sends a group of ten nobles to the country to escape the Black Death. For each of ten days, they each tell a tale. Each day's tales are grouped around a common topic or narrative subject. The tales, all one hundred of them, are completed; the plague ends in Florence; and the nobles return to the city.

The Canterbury Tales innovates on this model in significant ways. Far from being noble, Chaucer's tale-tellers run the spectrum of the middle class, from the Knight to the Pardoner and the Summoner. And the tales are not told in the order that might be expected—from highest-ranking pilgrim to lowest. Instead, each character uses his tale as a weapon or tool to get back at or even with the previous tale-teller. Once the Miller has established the principle of "quiting," each tale generates the next. The Reeve, who takes offense because "The Miller's Tale" is about a cuckolded carpenter (the Reeve had been a carpenter in his youth), tells a tale about a cuckolded miller, who also gets beaten up after his daughter is deflowered. As in many of the tales, subtle distinctions of class become the focal point of the story.

Chaucer's refusal to let his tale end conventionally is typical of the way he handles familiar stories. He wants to have it both ways, and he reminds the reader of this constantly. In "The Nun's Priest's Tale," for example, he argues both against an allegorical reading of the tale, "My tale is of a cok," and for it, "Taketh the fruyt, and lat the chaf be stille." At work in many of these tales is an important Chaucerian device: a false syllogism based on the movement from the specific to the general back to the specific again, although the specific now occupies a new moral ground. Almost every time Chaucer offers a list of examples, he is playing with this disparity between the general and the specific. As Chaucer worked against the impossibility of finishing

The Canterbury Tales according to the original plan—120 tales, four told by each of thirty pilgrims (in the Middle Ages, which had many systems based on twelve, 120 was as round a number as the 100 of The Decameron)—he began to consider the nature of finishing an act of storytelling. In The Canterbury Tales, in addition to several unfinished tales (the Cook's, the Squire's), there are two tales that are interrupted by other pilgrims: Chaucer's own "Tale of Sir Thopas" and "The Monk's Tale." In handling these tales, Chaucer moves into issues, particularly that of closure, that are now important to narratology and literary theory. Put another way, Chaucer worries both about what a story can mean and what a story can be. In considering the ramifications of an invented teller telling about other invented tellers telling stories whose main purpose is to get back ("quite") at other tellers, Chaucer finds himself with a new conception of fiction, one that is recognizably modern and even postmodern.

There is much speculation as to why Chaucer left The Canterbury Tales unfinished. One theory is that he left off writing them in the mid 1390s, some five or six years before his death. It is possible that the enormousness of the task overwhelmed him. He had been working on The Canterbury Tales for ten years or more, and he was not one quarter through his original plan. He may have felt he could not divide his time successfully between his writing and his business interests. Chaucer himself offers an explanation in the "Retraction" which follows "The Parson's Tale," the last of The Canterbury Tales. In it Chaucer disclaims apologetically all of his impious works, especially "the tales of Caunterbury, thilke that sowen into synne." There has been some speculation about the "Retraction": some believe that Chaucer in ill health confessed his impieties and others that the "Retraction" is merely conventional, Chaucer taking on the persona of the humble author, a stance favored in the Middle Ages. If the reader is to take Chaucer at his word, he seems to suggest that his works were being misread, that people were mistaking the sinful behavior in The Canterbury Tales for its message.

The last thirteen years of Chaucer's life correspond almost exactly to the span of years covered by Shakespeare's Richard II, that is, the period marked by Richard's claiming his majority (he had become king at age nine) and his assumption of the power of the throne in 1389 until his deposition and death in 1399. The realm was marred by the power struggles of the Lancastrian (Gaunt and his son, the eventual Henry IV) and Court (Richard) parties but Chaucer had connections in both camps, and over the dozen years of Richard's reign it was possible to be of the court without being Gaunt's enemy. That Chaucer was able to do this is indicated by the fact that Henry renewed annuities granted to Chaucer when Richard was king.

Nonetheless, these appear to have been financially trying times for Chaucer. His wife received the last payment of her annuity in 1387, which suggests she died in the following year. Although Chaucer lost his post as controller of customs in 1386, he had been appointed justice of peace for the County of Kent in 1385, and in 1389, following the coming to power of Richard, Chaucer was named clerk of public works. This post, which amounted to being a kind of general contractor for the repair of public buildings, was more lucrative than the controller's job that he had lost, but it caused him no end of headaches. One of the duties of this position required him to carry large sums of money, and in 1390 he was robbed of both his and the king's money three times in the space of four days. Though there was no direct punishment, he was appointed subforester of North Pemberton in Somerset. It appears that in 1390 or 1391 he was eased out of

his clerk's job; he eventually got into financial trouble. In 1398 he borrowed against his annuity and was sued for debt.

His last poem, "The Complaint to his Purse," is a letter asking King Henry for money. It is quite likely that in the last years of his life, he was constantly asking the king, whoever he was, for money. The poem, or his connections to the Lancastrians, must have worked because Chaucer was granted a sizable annuity by Henry. Nonetheless, Chaucer moved to a house in the Westminster Abbey Close because a house on church grounds granted him sanctuary from creditors. And so, from the fact of Chaucer's debts comes the tradition of burying poets, or erecting memorials to them, in Westminster Abbey. Chaucer died in 1400, the year after the accession of Henry to the throne and also the year after the death of John of Gaunt, the king's father. That Chaucer was buried in Westminster Abbey was due primarily to the fact that his last residence was on the abbey grounds. So important was he deemed as a poet that the space around his tomb was later dubbed the Poets' Corner, and luminaries of English letters were laid to rest around him.

John Gower

The English author John Gower (ca. 1330-1408) was one of the major court poets of the 14th century. His poems are not so vigorous as Chaucer's, but his criticism of his contemporaries is more direct.

Very little is known about John Gower's early life. He probably held a legal office of some kind, perhaps in Westminster. His first major work, probably begun about 1376, was in French. It is called Miroir de l'Omme, or Speculum meditantis. In it Gower describes the development of sin, the vices and virtues, and the remedy available to man, with a special appeal to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Some time about 1377 Gower retired to the priory of St. Mary Overy in Southwark. He soon began work on his long Latin poem Vox clamantis. Book I, written after 1381, contains a vivid description of the Peasants' Revolt, used to set the theme for a moral analysis of social decay in England. At this time Gower was acquainted with Geoffrey Chaucer, who gave him power of attorney while Chaucer was away on the Continent in 1378. Chaucer later dedicated Troilus and Criseyde to Gower and to Ralph Strode.

In 1390 Gower completed the first version of his most famous poem, written in English but given the Latin title Confessioamantis. He says that he wrote it at the request of King Richard II, who had asked him for "somnewe thing" to read. The first version of the poem was dedicated to Richard. In a later version Gower dedicated his poem to Henry of Derby, the son of John of Gaunt and the future King Henry IV.

