

# English Literature

The Bare Minimum for BCS

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What follows are my own notes on English Literature for BCS. There probably are plenty of mistakes, and I apologise if anyone reading this has found any. These notes have been made, first and foremost, for personal use, so verify anything that seems off (or better, even anything that doesn't). Let me know of the errors.

**Use at your own peril.**

Susmit Islam

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# Periods of English Literature

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# Periods of English Literature - 1/1

- Mnemonic: অমি রান্না নিয়ে রুমি ভাই এর মন পেল
  - Old age / Anglo-Saxon period
  - Middle age
  - Renaissance
  - Neoclassical
  - Romantic
  - Victorian
  - Edwardian
  - Modern
  - Postmodern / contemporary

## Old English (450-1066)

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- Famous authors:
  - Caedmon: **Earliest known English poet**
  - Cynewulf
  - St. Venerable Bede
  - Alfred the Great

## Middle English (1066-1500)

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## Famous authors:

- **Geoffrey Chaucer** aka *father of English poetry*
- William Langland
- Thomas Malory
- Robert Henryson

## Renaissance (1500-1660)

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# Renaissance (1500-1660) - 1/4

## ■ 4 subperiods:

- Mnemonic: লিজা যাবে car-এ করে

## ■ Elizabethan (1558-1603)

- Replete with lyrics and songs
- Golden age of English drama/literature
- Famous authors:
  - Mnemonic: লিলি মার সাথে ফ্রান্স স্পেনে ঘুরছে
  - Christopher Marlowe and other “*University Wits*”:
    - \* Robert Greene
    - \* Thomas Nashe

## Renaissance (1500-1660) - 2/4

- \* Thomas Lodge
- \* George Peele
- \* John Lyly
- Shakespeare
- Francis Bacon
- Edmund Spenser
- John Lyly
- **Jacobean (1603-1625)**
  - Reign of James I → Jacobean era
  - **Famous authors:**
    - John Donne

## Renaissance (1500-1660) - 3/4

- Michael Drayton
- Ben Johnson
- Elizabeth Cary
- **Caroline (1625-1649)**
  - Reign of Charles I (“Carolus”) → Caroline era
  - **Famous authors:**
    - John Milton
    - Robert Burton
    - George Herbert
    - *Cavalier poets*:
      - \* Loyal poets to Charles I

\* Richard Lovelace, Thomas Carew, Sir John Suckling,  
Edmund Waller, Robert Herrick

### ■ Commonwealth (1650-1660)

- John Milton
- Thomas Hobbes
- Thomas Fuller
- Abraham Cowley
- Andrew Marvell



## Neoclassical (1660-1785)

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# Neoclassical (1660-1785) - 1/3

- Slogan: “Art for man’s sake”
- 3 subperiods
- Restoration (1660-1700)
  - William Congreve
  - John Dryden (Congreve and Dryden known for *restoration comedies*)
  - Samuel Butler (*satire*)
  - John Bunyan
  - John Locke
- Augustan (1700-1745)

## Neoclassical (1660-1785) - 2/3

- Alexander Pope
- Jonathan Swift
- Daniel Defoe
- Henry Fielding
- **Sensibility / Johnson (1745-1785)**
  - Henry Fielding
  - Edmund Burke
  - Edward Gibbon
  - Samuel Johnson
  - Samuel Richardson
  - Hester Lynch Thrale

## Neoclassical (1660-1785) - 3/3

- James Boswell
- Tobias Smollett
- Laurence Sterne
- William Cowper
- Thomas Perry

## Romantic (1800-1832)

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# Romantic (1800-1832) - 1/1

- Slogan: “Art for art’s sake”
- Famous authors:
  - Wordsworth
  - Coleridge
  - Keats
  - Blake
  - Shelley (Percy Bysshe and Mary)
  - Byron
  - Jane Austen
  - Charles Lamb

## Victorian (1832-1901)

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# Victorian (1832-1901) - 1/2

## Poets:

- Alfred Tennyson
- Matthew Arnold
- Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning

