**THE RENAISSANCE PERIOD (1485­1660)**

**I. Early Tudor Period** (1485-1558): The War of the Roses ends in England with Henry Tudor (Henry VII) claiming the throne. Martin Luther's split with Rome marks the emergence of Protestantism, followed by Henry VIII's Anglican schism, which creates the first Protestant church in England. Edmund Spenser is a sample poet.

**II.** **Elizabethan Period** (1558-1603): Queen Elizabeth saves England from both Spanish invasion and internal squabbles at home. The early works of Shakespeare, Marlowe, Kyd, and Sidney mark Elizabeth's reign.

**III.** **Jacobean Period** (1603-1625): Shakespeare's later work, Ben Jonson, Francis Bacon, and John Donne.

**IV.** **Caroline Age** (1625-1649): John Milton, George Herbert, Robert Herrick, the "Sons of Ben" and others write during the reign of Charles I and his Cavaliers.

**V.** **Commonwealth Period** or **Puritan Interregnum** (1649-1660): Under Cromwell's Puritan dictatorship, John Milton continues to write, but we also find writers like Andrew Marvell and Sir Thomas Browne.

* The **Renaissance** (or rebirth of learning) which began in Italy in the 14th century affected English attitudes toward learning and the arts from approximately 1485 the accession of the Tudor monarchs, to 1660 when Charles II was restored to the throne. The Renaissance worked in two ways in the development of literature- it did much to liberate thought from the bondage of medieval theology (scholastic- dogmatic) and it presented writers with literary masterpieces as models
* Some of the ideas found in Renaissance literature include the doctrine of [**humanism**](http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-humanism.htm), a philosophical school of thought that placed importance upon human potential and the ability to find meaning and value in earthly life, rather than merely in the afterlife. The universal tend of humanism in emphasizing man’s dignity and his worldly happiness was reflected in the works produced in the period.
* The period is characterized by a rebirth among English elite of classical learning, a rediscovery of ancient Greek and Roman authors.

The first major revival of **classicism** occurred during the Renaissance. As a result of the intensified interest in Greek and Roman culture, especially the works of Plato and Cicero, classical standards were reinstated as the ideal norm in literature.( Classicism, a term that, when applied generally, means clearness, elegance, symmetry, and repose produced by attention to traditional forms. It is sometimes synonymous with excellence or artistic quality of high distinction. More precisely, the term refers to the admiration and imitation of Greek and Roman literature, art, and architecture. Because the principles of classicism were derived from the rules and practices of the ancients, the term came to mean the adherence to specific academic canons).

* Many works of Renaissance literature also expounded upon the idea, taken from antiquity, of the "**Great Chain of Being**," Its major premise was that every existing thing in the universe had its "place" in a divinely planned hierarchical order An object's "place" depended on the relative proportion of "spirit" and "matter" it contained--the less "spirit" and the more "matter," the lower down it stood. At the bottom, for example, stood various types of inanimate objects, such as metals, stones, and the four elements (earth, water, air, fire). Higher up were various members of the vegetative class, like trees and flowers. Then came animals; then humans; and then angels. At the very top was God. Within each of these large groups, there were other hierarchies. For example; human beings: a. king b. nobleman c. priest d. knight e. yeoman (small-land owner) f. tenant farmer g. peasant. If the chain is broken, then everything is disrupted throughout the natural and spiritual orders. For example, if the rightful king is deposed, the whole nation suffers. This can be clearly seen in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth and in most of the works of the period.* Renaissance thinkers viewed a human being as a microcosm (literally, a "little world") that reflected the structure of the world as a whole, the macrocosm
* The scholar went to study in Italy (Petrarch and Boccaccio) and brought back inspiration. The New Learning was established in Oxford and Cambridge. It was helped by the introduction of the Printing Press in 1476, by William Caxton.
* Renaissance scholars studied ancient Greek and Latin texts and advocated the imitation of classical styles in literature, art, and education. Closely related to secularism was the Renaissance emphasis on the individual and on the importance of developing human potential. The ideal "Renaissance man" was a person who cultivated his innate capabilities to the fullest. He was a many-faceted individual who might be an engineer, philosopher, and painter or an architect, astronomer, and poet. Perceiving himself as the centre of his own universe, he synthesized the emotional, rational, social, and spiritual forces in his life into a harmonious balance. The natural result of **secularism** and **individualism** was a general revolt against authority.
* The strong feeling of **nationalism** which had risen with the reign of Elizabeth awakened the people’s desire for knowledge about England’s past history.
* Humanists influenced a critical and scholarly study of scriptures, which partly led to a challenge of Roman Catholicism and the emergence of English Protestantism.
* New poetical forms introduced, e.g. blank verse and sonnet, enriched the native stock of English literature, and conventional ones were adopted to fit new subjects
* Translation occupied an important place in the period.
* Based itself on the models of Roman and Greek classics and the precedents from Italy, the English drama evolved from the interludes and morality plays and developed into a sophisticated art form.
* The philosophy of **Neo-Platonism**, which was widely held in Renaissance, advocates finding permanence in the ever-changing world of nature by practicing the virtues, particularly love. (Edmund Spenser)
* The literature of the sixteenth century and later was profoundly influenced by that religious result of the Renaissance which we know as the **Reformation**.
* **Puritan Interregnum: The term refers to both the Puritan government established under Oliver Cromwell after civil war and those year in which that government lasted (1649- 1658).** This interregnum marks the end of the English Renaissance. The puritans called their regime the Commonwealth and it was nominally a parliamentarian government but a dictatorship under Cromwell. Even the theaters that once showed the great dramas of Shakespeare and other playwrights were closed.

**PROSE**

**Desiderius Erasmus:** The greatest humanist of the age, who was Dutch by birth, came to England during the reign of Tudors, stimulated interest in classical writings and exploratory thinking among such English humanists as Sir Thomas More, Sir Thomas Elyot, and Roger Ascham. His *Praise of Folly*, an essay written in Latin, is considered one of the most notable works of the Renaissance and was employed as one of the catalysts of the [Protestant Reformation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestant_Reformation). In Praise of Folly he exalts the humanistic ideals and satirizes the corruption of religion and learning.