Confessioamantis means "the lover's confession," but it is not an autobiography of the poet and it does not concern itself with Gower's amorous adventures. After a prologue in which Gower points out that division in the soul introduced by sin creates division and strife in the world, he introduces the lover, a man overcome by lust and the desire for selfish pleasure. In the remainder of the poem, which occupies 8 books and some 34,000 lines, the lover confesses to Genius, the

priest of Venus, gradually recovering his reason and overcoming the division within himself. The poem ends with a prayer for good government and the rule of reason in the commonwealth. Gower's masterpiece contains an enormous amount of standard medieval moral philosophy and is illustrated by a great variety of exemplary tales. Some of the tales are very well told.

Between 1394 and the end of his life Gower wrote some Latin poems and, probably, some of his French ballades. He married late in life in 1398.

Drama in Middle English Period

ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF DRAMA IN THE MIDDLE AGE:

* It is rightly said that "the origins of drama have always been deeply rooted in the religious instincts of mankind". In fact Churches became the cradle of the English drama. In the Middle Ages Church had a significant role in the life of community.

* In order to preach the ignorant mass the clergy seemed eager to show them scriptural story in a visible form during special festivals as in Christmas or Easter. The services of the Church were in Latin and few could understand them.

* During the 10th century the Gospel stories being illustrated by the series of living pictures in which the performers acted the story in the dumb shows and in the next agate spoke as well as acted the parts. The actors were monks, priests, choir-boys in the service of the church. The plays were performed inside the church.

* After the Norman Conquest in place of Latin, the liturgical play followed the French pattern and finally in place of French, vernacular English was used as the language.

* The crowds became more interested and they started to throng inside the church. As a result the church yard was opened and finally drama came to the open market place. The organization had begun to pass from ecclesiastical to lay hands.

* The growing secularization of the drama is reflected in an edict of 1210 forbidding clergy to take part in the plays.

* From the clergy, control first passed to the religious and social guilds and then to the trade guilds under the general control of the council of the town.

* The guilds were wealthy and out of rivalry became responsible for the productions.

*The four guilds were generally known as Chester cycle, York cycle, Wakefield cycle and Coventry cycle (These cycles took their names after the names of the Towns).

* Gradually the extension of the cycles led to the evolution of the ambulatory cycle, in which the play was performed on the two decked cart or pageant. This pageant consisted of one enclosed room, which served both as Hell and as a tiring room and a second storey open to the sky on which the action was performed.

* For such outdoor per formation only summer festivals were really suitable. Most of the plays of the different cycle began to attach themselves to the feast of Corpus Christi which fell in May on June when the weather was likely to be good and the hours of daylight were long.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE DRAMA:

Mystery and Miracle Plays:

* The earliest species of the dramas are known as 'Mystery' and 'Miracle' plays.

It has long been the fashion to call the Biblical plays ‘mystery’ and those dealing with saints’lives‘Miracles.This division has come from France.

Though these kinds of plays were performed at first inside the church, gradually through the hands of four notable cycles they come to the open market. All the cycles more or less took the materials from the episodes of the Old and New Testaments.

Their aim was to reveal to the common crowd the entire story of the human world from the Creation to the Resurrection.

The productions of these plays were rather crude. There was very little stage property .There was a very few scenery and the dramatic effect was mainly brought out by means of some symbols. The actors were almost amateurs. But the audience was very responsive to the appeal of the play.

Now let us discuss how much the four cycles did their best for the development of the drama with the help of their production written by anonymous authors.

York Cycle:

* It consists of forty-eight (48) plays (though according to records 51 plays were acted).

* They were performed from the 14th to 16th century. The plays were written in the Northubrian dialect. They had dramatic life, and were on the whole reverent in tone. The plays deal with-

Creation of the World, Fall of Lucifer, Fall of Man, Cain and Abel, Life of Christ, Crucifixion etc.

The Wakefield Cycle (The Townley plays):

* The plays were acted at WoodKirk near Wakefield. The plays are entitled as Townley Hall in Lancashire.

* The Cycle consists of thirty-two (32) plays.

* The most important play of this cycle is The Shepherd’s Play which is supposed to be the first farce in English.

* The usual series of plays follow- Noah, Abraham and Issac, Jacob and Easu, Crucifixion, The Visit of Wise Men etc.

Chester Cycle:

* It consists of twenty-five (25) plays. They are more serious and didactic in purpose.

* The plays were acted by the trade companies of the city on the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday in Whitsun week from 1268 to 1577 and again in 1600.

* Some important plays are- The Sacrifice of Issac, Fall of Lucifer, The Deluge, Balaam and the Ass etc.

The Coventry Cycle:

* It consists of forty-two (42) plays. As all the 42 plays were not acted in one year-the custom was to perform the first 28 in one year and the remaining in the next year. The plays were acted at Coventry on the festival of Corpus Christi.

The Morality Play:

* Basically nothing is exactly known regarding the transition of English drama from the Mysteries and Miracles to the Moralities. It is so named because of its association with some moral or ethical instruction. A Morality is a kind of allegorical play. The characters are personified abstraction like – Mankind, Mercy, Justice, Peace, Vice, Death, Beauty etc. The play is concerned with the conflict between good and evil over the possession of human soul. It generally ends wit the triumph of virtue and the good.

* The remarkable Moralities are- Everyman, Mankind, The Castle of Perseverance, The Three Estates etc.

The Interlude:

* The last predecessor of the regular drama in England was the Interlude which flourished in the middle of the 16th century. It had several distinguished points:-

* 'It was a short play that introduced real characters, usually of humble rank, such as citizens and friars; there was an absence of allegorical figures; there was much broad farcical humour, often coarse; and there were set scenes, a new feature in the English drama. It will be observed that the interlude was a great advance upon the morality-play'.

* The Interlude aimed at amusement and entertainment. The most notable Interlude is John Heywood's 'The Four P's'.

· The Four P's:

* It is written in doggerel verse.
* It describes a lying-match between a Pedlar, a Palmer and a Potycary.

Each one makes a trial of their skill in that direction. The Potycary tells the story of his visit to Purgatory and to Hell to recover a lost soul. Finally the Palmer tells that he has traveled through many towns and cities throughout many towns and cities throughout Christendom. He has seen

five hundred thousand women yet in all the places he has been he had never seen or heard of "any woman out of Patience!"

Finally the Palmer is awarded the prize.

Other Interludes are- Johan, The Play of Weather, The Husband etc.

N.B. - Corpus Christi:

It is a great Roman Catholic festival. It became popular when the Pope granted 'pardon' to the performers and threatened excommunication of those who should interfere with the performances. Corpus Christi play was ambulatory one where the whole performance was done on a stage which moved along the selected roads with the crowd assembled all along the route. It gave birth to different types of expression to the religious themes from creation to the Last Judgment. In different wagons different scenes were shown. Banner bearers rode about in advance, reading aloud banners which announced the subject matter of the scene. Spectators thronged in from nearby villages and thus the play flourished. The term came to be applied to any play which represented Passion and Resurrection at any date.

University Wits

The University Wits were young scholarly playwrights from Oxford and Cambridge who were pioneering in secular drama, breaking with the tradition of the ecclesiastical plays of medieval England. Not only were these playwrights attempting the secularization of drama, they were also writing plays professionally for the first time for financial support. The University Wits were collectively called so because the term 'wit' refers to scholars – group of six men writing by way of professional choice. These include Thomas Kyd, Christopher Marlowe, John Lyly, Robert Greene, Thomas Lodge and Thomas Nasche. They were precursors of Shakespeare.

