**Ben Jonson and the Dawn of the Neoclassical Age**

The work of the poet/playwright **Ben Jonson** represents a move away from the flowery and emotional love sonnets and lyrics of the Elizabethans and towards what would eventually become the **Neoclassical Period**, an era that valued a more tightly crafted, more restrained style of writing based on the classical ideals of **order, balance,** and **harmony**. Jonson and the Cavalier poets who admired and followed him were instrumental in transitioning to this new poetic style, as is evident in the comparison below:

**Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind**

**William Shakespeare**

Blow, blow, thou winter wind.

Thou art not so unkind

As man’s ingratitude.

Thy tooth is not so keen,

Because thou art not seen, **5**

Although thy breath be rude.

Heigh-ho! Sing, heigh-ho! unto the green holly.

Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly.

Then, heigh-ho, the holly!

This life is most jolly. **10**

Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky,

That dost not bite so nigh

As benefits forgot.

Though thou the waters warp,

Thy sting is not so sharp **15**

As friend remembered not.

Heigh-ho! Sing, heigh-ho! unto the green holly.

Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly.

Then, heigh-ho, the holly!

This life is most jolly. **20**

**Song: to Celia**

**Ben Jonson**

Drink to me only with thine eyes,

And I will pledge with mine;

Or leave a kiss but in the cup,

And I’ll not look for wine.

The thirst that from the soul doth rise **5**

Doth ask a drink divine;

But might I of Jove’s nectar sup,

I would not change for thine.

I sent thee late a rosy wreath,

Not so much honouring thee **10**

As giving it a hope, that there

It could not withered be.

But thou thereon didst only breathe,

And sent’st it back to me;

Since with it grows, and smells, I swear, **15**

Not of itself, but thee.