

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.