

AGE OF JOHNSON

Dr Samuel Johnson (1709-1784)

- He is the greatest prose writer of this age.
- He lived most of his life in poverty and sickness.
- He had a melancholic disposition.
- Dr Johnson published essays in 'The Rambler' and 'The Idler'
 - In 1750 he started the periodical 'The Rambler'.
 - In 1756 he founded 'The Idler' which ran for 103 numbers.
 - He also founded a periodical named 'The Adventurer'.
- One of his greatest pupils was David Garrick.
- One of his earlier poems titled "London" was written in imitation of Juvenal.
- *A Dictionary of the English Language* was completed and published in 1755.
- The most important critical work of Dr Johnson is *Preface to Shakespeare*.
- In the evenings of a single week he composed the romance of *Rasselas, an Abyssinian Prince*.
- He wrote speeches for both Whigs and Tories.
- In 1764 Johnson organised the famous Literary Club which included well known figures of the day like his student David Garrick, Goldsmith, Joshua Reynolds, Burke and others.
 - They met regularly at Turk's Head Tavern.
- He wrote a tragedy titled *Irene*
- His important works are
 - *The Vanity of Human Wishes*.
 - It is a poem written in imitation of Juvenal.

- The poem examines Wolsey Buckingham and Clarendon.
- The poem also refers to Swift.
- *Rasselas*.
- *The Lives of the Poets*.
 - This is a series of Biographies published between 1779 and 1781.
 - He sketches the life of 52 poets.
 - The sketches begin with the *Life of Cowley*.

Edward Gibbon(1737-94)

- He is chiefly known for his work on Roman history titled *The Decline and the Fall of Roman Empire* (1776-83).
 - It is a work in six volumes.
 - He examines the greatness of Rome.
 - Another prose work of any significance is his *Autobiography*.

Edmund Burke (1729-97)

- He is chiefly remembered in history for the famous impeachment speech that he gave against Warren Hastings in 1786.
- In his writings about India, he observed that India had a great civilization but it had degenerated and stagnated.
 - He was one of the earliest to introduce the idea of the Native Effeminacy.
- He criticised Hastings for exploiting the Indians.
- He also wrote two small treatises.
 - *A Vindication Of Natural Society*
 - *Philosophical enquiry into the origin of our ideas of the sublime and the beautiful*.
- Some of his pamphlets were

- *Observations on the Present State of Nation*(1769)
- *Thoughts on the Present Discontents.*
- Other important works are
 - *Reflections on the French Revolution*(1790)
 - *A letter to a Noble Lord*(1790)
 - *An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs*(1791)
 - *Thoughts on French Affairs*
 - *Letters on a Regicide Peace.*
- His style was conditioned by oratory.

James Boswell (1740-1795)

- He was a Scotchman.
- He is chiefly remembered as the author of Johnson's biography, *Life of Dr Johnson*(1791)
 - This is a detailed record of Johnson's eccentricities, prejudices, genius etc.
 - Boswell met Johnson in 1763 at a bookseller's shop.
 - Boswell kept record of Johnson's life for 20 years.
- He also wrote a popular work titled *Account of Corsica*(1768)
- Boswell himself is known for his vanity, self consciousness, sexual promiscuity, narcissism and drinking habits.
- Another work of significance is his *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides.*
- Boswell may well be remembered as a diarist.

Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774)

- In his early life he was known for his wildness and stupidity.
- He was a medical student.
- He was a friend of Dr Johnson
- He was a member of the famous 'Literary Club'

- Goldsmith had criticised Garrick.
- Garrick rejects his plays.
- Garrick says that Goldsmith “wrote like an angel even though he talked like poor Poll”
- He reacted against sentimental comedy.
- His long poem “The Traveller” is dedicated to his brother,
- In the essay *A Comparison Between Laughing and Sentimental Comedy* Goldsmith treats distress as a source of entertainment.
- Important works of Goldsmith are
 - *The Vicar of Wakefield*(1766)
 - It is a good example of sentimental novel.
 - It portrays rural England.
 - It deals with the story of Dr Primrose and the love affairs of his daughters Olivia and Sophia.
 - George Primrose’s continental wanderings are inspired by Goldsmith’s own travels of Europe.
 - Dr Primrose stands for his father.
 - Moses in the *Vicar of Wakefield*, young Honey Wood in the *Good Natured Man* and Tony Lumpkin in *She Stoops to Conquer* are his own autobiographical sketches.
 - He worked as an assistant to Richardson.
 - The novel includes the famous poem “When Lovely Woman Stoops to Folly”.
 - *The Deserted Village*(1770)
 - *She Stoops to Conquer*(1773)
 - Its central character Marlow is uncomfortable with women of his own class.
 - The woman who stoops to conquer Marlow is Miss Kate Hardcastle.

