

English Literature

The Bare Minimum for BCS

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1. Periods of English Literature
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3. Middle English (1066-1500)
4. Renaissance (1500-1660)
5. Neoclassical (1660-1785)
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- 18. William Shakespeare

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.

It's a work in progress, so make sure you're reading the latest version, which you can [fetch from here](#).

Use at your own peril.

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Periods of English Literature

■ 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)

■ Famous authors:

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

Middle English (1066-1500)

Famous authors:

- **Geoffrey Chaucer** aka *father of English poetry*
- William Langland
- Thomas Malory
- John Gower

Renaissance (1500-1660)

Renaissance (1500-1660) - 1/4

(Playlist covering these (and more!) in detail)

■ 4 subperiods:

- Mnemonic: লিজা যাবে car-এ করে

■ Elizabethan (1558-1603)

- Replete with lyrics and songs
- Golden age of English drama/literature
- Nest of singing birds
- Famous authors: (Mnemonic: লিলি মার সাথে ফ্রান্স স্পেনে ঘুরছে)
 - “University Wits”: (Mnemonic: মার ঘরে ছেলে পেলো নাচে আর লিলি খায়)
 - ↪ মার → *Christopher Marlowe*
 - ↪ ঘরে → *Robert Greene*

↪ ছেলে → Thomas Kyd

↪ পেলে → George Peele

↪ নাচে → Thomas Nashe

↪ ল → Thomas Lodge

↪ লি → John Lyly

- Shakespeare
- Francis Bacon
- Edmund Spenser
- John Lyly

■ Jacobean (1603-1625)

- Reign of James I → Jacobean era

- **Famous authors:**

- John Donne
- 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)

- 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)
 - 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
- James Boswell
- Tobias Smollett

- Laurence Sterne
- William Cowper
- Thomas Perry

Romantic (1800-1832)

- 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)

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 (pennane 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

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

Old English Period

(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 (**first English epic**)
 - 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

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"** (*founder* of English prose → Alfred the Great, father of *modern* English prose → F. Bacon)
 - 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?”

Dante

- Epithets:
 - Father of the Italian language
 - Supreme poet of Italy
- Notable works:
 - **Inferno** (poem)
 - **The Divine Comedy** (epic)

John Gower

- Notable works:
 - Speculum Homms / Speculum Meditantis
 - Vox Clamantis
 - Confessio Amantis

The Renaissance

Preparatory Period for the Renaissance

- *First fruit of renaissance* → “Tottel’s Miscellany: Songs and Sonettes”
(Henry Howard and Sir Thomas Wyatt)

Sir Thomas More

- English lawyer and philosopher
- Executed during Henry VIII’s reign due to accusations of treason
- Notable works:
 - **Utopia** (1516)
 - Written in Latin
 - Criticism of renaissance English society

Sir David Lindsay

- Notable works: **The Dream** (poetry)

Nicholas Udall

- Father of English Comedy
- Notable works:
 - **Ralph Roister Doister**: *one of the first comedies* in English literature, the other one being **Gammer Gurton's Needle**

Henry Howard

- Earl of Surrey
- Father of blank verse

Sir Thomas Wyatt

- First Sonneteer in English

Elizabethan Period

Edmund Spenser

■ Epithets:

- **Poet of poets**
- The child of renaissance / reformation
- Court poet
- The divine master / principal poet / prince of poet

■ Famous poems:

- **The Faerie Queene** (epic, allegory)
- **Amoretti** (sonnets)
- **The Shepherd's Calendar** (first major work; dedicated to Sir Philip Sidney)

- **Astrophel** (elegy; on death of Sidney)
- **Four Hymns**
- Colin Clouts Came Home Again
- Mother Hubbard's Tale
- Complaints
- Epithalamion

Christopher Marlowe

■ Epithets:

- Father of English tragedy/drama
- “Shakespeare’s most important predecessor”
- “Greatest dramatist before Shakespeare”

■ Notable works:

Plays:

- Dr Faustus
- Tamburlaine the Great (তৈমুর লঙ)
- Edward II
- The Jew of Malta (mnemonic: Malta → Marlowe)
- You Can Never Tell

Poetry:

- The Passionate Shepherd to His Love
- Pharsalia
- Amores

Shakespeare

- Birth: 1564, Death: 1616
- 37 plays, 154 sonnets
- Discussed in detail in [this section](#).

John Lyly

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

Sir Philip Sidney

■ Notable works:

- **Arcadia** (“embryo of English novel”)
- **An Apology for Poetry** (literary criticism)
- **Astrophel and Stella** (sonnet)
- The Lady of May

Francis Bacon

■ Epithets:

- Father of modern English prose
- The essayist

■ Notable works:

- নামের শুরুতে Of ওয়ালা সব বই চোখ বুইজা Francis Bacon দাগাইবি
- Novum Organum (English: New Method)
- History of Life and Death
- The New Atlantis

Jacobean Period

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 |
| ■ Twickenham 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

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** (pamphlet)

The Neoclassical

Restoration Period

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 Poesy |
| ■ Aurang-zebe | ■ The Conquest of Granada |
| ■ The Mistaken Husband | ■ The Medal of John Bays |
| ■ Absalom and Achitophel | |

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

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

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*

William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare

([Detailed video on Shakes](#))

Early Life

- Birth: Apr 23, 1564; at Stratford on Avon
- Death: Apr 23, 1616 (aged 52)
- Buried: Apr 25, 1616
- Marriage: 1582, to Anne Hathaway (8y elder than Shakes)

Literary Career

Statistics

Plays	37
Sonnets	154
Narrative poems	3
Acts in his plays	5

The Extremes

1st staged play	Henry VI (Pt. 2)
Last play (swan song)	The Tempest
Shortest play	The Comedy of Errors
Longest play	Hamlet

■ Epithets:

- Bard of Avon
- King without a Crown

■ Literary style: iambic pentameter (5 stressed syllables and 5 unstressed syllables within each line)

William Shakespeare - 3/4

Tragedy	Comedy	Historical	Poem
Hamlet	All's Well That Ends Well	Henry IV Pt. 1	Lover's complaint
Romeo and Juliet	As You Like It	Henry IV Pt. 2	Passionate Pilgrim
Julius Caesar	Comedy of Errors	Henry V	Phoenix and the Turtle
Othello	Love's Labour's Lost	Henry VI Pt. 1	Rape of Lucrece
King Lear	Measure for Measure	Henry VI Pt. 2	Venus and Adonis
Macbeth	Merchant of Venice	Henry VI Pt. 3	
Titus Andronicus	Merry Wives of Windsor	Henry VIII	
Antony and Cleopatra	Midsummer Night's Dream	King John	
Troilus and Cressida	Much Ado About Nothing	Richard II	

Tragedy	Comedy	Historical	Poem
Timon of Athens	Taming of the Shrew	Richard III	
Coriolanus	The Tempest		
Cymbeline	All's Well That Ends Well		
	Two Gentlemen of Verona		
	Winter's Tale		
	Pericles, Prince of Tyre		
	Twelfth Night		

Table 1: Important works of Shakespeare