

Literature Timeline: Britain and Beyond

PERIOD	GENRE/STYLE	THEMES/ASPECTS	HISTORICAL CONTEXT	AUTHORS/TEXTS
Classical Grecian (800-200 BCE)	Oral tradition Drama Poetry	-Honoring gods -Promoting common identity -Dominance of Fate -Dangers of arrogance and hubris	-776 BCE First Olympic games held in Olympia -750 BCE Invention of Greek alphabet -650 BCE Earliest Lyric poets -510 BCE Introduction of Democracy in Athens -497-479 BCE Persian Wars -461-445 BCE Peloponnesian Wars -449 BCE Construction begins on Acropolis & Parthenon -339 BCE Trial & execution of Socrates -380 BCE Plato establishes Athens Academy -335 BCE Aristotle found the Lyceum in Athens -334 BCE Alexander the Great begins conquests (ends 323 BCE) -214 BCE Macedonian Wars begin (end 167 BCE)	Playwrights: Sophocles, Aeschylus, Aristophanes, Euripides Epic Poets: Hesiod, Homer Philosophers: Socrates, Plato, Aristotle
Classical Roman (200 BCE-350 CE)	Drama	-Influenced by Greeks -Imaginative reworking of	-753 BCE Legendary founding of Rome by	Poets: Ovid, Virgil

	Poetry Satire	classical myths -The greatness of Rome -Propaganda -Mockery of public folly and vulgarity	Romulus -753-509 BCE Roman monarchy -509-31 BCE The Roman Republic -27 BCE-312 CE The Roman Principate -312-1453 CE The later Roman Empire	Playwrights: Livius Andronicus, Terence, Plautus Philosophers: Marcus Aurelius Satirists: Martial, Juvenal Rhetoricians: Cicero, Quintillian
Patristic (c. 70 -749 CE) -time and writing of the Church Fathers, early Christians who defended the Gospel	Sermons Bible commentaries Church history	-Orthodox doctrine -Exegesis – analysis & explanation of scriptures -Faith “apologies” – defending the faith -Battle against infidelity: apostasy, heresy, schism		Early Christian writings: St. Augustine, St. Jerome, (about 100 Church Fathers) <i>The Nicene Creed</i>
Old English/Anglo Saxon (499-1066)	Oral tradition of literature Poetry dominant genre -unique verse form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • caesura • alliteration • repetition 	-Strong belief in Fate -Juxtaposition of church & pagan worlds -Admiration of heroic warriors who prevail in battle -Express religious faith & give moral instruction through literature	-Life centered around ancestral tribes/clans that ruled themselves -At first, the people in Britain were invading warriors from outlying areas: Angles, Saxons, Jutes, & Danes. -Later, they were agricultural.	<i>Beowulf</i> The Venerable Bede <i>Exeter Book</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • four-beat rhythm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Christianity helps literacy to spread -Introduces Roman alphabet to Britain -Oral tradition helps unite diverse peoples & their myths 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Norman Conquest ended this period. -The Bayeux Tapestry thought to be commissioned ca 1070 to tell the story of William the Conqueror & Harold, Earl of Wessex, & the Battle of Hastings in 1066. 	
<p>Middle English/Medieval (1066-1485 roughly)</p>	<p>Oral tradition continues</p> <p>Folk ballads</p> <p>Mystery & miracle plays</p> <p>Morality plays</p> <p>Stock epithets</p> <p>Kennings</p> <p>Frame stories</p> <p>Moral tales</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Plays that instruct the illiterate masses in morals & religion (can see & hear the literature) -Chivalric code of honor -Romances -Religious devotion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Crusades bring development of a money economy for the first time in Britain. -Trading increases dramatically as a result of the Crusades. -William the Conqueror crowned king in 1066. -Henry III crowned king in 1154 – brings judicial system royal courts, juries, & chivalry to Britain. -Renaissance begins in Italy ca 1300. -1347 Bubonic Plague reaches Europe, killing millions. -Joan of Arc is burned at the stake. -In Germany, the Gutenberg Bible is produced on a printing press. 	<p><i>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</i></p> <p><i>Domesday Book</i></p> <p><i>L’Morte de Arthur</i></p> <p>Geoffrey Chaucer, <i>The Canterbury Tales</i></p> <p>Boccaccio</p> <p>Dante</p>