 \*\*\***Sir Thomas More:** More is best known for his prose work Utopia (a Greek term meaning no place or nowhere). It was written in Latin in 1516. It entered English literature in 1551 when Ralph Robinsontranslated it. More’s Utopia is an imitation of Plato’s Republic. It portrays an ideal state, a communist rather than a Christian one. It consists of two books. Book I portrays an ideal world as opposed to the European world of corruption, war, poverty, cruelty and immoral conduct. Book II goes into details of More’s ideal state. (Laziness is forbidden, jewels are children's play toys, gold and silver are used for chamber pots and as chains for criminals, property is held in common, everybody works, everybody receives good education, there is complete freedom of religion).

**Sir John Cheke:** He was a professor of Greek at Cambridge University, popularized Greek studies in England. His Heart of Seduction, How Grievous It Is to a Commonwealth portrays the Tudor ideal of political order under a strong monarch and the Tudor fear of anarchy and rebellion.

**Sir Thomas Elyot** prepared the first Latin- English dictionary. In the *Book Named the Governor* Elyot expresses his humanistic concept of education for princes and those in high places. The governor, which was strongly influenced by Xenophon and Plato, is the first full treatise in English on the theory of humanistic education and moral philosophy.

**Roger Ascham:** An accomplished Greek scholar, who was tutor to Queen Elizabeth and her Latin secretary, was credited and honored for Queen Elizabeth’s interest in classics and humanistic learning. He strongly encouraged the use of English as a language of scholarship, and he was a purist who opposed the use of foreign words.

* **Toxophilus**: Ascham’s Toxophilus praises archery as a backbone of national defense and an excellent physical training and character building. The book is a Platonic dialogue in which Philologus (lover of Knowledge) and Toxophilus (lover of archery) discusses the use of bow and arrow.
* **Schoolmaster** is the first significant treatise on the theory of humanistic education in which patience, love and gentleness can accomplish more than whipping. He recommend edifying literature and condemns The Canterbury Tales and Morte d’ Arthur for immorality.

**Thomas Wilson** wrote *the Art of Rhetoric*, the first handbook of English composition. He favors a simple and fluent prose style free of affection and excessive Latinism. The Art of Rhetoric is not a mere composition handbook; it is actually a humanistic treatise on the full education of a man for the full life.

**Sir Walter Raleigh:** Raleigh’s prose is primarily historical, reflects the excitement at the expanding of British Empire from the point of view of a nationalistic Renaissance man.

* **A Report of the Truth of the Fight about the Isles of Acores** is a prose epic about the naval battle between Sir Richard Greville’s ships against an overwhelming Spanish Fleet.
* **The Discovery of the Large, Rich, and Beautiful Empire of Guiana** concerns the quest for gold, jungle with graphic accounts of hand-to- hand combat.
* **The History of the World** was written in prison contains history up to 130 B.C written in prose.
* **Raleigh’s poetry**: He is best known for such lyrics as The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd (A reply to Marlowe’s idyllic pastoral poem), The Lie (written from prison), and Farewell, False Love (a lover’s complaint written in metaphors).

**Francis Bacon**: Bacon’s importance in the history of English prose is due to his naturalization of a new genre “, essay”, in English. He borrowed the concept of the essay from Montaigne and modified it so as to make it suit his own particular genius.

* **Essays:** Bacon’s primary purpose was to teach young aristocrats how to succeed.
* **Advancement of Learning** is a tract on education in two books: the first book praises knowledge and challenges prejudices against learning, the second is a survey of learning, laying a foundation for a national culture.
* **Novum Organum (the New Instrument)** is the best statement of Bacon’s philosophy**.** In Novum Organum, Bacon details a new system of logic he believes to be superior to the old ways of syllogism. This is now known as the [Baconian method](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baconian_method). For Bacon, finding the essence of a thing was a simple process of [reduction](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reduction_%28philosophy%29), and the use of [inductive reasoning](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inductive_reasoning).
* **New Atlantis** is a [utopian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utopian) novel published in Latin. In this work, Bacon portrayed a vision of the future of human discovery and knowledge, expressing his aspirations and ideals for humankind. The novel depicts the creation of a utopian land where "generosity and enlightenment, dignity and splendor, piety and public spirit" are the commonly held qualities of the inhabitants of "Bensalem".

**Thomas Hobbes:** His philosophical works are considered the major English works of the type between Bacon and Locke.

* **The Elements of Law Natural and Politic** established him as the founder of modern empirical philosophy. He states that the ultimate reality is the ceaseless motion of matter, chief drive is self-preservation and free will is an illusion.
* **Leviathan:** In [Leviathan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leviathan_%28book%29), Hobbes set out his doctrine of the foundation of [states](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_%28polity%29) and legitimate governments – originating [social contract theory](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_contract_theory). He argues that monarchs rule not by divine right but because humans, through self-interest, give the natural rights for the security of a strong ruler. Hobbes postulates what life would be like without government, a condition which he calls the [state of nature](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_of_nature). In that state, each person would have a right, or license, to everything in the world.

**Robert Burton** was an [English](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/England) [scholar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scholar) at [Oxford University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Oxford), best known for the classic [*The Anatomy of Melancholy*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Anatomy_of_Melancholy).

**Izaak Walton** Best known as the author of [The Compleat Angler](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Izaak_Walton#The_Compleat_Angler), he also wrote a number of short biographies that have been collected under the title of Walton's Lives.

**John Selden**: One of the first great critical scholars. He is chiefly known for Table Talk a book of sayings that were collected by his secretary. He also wrote The Titles of Honor and The History of Titles.

**Richard Hakluyt**: He wrote the masterpiece of English travel literature: The Principal Voyages, Traffics and Discoveries of English Nation.

**Samuel Purchas**: When Hakluyt died, his works was continued by Purchas. The completed work was entitled Hakluyt’s Posthumus, or Purchas His Pilgrimes, which inspired Coleridge to write Kubla Khan.