John Lyly was a practitioner of drama in prose who lived from 1554-1606. His plays reflect the Elizabethan culture i.e, courtly culture which patronizes theatrical art. His themes were all concerned with the intellectual life of London as is best expressed in his novel called Eupheus. Lyly's prose style also finds expression through drama and one of his most popular plays is the comedy, Campaspe. The euphemistic language meant that Lyly used language that was rich with words of many colours, that apparently seem ridiculous, but was somehow stately and engaging. Lyly's treatment of the English language was perhaps the first experiment made with diction in the Elizabethan era. He was extremely loyal to the early Elizabethan tradition of moral comedy. However to moral soundness he also added a delicacy that made plays suitable for the gentlefolk of England. Human figures live and move side by side with deities of classical mythology. Some of his other plays include Endymion, Midas and The Woman in the Moon, and the very classical play in treatment but contemporary in presentation, Mother Bombie. The proverb "All is fair in love and war" has been attributed to Lyly's Euphues. In fact, Lyly was a major source of inspiration for A Midsummer Night's Dream by Shakespeare.

Of all the dramatic predecessors of Shakespeare, George Peele is perhaps the only unredeemed playwright and he is the only one except Marlowe to whom the word 'genius' can be seriously applied. He witnessed the squalor and filth of London life as he had spent his nascent days in abject poverty. One of his most significant plays is The Arraignment of Paris (The Judgement of

Paris). This play was presented in front of the Queen by the children of the chapel, and has a strong mythical connection to the Trojan War. The playwright uses the theme very interestingly by presenting the mythical situation in which Prime Paris was asked by the three goddesses (Aphrodite – Venus – Hera, and Diana – Artemis) to judge the fairest of them all. He judged in favour of Venus and incurred the wrath of Hera and Diana. The Arraignment of Paris is a play which envisions the simple loveliness of the Golden Age, i.e, pre-Homeric Greece. Peele therefore combines speeches with songs and introduces the interactions with intermingling between Gods and Shepherds. His other play, The Love of King David and Fair Bethsabe, takes us into a totally different world which is the oriental world of King David – a world of opulence and also a world of crime and penitence. Yet another play by Peele is The Old Wives' Tale, which takes readers into the nursery of children. Here Peele effectively mixes satire with the simple tales narrated to children. The situation of the play is that of a dreamy child who is full of such nursery tales narrated by the old wives. This particular play of Peele would create the best impact when enacted on stage. However, his greatest contribution to the Elizabethan drama remains The Arraignment of Paris in which he was able to recreate the world of magical vision and wonder which created tremendous appeal amidst the readers and the audience.

Of the bulk of Robert Greene's plays, much was comedy. In his experimentation with the genre of comedy, his play titled Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay, is a masterpiece. Greene presents rural scenes mixed with an abundance of magical and comical situations. There are devices like interludes involved in the play and there is quite a quantity of folklore introduced in the plotline. Greene delves into the history and art of sorcery and black magic, common superstitions and ominous forebodings that the Elizabethan audience was deeply interested in. Greene also composed a historical play titled, The Scottish History of King James IV. The play is authenticated by the use of real historical data combined with his skill as a playwright. Greene's influence was immense on Shakespeare's romantic comedies which are found to be based on much of the same premises and materials. He also wrote The Looking Glass for London and England with Thomas Lodge.

The genre of tragedy was perhaps most skilfully and artistically treated by Thomas Kyd in the Elizabethan age. The Spanish Tragedie is a masterpiece created by Kyd to represent the essential concept of tragedy in the Elizabethan era. It has been acclaimed as the "good theatre" as it includes certain essential requirements of Elizabethan tragedy. The Spanish Tragedie is modelled on the Senecan tragedies of blood and revenge. In his play, Kyd is exploring the idea of revenge as a moral duty or a justified act that has to be solemnly resolved. It is methodically executed by the protagonist of the play, Hieronimo. Hieronimo is the avenger who seeks revenge on Lorenzo and Balthazar for the conspiracy and murder of his son Horatio. In order to create this plot line Kyd has extensively borrowed from Senecan tragedies replete with the idea of retributive justice. Kyd employs several tragic devices to popularize the essential ideas of his play. One such device is the use of a personified figure of revenge who comes on stage at the beginning of the play to announce to the audience how revenge is an act of moral compulsion incumbent on the avengers. Kyd employs soliloquies which highlights the mission of revenge. The play – within – play technique was introduced by Kyd to exact his revenge upon the criminals. In a nutshell, The Spanish Tragedie sets the tone and direction of the Elizabethan revenge tradition which was to be followed by successive playwrights. Another play is Ur-Hamlet. This is the source of Shakespeare's Hamlet. Plays attributed in whole or in part to Kyd include Soliman and Perseda,

King Leir, Arden of Faversham and Edward III. He is also the presumed author of a pamphlet in prose entitled The Murder of John Brewen (1592), a grisly report on murder in a family, in which a goldsmith is murdered by his wife.

Thomas Lodge's most important work Rosalynd is commonly believed and critically observed to be the inspiration for Shakespeare's As You Like It. Lastly, the most significant extant play by Nasche is Summer's Last Will and Testament. It is an allegorical play which makes satire with courtly compliment. Another important work by this playwright is a picaresque tale titled The Unfortunate Traveller or The Life of Jack.

Drama in the Elizabethan age was particularly conscious of technique and stage craft which were rapidly developing to leave a greater visual impact on the audiences of the time. Great works of English literature flourished during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I; art, poetry, drama, and learning in general germinated as the English confidence and nationalism she inspired, spilled from the economic sector to cultural achievements. The Elizabethan Age is generally considered to be one of the golden ages in English literature and the University Wits are primary contributors to this legacy.

Christopher Marlowe has been termed as the "Father of the English Drama" and his evolution of writing made him the most popular University wit of his time. Marlowe stormed into popularity with Tamburlaine, the Great– the story of a shepherd boy who rises to power and becomes a world renowned conqueror. Other notable plays by Marlowe include Doctor Faustus, Dido: Queen of Carthage and The Jew of Malta. Furthermore, Marlowe also composed a play of great historical merit titled Edward II. In Doctor Faustus, Marlowe attempted to portray the struggle between an individual's thirst for acquiring forbidden knowledge and his yearning for maintaining the essence of his existence. Faustus is not merely a man who seeks the practical fruits of knowledge. He aspires for the ultimate understanding for the truths of life. There are allegorical representations in the play of the good and bad angels as it was done in morality plays. The good angels urge Faustus towards repentance while the bad angels urge him towards damnation. His first play to be written was Dido: Queen of Carthage. It is popularly believed that it is based on the 1st, 2nd and 4th books of Virgil's Aeneid. Edward II is a historical play in which Marlowe explores the life and death of a monarch alluding to his weak and ineffectual rain, his affinity for his friend Gaveston, the repeated uprsings of the Barons and the final brutal torture that he was subjected to. Marlowe provides yet another dimension by portraying the Machiavellian figure of Barrabas.