<p>The Renaissance (1485-1660)</p> <p>-Elizabethan Period: reign of Elizabeth I, 1586-1603</p> <p>-Jacobean Period: reign of James I of England, 1603-1625</p> <p>-Caroline Age: 1625-1649</p> <p>-Commonwealth Period: 1649-1660</p>	<p>Poetry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the sonnet • metaphysical poetry – elaborate & unexpected metaphors called conceits <p>Drama</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • written in verse • supported by royalty • tragedies, comedies, histories 	<p>-World view shifts from religion & after to stressing human life on earth.</p> <p>-Development of human potential</p> <p>-Aspects of love</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unrequited love • constant love • timeless love • courtly love • love subject to change <p>-Commoners welcomed at some play productions (like ones at the Globe), but conservatives try to close the theaters on grounds that they promote brazen behaviors.</p> <p>-Not all middle class embrace metaphysical poets & their abstract conceits.</p>	<p>-War of Roses ends in 1485, bringing political stability.</p> <p>-Printing press helps stabilize English as a language and allows more people to read a variety of literature.</p> <p>-1492 Columbus sets sail to Western Hemisphere</p> <p>-Economy changes from farm-based to one of international trade.</p> <p>-1543 Copernicus publishes theory earth & planets revolve around sun.</p> <p>-1607 English settlers establish Jamestown colony in Virginia.</p> <p>-1620 Pilgrims set sail on the <i>Mayflower</i>.</p> <p>-1633 Galileo condemned for supporting Copernicus's theory.</p>	<p><i>The Book of Common Prayer</i></p> <p>Sir Thomas Wyatt</p> <p>William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe</p> <p>Metaphysical Poets, John Donne, Andrew Marvell</p> <p>Cavalier Poets, Ben Jonson, Robert Herrick</p> <p>John Milton</p> <p>Miguel Cervantes, <i>Don Quixote</i></p>
<p>Neoclassical (1660-1798)</p> <p>a.k.a</p> <p>-Age of Reason</p> <p>-Age of Enlightenment</p> <p>-The Restoration</p>	<p>Satire</p> <p>Poetry</p> <p>Essays</p> <p>Letters, diaries, biographies</p>	<p>-Emphasis on reason & logic; disdain for superstition</p> <p>-Stresses harmony, stability, & wisdom</p> <p>-Locke: A social contract exists between the gov't. & the people. Gov't. governs guaranteeing "natural rights" of life, liberty, &</p>	<p>-50% of males are functionally literate (a dramatic rise).</p> <p>-1665 Great Plague of London</p> <p>-1666 Great Fire of London</p> <p>-1687 Sir Isaac Newton publishes law of gravity.</p> <p>-1718 Lady Mary Wortley</p>	<p>John Dryden</p> <p>Alexander Pope</p> <p>Philosopher John Locke, <i>Two Treatises on Government</i></p> <p>Daniel Defoe,</p>

	Novels	<p>property.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Emphasis on the individual -Belief that man is basically evil -Approach to life: “the world as it should be” 	<p>Montagu introduces inoculation in England.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -1757 British rule over India begins (ends 1947). -1775 British go to war with colonies in N. America. -1783 Treaty of Paris = American independence -1793 British go to war with revolutionary France. -Fenced enclosures of land cause demise of traditional village life. -Factories begin to spring up as industrial revolution begins. -Impoverished masses grow as farming life declines, and factories build. -Coffee houses- educated men spend evenings with literary & political associates -In America, this era encompasses the Colonial Period and the Age of Reason. 	<p><i>Robinson Crusoe</i> Jonathan Swift, <i>Gulliver’s Travels</i> Samuel Johnson, <i>A Dictionary of the English Language</i> John Bunyan</p> <p>Voltaire Racine Moliere</p> <p>America: colonial writers Bradstreet, Taylor, Edwards, Wheatley & revolutionary writers Franklin, Jefferson, & Paine</p>
<p>Romantic (1798-1832)</p> <p>-Gothic writings (c. 1790-1890)</p>	<p>Novels</p> <p>Poetry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lyrical ballads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Human knowledge consists of impressions & ideas formed in the individual’s mind. -Introduction of Gothic elements & terror/horror stories & novels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Napoleon rises to power in France and opposes England militarily and economically. 1815 Duke of Wellington defeats Napoleon at Waterloo. 	<p>Novelists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mary Shelly, <i>Frankenstein</i> • Bram Stoker, <i>Dracula</i>