**Sir Thomas Browne** was an [English](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/England) author of varied works which reveal his wide learning in diverse fields including [medicine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medicine), [religion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion), [science](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Science) and the [esoteric](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Esoteric).Hydriotaphia, Urn Burial,is a work by Sir [Thomas Browne](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Browne), published in 1658 as the first part of a two-part work that concludes with [The Garden of Cyrus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Garden_of_Cyrus)**.** Hydriotaphia, Urn Burial begins with the discovery of some roman funeral urns near Norwich and grows into a treatise on all known burial practices as well as an investigation into the death itself. The Garden of Cyrus is Browne's [Neo-Platonic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neo-Platonic) vision of the interconnection of [art](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art), [nature](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nature) and the [Universe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universe) via numerous symbols, primarily the number [five](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five), and the [quincunx](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quincunx) pattern. Religio Medici (a Physician’s religion) is another work by Browne.

**Raphael Holinshed**: the Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland, known as Holinshed’s Chronicles, is a history of Britain to 1575. From these chronicles Shakespeare borrowed the plot of Macbeth, parts of Cymbeline and possibly King Lear.

**Character Writers**

The seventeenth century witnessed the origin and development of another kind of essay, known as character writing. They wrote short sketches of various human types. The character writers were influenced by Theophrastus, Seneca and dramatists. They are also highly indebted to Bacon who provided them with a pattern of style. The following are the character writers:

**Thomas Dekker** wrote the *Bellman of London* and *A Strange Horse Race* which are noticeable for theportrayal of vivid character sketches. He also wrote one of the best-loved English comedies, The Shoemaker’s Holiday.

**Joseph Hall** was an English bishop, satirist and moralist. He wrote the *Good Magistrate* and Characters of *Virtues and Vices.* Satire distinguishes his charactersketches. Hall's Characters of Virtues and Vices consist of two books: Book I deals with virtuous types (such as the wise man, the honest man, and the true friend) and Book II with their vicious counterparts (such as the malcontent, the flatterer, and the unthrifty)

**Thomas Overbury’**s Characters is a collection of numerous well – portrayed characters. He usually packs the characters to some trade or occupation. The character takes color from the occupation from which it draws its virtues and vices. Well- known sketches include A Puritan and A Fair and Happy Milkmaid.

**John Earle** is superior to both Hall and Overbury as a character writer. His Microcosmography is his collection of well portrayed characters.

**George Herbert** differs from all other character writers of his time. His famous work *A Priest in the Temple* or *A* *Country Parson* is not a collection of unconnected sketches, but a short treatise in thirty seven chapters.

**Thomas Fuller** wrote The History of the Holy War, The Holy State and the Profane State.

**POETRY**

* Typical of Tudor poets were Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, aristocrats who wrote poetry to be circulated among acquaintances. Both Wyatt and Surrey translated Latin and Greek poems as well as contemporary French and Italian poets. They both used Italian verse forms and experimented with stanzaic forms, particularly sonnet, adapting the Italian sonnet to an English variant with three quatrains and a couplet (called the Shakespearean sonnet).
* **The Renaissance Miscellanies**: Many collections of poetry, called Miscellanies, were published during the Tudor period. They contained primarily lyric poems, many of them free translations by various poets. The best-known was **Tottel’s Miscellany**, which contains 97 poems by Wyatt and 40 by Surrey.

**\*\*\*Sir Thomas Wyatt:** He was the first poet who introduced sonnet. He translated 26 Petrarchan sonnets left over 30 examples of his own in English. His poems were published in 1577 in Songs and Sonnets known as Tottel’s Miscellany which is one of the landmarks of English literature beginning lyric love poetry in English.

Works of Sir Thomas Wyatt: They Flee From Me, Is It possible, My Lute Awake, Farewell Love, and Madam Withouten Many Words.

**\*\*\*Earl of Surrey (Henry Howard):** He was the first to give to the sonnet its purely English form and he was the first poet to use blank verse (unrhymed iambic pentameter) in his translation of two books of Virgil’s Aeneid. Surrey’s most famous poem is ‘[Prisoned in Windsor](http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/prisoned.htm)’.

**\*\*\*Sir Philip Sidney:** The first sonnet sequence was written by Sir Philip Sidney who was a poet, a literary critic and a schola**r.** Sidney’s Astrophel and Stella (Star lover and star), the first English sonnet cycle, records a young courtier’s love for a lady who is married. These 108 sonnets and 11 songs are the first direct expressions of personal feelings and experience in English poetry.

 **Sidney’s Prose:**

* **Arcadia:** is a pastoral prose romance interspersed with poems was considered not only as a pastoral romance but as a courtesy book, moral treatise and a discussion of love and philosophy. It records the story of two ship-wrecked prices that fall in love with the daughters of King of Arcadia. Sidney wrote it to amuse his sister, the Duchess of Pembroke, to whom it was dedicated. The eclogues included in Arcadia are significant in the development of English pastoral poetry.
* **An Apology for Poetry** (or, **The Defence of Poesy**): Sidney defends the writing of imaginative literature against the Puritan charge that it is an enemy of virtue.
* [**The Lady of May**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Lady_of_May): This is one of Sidney's lesser-known works, a [masque](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Masque) written and performed for Queen Elizabeth in 1578 or 1579.

**Samuel Daniel:** Though the content of his verse lacked originality**,** he was noted for artistry with language, particularly in *Delia*, a sequence of fifty sonnets. He took English poetry a giant step forward with the *Complaint of Rosamund*, a monologue in rime-royal stanza.

**Michael Drayton:** His sonnet sequence was called *Idea’s Mirror*. Later, he made revisions and added metaphysical poems in it and called it *Idea*. *The Shepherd’s Garland*, another work by Drayton, is a collection of pastoral eclogues.

**Thomas Sackville:** Sackville was a great humanist whose only contribution to England poetry is The Induction.

**William Shakespeare:** His non dramatic poetry consists of two narrative poems. Venus and AdonisandThe Rape of Lucrece; and a sequence of 154 sonnets, the first 126 addressed to a man, W.H. and the remaining 28 addressed to a woman, the Dark Lady.

**Edward de Vere**: considered best of the courtly poets for such sonnets as ‘Who Taught Thee First to Sigh?’ or such lyrics as ‘If women could be fair’.

**Sir Edward Dyer**: He is remembered for ‘My mind to me a kingdom is’, asserting the renaissance idea of intellectual self- sufficiency.

**Nicholas Breton** was one of the most popular Elizabethan pastoral lyricists, his Phillida and Cordion was written to be sung under the Queen Elizabeth’s window.