Tamburlaine the great

The play Tamburlaine the Great begins with a prologue declaring that the play with not focus on petty subjects that are discussed in other plays, and that it will instead be about a great conqueror and his victories.

Act 1 opens with Mycetes, the king of Persia, complaining to his brother Cosroe about a Scythian shepherd named Tamburlaine who, together with his band of outlaws, causes him trouble. Cosroe starts criticizing his brother for being week and foolish, and yet the king does nothing to stop him. In an attempt to stop Tamburlaine from entering Persia, Mycetes sends his chief captain, Theridamas, to kill Tamburlaine. After Theridamas and Mycetes leave the stage,

Cosroe is told that the Persians don't like Mycetes as king; they offer him the crown, which Cosroe accepts.

Tamburlaine appears for the first time in the second scene, when he captures Zenocrate, the Egyptian princess. Tamburlaine starts declaring his love for her and promises to make her a queen. Theridamas arrives with an army twice as big as Tamburlaine's, but is convinced to switch sides and becomes loyal to Tamburlaine.

Cosroe also joins Tamburlaine, hoping that he will be able to take his brother's throne with the help of Tamburlaine's army. When Mycetes hears about what happened, is advised by Meander to throw gold on the battlefield in an effort to distract the soliders. Tamburlaine comes in when Mycetes tries to hide his crown. Instead of taking it then, Tamburlaine lets Mycetes hold the crown until he destroys his army.

After Tamburlaine wins the fight, Cosroe flees with the crown to Persepolis. Tamburlaine challenges Cosroe and wins, Cosroe dying in the process.

The third act begins with the Turkish Emperor Bajazeth discussing Tamburlaine with his kings. They all agree that Tamburlaine must be stopped from entering the Turkish Empire.

In the next scene, Tamburlaine walks in on Lord Agydas telling Zenocrate to not let herself be manipulated by Tamburlaine; Zenocrate tells Agydas that she wants to marry Tamburlaine. When Agydas realizes that Tamburlaine heard what he said, he stabs himself, preferring to kill himself rather than letting Tamburlaine torture him.

In the next act, Tamburlaine defeats the Turkish emperor, making Bajazeth and his wife, Zabina, his slaves. Tamburlaine and Zenocrate then enjoy torturing and humiliating Bajazeth and Zabina.

Zenocrate's father, the sultan of Egypt, vows to stop Tamburlaine with the help of the Arabian king. Despite Zenocrate's pleas, Tamburlaine prepares to attack Egypt.

Tamburlaine's army attacks Damascus and the governor sends a group of virgins for Tamburlaine's army as an attempt to stop them from attacking. Tamburlaine declines his offer; he has the virgins slaughtered and then displayed on the city walls.

While Tamburlaine is at war with Egypt, Bajazeth kills himself by bashing his head into a wall, not being able to endure the humiliation any longer. When Zabine sees him, she does the same thing, running headfirst into the walls of her husband's cell.

Tamburlaine wins the battle against the sultan and the king of Arabia. While the king of Arabia dies, Tamburlaine spares the sultan and gives him more territory than before.

After the battle with the sultan, Tamburlaine returns to Zenocrate and crowns her queen of Persia, thus ending the first part of the play.

The second part opens with Sigismond, the king of Hungary, and Orcanes, the king of Natolia, signing a truce while Tamburlaine advances towards Natolia.

Back in Egypt, Bajazeth's son, Callapine, manages to escape from Tamburlaine's prisons by bribing his jailer, promising him a kingdom.

Tamburlaine teaches his three sons about war; while two of them are just like him, cruel and eager to be on the battlefield, one of them, Calyphas, doesn't have the same mentality as Tamburlaine does. After that, Tamburlaine meets with Theridamas, Techelles, and Usumcasane and they prepare to march towards Natolia.

In the next act, Sigismond breaks his vow and attacks Natolia while Tamburlaine does. However, Orcanes defeats them, believing that he won because Sigismond broke the vow he made to the Christian savior.

Hearing that Zenocrate became ill, Tamburlaine returns to her. Zenocrate dies and Tamburlaine burns down the city where she died, forbidding anyone to rebuild it.

Callapine is crowned as the Turkish emperor and swears that he will revenge his father's death and the humiliations he suffered.

Theridamas and Techelles march northward, where they conquer another city. The captain of that city dies; Theridamas and Techelles take his wife, Olympia, with them. Tamburlaine and Usumcasane then parlay with Callapine and his subsidiary kings, threatening each other and boasting.

Act 4 opens with Calyphas' brothers harrassing him, looking for a fight. He refuses; when Tamburlaine returns, he stabs Calyphas, thus killing his own son. Tamburlaine then orders the Turkish concubines to go and bury his son. He then goes away in a chariot pulled by the kings of the lands he conquered, and tells his soldiers to rape the Turkish concubines.

Meanwhile, Theridamas falls in love with Olympia and tries to court her, but she refuses his advances. Olympia tricks Theridamas into killing her, telling him that she has an ointment that can protect a person from getting wounded when stabbed.

Tamburlaine continues his conquests and arrives in Babylon. There, he hangs the governor of the city, orders every Babylonian drowned, and burns Islamic religious books. Tamburlaine returns to Persia feeling very ill. On the way back, they are attacked by Callapine, who is forced to run away. In Persia, Tamburlaine names Amyras his successor to the throne before dying.

The play ends with the lamentations of Tamburlaine's son, Amyras, fearing that he will never be as great as his father.

Shakespeare- professional man of Theatre

As a playwright and an actor Shakespeare was heavily involved with a number of London theatres. Read an overview of Shakespeare's theatres below.

Shakespeare's Theatres 1: The Theatre
Shakespeare's earliest plays were performed at The Theatre. When the company moved to the Globe Shakespeare became a partner in the company and eventually became wealthy partly as a result of that.

The Theatre was one of the first public theatres in England since Roman times just outside London, in modern day Shoreditch. It was in this theatre that Shakespeare began his acting and writing career with The Lord Chamberlain's Men, a theatre company.

Shakespeare's Theatres 2: The Curtain

The Lord Chamberlain's Men move to The Curtain theatre in 1597 until The Globe theatre opened in 1599.

Shakespeare's Theatres 3: The Globe

The Globe is the theatre most commonly associated with the performance of Shakespeare's plays. It was erected in 1599 on the south bank of the Thames by the Lord Chamberlain's Men, and it became their main performance space until it was destroyed by a fire on June 29, 1613. A reconstruction of the Globe is a popular tourist attraction in London today.

Shakespeare's Theatres 4: Blackfriars Theatre

Blackfriars Theatre was built by Richard Burbage in on the north bank of the Thames in 1596 as a private theatre. There were strict regulations on public playhouses within the bounds of the city wall, but the private theatres in London were built upon grounds that belonged to the church – grounds that had been appropriated by Henry VIII and were therefore not under the control of the Lord Mayor.

Shakespeare's Theatres 5: The Royal Court, the Inns of Court and the Houses of the Nobility

Members of the royal family did not attend the playhouses, and so Shakespeare and the Chamberlain's Men and later, the King's Men would, on occasion, be requested to perform at court.

The main London residence of the Monarch was at Whitehall during the reigns of both Elizabeth I and James I. But the court was constituted wherever the monarch happened to be staying.

