

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

Periods of English Literature- V

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

Romantic Period (1789/1798-1832) - This period is generally supposed to start in 1789 (the outbreak of the French Revolution) or alternatively in 1798 (the publication of Wordsworth's and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads*) and end in 1832 or else in 1837. The romantics denounced the upper class subject and poetic diction of the neoclassical period and proposed to deal with materials from common life. Wordsworth's treatment of lowly subjects in common language violated the neoclassical rules and regulations of literary forms. The exploitation of the realm of the supernatural by Coleridge, Keats and others, and the use of poetic symbolism by Blake and Shelley were some of the innovations in this period. Representative romantic works are the poems of feelingful meditation, often stimulated by a natural phenomenon. They are concerned with central human experiences and problems. Romantic poems are mostly subjective in nature as opposed to neoclassical poetry which was about other people. Major prose writers of this age were Charles Lamb, William Hazlitt, and Thomas De Quincey; and the novelists Jane Austen, Sir Walter Scott, and Mary Shelley.

Victorian Period (1832/1837-1901) - The beginning of this period is frequently dated 1832 (the passage of the first Reform Bill) or else 1837 (the accession of Queen Victoria) and it extends till the death of Victoria in 1901. Much writing of this period dealt with the pressing social, economic, religious and intellectual issues and problems of that era. Among the notable poets were Alfred Lord Tennyson, Robert Browning, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Matthew Arnold, and G. M. Hopkins. The most prominent essayist were Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin, Arnold, and Walter Pater; the most distinguished novelists were Charlotte and Emily Bronte, Charles Dickens, W M Thackeray, George Eliot, Thomas Hardy and Samuel Butler.

Modern Period (1901-1945) – This period can itself be divided into several eras.

The **Edwardian Period** (1901-1914) is named after King Edward VII, who reigned from 1901 to 1910. Poets of the time included Thomas Hardy, Alfred Noyes, W B Yeats, and Rudyard Kipling; dramatists included H A Jones, A W Pinero, John Galsworthy, G B Shaw, W B Yeats, Lady Gregory, and J M Synge. Many of the major literary achievements were in prose fiction by writers such as Thomas Hardy, Joseph Conrad, John Galsworthy, Rudyard Kipling, and Henry James.

The **Georgian Period** (1910-1945) – The term is more frequently applied to the reign of George V (1910-1936). The literary output of this period was seen in the years between the two World Wars. The poets of this period are grouped as Georgian Poets which included Rupert Brooke, Walter de la Mare, W H Davies, and John Masefield. Georgian poetry connote verse which is mainly rural in subject matter, deft and delicate rather than bold and passionate in manner, and traditional rather than experimental in technique and form. But apart from this much of the most influential literature of the period was marked by persistent and multidimensional experimentation in subject matter, form and style. Among the notable writers of this type of literature are Wilfred Owen, T. S. Eliot, W. H. Auden, James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, E. M. Forster, and George Orwell and the dramatists G. B. Shaw, Sean O’Casey, and Noel Coward.

The modern period was also an important era for literary criticism; among the innovative and influential English critics were T. S. Eliot, I. A. Richards, Virginia Woolf, and F. R. Leavis.

The **Postmodern Period** (1945----) This term is often applied to the time after World War II (1939-1945). The writers of post modern literature like Samuel Beckett, Vladimir Nabokov, Roland Barthes, and many others blend literary genres, cultural stylistics levels, the serious and playful in such a manner that they resist any traditional classifications of literary titles. The literature of the absurd is one of the prominent forms of writings of the time. It expresses the subversion of the foundations of our accepted modes of thought and experience so as to reveal the meaninglessness of human existence.

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.