**Thomas Campion** was an English [composer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Composer), [poet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poet), and [physician](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Physician). He wrote over a hundred [lute songs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lute_song), [masques](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Masque) for dancing, and an authoritative technical treatise on music. Campion wrote four books of Airs (poems written to be sung) that include some of the most perfect lyrics written in English such as When to her Lute Corinna Sings and There is a Garden in Her Face.

**Lady** **Mary Wroth** (1587–1651/3) was an English [poet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poet) of the Renaissance. Wroth was among the first female British writers to have achieved an enduring reputation. She is perhaps best known for having written The Countesse of Mountgomeries Urania, the first extant prose romance by an English woman, and for [Pamphilia to Amphilanthus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pamphilia_to_Amphilanthus), the first known sonnet sequence by an English woman.

**\*\*\*Edmund Spenser** is the greatest non-dramatic poet in the Elizabethan period. Along with Geoffrey Chaucer, William Shakespeare and John Milton, he is considered to be one of the four supreme masters of English poetry. Spenser is one of the poets who influenced the poets who came after him and therefore he is also called “the poets’ poet”. *The Shepherd’s Calendar* made him known as a poet. The Shepherd’s Calendar is considered the first outstanding pastoral poem in English.

* Spenser invented a new verse form known as the *Spenserian stanza*. It is a stanza of nine lines, eight of five feet each and last of six feet, riming *ababbcbcc.*

Spenser’s main poetical works are:

* **The Shepherd‘s Calendar**: It is the first pastoral poem in English literature. It includes twelve eclogues, one for each month (January, February, March…), idealizes shepherds and rural life. The poem introduces Colin Clout, a folk character originated by [John Skelton](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Skelton), and depicts his life as a shepherd through the twelve months of the year.
* **Amoretti** is Spenser’s collection of 88 love sonnets. His love is called “sweet warrior”, in imitation of Petrarch’s “dolce guerrierra”. In two sonnets he identifies his heroine with the Petrarchan or Neo-Platonic idea of beauty
* **Epithalamion** : a magnificent ode written on the occasion of his marriage with Elizabeth Boyle
* **Prothalamion:** an ode on marriage
* **Astrophel and Stella** : is the first pastoral elegy in English on the death of Sir Philip Sidney
* **Four Hymns**: written to glorify beauty, heavenly love and heavenly beauty.
* **The Faerie Queen:** The original plan of the poem included twelve books, each of which was to recount the adventure of a Knight, who represented a moral virtue. The work is purely allegorical in its personification of virtues and in its representation of life as a struggle between good and evil. Spenser could complete only six books, celebrating Holiness, Temperance, Chastity, Friendship, Justice and Courtes**y.**

**INTERLUDES**

Although didactic like the morality plays, these were more comic and realistic, ant the heroes more individualized.

**Henry Medwall** was the first known English [vernacular](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vernacular) dramatist. His interlude Fulgens and Lucres, whose heroine must choose between two suitors, is probably the first purely secular drama in English. It was written for presentation between the courses of a banquet. The other play of Medwall is titled Nature.

**John Heywood**: The best known interlude is Heywood’s short comedy, *The Play called the foure PP*; a newe and a very merry interlude of a palmer, a pardoner, a potycary, a pedler. In a match to determine the most fantastic lie, the Palmer wins by saying he had never in all his travels seen a woman lose her temper.

**DRAMA**

The English drama evolved from Miracle and Mystery plays and the Moralities and then developed into a very fine artistic form. The drama form rose to perfection during the Elizabethan period.

**The First English Comedy:**

The earliest English comedy was influenced by the Latin comedy writers, Terence and Plautus. **Nicholas Udall’s** ***Ralph Roister Doister***, was written about 1550 is the first comedy. **Udall,** master of Westminster school, meant his play to be acted by school boys. The play is about a fop who is in love with a widow. But the widow is already engaged to another man. The play is an adaptation of Plautus’s comedy, Miles Gloriosus. ***Ralph Roister Doister*** has a clear plot and natural dialogue. It is composed in rhyming couplets. It is divided into acts and scenes in the Latin style. Gamar Gurton‘s Needle (1575), written by an unknown writer is another comedy in the classical style.

**The First English Tragedy**:

The first English tragedy was produced in 1562 by **Thomas Sackville** and **Thomas Morton.** It was called ***Gorboduc*** (or Ferrex and Porrex). It was an imitation of Senecan tragedy, written primarily for representing during the Christmas festives of 1561. It had the unique distinction of being the first play to be written in blank verse and the first play to be based on history.

**The Elizabethan Romantic Drama:**

When the first tragedy, Gorboduc was produced on the English stage in 1561, there was some confusion in the minds of scholars. Some wanted to follow the classical type of drama as introduced by Seneca and others wanted to cater to the unscholarly public who wanted only amusement. They expected exciting plots and vigorous action and finer details about art. Hence, gradually, the Elizabethan Romantic drama emerged.

**Principles of Classical Drama:**

To understand the conventions of the Elizabethan Romantic Drama, we must have an idea about the principles of the classical drama.

1. The classical drama adhered to unity of the subject and tone. Comedy and tragedy were kept separate. There were no humorous episodes of any kind in a tragedy.

2. There was little or no dramatic action. Main events in the play were only reported to the audience by dialogue or narration.

3. The dramatists were expected to follow the three classical unities of time, place and action to control the construction of the plot.

**The Romantic Drama:** The Elizabethan dramatists opposed these classical principles

1. The Romantic drama makes free use of variety in theme and tone. Often in one play, we can find the blending of the tragic and the comic.

2. The Romantic drama is essentially a drama of action. Much of the action is shown on the stage.

3. It repudiates the three classical unities of time, place and action.

The Elizabethan Romantic drama, in the hands of the University-educated scholars, acquired a suitable form to please the theatre-going public.

