

Neo-Classicism

The term Neoclassicism is a combination of two words Neo and Classic. The word 'neo' has been derived from a Greek word "neos" which means "young or new", while the word 'classic' according to Webster Dictionary, refers to the style and works of the ancient authors of Greece and Rome.

To combine these words, we get the meaning of neoclassicism as the rebirth and restoration of classicism.

Hence, neoclassicism is a movement in the history of English literature, which laid immense emphasis on revival of the

classical spirit during the period
b/w 1680 to 1750 in the Age of
Pope or Dryden. It is a prototype
of classicism. Writers of this

period immensely endeavoured to

follow the footpaths of the

writers of the Augustus, emperor
of Rome, which produced

unparalleled writers as Horace,
Virgil and Ovid. That is the

reason; the age of Pope,

Dryden is also called the Augustan
age.

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The Neoclassical Poetry

Neoclassical poetry is the type
of poetry which follows the pattern
of poetry authored by the poets
of ancient time i.e. Greek and
Rome. Pope and Dryden were the
leading writers, who deviated from

the traditional schools of poetry and sought guidance in the works of ancient Greek & Roman writers. They tried to follow the writers of the antiquity in letter and spirit in the Augustan age.

According to Britannica Encyclopedia:

Classicism and Neoclassicism, in the arts, historical tradition or aesthetic attitudes based on the art of Greece and Rome in antiquity. In the context of tradition, classicism refers either to the art produced in antiquity or to latter art inspired by that of antiquity; Neoclassicism always refers to the art produced. Thus the terms Neoclassicism & classicism are often used interchangeably.

Stages of Neoclassicism

The Restoration Period

It is called the Restoration Period, as King Charles II was restored in this era. The Restoration Period lasted from 1660-1700. Writers of this age, Dryden and Milton, endeavoured to use sublime, grand and impressive style, scholarly allusions, and mythology and the intense use of imagination.

The Augustan Age

The Augustan Age is also called the Age of Pope. Pope was the leading poet in this age. The Augustan age lasted from 1700 to 1750.

The Age of Johnson

The Age of Johnson lasted up to 1798, when the Romantic Movement was underway with the Publication of Lyrical Ballads by Wordsworth and Samuel Coleridge.

Characteristics of Neoclassical Poetry

Rationalism

Rationalism is the most essential feature of neoclassical poetry.

Neoclassical Poets viewed reason as the mainspring of learning, knowledge and inspiration for their poetry. Neoclassical poetry is a reaction against the Renaissance style of poetry. It is a unique outcome of intellect, not fancy & imagination.

Unlike romantic poetry, which is entirely the result of Sentiments of the poet, neoclassical poetry is a stimulated fabricated and stereo-typical type of poetry. In romantic poetry, sentiments play a vital role while in neoclassical poetry; reason and intellect are dominant elements. The neoclassical poets made an effort to disregard imagination, emotion and feelings, while composing their poetry. That is the reason; their poetry may be branded as ~~Purificational~~ and Synthetic.

— Scholarly Allusions —

Neoclassical poets were all highly educated and well-versed in various fields of studies. They knew a lot about religious, biblical

and classical literature. Allusions helped them to convey their message to their readers. That's why; their poetry is brimming with plentiful allusions. They desired to write in the manner of their classical masters. Look at the following examples taken from Rape of the lock by Alexander Pope:

Safe past the Gnome thro' this
fantastic brand,

A branch of healing Spleenwort
in his hand

(Rape of the lock, Canto IV)

In these lines, Spleenwort is a branch of tree. Pope is referring to Virgil's Aeneid, wherein the Aeneas visits the gangland safely just because of having magical branch of a tree.

The Goddess with a discontented air
Seems to reject him, tho' she
grants his pray'r.

A wond'rous Bag with both her
hands she binds

Like that where once Ulysses held
the winds

(Rape of the Lock, Canto IV)

In the above mentioned lines,
the poet has made allusions
to Homer's Odyssey.

— Didacticism —

Neoclassical poets rebelled against
the romantic nature of poetry

of the Renaissance Period. Romantic

poets loved to compose poetry

just for the sake of poetry like

John Keats - they tried hard to

sidestep morality and didacticism

in their poetry. Their purpose

was to give vent to their feelings. That's why, most of the neoclassical poetry is replete with didacticism to a great deal.

— Realism —

Realism is a hallmark of neoclassical poetry. The neoclassical poets, unlike romantic poets, were not living in their own world of imagination: they were had realists and they presented the true picture of the society. They didn't turn their eyes from the harsh realities of life. They were keen observers and dwelled upon what they experienced. with their open eyes in their poetry. Dryden's and Pope's poetry are replete with excellent example of realism.

—Adhere To Classical Rules—

The neoclassical poets were undoubtedly great adherents of classical rules. They went all-out to revive the classicism in their poetry by following each and every rule of classicism. Their highest common concern was to adhere to the classical rules and employ them in their poetry as much as possible.

Neoclassical poetry is also known as Pseudo Classical poetry.

They respected the classical works a great deal.

—No Passionate Lyricism—

Romantic poetry is popular for its lyrical quality, while neoclassical poetry is lacking in lyrical features due to apathy.

of the neoclassical poets for passion, feelings and emotions.

They looked at the passion with distrust and suspicion that's why, very few lyrics were written in the age of Pope of Dryden. They didn't give free play to their imagination; rather they dwelt upon the intellectual aspects of poetry.