During Christmas, 1594, Shakespeare acted before Queen Elizabeth I in her palace at Greenwich in two separate comedies, and during Christmas, 1597, the Chamberlain's Men performed Love's Labour's Lost before the Queen in her palace at Whitehall. In 1603, Shakespeare plays were performed several times before King James I at Hampton Court, when the company had changed their name to The King's Men.

Like the royal families the noblemen did not attend theatres. Shakespeare and the Chamberlain's Men would accept invitations to perform at the country houses and estates of the nobility. Among many performances in the houses of noblemen, Shakespeare performed at the house of the Earl of Pembroke in 1603, and in 1605 he performed at Lord Southampton's London house.

William Shakespeare, often called England's national poet, is considered the greatest dramatist of all time. His works are loved throughout the world, but Shakespeare's personal life is shrouded in mystery.

Who Was William Shakespeare?

William Shakespeare was an English poet, playwright and actor of the Renaissance era. He was an important member of the King's Men company of theatrical players from roughly 1594 onward.

Known throughout the world, Shakespeare's writings capture the range of human emotion and conflict and have been celebrated for more than 400 years. And yet, the personal life of William Shakespeare is somewhat a mystery.

There are two primary sources that provide historians with an outline of his life. One is his work — the plays, poems and sonnets — and the other is official documentation such as church and court records. However, these provide only brief sketches of specific events in his life and yield little insight into the man himself.

When Was Shakespeare Born?

No birth records exist, but an old church record indicates that a William Shakespeare was baptized at Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-upon-Avon on April 26, 1564. From this, it is believed he was born on or near April 23, 1564, and this is the date scholars acknowledge as Shakespeare's birthday.

Family

Shakespeare was the third child of John Shakespeare, a leather merchant, and Mary Arden, a local landed heiress. Shakespeare had two older sisters, Joan and Judith, and three younger brothers, Gilbert, Richard and Edmund.

Before Shakespeare's birth, his father became a successful merchant and held official positions as alderman and bailiff, an office resembling a mayor. However, records indicate John's fortunes declined sometime in the late 1570s.

Childhood and Education

Scant records exist of Shakespeare's childhood and virtually none regarding his education. Scholars have surmised that he most likely attended the King's New School, in Stratford, which taught reading, writing and the classics.

Being a public official's child, Shakespeare would have undoubtedly qualified for free tuition. But this uncertainty regarding his education has led some to raise questions about the authorship of his work (and even about whether or not Shakespeare really existed).

Wife and Children

Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway on November 28, 1582, in Worcester, in Canterbury Province. Hathaway was from Shottery, a small village a mile west of Stratford. Shakespeare was 18 and Anne was 26, and, as it turns out, pregnant.

Their first child, a daughter they named Susanna, was born on May 26, 1583. Two years later, on February 2, 1585, twins Hamnet and Judith were born. Hamnet later died of unknown causes at age 11.

Shakespeare's Lost Years

There are seven years of Shakespeare's life where no records exist after the birth of his twins in 1585. Scholars call this period the "lost years," and there is wide speculation on what he was doing during this period.

One theory is that he might have gone into hiding for poaching game from the local landlord, Sir Thomas Lucy. Another possibility is that he might have been working as an assistant schoolmaster in Lancashire.

It's generally believed he arrived in London in the mid- to late 1580s and may have found work as a horse attendant at some of London's finer theaters, a scenario updated centuries later by the countless aspiring actors and playwrights in Hollywood and Broadway.

The King's Men

By the early 1590s, documents show Shakespeare was a managing partner in the Lord Chamberlain's Men, an acting company in London with which he was connected for most of his career.

Considered the most important troupe of its time, the company changed its name to the King's Men following the crowning of King James I in 1603. From all accounts, the King's Men company was very popular. Records show that Shakespeare had works published and sold as popular literature.

Although the theater culture in 16th century England was not highly admired by people of high rank, some of the nobility were good patrons of the performing arts and friends of the actors.

William Shakespeare's Plays

While it's difficult to determine the exact chronology of Shakespeare's plays, over the course of two decades, from about 1590 to 1613, he wrote a total of 37 plays revolving around several main themes: histories, tragedies, comedies and tragicomedies.

Early Works: Histories and Comedies

With the exception of the tragic love story Romeo and Juliet, Shakespeare's first plays were mostly histories. Henry VI (Parts I, II and III), Richard II and Henry V dramatize the destructive results of weak or corrupt rulers and have been interpreted by drama historians as Shakespeare's way of justifying the origins of the Tudor Dynasty.

Julius Caesar portrays upheaval in Roman politics that may have resonated with viewers at a time when England's aging monarch, Queen Elizabeth I, had no legitimate heir, thus creating the potential for future power struggles.

Shakespeare also wrote several comedies during his early period: the whimsical A Midsummer Night's Dream, the romantic Merchant of Venice, the wit and wordplay of Much Ado About Nothing and the charming As You Like It and Twelfth Night.

Other plays written before 1600 include Titus Andronicus, The Comedy of Errors, The Two Gentlemen of Verona, The Taming of the Shrew, Love's Labour's Lost, King John, The Merry Wives of Windsor and Henry V.

Works after 1600: Tragedies and Tragicomedies
It was in Shakespeare's later period, after 1600, that he wrote the tragedies Hamlet, Othello, King Lear and Macbeth. In these, Shakespeare's characters present vivid impressions of human temperament that are timeless and universal.

Possibly the best known of these plays is Hamlet, which explores betrayal, retribution, incest and moral failure. These moral failures often drive the twists and turns of Shakespeare's plots, destroying the hero and those he loves.
In Shakespeare's final period, he wrote several tragicomedies. Among these are Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale and The Tempest. Though graver in tone than the comedies, they are not the dark tragedies of King Lear or Macbeth because they end with reconciliation and forgiveness.

Other plays written during this period include All's Well That Ends Well, Measure for Measure, Timon of Athens, Coriolanus, Pericles and Henry VIII.

When Did Shakespeare Die?
Tradition holds that Shakespeare died on his 52nd birthday, April 23, 1616, but some scholars believe this is a myth. Church records show he was interred at Trinity Church on April 25, 1616.

Ben Johnson

The English playwright and poet Ben Jonson (1572-1637) is best known for his satiric comedies. An immensely learned man with an irascible and domineering personality, he was, next to Shakespeare, the greatest dramatic genius of the English Renaissance.

Ben Jonson was probably born in or near London, about a month after the death of his clergyman father. He received his formal education at Westminster School, where he studied under the renowned scholar William Camden. He did not continue his schooling, probably because his stepfather forced him to engage in the more practical business of bricklaying. He spent a brief period as a soldier in Flanders and sometime between 1592 and 1595 he was married.
Early Career
English literature, and particularly the drama, had already entered its golden age when Ben Jonson began his career. Jonson's special contribution to this remarkably exuberant age was his strong sense of artistic form and control. Although an accomplished scholar, he had an unusual

appreciation of the colloquial speech habits of the unlettered, which he used with marked effect in many of his plays.