## Essayists:

- Thomas Carlyle
- John Ruskin
- Walter Pater



### Novelists:

- Dickens
- Bronte Sisters
- Elizabeth Gaskell
- George Eliot  
(penname of Mary Ann Evans)
- Anthony Trollope
- Thomas Hardy
- William Makepeace Thackeray
- Samuel Butler (there's also a Restoration era poet by the same name)

## Important Authors and Literary Works

## The Firsts

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- **Tragedy: Gorboduc** (authors: Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville)
- **Comedy: Ralph Roister Doister** (Nicholas Udall)
- **Novel: Pamela; Virtue Rewarded** (Samuel Richardson)
- **Revenge tragedy: The Spanish Tragedy** (Thomas Kyd)

# Old English Period

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# Old English Period - 1/4

(A really good exposition in video format on the Old and Middle English periods [can be found here](#))

- Most famous work of the Old English period: **Beowulf**
  - Epic poem
  - Author was anonymous
  - $\approx$  3200 lines

## Caedmon

- First known English poet
- Epithets: *father of English sacred songs, Milton of Anglo-Saxon period*

- Notable works:
  - Paraphrase
  - Caedmon's Hymn (poem)
  - Genesis
  - Exodus
  - Judith

### Cynewulf

- Epithet: **author of Christ**
- Notable works:
  - Juliana

- The Fates of the Apostles
- Christ
- Elene

### St. Venerable Bede

#### ■ Epithets:

- Father of English learning
- First historian in English language
- Doctor of the Church

#### ■ Notable works:



- An Ecclesiastical History of the English People (book for which he got “Doc of the Church” epithet)

### King Alfred the Great

- **Founder of English prose** (*father* of English prose = Wycliffe, *father* of *modern* English prose = Francis Bacon)
- Notable works:
  - **Anglo-Saxon Chronicle** (“first monument in the English prose”)

## Middle English Period

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## Geoffrey Chaucer

### ■ Epithets:

- *“The morning star of English literature/renaissance”*
- Father of modern poetry
- First humourist in English literature

### ■ Notable works:

- The Canterbury Tales
- The Nun's Priest's Tale
- Troilus and Criseyde
- The Parliament of Fowls/Birds

- The House of Fame
- The Legend of Good Women
- Important quotes: *"Time and tide wait for no man"*

### John Wycliffe

- English theologian, philosopher etc
- **First translated the Bible from Latin**
- Epithets:
  - **"Father of English Prose"**
  - Morning star of reformation
  - Evening star of scholasticism

### Sir Thomas Mallory

- Notable works: **Morte d' Arthur** (first romance in prose)

### William Langland

- Notable works: **Vision of Piers Plowman** (*first great English satire*)
- Important quotes: *"Who will bell the cat?"*

# The Renaissance

## Elizabethan Period

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## Edmund Spenser

- “Poet of poets”
- Famous poems:
  - The Faerie Queen (epic, allegory)
  - Amoretti (sonnets)
  - Colin Clouts Came Home Again
  - Mother Hubberd’s Tale
  - Complaints
  - Epithalamion
  - The Shepherd’s Calendar



## Christopher Marlowe

- “Shakespeare’s most important predecessor”
- “Greatest dramatist before Shakespeare”
- **Father of English tragedy**
- Notable works:

### Plays:

- Dr Faustus
- The Jew of Malta
- You Can Never Tell
- Tamburlaine the Great

### Poetry:

- Pharsalia
- The Passionate Shepherd  
to His Love
- Amores

## Shakespeare

- Birth: 1564, Death: 1616
- 37 plays, 154 sonnets

## John Lyly

- Notable works:
  - Euphues (“bears the embryo of English novel”)
  - Campaspe
  - Sapho and Phao
  - Midas

### Sir Philip Sidney

- Notable works:
  - Arcadia (“embryo of English novel”)
  - The Lady of May
  - An Apology for Poetry