<p>overlap with the Romantic and Victorian periods.</p>		<p>-In nature, one can find comfort & peace that the man-made urbanized towns & factory environments cannot offer. -Evil attributed to society, not to human nature -Belief that man is basically good -Movement of protest: a desire for personal freedom -Children seen as hapless victims of poverty & exploitation</p>	<p>-Gas lamps developed. -Tory philosophy that gov't. should NOT interfere with private enterprise -1832 Middle class men gain voting rights in Britain. -Railroads begin to run. -In America, this is also the Romantic Era, comprised of both Transcendental writings and Gothic writings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jane Austen, <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> <p>Poets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robert Burns • William Blake • William Wordsworth • Samuel Taylor Coleridge • Lord Byron • Percy Shelley • John Keats <p>Germany: Goethe, <i>Faust</i>; Brothers Grimm fairytales</p> <p>France: Victor Hugo, <i>The Hunchback of Notre Dame</i></p> <p>Russia: Aleksandr Pushkin</p> <p>America: Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Poe</p>
<p>Victorian (1832-1900)</p>	<p>Novels</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bildungsroman 	<p>-Conflict between those in power & the common masses of laborers</p>	<p>-Paper becomes cheap, so magazines & novels are cheap</p>	<p>Novelists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charles Dickens

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political novels • Detective novels (Sherlock Holmes) • Serialized novels (Charles Dickens) <p>Elegies</p> <p>Poetry: easier to understand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dramatic monologues <p>Drama</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • comedies of manners <p>Magazines offer stories to the masses.</p>	<p>& the poor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Shocking life of urban poor & sweatshops is highlighted in literature to insist on reform. -Country v. city life -Sexual discretion (or lack of it) -Strained coincidences -Romantic triangles -Heroines in physical danger -Aristocratic villains -Misdirected letters -Bigamous marriages -Literature begins to reach the masses. 	<p>to mass produce.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Unprecedented growth of industry & business in Britain -1833 Factory Act bans factory work for children under 9; slavery is abolished in British Empire. -1844 Morse sends first long-distance telegraph message. -1845 Irish Potato Famine begins (ends 1851). -1861 Alexander II frees serfs in Russia; U.S. civil war erupts (ends 1865). -1870 Local governments establish public schools; Married Women's Act gives women economic rights. -1874 Alexander Graham Bell develops telephone. -1879 Ireland presses for home rule; Thomas Edison invents light bulb. -1884 Reform Bill gives vote to almost all adult males. -1893 Henry Ford develops gasoline-powered autos. -1895 Guglielmo Marconi invents first radio. -1896 First modern Olympic Games in Greece 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thomas Hardy • Rudyard Kipling • Robert Louis Stevenson • George Eliot (a.k.a. Mary Ann Evans) • Sir Arthur Conan Doyle • H.G. Wells • The Bronte's • Jane Austen <p>Playwright, Oscar Wilde</p> <p>Poets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alfred Lord Tennyson • Gerard Manley Hopkins • Robert Browning • Elizabeth Barrett Browning • Pre-Raphaelites, the Rossetis
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<p>Modern (1900-1945 subject to debate)</p>	<p>Poetry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free Verse <p>Epiphanies begin to appear in literature.</p> <p>Speeches</p> <p>Memoirs</p> <p>Novels</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stream of consciousness • Detached, 	<p>-Lonely individual fighting to find peace & comfort in a world that has lost its absolute values & traditions</p> <p>-Man is nothing except what he makes of himself.</p> <p>-Belief in situational ethics-no absolute values. Decisions are based on the situation of the moment.</p> <p>-Mixing of fantasy with nonfiction blurs lines of reality for reader.</p> <p>-Loss of the hero in literature</p>	<p>-British Empire loses one million soldiers to WWI.</p> <p>-1921 Irish Free State is established; Northern Ireland remains part of Great Britain.</p> <p>-Winston Churchill leads Britain through WWII, and the Germans bomb England directly.</p> <p>-British colonies demand independence.</p> <p>-In American, the Modern Period included writers of the “Lost Generation” and the</p>	<p>Novelists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • James Joyce • Virginia Woolf • Joseph Conrad • D.H. Lawrence • Graham Greene • Dylan Thomas • George Orwell <p>Poets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • W.H. Auden • William Butler Yeats • T.S. Eliot