Jonson began his theatrical career as a strolling player in the provinces. By 1597 he was in London, the center of dramatic activity, and had begun writing plays for the theatrical manager Philip Henslowe. In what is probably his first piece of dramatic writing. The Isle of Dogs, Jonson ran afoul of the law. The play (which has not survived) was judged to be a "lewd" work containing "seditious and slanderous matter," and Jonson was imprisoned. In 1598 he was in more serious trouble. Having killed a fellow actor in a duel, he escaped hanging only by claiming right of clergy—that is, by reciting a few words of Latin commonly known as "neck-verse."

In the same year Jonson's first major work, Every Man in His Humour, was performed by the Lord Chamberlain's Men, with Shakespeare taking the lead role. This play stands as a model of the "comedy of humors," in which each character's behavior is dictated by a dominating whim or affectation. It is also a very cleverly constructed play.

Jonson's next major play, Every Man out of His Humour, appeared in 1599 or early 1600, followed closely by Cynthia's Revels (1601) and Poetaster (1601). These three "comical satires" represent Jonson's contribution to the so-called war of the theaters—a short-lived feud between rival theatrical companies involving Thomas Dekker, John Marston, and perhaps other playwrights in addition to Jonson himself. After this brief but heated skirmish, Jonson turned his energies to what he clearly regarded as one of his most important works, Sejanus His Fall, which eventually appeared in 1603. This rigidly classical tragedy was admired by some of Jonson's learned contemporaries, but the great majority of playgoers considered it a pedantic bore. Jonson's only other surviving tragedy, Catiline His Conspiracy (1611), met with a similar fate.

By 1604, before he had written his most enduring works, Jonson had become known as the foremost writer of masques in England. These highly refined allegorical spectacles were designed for courtly audiences, and as a rule members of noble or royal families took part in the performances. Jonson continued writing masques throughout his career, frequently in cooperation with the famous architect Inigo Jones, who designed the stage sets and machinery.

Major Works

Jonson's dramatic genius was fully revealed for the first time in Volpone, or the Fox (1606), a brilliant satiric comedy which Jonson claimed was "fully penned" in 5 weeks. It was favorably received not only by London theatergoers but by more sophisticated audiences at Oxford and Cambridge.

Volpone contains Jonson's harshest and most unremitting criticism of human vice. All the principal figures are named (in Italian) after animals suggestive of their characters: for example, Volpone, the cunning fox, and Voltore, the ravenous vulture. The main action turns on Volpone's clever scheme to cheat those who are as greedy as he but not nearly so clever. With the help of his servant Mosca, he pretends to be deathly ill; each of the dupes, encouraged to believe that he may be designated heir to Volpone's fortune, tries to win his favor by presenting him with gifts. Volpone is too clever for his own good, however, and is finally betrayed by Mosca and exposed to the magistrates of Venice. The punishment imposed on him (and on the self-seeking dupes as

well) is unusually severe for a comedy; in fact, there is almost nothing in Volpone which provokes laughter.

The satire of Jonson's next three comedies is more indulgent. Epicoene, or the Silent Woman (1609) is an elaborate intrigue built around a farcical character with an insane hatred of noise. The principal intriguer, Sir Dauphine Eugenie, tricks his noise-hating uncle Morose into marrying a woman Morose believes to be docile and quiet. She, however, turns out to be an extremely talkative person with a horde of equally talkative friends. After tormenting his uncle and in effect forcing him into a public declaration of his folly, Sir Dauphine reveals that Morose's voluble wife is actually a boy disguised as a woman.

In The Alchemist (1610) the characters are activated more by vice than folly—particularly the vices of hypocrisy and greed. Jonson's treatment of such characters, however, is less harsh than it was in Volpone, and their punishment consists largely in their humiliating self-exposure. Bartholomew Fair (1614), unlike Jonson's other comic masterpieces, does not rely on complicated intrigue and deception. Its relatively thin plot is little more than an excuse for parading an enormously rich and varied collection of unusual characters.

Later Years

After Bartholomew Fair, Jonson's dramatic powers suffered a decline. His major achievements were solidified by the appearance of his Works in a carefully prepared folio volume published in 1616. Although he continued writing plays for another 15 years, most of these efforts have been dismissed as "dotages." He remained nonetheless an impressive and respected figure, especially in literary and intellectual circles. In 1619, for example, he was awarded an honorary degree from Oxford. He was also idolized by a group comprising younger poets and playwrights who styled themselves the "tribe of Ben."

It is from this last phase of Jonson's dramatic career that much of the information about his personal life and character comes. One major source of information is the record of conversations with Jonson kept by the Scottish poet Drummond of Hawthornden. In the summer of 1618 Jonson took a walking tour to Scotland, in the course of which he spent a few days with Drummond. His host concluded that Jonson was "a great lover and praiser of himself, a contemner and scorner of others, given rather to lose a friend than a jest; jealous of every word and action of those about him, especially after drink, which is one of the elements in which he liveth; … oppressed with fancy, which hath ever mastered his reason." This somewhat unflattering portrait accords reasonably well with the personality that reveals itself indirectly in Jonson's plays.

Jonson's nondramatic writings include a grammar of English (printed in 1640), a miscellaneous collection of notes and reflections on various authors entitled Timber, or Discoveries (also printed in 1640), and a large number of poems, almost all of them written in response to particular events in the poet's experience. Most of his poetry was written in short lyric forms, which he handled with great skill. His lyric style tends to be simple and unadorned yet highly polished, as in the epigram on the death of his first daughter, which begins "Here lies to each her parents ruth,/ Mary, the daughter of their youth."

After the death of King James I in 1625, Jonson suffered a number of setbacks. His talents as a masque writer were not fully appreciated by the new king, and as a result Jonson was frequently short of money. He was paralyzed in 1628 and confined for the remainder of his life to his home in Westminster. He evidently continued his scholarly study of the classics, which had occupied him throughout his active life. He died on Aug. 6, 1637. In recognition of his stature as the foremost man of letters of his age, he was buried with great ceremony in Westminster Abbey.

Poetic Drama

INTRODUCTION:

The poetic drama is a great achievement of the modern age. It is a mixture of high seriousness and colloquial element. It is the combination of the tradition and the experiment and of the ancient and the new. It is symbolic and difficult. Its verse form is blank verse or free verse. In short, its vehicle is verse, its mechanism is imagery, its substance is myth and its binding force is musical pattern.

Beginning:

The 18th and the 19th century contributed little to the development of poetic drama due to the unfavourable conditions. There were signs of rebirth of this drama by 1920. But it could not gain much ground. The reason was that most of the dramatists of this period were interested in realistic drama. A change was noticed with the passage of time. The disciples of Ibsen began to be overshadowed. At the Abbey Theatre Yeats tried to revive poetic drama. But he could not succeed. It was T.S. Eliot who firmly established it. He prepared the concrete ground for it by saying that the craving for poetic drama is permanent in human nature. He added that poetry was the complete medium for drama

Beginners:

Before T.S. Eliot some dramatists tried to create a taste for poetic drama. This attempt helped Eliot in making his valuable experiments in poetic drama. Among these dramatists Stephen Phillis, Jon Masefield, Gordon Bottomley, Flecker and John Drinkwater are important. They all experimented in poetic Drama and prepared ground for Eliot. Their plays vitalised the course of poetic drama.

