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## Major Writers & Literary Works

### Aeschylus (523 – 456 BC)

- Aeschylus was an ancient Greek Tragedian.
- He is also the first whose plays still survive; the others such as Sophocles and Euripides.
- He is often described as “The Father of Tragedy”.
- According to Aristotle, he expanded the number of characters in the plays to allow conflict among them, whereas characters previously had interacted along with the chorus.
- Only seven of his estimated 70-90 plays survived and there is a longstanding debate regarding one of his plays “Prometheus Bound”, which some believe to be written by his son Euphorion.
- He was probably the first dramatist to present plays as a trilogy. His Oresteia is the only ancient example of this form that survives.
- The Persians is the only surviving classical Greek tragedy concerned with contemporary events and useful source of information about its period.
- Oresteia is acclaimed by today’s literary academics.
- The inscription on his graveyard signifies the primary importance of “Belonging to the City”
- His only seven tragedies are survived intact are: “The Persians” (472 BC), “Seven Against Thebes” (407BC), “The Suppliants” (463 BC), “Oresteia” trilogy and “Prometheus Bound” (authorship is disputed).
- Oresteia trilogy consists of three tragedies: “Agamemnon”, “The Libation Bearers” and “The Eumenides”, this trilogy tells the bloody story of the family of Agamemnon, King of Argos.
- Aristotle claimed that Aeschylus added the Second actor (deuteragonist) to the Greek stage.

## Sophocles (497 – 406 BC)

- Sophocles is one of the ancient Greek Tragedians whose plays are survived.
- Sophocles wrote 123 plays during the course of his life but only seven have survived in complete form,

They are:

1. Ajax
2. Antigone
3. The Women of Trachis
4. Oedipus the King
5. Electra
6. Philoctetes and
7. Oedipus at Colonus

- The most famous tragedies of Sophocles feature Oedipus (means- swollen foot) and also “Antigone”. They are generally known as the “Theban Plays”. Although each play was actually a part of a different tetralogy, the other members of which are now lost.
- He also developed his characters to a greater extent than earlier playwrights such as Aeschylus.
- Only two of seven surviving plays can be dated securely i.e. “Philoctetes” (409 BC) and “Oedipus at Colonus” (401 BC).

Theban Plays:

It consists of three plays: “Oedipus the King (also called Oedipus Tyrannus or by its Latin title Oedipus Rex), “Oedipus at Colonus” and “Antigone”. All the three plays concern the fate of Thebes during and after the reign of King Oedipus.

- According to Aristotle, Sophocles is responsible for introducing the “Third Actor to Greek Stage” (Tritagonist).

## **Euripides (480 – 406 BC)**

- Euripides was a tragedian of classical Athens.
- According to Suda, out of 92 plays by him, 18 or 19 have survived more or less complete.
- In the Hellenistic Age, he became Cornerstone of Ancient Literary education along with Homer, Demosthenes and Menander.
- He also became “The most tragic of poets”.

### **Notable Works**

- 1- Alcestis (438 BC)
- 2- Medea (431 BC)
- 3- Heracleidae (430 BC)
- 4- The Bacchae (405 BC)
- 5- The Trojan Women (415 BC)
- 6- Hippolytus (428 BC)
- 7- Helen (412 BC)
- 8- Andromache (525 BC)
- 9- Hecuba (424 BC)
- 10- The Suppliants (423 BC)
- 11- Electra (420 BC)
- 12- Heracles (416 BC)
- 13- Phoenician Women (410 BC)
- 14- Orestes (408 BC)
- 15- Iphigenia at Aulis (405 BC)

## **Socrates (470 – 399 BC)**

- Socrates was a classical Greek Philosopher credited as one of the founders of Western Philosophy.
- He is an enigmatic figure chiefly known through the accounts of classical writers especially the writings of his students Plato and Xenophon and the plays of his contemporary Aristophanes.
- Socrates has become renowned for his contribution to the field of Ethics and it is this Platonic Socrates who lends his name to the concept of Socratic Irony and the Socratic Method. Socrates also made important and lasting contributions to the field of Epistemology.
- Socrates never individually wrote anything that remains extant. As a result, all first-hand information about him and his philosophies depend upon secondary sources. This issue is known as Socratic Problem or Socratic Question.
- To understand Socrates, one must turn primarily to the works of Plato, whose dialogues are thought the most informative source about Socrates’ life and philosophy and also Xenophon. These writings are the Socratikoi logoi or Socratic Dialogue which consists of reports of conversations apparently involving Socrates.
- He was prominently lampooned in Aristophanes’ comedy “The Clouds”.