	<p>unemotional, humorless</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present tense • Magic realism 	<p>-Destruction made possible by technology.</p> <p>-Approach to life: “Seize life for the moment, and get all you can out of it.”</p>	<p>“Harlem Renaissance.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <p>Playwrights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • George Bernard Shaw <p>America: Fitzgerald, Stein, Hemingway, Faulkner; Baldwin, Ellison</p>
<p>Postmodern / Contemporary (1945-onward)</p>	<p>Novels, Short Stories, Drama</p> <p>-Mixing of fantasy with nonfiction; blurred lines of reality</p> <p>-Meta-fiction</p> <p>-Magical Realism</p> <p>-Science Fiction</p> <p>-Multicultural in theme & style</p> <p>-Narratives: fiction & nonfiction</p> <p>-Storytelling emphasized</p>	<p>-No heroes or flawed heroes</p> <p>-Concern with the individual in isolation</p> <p>-Social issues, writers align with feminists & ethnic groups</p> <p>-Humorless or ironic in theme</p> <p>-Self-publishing opportunities</p> <p>-Media culture overtly interprets values</p> <p>-Numbness, apathy, disassociation of western culture</p> <p>-Fast pace/technology</p> <p>-Culture of “watchers” / willful seclusion</p> <p>-Reality TV</p> <p>-Homogenization of suburbia / media culture</p> <p>-Pharmaceuticals / medicated society</p> <p>-Economic & political globalization – end of national</p>	<p>-1945 British civilian & military losses total 360,000 at end of WWII.</p> <p>-1947 India & Pakistan are granted independence.</p> <p>-1952 Queen Elizabeth II ascends to the throne.</p> <p>-1961 South Africa withdraws from British Commonwealth.</p> <p>-1977 The first practical home computer, Apple II, hits the market.</p> <p>-1981 Prince Charles marries Lady Diana Spencer.</p> <p>-1989 Berlin Wall falls; students demonstrating for Chinese democracy are killed in Beijing’s Tiananmen Square.</p> <p>-1997 Britain returns Hong Kong to China after 155 years</p>	<p>Novelists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Fowles • Doris Lessing <p>Poets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stevie Smith • Ted Hughes • Seamus Heaney <p>Playwrights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Samuel Beckett • Tom Stoppard <p>South Africa: Nadine Gordimer</p> <p>America: Salinger, Vonnegut, Ginsberg, The Beat Poets, Angelou, Morrison, Walker, Soto, O’Brien,</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Anti-heroes -Young Adult Literature -Irony, cynicism elements -“Pop” novel readership Poetry -Confessional: detailed, personal issues faced in open, conversational poetry -Autobiographical 	<p>sovereignty</p>	<p>of colonial rule; Princess Diana dies in Paris in auto accident.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -2001 Irish Republican Army begins disarmament; terrorist acts in the U.S. kill nearly 3,000 people. -2003 U.S.-led troops invade Iraq. -2005 London underground bombings -2009 Barack O’Bama becomes first African American president of the U.S. 	<p>King, Grisham, Crichton, Clancy, Kingsolver, Krakauer</p>
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