W.B. Yeats:

W.B. Yeats, Lady Gregory and J.M. Synge established the Abbey theatre in Dublin to encourage the poet - playwrights. At this theatre Yeats endeavoured to revive poetic drama. He wrote about twenty-six plays in verse but Yeats was more of a poet than dramatist. His plays are rich in poetical intensity. Eliot has praised his contribution to poetic drama. Yeats' important plays are on Baile's Strand, The Resurrection and Deirdre.

T.S. Eliot:

Eliot propounded the theory of the poetic drama. It was he who established its tradition in 20th century. The murder in the Cathedral is his first full-length poetic play. The family Reunion, The Cocktail Party, The Confidential Clerk and the Elder Statesman are his other important poetic plays. Through these plays he evolved a befitting poetic mode of expression for the poetic drama. He discarded the use of traditional blank verse. He carefully avoided any echo of

Shakespeare. He explored the dramatic possibility of verse and extended the scope of poetic drama.

Auden and Isherwood:

Auden wrote two plays alone and three plays in collaboration with Isherwood. Audern's The Dance of Death is an important poetic drama. Isherwood's Ascent of F6 and Across the Frontiers are important plays. His plays deal with symbolic situation and cartoon characters.

Stephen Spender:

He wrote Trial of a Judge. But it can't be considered to be a poetic play of permanent value. John Masefield, Drinkwater, Macneice, Duncan, and Ridler are the other dramatists that have enriched the field of the poetic drama.

Christopher Fry:

His 'The Lady Is Not For Burning' is an important experiment in verse and technique. In 'Venus Observed' Fry uses simple poetic language.

Conclusion:

Thus Poetic drama is completely a new phenomenon in the history of English drama. It is a literary revolution of 20th Century.

Metaphysical Poetry:

The word ‘Metaphysical Poetry’ is a philosophical concept used in literature where poets portray the things/ideas that are beyond the depiction of physical existence. Etymologically, there is a combination of two words ‘meta’ and ‘physical in word “metaphysical”.’ The first word “Meta” means beyond. So metaphysical means beyond physical, beyond the normal and ordinary. The meanings are clear here that it deals with the objects/ideas that are beyond the existence of this physical world.

Definition of Metaphysical Poetry

Metaphysical poetry is a genre of poetry that deals with deep and profound subjects like spirituality, religion, etc. It is highly intellectual form of poetry and presents the world to its readers in a different way. It asks questions that science cannot answer. Metaphysical poetry prompts the readers to question their reality and existence. It takes one beyond the physical world and gives new perspectives through its imagery, wit and paradox.

Definition in Merriam Webster Dictionary

“Highly intellectualized poetry marked by bold and ingenious conceits, incongruous imagery, complexity and subtlety of thought, frequent use of paradox, and often by deliberate harshness or rigidity of expression”

Characteristics of Metaphysical poetry

Metaphysical poetry talks about deep things. It talks about soul, love, religion, reality etc. You can never be sure about what is coming your way while reading a metaphysical poem. There can be unusual philosophies and comparisons that will make you think and ponder.
The most important characteristics of metaphysical poetry is "undissociated sensibility" (the combination of feeling and thoughts).
Even though it talks about serious stuff, it talks about it in a humorous way. The tone is sometimes light. It can be harsh sometimes too. The purpose is to present a new idea and make the reader think.
Another characteristic of such poetry is that it is unclear. Because it provides such complicated themes, the idea of metaphysical poems is somewhat not definite. It is different for every person. It depends on the perception and experiences of the reader. Every person will take something different out of the same poem based on their beliefs and understanding.
Metaphysical poetry is also short. It uses brief words and conveys a lot of ideas in just a small number of words. There are many maxims in this type of poetry too. John Donne introduced sayings into metaphysical poetry.
The unusual comparison of things in poetry is one of its unique and most interesting characteristics. All the metaphysicals have ability for unusual witty comparison , juxtaposition, and imagery. These unusual comparison are metaphysical conceits. As Donne in Twicknam Garden uses expression "spider love" that is contrary to the expectations of the readers. In the same poem, Donne also compares a lovers tears to wine of love that is unusual use of juxtaposition. Conceit compares very dissimilar things. For example bright smoke, calling lovers as two points of compass, taking soul as dew drop, etc.
The metaphysical poetry is brain-sprung, not heart-felt. It is intellectual and witty.
According to Grierson, the two chief characteristics of metaphysical poetry are paradoxical ratiocination and passionate feelings. As Donne opens his poem "The indifferent" with a line with a paradoxical comment. "I can love both fair and brown"
Other unique feature of this poetry is Platonic Love. The word is taken after Plato. Platonic love is a non-romantic love. There is no lust or need of physical contact. It is spiritual love and is mostly for God.
Another feature of the metaphysical poetry is its fantastic lyrics style. As A. C. Word said: "The metaphysical style is a combination of two elements, the fantastic form and style, and the incongruous in matter manner". The versification of the metaphysical poetry is also coarse and jerky like its diction. The main intention of the metaphysicals was to startle the readers. They deliberately avoided conventional poetic style to bring something new to the readers. Their style was not conventional and the versification contrast with much of the Elizabethan writers.
It arouses some extreme level of thoughts and feelings in the readers by asking life-altering questions.
The Contribution of Metaphysical Poets to English Literature
Here are some of the main contributions of the metaphysical poets to English literature.

The metaphysical poets enriched English literature with best religious poetry. Donne, Herbert, Crawsha, Vaughan, and Traherence are the most prominent among the religious poets in English. Metaphysical poets also contributed a lot in the field of love poetry. Their contribution in love is quite considerable and holds an important place in history of English literature.

The ruggedness and vulgarity in versification and diction by metaphysicals also made a remarkable service to English poets to realize them that mere “smoothness of numbers” does not make a poetry marked as perfection but there are also other factors that can make a great poetry.
Prominent Works in Metaphysical Poetry
Some of the great metaphysical poetry works by metaphysical poets include:

The Flea, The Sun Rising, A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning, Death Be Not Proud, by John Donne, The Collar, The Pulley, by George Herbert, The Retreat, by Henry Vaughan, The Definition of Love, To His Coy Mistress, by Andrew Marvell, etc.

Conclusion
Metaphysical poetry is to be read with an open mind. It is not purposely trying to convince readers to think in a certain way but it provides a new way of thinking. Metaphysical poets are highly intellectual and people of learning. Reader’s minds open up, their area of thinking expands, and they awaken by their writings. The challenging approach of such poetry develops the concentration of readers on the things that exist beyond this physical world. It also permits the poets to state their inner thoughts in the poetry though higher cognitive skills are required to digest the abstract ideas and concepts coined in metaphysical texts of poetry.

John Donne

John Donne was born in 1572 in London, England. He is known as the founder of the Metaphysical Poets, a term created by Samuel Johnson, an eighteenth-century English essayist, poet, and philosopher. The loosely associated group also includes George Herbert, Richard Crashaw, Andrew Marvell, and John Cleveland. The Metaphysical Poets are known for their ability to startle the reader and coax new perspective through paradoxical images, subtle argument, inventive syntax, and imagery from art, philosophy, and religion using an extended metaphor known as a conceit. Donne reached beyond the rational and hierarchical structures of the seventeenth century with his exacting and ingenious conceits, advancing the exploratory spirit of his time.