- In comedy entitled “The Clouds” ancient Greek author Aristophanes pokes fun at Socrates.

### **Ovid (43 BC – AD 17)**

- He wrote witty and sophisticated love poems.
- His full name was Publius Ovidius Naso known as Ovid in English speaking world.
- He was a Roman Poet who lived during the reign of Augustus.
- He was a contemporary of Virgil and Horace.
- He is best known for Metamorphoses (AD 8), a 15-book continuous Mythological narrative written in the meter of Epic and for collections of love poetry in Elegiac Couplets, especially the Amores (Love Affairs) and Ars Amatoria (The Art of Love).
- The Metamorphoses remains one of the most important sources of classical mythology.
- He was the first major Roman poet to begin his career during the reign of Augustus.
- The Fasti (Books of Days) is a six book Latin poem remained incomplete with Calendar structure. “Tristia” and “Epistulae Ci Ponto” are two collection of elegies in the form of complaining letters from his exile.
- His shorter works include Remedia Amoris (Cure for Love), the Curse poem Ibis and an advice poem On Women’s Cosmetics.
- He wrote a lost tragedy Medea.
- The Heroides (Heroine) or Epistulae Heroidum is a collection of 21 poems in elegiac couplets.
- Tristia (Sorrow) consists of five books written during Ovid’s exile in Tomis.
- Epistulae ex Ponto (Letters from the Black Sea) is a collection of four books.
- Augustus Caesar banished Ovid to an isolated island and he died in exile.

### **Metamorphoses**

- It is a narrative poem beginning with the creation of the world and ends in Ovid’s time.
- It consists of adventures of love affairs of deities and heroes.
- More than 200 tales are taken from Greek and Roman Mythology, and these were the greatest source of Mythology for Renaissance writers.

### **Pindar (522 – 443 BC)**

- Pindar was an ancient Greek lyric poet from Thebes.
- He was the first Greek poet to reflect on the nature of poetry and on the poet’s role.
- His poetry illustrates the beliefs and values of Archaic Greece at the dawn of classical period.
- About ten days before he died, the goddess Persephone appeared to him and complained that she was the only divinity to whom he never composed a rhyme.
- He died around 440 BC while attending a festival at Argos.
- Scholars at the Library of Alexandria collected his compositions in 17 books organized according to genre.

- One book of humnoi “Hymns”, one book of Paines “Paeans” , two books of dithuramboi “Dithyrambs”, 2 books of Prosodia “Processionals”, 3 books of parthenia “Song for Light Dance”, 1 book of threnoi “Laments”, 4 books of epinikia “Victory odes” – above all Epinikia Odes written to commemorate athletic victories, survive in complete form.
- His victory Odes are grouped in 4 books: Olympion, Pythian, Isthmian and Nemean Games.
- Longinus likens to a vast fire and Athenaeus refers to him as a Great Voked Pindar.
- Pindaric Ode – There are 3 types of stanza in each ode based on choral positions. Strophe (right to left), anti-strophe (left to right) and Epode (in a circle).
- A variation of Pindaric ode called Irregular Ode was developed by Abraham Cowley (17th century).