- *The Bee*(1759)
 - It is a serial miscellany.
 - It ran for eight weekly numbers.
- *An History of the Earth and Animated nature*(1774)
 - It is an eight volume work.
- *Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe.*(1759)
 - In this work he mourns the demise of arts and culture in general.
- *The Citizen of the World*(1760-61)
 - *The Chinese Letters* which he contributed to the public ledger were published together in 1762 as *The Citizen of the World*
 - It is written by a Chinaman visiting England.
- *Good Natured Man*(1768)
 - It is a sentimental comedy

David Hume (1711-76)

- Primarily a philosopher
- His important works are
 - *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*(1748)
 - *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*(1751)
- Hume is known for his concept of the ‘association of ideas’.

GOTHIC FICTION

- ❖ Gothicism was a form of architecture that flourished between the 12th and 16th centuries in parts of Europe.
- ❖ These novels exploited superstition and romance.
- ❖ It is also called ‘novel of terror’.
- ❖ These novels revived the interest in the middle ages.

Horace Walpole (1717-97)

- ▶ Walpole was a friend of Gray and Mrs. Anne Radcliff
- ▶ Walpole had turned his small house or villakin into a gothic castle.
- ▶ The term gothic refers to architecture.
- ▶ His important novel is *The Castle of Otranto* (1765).
 - It is subtitled 'A Gothic Story: Translated by William Marshal Gent, from the Original Italian of Onuphrio Muralto'
 - It refers to the events of 12th and 13th century.
 - Walpole says that he attempted to "blend the two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern"
 - The novel was meant to be a satire.
 - The story describes the manners of feudal period.
 - The novel combines murders, mysterious passages, secret rooms, moving statues, speaking portraits etc.
 - It was inspired by a dream of a gigantic hand in armour.
 - It is said that Gray was frightened after reading it.
 - Byron called it 'The first romance in the language'
 - Walter Scott also appreciated this work.

William Beckford (1760-1844)

- ▶ His important gothic novel is *The History of the Caliph Vathek* (1784)
 - Vathek has oriental setting.
 - Its story resembles a few of the stories in Arabian nights.
 - The book was originally written in French during Beckford's continental travels.
 - The English translation was published in 1784.

Anne Radcliff (1764-1823)

- ▶ She published five novels of mystery and terror
- ▶ Her important novel is *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794)
 - Montoni is the villain in *Udolpho*.
 - It is set in late 16th century France and Italy.
- ▶ Some say that Anne Radcliff became insane writing these novels.
- ▶ Her male characters are an early representation of Byronic heroes.
- ▶ Jane Austen makes fun of Anne Radcliffe's novel in *Northanger Abbey*.

Matthew Gregory Lewis (1775-1880)

- ▶ Lewis was strongly impressed by German romanticism.
- ▶ He had met Goethe.
- ▶ He had translated Schillers' *Kabale and Liebe* into English.
- ▶ His most important work is *Ambrosio* or *The Monk*(1795)
 - It combined both Radcliffian properties and German terror material.
- ▶ He wrote a musical drama titled *The Castle Spectre*
- ▶ He wrote an opera entitles *Adel Morn the Outlaw*
- ▶ His novel *The Bravo of Venice*(1804) was based on German Romantic writer Zschokke's work *Abellino*

Clara Reeve

- ▶ She wrote a gothic novel titled *Old English Baron*.
 - It is described as a gothic story
 - The initial title of the novel was 'The Champion of Virtue'.
- ▶ She attempted to write less violent novels

Charles Robert Maturin (1782-1824)

- ▶ His important gothic novels are *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) and *the Fatal Revenge*(1807)

Other important gothic writers are Charlotte Smith (She wrote *Emmeline or the Orphan of the Castle* (1788)) and Sophia Lee(She wrote *The Recess*)

GRAVEYARD POETS

- ❖ The most important graveyard poets are Thomas Gray, Thomas Parnell, Edward Young and Robert Blair.
- ❖ Gloom, despair and pessimistic thought are the important features of these poems.
- ❖ Death is frequently referred to in these poems.
- ❖ Grave is a recurring image in these poems.