**UNIVERSITY WITS (PRE-SHAKESPEAREAN DRAMA)**

The **University Wits** were a group of late 16th century [English](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/England) [playwrights](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Playwright) who were educated at the universities ([Oxford](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxford_university) or [Cambridge](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cambridge_university)) and who became playwrights and popular secular writers. Members of this group were [Christopher Marlowe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christopher_Marlowe), [Robert Greene](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Greene_%28dramatist%29) and Thomas Nashe from [Cambridge](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Cambridge), and [John Lyly](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Lyly), [George Peele](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Peele) and Thomas Lodge from [Oxford](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Oxford). [Thomas Kyd](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Kyd) is also considered sometimes as one of the University Wits but Kyd did not read in any university. They were romantic by nature and they represented the spirit of Renaissance. They were the founders of the new forms of drama. The contribution of the university Wits to the development of drama needs to be highlighted:

1. **John Lyly** was an [English](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/England) writer, poet, dramatist, playwright, and politician, best known for his books [*Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Euphues)*. (Euphues is one of the books which have been claimed as the first novel in English).*Lyly wrote eight comedies: The Woman in the Moon, [Endymion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Endymion_%28play%29), [Campaspe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Campaspe_%28play%29), [Sapho and Phao](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sapho_and_Phao), [Gallathea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gallathea), [Midas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Midas_%28play%29), [Mother Bombie](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mother_Bombie) and [Love's Metamorphosis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Love%27s_Metamorphosis). In Gallathea the scene is an English country cursed by Neptune who demands the sacrifice of fair virgins. To save their daughters from being sacrificed two fathers disguise their daughters as boys and the disguised girls fall in love with each other. John Lyly’s Gallathea is the first English use of the device of girls disguised as boys. In Endymion Lyly introduces fairies into English drama. Shakespeare employs all the devices contributed to English drama by Lyly (especially disguise device).
2. **Robert Greene**: His most popular play is *The Honorable History of Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* which is a romantic comedy. This play is notable because it introduces Margaret, the first great romantic heroin of the English drama and a prototype for Shakespeare’s women.
* Robert Greene’s prose: Greene’s best known prose, Pandosta the Triumph of Time, is the source of Shakespeare’s The Winter Tale. A Notable Discovery of Coinage is another important prose by Greene.
1. **George Peele**: Peele’s the **Old Wives’ Tale**, which is the first English romantic comedy, is a dramatic fairy tale based on a love affair.
2. **Thomas Kyd:** His ‘**Spanish Tragedy’,** the most popular play before 1600, was the first English revenge tragedy, outdoing Seneca in violent horror. Kyd made original use of feigned madness and a play-within- a- play.
3. **Thomas Lodge**: His Rosalynde a prose containing sonnets and eclogues was the source of Shakespeare’s As You like It.
4. **Thomas Nashe**: He wrote an entertainment called [*Summer's Last Will and Testament*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Summer%27s_Last_Will_and_Testament), a "show" with some resemblance to a [masque](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Masque). Nashe may also have contributed to [*Henry VI, Part 1*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_VI%2C_Part_1), the play later published under Shakespeare's name as the first part of the *Henry VI* trilogy. In 1597 Nashe co-wrote the play [*The Isle of Dogs*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Isle_of_Dogs_%28play%29) with [Ben Jonson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ben_Jonson). The work caused a major controversy for its "seditious" content. The play was suppressed and never published. Jonson was jailed, but Nashe was able to escape.The Unfortunate Traveler: or, the Life of Jack Wilton by [Thomas Nashe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Nashe) is the first [picaresque novel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Picaresque_novel) in English. The narrator, Jack Wilton, describes his adventures as a page during the wars against the French, and his subsequent travels in Italy as page to the Earl of Surrey
5. **\*\*\*Christopher Marlowe** was the most brilliant and interesting of all university wits**.** Marlowe for the first time made blank verse a powerful vehicle for the expression of varied human emotions. He is the first tragic dramatist who used the device of Nemesis in an artistic and psychological manner. He created authentic romantic tragedy in English. He broke from the ordered conventions of the Elizabethan life and drama.
* **Tamburlaine the Great** is a dramatized epic. It follows the Fall of Princes tragedy.Tamburlaine (Timur) a ruthless ambitious shepherd becomes King of Persia. Tamburlaine turns his attention to Bajazeth, Emperor of the Turks. He defeats Bajazeth capturing the Emperor and his wife Zabina. Tamburlaine keeps the defeated ruler and his wife in a cage. Bajazeth later kills himself by bashing his head against the bars and upon finding his body Zabina does likewise. Tamburlaine displays further acts of cruelty during the play and dies in the end. This was the first English play to use blank verse.
* **Dr. Faustus:** The German scholar Faustus, bored with conventional learning, sells his soul to the Devil for superhuman powers. He misuses his powers by playing tricks on the Pope and calling Helen of Troy. At the end, though Faustus is repentant, Lucifer claims his soul.
* **The Jew of Malta:** Half of the wealth of the Barabas is confiscated by the Governor of Maltaand his plot for revenge begins a slaughter in which his daughter Abigail’s lover is killed and Abigail herself is poisoned. At the end Barabas dies by falling into a boiling caldron.
* **Edward II** is the first historical (or chronicle) play.An English king is involved in political intrigue and assassinated in this Fall of Princes tragedy.
* Marlowe’s non-dramatic poetry includes *Hero and Leander*, *“the Passionate Shepherd to His Love”*

**Other Dramatists**

**John Fletcher** was a [Jacobean](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacobean_era) playwright. He is commonly assumed to have collaborated with Shakespeare on [Henry VIII](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_VIII_%28play%29), [The Two Noble Kinsmen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Two_Noble_Kinsmen), and the [lost](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lost_work) [Cardenio](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cardenio). His mastery is most notable in two dramatic types, [tragicomedy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tragicomedy) and [comedy of manners](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comedy_of_manners). Some of his plays are: [The Wild Goose Chase](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Wild_Goose_Chase), [Wit Without Money](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wit_Without_Money), [The Woman's Prize](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Woman%27s_Prize), [The Island Princess](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Island_Princess) [The Mad Lover](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Mad_Lover), [Wife for a Month](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Wife_for_a_Month), [Valentinian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valentinian_%28play%29).