## Virgil (70 – 19 BC)

- Publius Vergilius Maro usually called Virgil or Vergil in English, was an ancient Roman Poet of the Augustan period.
- He is known for three major works of Latin Literature, The Eclogues, The Georges and the epic Aeneid.
- A minor number of poems are collected in the Appendix Virgiliana, are sometimes attributed to him.
- His “Aeneid” has been considered the national epic of Ancient Rome from the time of its composition to the present day.
- It is modelled after Homer’s Iliad and Odyssey.
- Virgil’s work has had wide and deep influence on western literature most notably on Dante’s “Divine Comedy”, in which Virgil appears as Dante’s guide through hell and purgatory.
- After considering briefly, a career in Rhetoric and Law, the young Virgil turned his talents to poetry.
- He was nicknamed “Parlhenias” or “Maiden” because of his social aloofness.
- The Augustan poet Ovid parodies the opening lines of “Aeneid in Amores” and his summary of The Aeneid story in book 14 of the Metamorphosis the so-called Mini – Aeneid.
- Lucan’s epic The Bellum Olive has been considered an anti-Virgilian epic.
- “The Aeneid” an epic poem written between 29 and 19 BC tells the legendary story of Aeneas, a Trojan who travelled to Italy where he became the ancestor of Romans. It comprises 9,896 lines in dactylic hexameter.



## Homer

### (Probably between 12th and 8th centuries BC)

- Homer is best known as the author of Iliad and Odyssey.
- He was believed by the ancient Greek to have been the first and greatest of all the epic poets.
- Author of the first known literature of Europe, he is central to the Western Canon.
- The importance of Homer to the ancient Greeks is described in Plato's Republic which portrays him as "first teacher" of tragedies and "Leader of Greek culture".
- The satirist Lucian in his "True History" describes him as Babylonian called Tigranos, who assumed the name Homer when taken "Hostage".

Notable works of Homer

#### 1-Odyssey

- The poem mainly focuses on the Greek hero Odysseus (known as Ulysses in Roman myths), king of Ithaca, and his journey home after the fall of Troy. It takes Odysseus ten years to reach Ithaca after the ten-year Trojan War. In his absence, it is assumed Odysseus has died, and his wife Penelope and son Telemachus must deal with a group of unruly suitors, the Mnesteres who compete for Penelope's hand in marriage.
- George Chapman (1616) translated it to English.
- It is written in dactylic hexameter.
- It is sequel to the Iliad.

#### 2-Iliad

- Referred as the Song of Ilion or Song of Ilium.
- It is an ancient Greek epic poem in dactylic hexameter, set during Trojan War between King Agamemnon and the Warrior Achilles (15,693 lines).

3-Homeric Hymn: A collection of 33 anonymous ancient Greek Hymns celebrating individual god in dactylic hexameter.

4-Epic Cycle: A collection of ancient Greek epic poems that related the story of Trojan War which includes the Cypria, the Aethiopes, the so called Little Iliad, Ilupersis, the Nostoi and the Telegoni in dactylic hexameter.

## Literary Criticism

### Plato (429-397 BC)

- Real name of Plato was Aristocle that means broad shouldered.
- Plato was the first critic of poetry. He wrote dramatic dialogues rather than didactic volumes. in total he wrote 36 dialogues.
- According to Plato's Theory of Mimesis (Imitation), the arts deal with illusion and they are imitation of an imitation, hence they are twice removed from reality. Thus, Plato censured poetry because it distorts reality.
- Plato disapproves of poetry because it is immoral and as a philosopher, he disapproves it because it is based on falsehood.
- According to Plato, Philosophy is better than Poetry, because philosophers deals with ideal truth, whereas poet deals with what appears to him/illusion.
- According to Plato, truth of Philosophy was more important than the pleasure of Poetry.
- Plato objected poetry on three grounds:
  - Education
  - Philosophical and
  - Moral view point.
- In his Theory of Mimesis, he gave an example of a carpenter and chair. The idea of 'chair' first came in the mind of carpenter. He gave physical shape to his idea out of wood and created a chair. The painter imitated the chair of the carpenter in his picture of chair. Thus, painter's chair is twice removed from reality. Hence, he believed that art is twice removed from reality.
- According to Plato poets are breeders of falsehood and poetry is mother of lies.
- Plato distinguished between Mimesis and Digenesis, in which Mimesis is the speech of a character directly reproduced, where Digenesis is a narration of doings and sayings.
- His famous work is The Republic, which had strong influence on Thomas More's Utopia.
- The issue of privileging speech over writing was taken for discussion in his Phaedrus.
- According to Plato, the ideal age of a poet should be less than 50 years.
- In the republic Plato has introduced 7 musical modes they are Ionian, Dorian, Phrygion, Lydian, Mixolydian, Aeolias and Bochian.