Donne entered the world during a period of theological and political unrest for both England and France; a Protestant massacre occurred on Saint Bartholomew's day in France; while in England, the Catholics were the persecuted minority. Born into a Roman Catholic family, Donne's personal relationship with religion was tumultuous and passionate, and at the center of much of his poetry. He studied at both Oxford and Cambridge Universities in his early teen years. He did not take a degree at either school, because to do so would have meant subscribing to the Thirty-nine Articles, the doctrine that defined Anglicanism. At age twenty he studied law at Lincoln's Inn. Two years later he succumbed to religious pressure and joined the Anglican Church after his younger brother, convicted for his Catholic loyalties, died in prison. Donne wrote most of his love lyrics, erotic verse, and some sacred poems in the 1590s, creating two major volumes of work: Satires and Songs and Sonnets.

In 1598, after returning from a two-year naval expedition against Spain, Donne was appointed private secretary to Sir Thomas Egerton. While sitting in Queen Elizabeth's last Parliament in 1601, Donne secretly married Anne More, the sixteen-year-old niece of Lady Egerton. Donne's

father-in-law disapproved of the marriage. As punishment, he did not provide a dowry for the couple and had Donne briefly imprisoned.

This left the couple isolated and dependent on friends, relatives, and patrons. Donne suffered social and financial instability in the years following his marriage, exacerbated by the birth of many children. He continued to write and published the Divine Poems in 1607. In Pseudo-Martyr, published in 1610, Donne displayed his extensive knowledge of the laws of the Church and state, arguing that Roman Catholics could support James I without compromising their faith. In 1615, James I pressured him to enter the Anglican Ministry by declaring that Donne could not be employed outside of the Church. He was appointed Royal Chaplain later that year. His wife died in 1617 at thirty-three years old shortly after giving birth to their twelfth child, who was stillborn. The Holy Sonnets are also attributed to this phase of his life.

In 1621, he became dean of Saint Paul's Cathedral. In his later years, Donne's writing reflected his fear of his inevitable death. He wrote his private prayers, Devotions upon Emergent Occasions, during a period of severe illness and published them in 1624. His learned, charismatic, and inventive preaching made him a highly influential presence in London. Best known for his vivacious, compelling style and thorough examination of mortal paradox, John Donne died in London on March 31, 1631.

John Milton
John Milton
John Milton’s Life
John Milton was born on 9th December 1608 in Bread Street, London, in England. He was a renowned English poet, historian civil servant for Commonwealth and pamphleteer. After William Shakespeare, he is considered to be one of the great writers in England. He was a prominent author during a time of political upheaval and religious flux.

Milton graduated from the Christ College Cambridge in 1629 and secured 4th position his graduating year at university. He completed his master’s degree from the Cambridge University in 1632. Upon receiving his degree, he went to Horton, Berkshire.

He had good relations with Edward King and he wrote his popular poem “Lycidas” for him. From 1635 onwards, Milton did self-directed studies for six years; he read philosophy, politics, history, literature, science and theology in order to make him ready for a poetic career. Due to this intensive study, Milton is considered as one of the most learned English poets. On his return to England from France, the Bishops’ Wars and armed conflict further intensified and Milton started writing against episcopacy to serve the parliamentary cause and Puritans.

In 1642, Milton got married to a 16 year-old girl, Mary Powell. However, she left him due to financial issues. During his mid-thirties, Milton’s eyesight gradually deteriorated and he became blind in 1652. A widower and blind Milton got married again to Katherine Woodcock in 1656, but she passed away soon. Then, he married a third time to Elizabeth Mynshull in 1662. Milton died in November, 1674 and was buried at St. Giles, Cripplegate Church.

John Milton's Works

Milton composed his great piece of work "Paradise Lost" (a magnum opus and an epic poem) as a blind poet during the period 1658-1664. Several critics are of the view that this poem reflects the personal despair of Milton due to the failure of Revolution.

In 1671, Milton published, "Paradise Regained" a sequel to "Paradise Lost". In addition, he published a tragedy "Samson Agonistes" alongside that sequel in 1671. In 1673, Milton republished his 1645 poem collection accompanied by Latin prolusions and collections of his letters from his Cambridge days.

In his prose works, he advocated for the abolition of the Church of England and the execution of King Charles I. After the restoration of King Charles-II in 1660, he supported in his works a political philosophy, which opposed tyranny and religion that is state-sanctioned. He derived his philosophy from the English civil wars.

John Milton's Style and Popular Poems

Since Milton was famous for his unique style of blank verse and sonnets, he won the praise of the romantic poets for his skills. However, they did not accept his religious views. William Wordsworth opens his popular sonnet with "Milton! thou should'st be living at this hour.<" John Keats was also a great admirer of Miltonic verse and advocated that, "Miltonic verse cannot be written but in an artful or rather artist's humor". Keats also felt that his epic poem "Hyperion" was filled with several Miltonic inversions. During that time, poetic blank verse was thought to be a unique form of poetry rather than in drama verse.

In addition to the induction of stylish innovation of Milton, he also influenced later poets. Specifically, Thomas Hardy and George Eliot of the Victorian Age were greatly inspired by his poetry. Similarly, Milton was a great influence to Ezra Pound and T.S Eliot – two of the most famous 20th century critics. Milton gave paramount importance to liberty of conscience and the Scriptures for guidance in faith- related matters.

Among the popular poems of Milton are: "Arcades", a masque he wrote to give praise to Alice Spencer's character; "How Soon Hath Time", a poem that talks about how fleeting time is; "At a Solemn Music", a poem that describes the feelings and emotions brought about when listening to a solemn music; "An Epitaph on the Admirable Dramatic Poet, W. Shakespeare"; "Hymn on the Morning of Christ's Nativity"; "Lycidas"; "On His Blindness"; " Samson Agonists"; "Paradise Lost"; "Paradise Regained"; "On His Deceased Wife"; "On Shakespeare"; and "O Nightingale".

Unit 5

Bulfinch's Mythology

Bulfinch's Mythology is a collection of works by American Latinist and banker Thomas Bulfinch, named after him and published after his death in 1867. The work was a highly successful popularization of Greek mythology for English-speaking readers. Carl J. Richard comments that it was "one of the most popular books ever published in the United States and the standard work on classical mythology for nearly a century", until the release of classicist Edith Hamilton's 1942 Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes.The book is a prose recounting

of myths and stories from three eras: Greek and Roman mythology, King Arthur legends and medieval romances. Bulfinch intersperses the stories with his own commentary, and with quotations from writings by his contemporaries that refer to the story under discussion. This combination of classical elements and modern literature was novel for his time.

Bulfinch expressly intended his work for the general reader. In the preface to The Age of Fable he states "Our work is not for the learned, nor for the theologian, nor for the philosopher, but for the reader of English literature, of either sex, who wishes to comprehend the allusions so frequently made by public speakers, lecturers, essayists, and poets, and those which occur in polite conversation.