

## Notes for B. A. English (Hons.) Part- I

### Periods of English Literature- III

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N. B. – This topic is in continuation with the previous one entitled “**Periods of English Literature-II**”

The **Renaissance** (1500-1660) - Renaissance literally means “rebirth”. Most probably and generally accepted, it began in Italy in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century. It continued in Italy and other countries of Western Europe through 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century, though it came to England in 16<sup>th</sup> century and flourished during the Elizabeth and Jacobean periods. In this period the European arts of painting, sculpture, architecture and literature reached to the point of zenith.

**Elizabethan Age** (1558-1603) - This was the period of the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. It was a time of intellectual liberty, of growing intelligence and social contentment, of unbounded patriotism and peace. Since, it is in drama only that a whole man- his action, thought, and feeling- can be adequately expressed, the literature of this age turned to the drama and brought it rapidly to the highest stage of its development. That is why it is called the greatest age for English drama. It was the age of Sir Philip Sidney, Christopher Marlowe, Edmund Spenser, William Shakespeare, Sir Walter Raleigh, Francis Bacon, Ben Jonson, and many other extraordinary writers.

**Jacobean Age** (1603-1625) - This period is attributed to the reign of James I (in Latin, “Jacobus”). It was the age of Bacon’s prose, John Donne’s sermons, Robert Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy*, and the King James translation of the Bible (1611). It was also the age of Shakespeare’s greatest tragedies and tragicomedies and of major writings by other notable poets and playwrights including John Donne, Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, John Webster.

**Caroline Age** (1625-1649) - The period of reign of Charles I (in Latin, “Carolus”) is known as Caroline Age. This was the time of the English Civil War fought between the supporters of the King and those of Parliament. John Milton began his writing during this

period. It was also the time of religious poet George Herbert and of prose writers Robert Burton and Sir Thomas Browne. The group of **Cavalier Poets** which included Richard Lovelace, Sir John Suckling, and Thomas Carew belong to this age. They were writers of witty and polished lyrics of courtship and gallantry. Some of them are famously known as **son of Ben** because they were admirers and followers of Ben Jonson

The **Commonwealth Period** or **Puritan Interregnum** extends from the end of the Civil War and the execution of Charles I in 1649 to the restoration of the Stuart monarchy under Charles II in 1660. During this period England was ruled by Parliament under the Puritan leader Oliver Cromwell. The public theatres were closed in 1642 by the Puritans on religious and moral grounds, so drama almost disappeared. It was the age of Milton's political pamphlets, of Hobbes' political treatise *Leviathan*, of the prose writers Sir Thomas Browne, Thomas Fuller and Jeremy Taylor and of the poets Henry Vaughan, Abraham Cowley, and Andrew Marvell.

#### **Sources and Recommendations for further Reading:-**

Abrams, M. H. and G. G. Harpham. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. New Delhi: Cengage, 2015.

Nayar, Pramod K. *A Short History of English Literature*. New Delhi: Foundation, 2014.