## The Republic

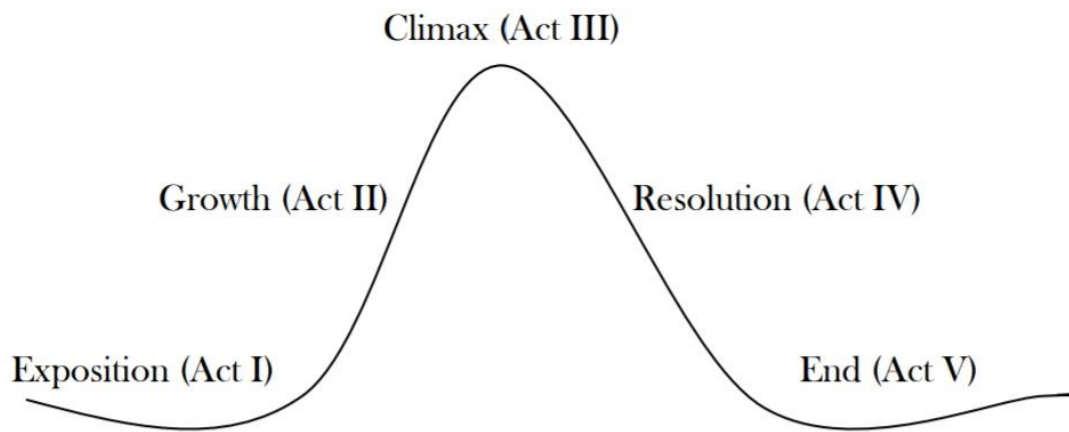
- The Republic (Latin: De La Republica) is a Socratic dialogue written by Plato around 380 BC.
- It concerns with the 'definition of justice', 'the order and character of the just city- state' and 'the just man'-for this reason ancient readers used the name "On Justice" as an alternative title.
- It's proved to be most influential works of philosophy and political theory. In it Socrates along with various Athenians and foreigners discusses the meaning of justice and examine whether or not 'the just man' is happier than 'the unjust man', by considering a series of different cities coming into existence "in speech" culminating in a city "Kallipolis" which is ruled by philosopher kings.
- The participants also discuss The Theory of Forms, the immortality of the soul and the roles of the philosopher and of poetry in society.
- It is written in 10 books.
- Socrates defines 'Timocracy' as a government of people who love, rule and honour.
- The Republic was well distinguished along with Parmenides, Phaedrus and Theaetetus.
- In this work Plato recommended only two musical modes , they are Lydian and Ionia

## Aristotle (384-322 BC)

- Aristotle was the disciple of Plato.
- Through he followed Plato in defining poetry as mimesis but he did not condemn it like Plato rather he regarded mimesis as a natural healthy impulse.
- Aristotle is known for his critical treatise:
- The Poetics: dealing with art and poetry and
- The Rhetoric: the art of speaking
- His main concern was tragedy, which he considered most developed part of poetry while the other part of poetics, comedy is unfortunately lost.
- Aristotle replied the charges made by his master Plato against poetry as:
- Aristotle said that the art of imitation is removed from the truth is not correct rather it leads us to the essential reality of life.
- Against the charges of Plato, Aristotle said: Tragedy gives us new knowledge, yields aesthetic satisfaction and produces a better state of mind.
- Aristotle said that 'poetry is not bad', because it does not teach philosophy of ethics, rather Philosophy and Poetry have identical function, they are not different subjects.
- Aristotle agrees with Plato that poet is an imitator and creative art is imitation but disagrees with the idea of poet's imitation is twice removed from reality and hence unreal/illusion of truth.

