

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

### Periods of English Literature- IV

Dr. Anand Bhushan Pandey  
Assistant Professor  
Department of English  
S. B. College, Ara

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

The **Neoclassical Period** (1660-1785) - It spans around 140 years or so after the Restoration (1660). The authors of this period exhibited in their writing a great respect for classical writers- that is the writers of ancient Greece and Rome. This is why the age is known as Neoclassical period. In this age literature was conceived to be primarily an “art” and the representative neoclassical writers were careful and cautious to observe the established “rules” of the art. Art for humanity’s sake—not art for art’s sake—was the central ideal of neoclassical literature. The further sub-divisions of this great age would be of great help in order to understand it minutely:

**Restoration** (1660-1700)- This period takes its name from the restoration of Charles II to the English throne in May, 1660 from exile after the end of the commonwealth government and lasts till 1700. The urbanity, wit, and licentiousness of the life centering on the court is reflected in much of the literature of the age, whereas people from the country are consistently ridiculed for their clumsiness, uncultivated appearances and lack of sophistication. The theatres came to life after the revocation of the ban placed on them by the Puritans in 1642. George Etherege, William Wycherley, William Congreve, and John Dryden developed the comedy of manners called *Restoration Comedy*, and Dryden, Otway and other playwrights developed the form of tragedy called *heroic drama*. Dryden was the major poet and critic as well as one of the major dramatists.

**Augustan Age** (1700-1745) – The period takes its name from the Roman emperor Augustus (27 BC- 14 AD). The original Augustan Age was the literary period of famous Virgil, Horace, and Ovid. However the term is also applied to the literary period in England from 1700 to 1745. The representative writers of the age such as Alexander Pope, Jonathan

Swift and Joseph Addison deliberately imitated the literary styles, forms and subjects of the Roman Augustans. This age is also known as an age of Pope.

**Age of Sensibility** or the **Age of Johnson** (1744-1785)- The period between the death of Alexander Pope in 1744 and 1785 is known as the Age of Sensibility or the Age of Johnson. The alternative years for the end of this period have been proposed to be 1789 and 1798. Samuel Johnson held a dominant position during this period. The name age of sensibility puts its stress on the emergence of new cultural attitudes, theories of literature, a growing sympathy for the Middle Ages with emphasis on instinct and feeling, the literature of sensibility. Some of the important writers of this period were Oliver Goldsmith, James Boswell and Edward Gibbon. This was also the period of the great novelists like Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding, Tobias Smollett and Laurence Sterne.

#### **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.