**Francis Beaumont** was a dramatist in the [English Renaissance theatre](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_Renaissance_theatre), most famous for his collaborations with [John Fletcher](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Fletcher_%28playwright%29). The plays he wrote alone include; [*The Knight of the Burning Pestle*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Knight_of_the_Burning_Pestle) *and* [*the Masque of the Inner Temple and Gray's Inn*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Masque_of_the_Inner_Temple_and_Gray%27s_Inn)*. The plays he wrote with John Fletcher include;* [*The Woman Hater*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Woman_Hater)*,* [*Cupid's Revenge*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cupid%27s_Revenge)*,* *Philaster,* [*The Maid's Tragedy*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Maid%27s_Tragedy)*,* [*A King and No King*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_King_and_No_King)*,* [*The Scornful Lady*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Scornful_Lady)*,* [*The Captain*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Captain_%28play%29)*,* [*Love's Pilgrimage*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Love%27s_Pilgrimage_%28play%29) *and* [*The Noble Gentleman*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Noble_Gentleman)

**George Chapman** was an [English](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/England) [dramatist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dramatist), [translator](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Translator), and [poet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poet). He was a [classical scholar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classical_scholar) whose work shows the influence of [Stoicism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stoicism). Chapman is best remembered for his translations of [Homer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homer)'s [Iliad](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iliad) and [Odyssey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Odyssey), and the Homeric [Batrachomyomachia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Batrachomyomachia). His comic masterpiece, All Fools, combines two comedies by Terence into one comedy.

***John Marston***was an [English](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_people) poet, playwright and satirist during the late Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. The Malcontent is a revenge tragedy written by Marston.

**Thomas Heywood**: was a prominent [English](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/England) playwright, actor, and author whose peak period of activity falls between late [Elizabethan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elizabethan_theatre) and early [Jacobean theatre](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacobean_theatre).[*A Mayden-Head Well Lost*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Maidenhead_Well_Lost)*,* [*the Late Lancashire Witches*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Late_Lancashire_Witches) *and* A *Woman Killed with Kindness.*

**John Webster** was an English [Jacobean](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literature_in_English#Jacobean_literature) [dramatist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dramatist) best known for his sensational tragedies [*The White Devil*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_White_Devil) , based on a real-life murder story, and [*The Duchess of Malfi*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Duchess_of_Malfi).

**Thomas Middleton** was an English [Jacobean playwright](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_Renaissance_theatre) and poet. Middleton wrote in many genres, including [tragedy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tragedy), [history](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_play) and [city comedy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/City_comedy). His best-known plays are the tragedies [*The Changeling*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Changeling_%28play%29) and [*Women Beware Women*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_Beware_Women), and the satirical city comedy [*A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Chaste_Maid_in_Cheapside).

**\*\*\*William Shakespeare\*\*\***

Shakespeare wrote 37 plays. The period of Shakespeare‘s dramatic activity spans twenty four years (1588 –1613) which is divided into the following four sub-periods:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| The First Period (1588 – 96) | The Two Gentlemen of Verona (1589–1591) [*The Taming of the Shrew* (1590–1594)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chronology_of_William_Shakespeare%27s_plays#The_Taming_of_the_Shrew_.281590.E2.80.931594.29) Henry VI, Part 2 (1590–1591)Henry VI, Part 3 (1591), Henry VI, Part 1 (1591)Titus Andronicus (1591–1592)Richard III (1592)Edward III (1592-1593)The Comedy of Errors (1594)Love's Labour's Lost (1594–1595) Love's Labour's Won (1595–1596) Richard II (1595) Romeo and Juliet (1595) The Life and Death of King John (1596) |
| The Second Period(1596 – 1600) | As You Like It (1599–1600) Julius Caesar (1599) Henry V (1598–1599) Much Ado About Nothing (1598–1599)Henry IV, Part 2 (1596–1597) The Merry Wives of Windsor (1597–1598) The Merchant of Venice (1596) Henry IV, Part 1 (1596–1597) |
| The Third Period(1601 – 08) | Pericles, Prince of Tyre (1607) All's Well That Ends Well (1606–1607) Antony and Cleopatra (1606)Macbeth (1606)Troilus and Cressida (1602) Timon of Athens (1605–1606) King Lear (1605–1606)Othello (1603–1604) Measure for Measure (1603–1604)Twelfth Night (1601) Hamlet (1599–1601) |
| The Fourth Period(1608 – 1613) | Coriolanus (1608) The Winter's Tale (1609–1610) Cymbeline (1610–1611) The Tempest (1610–1611) Cardenio (1612–1613) Henry VIII, or All is True (1613) The Two Noble Kinsmen (1613) |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Comedies** | **Histories** | **Tragedies** | **Poems** | **Lost Plays** |
| [All's Well That Ends Well](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All%27s_Well_That_Ends_Well)\*\* | [King John](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Life_and_Death_of_King_John) | [Romeo and Juliet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romeo_and_Juliet) | [Shakespeare's sonnets](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shakespeare%27s_sonnets) | [Love's Labour's Won](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Love%27s_Labour%27s_Won) |
| [As You Like It](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/As_You_Like_It) | [Richard II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_II_%28play%29) | [Coriolanus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coriolanus) | [Venus and Adonis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Venus_and_Adonis_%28Shakespeare_poem%29) | [The History of Cardenio](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_History_of_Cardenio)  |
| [The Comedy of Errors](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Comedy_of_Errors) | [Henry IV, Part 1](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_IV%2C_Part_1) | [Titus Andronicus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Titus_Andronicus)  | [The Rape of Lucrece](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Rape_of_Lucrece) |  |
| [Love's Labour's Lost](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Love%27s_Labour%27s_Lost) | [Henry IV, Part 2](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_IV%2C_Part_2) | [Timon of Athens](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timon_of_Athens)  | [The Passionate Pilgrim](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Passionate_Pilgrim) |  |
| [Measure for Measure](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Measure_for_Measure) \*\* | [Henry V](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_V_%28play%29) | [Julius Caesar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julius_Caesar_%28play%29) | [The Phoenix and the Turtle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Phoenix_and_the_Turtle) |  |
| [The Merchant of Venice](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Merchant_of_Venice)\*\* | [Henry VI, Part 1](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_VI%2C_Part_1) | [Macbeth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macbeth)  | [A Lover's Complaint](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Lover%27s_Complaint) |  |
| [The Merry Wives of Windsor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Merry_Wives_of_Windsor) | [Henry VI, Part 2](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_VI%2C_Part_2) | [Hamlet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamlet) |  |  |
| [A Midsummer Night's Dream](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Midsummer_Night%27s_Dream) | [Henry VI, Part 3](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_VI%2C_Part_3) | [Troilus and Cressida](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Troilus_and_Cressida)  |  |  |
| [Much Ado About Nothing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Much_Ado_About_Nothing) | [Richard III](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_III_%28play%29) | [King Lear](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_Lear) |  |  |
| [Pericles, Prince of Tyre](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pericles%2C_Prince_of_Tyre) \* | [Henry VIII](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_VIII_%28play%29)  | [Othello](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Othello) |  |  |
| [The Taming of the Shrew](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Taming_of_the_Shrew) |  | [Antony and Cleopatra](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antony_and_Cleopatra) |  |  |
| [The Winter's Tale](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Winter%27s_Tale)\* |  |  |  |  |
| [The Tempest](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Tempest)\* |  |  |  |  |
| [The Two Noble Kinsmen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Two_Noble_Kinsmen)\* |  |  |  |  |
| [The Two Gentlemen of Verona](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Two_Gentlemen_of_Verona) |  |  |  |  |
| [Twelfth Night](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twelfth_Night) |  |  |  |  |
| [Cymbeline](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cymbeline) |  |  |  |  |
| Plays marked with an [asterisk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asterisk) (\*) are now commonly referred to as the '[romances](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shakespeare%27s_Late_Romances)'. Plays marked with two asterisks (\*\*) are sometimes referred to as the '[problem plays](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shakespearean_problem_play)'. |

