

# English Literature

The Bare Minimum for BCS

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# Table of contents - 1/2

1. Periods of English Literature
2. Old English (450-1066)
3. Middle English (1066-1500)
4. Renaissance (1500-1660)
5. Neoclassical (1660-1785)

## Table of contents - 2/2

6. Romantic (1800-1832)

7. Victorian (1832-1901)

8. The Firsts

9. Middle English Period

10. Elizabethan Period

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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# Old English (450-1066) - 1/1

- Most famous work: **Beowulf**
  - Epic poem
  - Author was anonymous
  - $\approx$  3200 lines
- Famous author: **Caedmon**
  - Earliest known English poet
  - Sole surviving work: **Caedmon's Hymn** (poem)



## Middle English (1066-1500)

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## Famous authors:

- Geoffrey Chaucer aka *father of English poetry*
- 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
- **Commonwealth (1650-1660)**
  - John Milton

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

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

## Neoclassical (1660-1785)

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# Neoclassical (1660-1785) - 1/3

- 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

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

- Jonathan Swift
- **Sensibility / Johnson** (1745-1785)
  - Henry Fielding
  - Edmund Burke
  - Edward Gibbon
  - Samuel Johnson
  - Samuel Richardson
  - Hester Lynch Thrale
  - James Boswell
  - Tobias Smollett
  - Laurence Sterne

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

- William Cowper
- Thomas Perry

## Romantic (1800-1832)

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# Romantic (1800-1832) - 1/1

- 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)

## Middle English Period

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## Geoffrey Chaucer

- Notable works:
  - The Canterbury Tales
  - The Nun Priest's Tale
  - The Parliament of Fowls
  - The Legend of Good Women

## John Wycliffe

- English theologian, philosopher etc
- First translated the Bible from Latin
- “Father of English Prose”

## Elizabethan Period

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## Edmund Spenser

- “Poet of poets”
- Famous poems:
  - The Faerie Queen (epic)
  - 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