

## Outline of British Literary Periods

### **1. Old English (Anglo-Saxon) Period (450–1066)**

**Historical context:** Germanic settlement in Britain; Christianization

**Features:** Oral tradition, heroic poetry, Christian themes, adventures of great heroic figures, strong rhythmic structure, alliteration.

**Major works:** *Beowulf, The Wanderer, The Seafarer, The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.*

### **2. Middle English Period (1066–1500)**

**Historical context:** Norman Conquest; blending of Anglo-Saxon and Norman French cultures.

**Features:** Courtly love, chivalric romance, emerging vernacular English, shift to secular writing

**Major works/authors:** Geoffrey Chaucer (*The Canterbury Tales*), William Langland (*Piers Plowman*), Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.

### **3. The Renaissance / Early Modern Period (1500–1660)**

#### *a. Elizabethan Era (1558–1603)*

Flourishing of drama and poetry

William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, Spenser

#### *b. Jacobean Era (1603–1625)*

Darker tragedies, religious tensions

Shakespeare's later works, Ben Jonson, John Donne

#### *c. Caroline Era (1625–1649)*

Cavalier poets, lyricism

Herrick, Carew, Lovelace

#### *d. Commonwealth/Interregnum (1649–1660)*

Puritan rule; decline of theatre

Milton begins *Paradise Lost*

### **4. The Restoration and 18th Century (1660–1798)**

#### *a. Restoration (1660–1700)*

Reopening of theatres; satire and comedy of manners

Dryden, Aphra Behn

**b. Augustan Age (1700–1750)**

Imitation of classical forms; satire.

Alexander Pope, Jonathan Swift, Daniel Defoe.

**c. Age of Sensibility/ The Age of Johnson (. 1750–1798)**

Pre-Romantic reactions; focus on emotion and nature

Samuel Johnson, Gray, Burns

**5. Romantic Period (1798–1837)**

Emphasis on emotion, imagination, nature, the sublime

William Wordsworth, S.T. Coleridge, Lord Byron, P.B. Shelley, John Keats, William Blake

**6. Victorian Period (1837–1901)**

Industrialization, moral concerns, realism, social critique

Charles Dickens, Bronte sisters, George Eliot, Robert Browning, Oscar Wilde, Thomas Hardy

**7. Edwardian Period (1901–1914)**

Social realism, early modernist tendencies.

Kipling, Forster, Wells, Conrad.

**8. Georgian Period (1910–1936)**

Often pastoral poetry; transitional period

D.H. Lawrence, Thomas Hardy (late), The Georgian Poets

**9. Modernism (1914–1945)**

Experimental forms, fragmentation, psychological depth

Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, T.S. Eliot, W. B. Yeats

**10. Post-Modern and Contemporary (1945–present)**

- Diverse styles, metafiction, postcolonial voices
- Graham Greene, Muriel Spark, Iris Murdoch, Salman Rushdie, Zadie Smith, Hilary Mantel.