**Comedies**

[**The Comedy of Errors**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Comedy_of_Errors) **:** A farce comedy about mistaken identities. *The Comedy of Errors* tells the story of twin brothers and twin slaves that were accidentally separated at birth and years later get mistaken for each other. It is his shortest and one of his most [farcical](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Farce) [comedies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shakespearean_comedy), with a major part of the humor coming from mistaken identity, in addition to [puns](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pun) and [word play](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Word_play).

[**All's Well That Ends Well**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All%27s_Well_That_Ends_Well)is a tragicomedy. This play concerns a maid, Helena, who cures the King of France of a disease, then asks for Lord Bertram's hand in marriage. Bertram goes to war hoping to not marry Helena. Helena follows, and (pretending to be one of Bertram's other girlfriends) sleeps with Bertram. Bertram, matured, marries Helena.

[**Love's Labour's Lost**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Love%27s_Labour%27s_Lost) is a romantic comedy. Four noblemen swore to study three years, avoiding all contact with women. The princess of France and her beautiful attendants soon foil the plan.

[**Twelfth Night**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twelfth_Night)is a romantic comedy of mistaken identity. Being shipwrecked, Viola comes to believe that her twin brother Sebastian is lost in the storm. She disguises herself as a boy, calls herself Caesario, and enters the service of Duke Orsino as a page. The Duke uses Viola as a messenger to his beloved, Olivia, who falls in love with the messenger. Sebastian, who is looking for his sister is mistaken for Caesario by Olivia and quickly agrees to marry her. Orsino is angered, but the appearance of Sebastian explains the mix-up. The Duke discovers his love for Viola and marries her.

[**The Winter's Tale**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Winter%27s_Tale)is a dramatic romance. Leontes, king of Sicilia, falsely believes that his friend king Polixenes is the lover of his wife queen Hermione. He asks his servant, Camillo, to poison Polixenes, Camillo warns Polixenes instead and they flee leaving Hermione and her little boy, Mamillius, to face the King’s displeasure. Leontes imprisons Hermione. In prison Hermione gives birth to a daughter who is exiled by Leones’ order. The oracle of Apollo at Delphi states that Hermione and Polixenes are blameless and the kind Leontes shall live without an heir if the lost daughter is not found. Leontes’ son Mamillius dies and Hermione is reported dead. The baby girl, who is abandoned on the seacoast, is brought up by a shepherd as his daughter, Perdita. Polixenes’ son Florizel fall in love with Perdita, but the shepherd is opposed to their marriage and they sail to Sicilia where Leontes finds that Perdita is his long-lost daughter. It also becomes clear that Hermione is not dead. The play ends with the arrangement for the marriage of Perdita and Florizel.

[**Pericles, Prince of Tyre**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pericles%2C_Prince_of_Tyre)is a dramatic romance. Pericles in a tournamentwins and wedsThasia, daughter of king Simonides. Husband and wife sail for Tyre, but Thasia is mistakenly thought to have died after giving birth to a daughter. Her body is set afloat in a casket which is washed ashore. Thasia enters the temple of Diana. Pericles leaves his baby daughter Marina with Governor Cleon and his wife Dionyza. Sixteen years later Marina becomes a beautiful girl and Dionyza plots to kill her because of jealousy. Dionyza's servant, who is entrusted with the job, cannot carry it out when Marina is captured by pirates; the servant reports back that Marina is dead, and Cleon mournfully raises a monument to her memory. Pericles encounters the tomb on a visit to Tarsus and falls into a deep despair. The pirates, meanwhile, sell Marina into a brothel in Mitylene, but she is soon freed by the governor Lysismachus. Pericles sails into Mitylene. While there, he encounters Marina, and after some talking, Pericles eventually recognizes her for his daughter; the two are happily reunited. Lysismachus, the governor, asks for Marina's hand, which Marina accepts. Then, Pericles is visited by a dream that instructs him to visit Ephesus. There he is reunited as well with Thasia (who is now the head priestess of Diana), and the whole family is together again.

[**The Merchant of Venice**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Merchant_of_Venice)**:** Antonio borrows money from Shylock, a Jewish moneylender, in order to lend money to his friend Bassanio. Bassanio uses the money to successfully woo Portia, a wealthy and intelligent woman with a large inheritance. Unfortunately, a tragic accident makes Antonio unable to repay his debt to Shylock, and he must be punished as agreed by giving a pound of his flesh to the moneylender. Portia, disguised as a lawyer, comes to the court and saves Antonio by pointing out that Shylock may only take flesh, and not any blood. Shylock is foiled, Portia reveals her identity, and Antonio's wealth is restored.