- Aristotle also disagrees with the Plato's idea that function of poetry is to make people weaker and emotional/ too sentimental rather Aristotle said that: - "the end of poetry is to please, however teaching may be given and such pleasing is superior to other pleasures because it teaches civic morality".
- Aristotle classified various forms of art with the help of Object, Medium and Manner of their imitation of life (as which object is imitated, what sort of medium is used to imitate life and in what manner is imitation of life is presented).
- Aristotle defined tragedy as: "It is an imitation of an action that is serious and complete to a certain magnitude and a kind of artistic ornament in the form of action through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation – Catharsis of these and similar emotion"

### STRUCTURE OF THE PLAY



**Note:** End (Act V) is called Catastrophe in tragedy and Denouement in Comedy.

### **Aristotle's Theory of Catharsis**

- His theory of catharsis consists in the purgation or purification of the excessive emotion of pity and fear.
- Witnessing the tragedy and suffering of protagonist on the stage, such emotions and feelings of the audience is purged and this purgation makes them relieved and they emerge as a better human being than they were.
- He used this term in his definition of Tragedy in chapter VI of Poetics.

#### Aristotle's Six Parts of Tragedy

1. Plot: It is a harmonious combination or arrangements in incidents and action in the story. Aristotle called plot as the most important of the tragedy. It is called an organic whole. It is also called Mythos.

2. Character: They serve to advance the action of story. It is also called Ethos.
3. Thought: It denotes the intellectual and moral qualities. It is also called reasoning.
4. Diction: It is the composition of verses or verification of dialogue (a series of well written speech)
5. Melody/Song: Pleasurable occasions.
6. The spectacle: It is the overall visual appearance of the stage and the actors

**Hamartia**

- It is an error of judgment made by protagonist inadvertently. It is the action of hero which at the time of doing doesn't seem that consequential, such as 'Oedipus is killing the old man in ignorance'.
- It means to err (tragic flaw).
- In other words, it can be said that hamartia is the protagonist's error or flaw that leads to a chain of plot actions culminating in a reverse from their good fortune to bad.
- This error can either be a result of ignorance, an error of judgment, a flaw in character or sin.
- It was popularized by A.C. Bradley in Shakespearean Tragedy.

**Peripetia**

- It is a reversal of circumstances or reversal of fortune or turning point in a tragedy. Aristotle said that peripetia is the most powerful plot in the tragedy along with discovery. It is the place in tragedy where protagonist's fortune turns bad from good.
- It is the turning point in a drama after which the plot moves towards conclusion after the climax of the narrative where the conflict is revolved, mystery is explained, misunderstandings are clarified or lovers reunited etc. Peripetia and Anagnorisis can occur together.
- In the tragedy the conclusion is called "catastrophe".

**Anagnorisis:** It is recognition or the moment of discovery by the protagonist. As Oedipus killed his father and married his mother than felt anagnorisis.

**Aristotle's Poetics**

- It is the earliest surviving work of dramatic theory. It has 26 chapters.
- Aristotle works on aesthetics, consist of Poetic and Rhetoric. The poetics is especially concerned with drama.
- Aristotle argued that poetry provides a safe outlet for the release of intense emotions.
- The followers of Aristotle later known as Peripatetics. Aristotle was the teacher of Alexander the Great.
- In it he said that "tragedy is the imitation of an action that is complete and whole and of a certain magnitude having a beginning a middle and an end.
- He also coined the term 'Entelechy' that means anything which is currently happening.

## Longinus (1ST or 3RD Century A.D)

Longinus is well known for the aesthetic treatise *On the Sublime*, a work which focuses on the effect of good writing. He was a Greek teacher of rhetoric and literary critic.

*On the Sublime* is both the treatise and the work of literary criticism

It is written in an epistolary form and the final part that deals with the public speaking has been lost.

This treatise is dedicated to 'Posthumious Terentianus'.

*On the Sublime* is a compendium of literary exemplars with about 50 authors spanning 1000 years mentioned or quoted. He pointed 5 sources in the treatise.

- Sublime means loftiness and excellence in language.
- He refers to a passage from Genesis (1st chapter of bible).
- He emphasized that 'to be a truly great writer authors must have moral excellence'.
- He promotes 'Elevation of Style'.
- Scott James called him 'first romantic critic'.
- Pope's *Essay on Criticism* sums up all the art of poetry as taught first by Longinus.
- According to Longinus the sublime has the following features:
- It is the essence of all great poetry and oratory.
- It valorises a special use of language.
- It is a matter of reader-response.

Longinus in his *On the Sublime* finds five principle sources of the sublime the first two of which are the result of the natural capacities of the authors' i.e.

