Restoration Drama  
The Restoration refers to the restoration of the monarchy when Charles II was restored to the throne of England following an eleven-year Commonwealth periodThe revival of drama in England after the restoration of the monarchy (1660) is known as Restoration Drama. Its main features were the reopening of the theatres after the Puritan Interregnum, the formation of new acting companies, and the first appearance of women on the English stage. The dominant genres of the era were the comedy of manners and the heroic drama of Dryden and others, both of which show a strong French influence. This was encouraged by the king himself, who had become familiar with the works of Corneille and others while in exile in France.   
**An Age of Satire**

Literature during this period was often considered a tool for the advancement of knowledge. Writers were often found observing nature in their attempts to express their beliefs. Human nature was considered a constant that observation and reason could be applied to for the advancement of knowledge. Within these circumstances, the Age of Satire was born. Satire was the most popular literary tool that was utilized by writers of the time. With the help of satire, writers were better able to educate the public through literature.  
plays  
As these plays drew from the stagecraft and literature of the Jacobean and Carolinian drama, so the plays of the eighteenth century drew from the Restoration. John Gay’s The Beggar’s Opera (pr. 1728) and Henry Fielding’s Tom Thumb: A Tragedy (pr. 1730) differ little from George Villiers ’s The Rehearsal (pr. 1671) or Joseph Arrowsmith’s The Reformation (pr. 1673), which satirize the vogue for heroic tragedy. Charles Goring’s Irene and Lewis Theobald’s The Persian Princess, first performed in February and May, 1708, respectively, rely on the same kind of exotic settings that John Dryden was using four decades earlier for his heroic tragedies; as late as 1749, Samuel Johnson’s Irene: A Tragedy (pr. 1749) provided viewers with the same conflict between love and honor, as well as exotic settings and elevated [diction](https://www.enotes.com/topics/literary-terms/complete-index/diction?en_action=content_body_click&en_label=%2Ftopics%2Frestoration-drama-61&en_category=internal_campaign), that Restoration audiences had found in the tragedies of Nathaniel Lee. Furthermore, late seventeenth century plays retained their popularity well into the next century. William Congreve ’s The Old Bachelor (pr. 1693) was acted six times in 1724-1725, whereas Charles Shadwell ’s The Fair Quaker of Deal (pr. 1710) was performed only...  
major authors of the restoration   
 **John Dryden**

[but John Dryden was King of Restoration literature. He is, by far, the most important literary figure of the period](https://www.shmoop.com/restoration-literature/john-dryden-author.html)

**William Congreve**

William Congreve is a super-important playwright of the Restoration period, and a disciple of John Dryden's. He is known for his comedies, which catered to the tastes of the time

**[John Milton](https://www.shmoop.com/restoration-literature/john-milton-author.html)**[John Milton was a bit of an oddball during the Restoration age. That's because he stuck to his Puritanism and Republicanism at a time when politics and society were turning away from both](https://www.shmoop.com/restoration-literature/john-milton-author.html)

**[Aphra Behn](https://www.shmoop.com/restoration-literature/aphra-behn-author.html)**

[Not only was Aphra Behn one of the first professional women writers, she also worked as a spy for the British government. Whoa. Way to make Mata Hari look like a second-class wannabe](https://www.shmoop.com/restoration-literature/aphra-behn-author.html)

**[William Wycherley](https://www.shmoop.com/restoration-literature/william-wycherley-author.html)**

[William Wycherley spent part of his life in France, and ended up being super-influenced by French literature (and probably was a member of the Big Wig Fan Club).](https://www.shmoop.com/restoration-literature/william-wycherley-author.html)