Thomas Gray (1716-71)

- He was a man of poor helth.
- He was a recluse.
- One of his earliest poems is “The Alliance of Education and Government”.
 - It is written in closed couplets.
- His first important poem is the ode titled “On Distant Prospect of Eton College” (1742)
- He is chiefly remembered for his *Elegy Written in A country Churchyard*(1751)
 - It is well appreciated by Dr Johnson.
- His other poems of any significance of the earlier period are
 - “Ode to Spring”
 - “On the Death of a Favourite Cat”.

- “On the Death of a Favourite Cat” is written in the tradition of mock heroic.
- As he grew older his poems became more romantic.
- The two great odes that he wrote are “A progress of Poesy” and “The Bard”
 - “The Bard” follows the style of old Celtic poetry.
 - The poem is a prophesy addressed by a Welsh Bard to Edward I.
- His poem the ‘Fatal Sisters’ and ‘The Descent of Odin’ are written against Celtic themes.
 - “Fatal Sisters” follows Norse style.
 - Dr Johnson ironically calls the poem ‘Fatal Sisters’, “the wonderful wonder of wonders”
- He wrote poems with rustic settings and ordinary life.
- Gray’s work also included a medieval fable , *The Bard*
- He composed poems on Celtic myth.
- He translated some Norse poems.
- He wrote Pindaric odes.
- He combined a highly stylised diction with intense passion.
- “Hymn to Adversity” is a poem where he indulges in moralising.
- Dr Johnson refers to Gray as a poet who is “tall by walking on tip toe”.
- Wordsworth objected to Gray’s sonnet “Sonnet on the Death of Mr Richard West” for the artificiality of diction.
- He was a friend of Horace Walpole.
- He declined Poet Laureateship in 1757.

Thomas Parnell (1679-1718)

- He is chiefly known for his poem “Night-Piece on Death” written in 1721

Edward Young (1683-1765)

- He is remembered for his epic poem “Night Thoughts” written in 1742.

Robert Blair (1699-1746)

- He was a Scottish writer.
- Retains his fame as a graveyard poet chiefly because of his poem “The Grave”.

TRANSITIONAL POETS

- ❖ William Collins, William Cowper, William Blake and Thomas Gray are the important transitional poets.

William Collins (1721-1759)

- He is primarily remembered for his odes.
- “On the Passions” echoes Dryden and Pope.
- His other important poems are “To Evening” “Ode to Simplicity” “On the Death of Thomson”.
- He had great admiration for Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton
- He studied Greek drama.
- His earliest published work is “Persian Eclogues”
 - The poem has Persian names and settings
- His *Odes On Several Descriptive And Allegorical Subjects* were planned to be part of a joined venture with Joseph Warton.
 - But this collection appeared separately.
- “His Ode to Pity” celebrates Euripides
- His “Ode To Fear” pays tribute to Aeschylus and Sophocles

- His “Ode on the Poetical Character” is the most complex of his odes.
- His “Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland” is incomplete and was published after his death.
- His poem “Song from Shakespeare’s Cymbeline” shows his interest in the older poets.

William Cowper (1731-1800)

- He led a secluded life
- He was interested in gardening, reading and writing.
- His poem “Table Talk” was written in couplets.
 - In this poem he refers to the artistic talent of Pope.
- “The task” is a long poem in four books
 - The poem presents pictures of country scenes.
- The influence of ballad form could be found in his poem “The Diverting History of John Gilpin”.
- His best poem “The Castaway” describes a sailor washed overboard and left alone in the ocean.
 - He swims for an hour and drowns
 - The last lines of this poem are quoted by Mr Ramsay in Virginia Woolf’s *To The Light house*.
- His satires are modelled on the works of Pope.
- His most quoted line is “god made the country and man made the town”
- There is sympathetic treatment of nature in Cowper’s poems.

William Blake (1757-1827)

- He is known as the visionary poet
 - As a child he used to get visions
 - He was well read in mysticism and occult philosophy.