## Jacobean Period

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## John Donne

- One of the **metaphysical poets**, others are:
  - Henry Vaughan
  - Andrew Marvell
  - John Cleveland
  - Abraham Cowley
  - George Herbert
  - Richard Crashaw
- Other epithets: “**poet of love**”, “**religious poet**”

### ■ Notable works:

- |                           |                            |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| ■ The Good Morrow         | ■ The Anatomy of the world |
| ■ The Sun Rising          | ■ The Frea                 |
| ■ The Canonization        | ■ The Ecstasy              |
| ■ Twicknam Garden         | ■ The Funeral              |
| ■ For Whom the Bell Tolls |                            |

### John Webster

- Poet
- Notable works:
  - The Duchess of Malfi
  - The White Devil
  - The Devil's Law Case

### George Chapman

- Notable works: first English translation of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*

## Commonwealth Period

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## Andrew Marvell

- One of the **metaphysical poets**
- Notable works:
  - To His Coy Mistress
  - The Definition of Love
  - The Rehearsal Transposed
  - The Garden

## Thomas Hobbes

- **Political philosopher**
- Notable work: **Leviathan**

### Jeremy Taylor

- English cleric
- Notable works:
  - Holy Living
  - Holy Dying

### John Milton

- Famous **epic poet**
- “A great master of verse in the Puritan period”

## ■ Notable works:

### Epic:

- *Paradise Lost* (blank-verse epic poem)
- *Paradise Regained*

### Others:

- *Comus*
- *Lycidas* (a pastoral elegy, written on the death of Edward King, friend of Milton)
- *Of Education*
- *Areopagitica*

# The Neoclassical

## Restoration Period

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## William Congreve

- His comedy is known as “**comedy of manners**” (Ben Johnson → “*comedy of humours*”)
- Notable works:
  - The Way of the World
  - Love for Love
  - The Double Dealer
  - The Old Bachelor

## John Dryden

- Father of English criticism
- Notable works:

- |                          |                           |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| ■ All for Love           | ■ Macflecknoe             |
| ■ The Indian Emperor     | ■ The Essay of Dramatic   |
| ■ Aurang-zebe            | Poesy                     |
| ■ The Mistaken Husband   | ■ The Conquest of Granada |
| ■ Absalom and Achitophel | ■ The Medal of John Bays  |

### Samuel Butler

- English novelist
- Notable works: *Hudibras* (famous satire in verse)

### John Bunyan

- English writer and Puritan preacher
- Notable works: **The Pilgrim's Progress** (an allegory)

### John Locke

- English philosopher whose works lie at the *foundation of modern philosophical empiricism and political liberalism*
- Notable works:



- An Essay Concerning Human Understanding
- Two Treatises of Government

## Augustan Period

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## Alexander Pope

- Mock heroic poet
- Notable works:
  - An Essay on Criticism
  - The Dunciad
  - The Imitation of Horace
  - An Essay on Man
  - Letter to Gay
  - The Rape of the Lock (epic)

### Jonathan Swift

- Greatest satirist of 18th century
- Notable works:
  - Gulliver's travels
  - A Tale of A Tub
  - The Battle of the Books
  - A Modest Proposal
  - A Journey to Stella

## Daniel Defoe

- Notable works:

- Novels:

- Captain Singleton
- Robinson Crusoe:
  - \* Key characters: Crusoe, Friday
- Moll Flanders
- Colonel Jack
- Roxana: The Fortunate Mistress

- Poem: The True-Born Englishman

## Henry Fielding

- Father of English novel
- Notable works:

### Novels:

- Tom Jones
- Amelia
- Joseph Andrews
- Jonathan Wilde
- Top Secret

### Play:

- Rape Upon Rape
- The Temple Beau
- The Tragedy of Tragedies
- The Modern Husband

## Sensibility/Johnson Period

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## Oliver Goldsmith

- Irish novelist, playwright, poet
- Notable works:
  - The Citizen of the World
  - The Vicar of the Wakefield
  - The Traveller
  - The Deserted Village
  - The Good-Natured Man
  - She Stoops to Conquer



### Thomas Gray

- Notable works: Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard