

RENAISSANCE

(1500-1600)

Introduction

The Renaissance in English literature refers to a cultural and intellectual movement that occurred in England during the late 15th to early 17th centuries. This period marked a revival of classical learning, art and literature, inspired by the rediscovery of ancient Greek and Roman texts.

Meaning

Renaissance is a French word meaning "Rebirth", Regenerate and Awakening.

Renaissance is often said to be the start of modern age. The term Renaissance was first used by French historian Jules Michelet.

Start of Renaissance

Renaissance started in late 13th century. It started with the writing of Dante Alighieri and Petrarch.

∴ Dante Alighieri was an Italian poet, best known for his work,

"The Divine Comedy".

∴ Petrarch worked for "Sonnet".

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In 15th century, the Renaissance spread from Florence to Italy and later in Europe.

In this period Johannes Gutenberg invented printing press. He was a German inventor, printer and publisher. His most famous work is the Gutenberg Bible, which is one of the first major books produced using this technology.

Reason of Renaissance

The Renaissance was a period of cultural revival in Europe, driven by several key factors:

- **Black death:** The plague led to a significant decline in population, which shifted economic power. Labour became more valuable, giving rise to a wealthy merchant class that supported the arts.
- **Advances in Technology:** Innovations such as the printing press allowed for the rapid dissemination of knowledge, making literature and ideas more accessible.

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Another cause of the Renaissance was the new idea that social class didn't have to dictate your wealth. For the first time, people realized that they could work hard to earn money and then rise in society, rather than to let the class they were born into dictate their financial freedom.

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ages of Renaissance

Early Renaissance: The early Renaissance was a cultural movement that marked the transition from the medieval period to a new era of artistic and intellectual revival in Europe.

High Renaissance: The high Renaissance represents the peak of artistic achievement during the Renaissance period.

Late Renaissance: The late Renaissance is characterized by a shift towards Mannerism following the high Renaissance.

- early Renaissance → 13th / 14th century
- High Renaissance → 15th century
- Late Renaissance → 16th century

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The discovery of the ~~new~~ world and the discovery of man, by man

Renaissance is sometimes known as the revival of learning.

The Effect of Renaissance on English Literature

The most significant impact of the Renaissance on English Literature was seen in the changes of perception of human. For example, the words of Williams—

Now he looked inward into his own soul,

Seeking the meaning of experience in term of his free individuality.

Impact on Drama

The Renaissance was a golden age for English drama with playwrights like William Shakespeare and Ben Jonson^{Johnson} producing iconic works. Shakespeare plays, in particular, combined elements of tragedy, comedy and Theaters became a popular form of entertainment and plays often explored Political, moral and existential questions.

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Impact on Poetry

In poetry, the spirit of Renaissance can be seen in the works of Spenser, Sidney and Shakespeare. They gave English poetry a new sense of grace, dignity and harmony. They did their best to imitate Italian Renaissance. With these few poets of Renaissance era, England became a nest of singing birds. Sonnet became a popular form during that age.

Conclusion

The Renaissance makes a great effect on the development of English literature. In 1564, the Italian Renaissance was over but the English Renaissance had hardly begun. The age of Shakespeare was the era of Renaissance in England. The impact of the Renaissance laid a foundational legacy that not only shaped the literature of its time but also influenced subsequent literary movements.

In essence, the English Renaissance transformed literature by incorporating classical ideals, exploring humanism and expanding the scope of drama and poetry. It laid the foundation for much of modern English literature.

Key Features of Renaissance :-

The English Renaissance has many important features. Some of the important features are intellectual rebirth, thirst for knowledge, freedom of thought and action, humanism, scientific outlook, love for beauty and so on.

Intellectual rebirth :-

The most important feature of the Renaissance is intellectual rebirth or regeneration. It conveys the idea that for centuries Europe had been dead intellectually and then by some means, had recovered life. The rebirth or regeneration came to Italy first and then to other European countries.

Freedom of thought :-

Freedom of thought and action is another important feature of Renaissance. An awakening of the minds of men. Freedom of thought and action were the dominant passions of the Renaissance.

Thirst for knowledge :-

Thirst for knowledge is another important feature. It was an age of great

curiosity and thirst for knowledge.
Man desire to know the unknown and
to see the unseen.

Scientific Outlook:

During the Renaissance periods
European explores and scientists contributed
significantly to the development of inquiry

Humanism:

Humanism is another important
feature. During the Elizabethan age, there
was the revival of classical learning which
passion became with the people. The
rediscovery of Greek and Roman antiquity
gave birth to a new culture and that
is called humanism.

A central theme was the focus on human
potential and achievements. Writers explored
human nature, individualism and the complexities
of human experience.

Love for Adventure:

The age of Renaissance was
an age of great curiosity and love for
adventure. In the 15th century, Columbus
reached America and Vasco da Gama reached
India. This kind of love for adventure
influence the Renaissance greatly

Love for beauty:

Love for beauty is another

feature. Here beauty signifies the beauty of culture, beauty of the civilized world, the beauty of women and so on.

The desire of wealth.

The desire of unlimited power and wealth is another important feature. England's trade and commerce improved and the country grew rich and prosperous.

Major Figures of English Renaissance

William Shakespeare Perhaps the most famous writer of the period, whose works include tragedies like "Hamlet" and "Macbeth" comedies like "A Midsummer Night's Dream" histories like Richard III.

Christopher Marlowe known for his blank verse dramas, such as Doctor Faustus and Tamburlaine.

Edmund Spenser Best known for his epic poem The Faerie Queene which combines allegory, mythology and a celebration of the Tudor dynasty.

John Donne A metaphysical poet known for his complex and paradoxical imagery, particularly in works like his Holy Sonnets.

Elizabethan Age (1558-1603)

The Elizabethan Age, spanning from 1558 to 1603 during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, is considered the golden age of English Renaissance. It was a period of cultural flourishing, marked by major advancements in literature, the arts and exploration.

Key Characteristics:

- 1) Literature and Drama
- 2) Poetry, 3) Exploration, 4) Art and Music
- 5) Humanism and learning

Jacobean Age (1603-1625)

The Jacobean Age refers to the period during the reign of King James I of England from 1603 to 1625. The name Jacobean comes from "Jacobus" the Latin form of "James".

Key Characteristics:

William Shakespeare, literature and drama
Prose and Poetry, Art and Architecture

Caroline Age (1625 to 1649)

The Caroline Age refers to the period of English history during the reign of King Charles I, from 1625 to 1649. It is named after the Latin form of Charles, "Carolus". The Caroline Age is often seen as a continuation of the English Renaissance, but it is also marked by significant political and social upheaval that led to the English Civil War.

Commonwealth Age (1649 - 1660)

The Commonwealth Age refers to the period in English history following the execution of King Charles I and temporary abolition of the monarchy. It was marked by the establishment of the Commonwealth of England, a republican government led by Oliver Cromwell and, later, his son Richard Cromwell.