- Blake was a printer and an engraver.
- His poems are chiefly remembered for their visual impact.
- He is known for the symbolism in his poetry
- He believed that Satan was the hero of Milton's *Paradise Lost*
- *In the Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, he argues that god is both good and evil.
 - He says without contraries are no progression in the Marriage of Heaven and Hell.
 - Hell for Blake was a symbol of liberty and spontaneity.

His poetry combines contraries

- He anticipates Romantic poetry in his *Songs of Innocence and Experience*
- *The Songs of Innocence* (1789) portrays the world of children , sheep and lambs which are symbols of innocence .
- *The Songs of Experience* (1794) deals with the corruption of innocence
 - In these poems Blake expresses his hatred of authority-parents , teachers and priests
- Blake depicts the world in terms of conflict between
 - Nature and Culture
 - Corruption and innocence
 - Imagination and rationality
- He was critical of Industrialisation.
- The poem "The Sick Rose" describes the corruption of beauty and innocence.
- His prophetic books are *America* (1793), *Europe* (1794) and *Jerusalem*. They deal with liberty.

- *The songs of Los* (1795) deals with the loss of imagination which is replaced by religion and rationality.
- He published three volumes of verse titled *Poetical Sketches* in 1783
- His familiarity with Bible is obvious in his works.
- He was influenced by the Swedish visionary and religious thinker Emanuel Swedenborg.
- Blake's earlier poems were influenced by Shakespeare, Spenser, Milton and Chatterton.
- *The French Revolution* (1791) deals with his response to the French Revolution.
- Blake comments "to generalise is to be an idiot. To particularise is the alone distinction of merit."

OTHER POETS

John Gilpin

- He is known for his treatise *Three Essays : On picturesque beauty ; on picturesque travel ; and on sketching landscape.*(1792)
- The picturesque according to Gilpin was a landscape improved by human beings.
- The picturesque was an important quality of the romantic writing.

Robert Burns (1759-96)

- He is hailed as the National Poet of Scotland.
- He was a peasant's son.
- His interest in Ballad was kindled by a member of the household named Betty Davidson.
- Robert Burns is also known as Rabbin Burns.
- Burns collected folk songs from across Scotland.

- “A Red, Red Rose”; “A Man's A Man for A' That”; “To a Louse”; “To a Mouse”; “The Battle of Sherramuir”; “Tam o' Shanter”, and “Ae Fond Kiss” are the most celebrated poems of Burns.
- He dedicated the poems “The Highland Lassie O”, “Highland Mary” and “To Mary in Heaven” to his lady love Mary Campbell.
- Burns’ his plan of elopement with Mary Campbell to Jamaica is referred to in his song "Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary, and leave auld Scotia's shore?".
- Burns wrote many of the poems included in his first book, titled *Poems*, in the Scottish Dialect.
- Robert Burns died from heart disease at the age of thirty-seven. On the day of his death, his wife Jean Armour gave birth to his last son.
- Most of Burns' poems were written in Scots.
 - They document and celebrate traditional Scottish culture, expressions of farm life, and class and religious distinctions.
- "Handsome Nell", is a poem about his first love for a girl called Nellie .
- Burns work reflect the story of an ordinary Scotsman, his background, his encounters, his observations & thoughts.
- His poem “Tam O'Shanter” which means "Tom from the village of Shanter" is considered his great folklore masterpiece
 - It is a chilling & fantastic story in which Burns describes his friend Tam O' Shanter,
- One of his most famous lines is “A Man's a man for a' that” meaning A man is a man for all that
- O' My Luv is like a red, red rose is surely the most famous love poem of Burns

Thomas Percy (1729-1811)

- He began his career with the translation of a Chinese novel.
- He had a taste for the old.
- Percy published a collection of Ballads titled *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*.
 - The collection included ballads and political songs.

Thomas Chatterton (1752-1770)

- He was influenced by Medieval myths and legends
- Chatterton claimed that he discovered a medieval poet named Thomas Rowley.
- Horace Walpole and Thomas Warton criticised Chatterton for attempting forgeries.
- He is chiefly known for his poem “An Excelent Balade of Charitie” .
- Wordsworth describes Chatterton as
 - “The marvellous boy
 - The sleepless soul that perished in his pride”
- Coleridge wrote a poem about him titled “Monody on the Death of Chatterton”.

SENTIMENTAL COMEDY