

NEO- CLASSICAL AGE or AUGUSTAN AGE or THE AGE OF REASON [1700-1798]

This age can further be divided into various sub groups:

Subdivisions of the Age:

1700-1750---THE AGE OF POPE

1700-1745--- AUGUSTAN AGE/ NEO- CLASSICAL PERIOD

1745-1783----THE AGE OF SENSIBILITY

1740-1800----THE AGE OF TRANSITION

The term **Augustan age** comes from the **self-conscious imitation** of the **original Augustan writers- Virgil, Horace** and other **classical writers**.

The term '**Augustan**' refers to the **ROMAN Emperor, Augustus Caesar** [also known as Octavian Caesar], who came to power after the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 BC and is regarded as the First Roman Emperor

The age of the emperor Augustus was the golden period [Classical age] of Roman Empire [Latin literature].

Similarly 18th century is also known as the golden period in the history of English Literature.

The writers of the 18th century **imitated** the **literary forms and themes** of the **original Augustus** writers such as **Virgil and Horace**.

18th century is also known as the **Neo Classical Age** because its writers looked back to the ideals and art forms of classical times. They emphasized even more than their Renaissance predecessors on the classical ideals of order and rational control.¹

18th century writers replaced **Renaissance emphasis** on the imagination, on invention, experimentation, on mysticism.

Their emphasis was **on** order and reason, on restraint, on common sense and on religious, political, economic and philosophical conservatism.

18th century writers maintained that **man** himself was the most appropriate **subject of art**.

They saw art itself an essentially pragmatic as valuable

They saw art was somehow **useful** and was properly **intellectual** rather than **emotional**.

Sometimes the **latter half** of the **18th century**, the period between **1750 and 1798** is taken as a different period called the **Age of Sensibility**. This period **focused on instinct, feeling and imagination**.

LITERATURE OF THE AUGUSTAN AGE:

Alexander Pope and **Samuel Johnson** are seen as the **most representative writers** of this **Augustan Age**.

Dryden can be seen as a **link between Restoration and Augustan Age**. Dryden wrote comedies in a Restoration vein, but also wrote works in a neoclassical spirit.

Matthew Arnold called 18th century as **‘the age of prose and reason’**

The influence of **Enlightenment, wit and intellectual conceits** set the tone of much **Augustan Age**.

Dryden, Pope, Swift, Addison and other writers demonstrated qualities of **order, clarity and stylistic decorum**.

Their **works** were **concerned with facts and reason** and **less concern** was shown to **emotion and imagination**.

LITERARY CHARACTERISTICS OF AUGUSTAN AGE:

- This was an age of new prose forms such as periodicals, criminal biographies, travelogues, political allegories and romantic tales.
- The predominance of satire is an important literary characteristic of this age.
- Augustan age saw rise of the novel as a genre [literary form].
- Novel became the most important literary expression of the bourgeoisie [rich middle class] and middle class. Defoe, Richardson, Fielding, Smolett were the main exponents of this form.
- The Heroic couplet [two lines of rhymed iambic pentameter] was the most important verse form [poetry] of the age.
- Sentimental comedy was a new dramatic form that became popular during this age. Later it was burlesqued [mocked] by writers such as Goldsmith.
- Periodical essay, Literature of sensibility and Graveyard poetry were new literary trends of the age.

LITERARY TRENDS OF THE AGE

1. Periodical Essay
2. Literature of Sensibility and
3. Graveyard Poetry

Were new **literary trends** of the age.

PERIODICAL ESSAY

Periodical essay was the **new literary form** that emerged during the early part of the 18th century.

It was a **non fictional prose** that was **published** in magazines, newspapers or journals at regular intervals.

These essays **mirrored** the Augustan Age in England.

The periodical essay dealt with matters that were contemporary, but not immediate with matters and morals, with tendencies of the time rather than actual events.