- (a) Grandeur of thought and  
b) Vivid portrayal of the passion/capacity for strong emotion.

- The other three are basically rhetorical skills:

- (c) The appropriate use of figures of speech,  
(d) Suitable diction and metaphors,  
(e) The majestic composition or structure of the whole work.

### (a) Grandeur of Thought

- Nobody can produce a sublime work unless his thoughts are grand and sublime. Stately thoughts belong to the loftiest mind, therefore he who would attain distinction of style must feed his soul on the works of the great masters as Homer, Plato and Demosthenes and capture from them some of their greatness. According to Longinus, grandeur of thought is not mere imitation or borrowing but that "men catch fire from the spirits of others".

**(b) Vivid Portray of Passion / Capacity for Strong Emotions**

- The second source of the sublime is vehement and inspired passion. Longinus asserts that nothing contributes more to loftiness of tone in writing than genuine emotion. For this reason, he only prefers The Iliad to Odyssey and Demosthenes to Cicero.
- According to Longinus, emotions has to be 'true emotions' and 'in the right place'.

**(c) The Appropriate Use of Figures of Speech/Picture**

- The third source of attaining excellence of style, is the use of figure of speech which he considers very important and so devotes nearly one third of his works to it.
- The grandeur of any figure will depend on its being employed in the right place and the right manner, on the right occasion and with the right motive.
- The chief figures that make for sublimity are the theoretical questions, asyndeton, hyperbaton and periphrasis. The figure of speech should not be used mechanically but naturally.

**(d) Nobility of Diction**

- Diction includes choice and arrangement of words and the use of metaphors and ornamental language.
- Among the ornaments of speech, Longinus considers metaphor and hyperbole.

**(e) Dignity of Composition**

- Dignified composition or the arrangement of words should be one that blends thought, emotion, figures, and words themselves-the preceding four elements of sublimity into a harmonious whole.
- It makes the hearer or reader share the emotion of speaker. A proper rhythm is one of the elements in this harmony.
- Longinus also distinguished between true and false sublime. False sublime is characterized by timidity or bombast of language and also by puerility (a parade and pomp of language) whereas true sublime on the other hand, is marked by universality of appeal; it pleases all and always; it uplifts our soul.

**Quotations by Longinus**

- "Sublimity is the echo of the noble mind".
- "Literature is the nature of revelation".
- "Poetry has the character of oracle".

**Plotinus (204-270 A.D)**

- Plotinus was a major philosopher. In his philosophy there are three elements:
- The one
- The intellect
- The soul
- The term Neoplatonism was applied to him by the new historians.
- He wrote Enneads.

**Boethius (480-524 A.D)**

- Boethius was a Roman senator and a philosopher.
- His full name was Anicius Manilius Severinu Boethius
- In 524 he was jailed and there he wrote Consolation of Philosophy.
- His other important works are:
- De Arthemetica
- De Musica
- Introductio ad Syllogismos
- Consolation of Philosophy

**St.Augustine of Hippo (354-430 A.D.)**

- He was born in Aurelius Augustinus. He is often called as Augustine of Hippo famous for The City of
- Gold.
- His important works are:
- Reading the Confession (autobiographical work)
- The Mysterious Women from Northern Africa
- Ontology and Eudemonism
- Philosophical Anthropology
- Psychology and Epistemology



**Horace (65-08 B. C.)**

- He was a roman classicist who lived in the first century BC.
- He wrote only one important critical document in verse, that is Epistles to the Pisos later named Ars
- Poetica by Quintilian. It has 3 epistles.
- Ars Poetica is an adaption of Lucretius' Hellenistic Critic.
- He stated that "The aim of poetry is to instruct, or to delight or both".
- Ars Poetica or The Art of Poetry is a poem (19 BC) by Horace in which he advises poets on the art of
- writing poetry and drama.
- Ars Poetica exercised a great influence on European Literature notably on French drama.
- It was first translated in 1556 by Thomas Drant and in 1640 by Ben Jonson.
- The Odes of Horace is a collection of 4 books of Latin lyrics poems.
- Horace formulated the concept of the "Utile Dulci Profit combined with Delight".



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