The **rise** of this form began with **John Dunton's** **ATHENIAN GAZETTE** on 17th March **1691**

The term '**Periodical essay**' was **first** used by **GEORGE COLMAN THE ELDER** and **BONNEL THORNTON** in their magazine the **CONNOISSEUR** [1754-56]

The Tatler [1709-1711], **The Spectator** [1711-12], **The Rambler** [1750-51] were the most successful and influential single essay periodicals of the 18th century.

Richard Steele, Joseph Addison, Thomas Tickell, Alexander Pope, Ambrose Philips were some great **contributors** to this form.

Important Periodicals of the Age:

Name of the Periodical	Year	Founder	Published
The Tatler	[1709-1711]	Richard Steele	Three times a week [Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday]
The Spectator	[1711-12]	Joseph Addison and Richard Steele	Daily publication
The Guardian	12 March 1713 to 01 October 1713	Richard Steele	--
The Rambler	[1750-52]	Samuel Johnson	Tuesdays and Saturdays
The Idler	[1758-60]	Samuel Johnson	Weekly

Literature of Sensibility:

Literature of Sensibility refers to a particular type of literature written during the 18th century, which focused on feelings of sympathy and sensibility.

Sensibility here meant **an ability to emotionally respond to beauty and sublimity.**

It was a **revolt** against **philosophy of Hobbes and other 17th century empirical philosophers.** These philosophers viewed **human beings as selfish and greedy.**

Proponents of literature of sensibility believed that

- 1. Feelings were far more reliable guides to morality and truth than abstract principles**
- 2. And viewed human beings as essentially benevolent.**

A key text '**The Theory of Moral Sentiments**' [1759] by **Adam Smith** contributed towards this movement towards sensibility.

Important Novels of sensibility:

- 1. Julie** by Jean-Jacques Rousseau
- 2. Pamela** [1740] and **Clarissa Harlowe** [1748] by Samuel Richardson
- 3. A Sentimental Journey** [1768] and **Tristram Shandy** [1767] by Laurence Sterne
- 4. Man of Feeling** [1771] by Henry MacKenzie

Plays of sensibility:

- 1. The Conscious Lovers** by Richard Steele
- 2. The West Indian** by Richard Cumberland

Poems of sensibility:

- 1. Sensibility** [1782] by Hannah More
- 2. Elegiac Sonnets** [1784] by Charlotte Smith

GRAVEYARD POETRY

Graveyard School of Poets refers to a group of 18th century poets, whose works dealt with the themes of death, sorrow and mortality.

Often set in a graveyard, the poems mused on the vicissitudes [different opinions] of life, the solitude of death and the anguish of bereavement.

Graveyard school incorporated melancholy and expanded the range of emotional responses to death to include grief, tenderness, tearfulness, nostalgia and other states of mind.

Famous Poems/Poets of Graveyard:

1. Night Piece on Death [1721] by Thomas Parnell
2. The Grave [1743] by Robert Blair
3. Night Thoughts [1742-45] by Edward Young
4. Elegy written in a country churchyard [1751] by Thomas Gray

Major Poets of the Augustan Age

1. Alexander Pope [1688-1744]
2. Dr Samuel Johnson [1709-1784]
3. Thomas Gray [1716-1771]
4. William Collins [1721-1759]
5. Oliver Goldsmith [1730-1774]
6. William Cowper [1731-1800]
7. George Crabbe [1754-1832]
8. Robert Burns [1759-1796]
9. William Blake [1757-1827]—generally regarded as a seminal figure of the Romantic age

Major Novelists of the Augustan Age

1. Jonathan Swift [1667-1745]
2. Daniel Defoe [1660-1731]
3. Samuel Richardson [1689-1761]
4. Laurence Sterne [1713-1768]
5. Henry Fielding [1707-1754]
6. Tobias Smollett [1721-1771]

Major Prose Writers of the Augustan Age

1. Joseph Addison [1672-1719]
2. Richard Steele [1672-1729]
3. John Arbuthnot [1667-1735]