[**Cymbeline**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cymbeline) is a tragicomedy. Cymbeline, the King of Britain, is a widower with three children. His two boys (Guiderius and Arviragus) were kidnapped 20 years ago at age three, leaving his daughter, Imogen, as the only heir to the throne. Cymbeline marries a wicked queen. Imogen, Cymbeline's daughter is in love with Posthumus, but her stepmother wants Imogen to marry Cloten, the queen's son. When Imogen secretly marries Posthumus, Cymbeline banishes Posthumus from Britain and imprisons Imogen. Posthumus gives Imogen a bracelet before he leaves for Rome. In Rome, Iachimo (a Frenchman) bets Posthumus that he (Iachimo) can woo Posthumus' wife Imogen. Posthumus takes Iachimo up on the bet, and Iachimo heads to Britain. Iachimo cannot woo Imogen, however, so he sneaks into her bedroom, steals her bracelet, and returns to Rome to successfully convince Posthumus that he has succeeded. Posthumus, in anger, orders his servant, Pisanio, to kill Imogen. Pisanio cannot, though he makes it look like Imogen is dead by taking her to Milford Haven and disguising her as a male named Fidele. In Milford Haven, Imogen (as Fidele) meets her brothers living with Belarius, a lord banished years ago by Cymbeline. Imogen, of course, does not know this, though. It turns out that Belarius had kidnapped the boys in anger towards Cymbeline for banishing him. In the last scene of the play, Imogen returns to her father, Iachimo confesses of his evils and the stealing of Imogen's bracelet ,Belarius admits to kidnapping the princes, Cymbeline allows Imogen and Posthumus to stay married.

[**The Merry Wives of Windsor**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Merry_Wives_of_Windsor)is a realistic farce comedy. It was written for Queen Elizabeth who requested a Falstaff comedy. Falstaff arrives in Windsor very short on money. He decides to obtain financial advantage that he will court two wealthy married women, Mistress Ford and Mistress Page. Falstaff decides to send the women identical love letters. When the women receive the letters, each goes to tell the other and they quickly find that the letters are almost identical. The merry wives conspire with their husband to humble Falstaff in a comic way.

* Sir John Falstaff is a [fictional character](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fictional_character) who appears in three plays by [William Shakespeare](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Shakespeare) [Henry IV, part 1](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_IV%2C_part_1),[Henry IV, part 2](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_IV%2C_part_2) and [The Merry Wives of Windsor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Merry_Wives_of_Windsor). Falstaff, the most popular Shakespearean character throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, has been labeled as a character loaded with faults, and with those faults which naturally produce contempt.

[**As You like It**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/As_You_Like_It)is a romantic pastoral comedy**.** Rosalind, the daughter of Duke Senior (the banished duke), is raised at the court of Duke Frederick (who is younger brother to Duke Senior and took over his dukedom), with her cousin Celia (daughter to Duke Frederick). She falls in love with a young man named Orlando, but before she can even think twice about it, she is banished by Duke Frederick, who threatens death if she comes near the court again. Celia, being Rosalind's best friend, goes with Rosalind (who is disguised as a boy, Ganymede) and Touchstone, the court's fool, to the Forest of Arden where Rosalind’s father and his men live in exile. Upon their arrival in the forest, they come across with Orlando and his manservant, who are fleeing the wrath of Orlando's eldest brother Oliver. Rosalind re-emerges as a woman and her father gives her to Orlando.

* Touchstone is the first of Shakespeare’s wise fools.

[**Much Ado about Nothing**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Much_Ado_About_Nothing)**:** Don Pedro, Prince of Arragon, pays a visit to Leonato, the governor of Messina. Two of his officers, Benedick and Claudio accompany him. While in Messina, Claudio falls for Leonato's daughter, Hero. Benedick and Beatrice, the governor's niece, have a strong dislike of each other. The trickery begins as Don Pedro (with the help of Leonato and Claudio) attempts to make Benedick and Beatrice fall in love. They really fall in love and Benedick asks Leonato for Beatrice's hand in marriage.

[**The Taming of the Shrew**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Taming_of_the_Shrew) is a romantic farce comedy. Baptista, a wealthy merchant of Padua, has two daughters: Katherina and Bianca. He declares that no one shall wed Bianca until Katherina has been married. Lucentio of Pisa, one of many suitors to the younger and kinder Bianca, devises a scheme in which he and Tranio (his servant) will switch clothes, and thus disguised, Lucentio will offer his services as a tutor for Bianca in order to get closer to her. At his point, enter Petruchio of Verona, in Padua to visit his friend Hortensio (another suitor to Bianca). Attracted by Katherina's large dowry, Petruchio resolves to woo her. To the surprise of everyone, Petruchio claims that he finds Katherina charming and pleasant. A marriage is arranged, and Petruchio immediately sets out to tame Katherina through a series of increasingly worse tricks. By the end of the play, Lucentio has won Bianca's heart and Hortensio settles for a rich widow in Padua.

[**The Two Gentlemen of Verona**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Two_Gentlemen_of_Verona)**:** Valentine and Proteus are two young gentlemen of Verona who are best friends. Valentine's father sends him to take a position in the Duke of Milan's court, and Proteus accompanies him reluctantly, not wanting to leave his beloved Julia. While in Milan, Valentine falls for the Duke's daughter, Silvia. Silvia is engaged with Thurio, a wealthy courtier, although Silvia prefers Valentine. The two decide to escape but, Proteus who falls in love with Silvia betrays Valentine in order to get Valentine out of the way Valentine is banished, Silvia is confined to a jail, and Proteus becomes a confidant of the Duke in matters concerning Thurio and Silvia. Valentine joins a band of outlaws and is elected their leader. Julia—disguised as a boy page—enters Milan in search of Proteus, who is trying unsuccessfully to woo Silvia. Silvia finally escapes in search of Valentine. As fate would have it, Silvia is captured by Valentine's band of outlaws. The Duke has soon learned of Silvia's escape, and he, Proteus, and Thurio all set off to rescue her. Proteus recovers Silvia before the outlaws can bring her to Valentine. Valentine encounters them as Proteus makes the case for his love to Silvia; the two confront and eventually make peace with each other. The Duke and Thurio arrive upon the scene, but Thurio backs off his claim to Silvia when challenged by Valentine. As the play ends, Valentine gets Silvia with the Duke's approval, Proteus and Julia are reconciled, and the Duke grants a pardon to the band of outlaws.

[**A Midsummer Night's Dream**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Midsummer_Night%27s_Dream)is a masque fantasy. Lysander loves Hermia, and Hermia loves Lysander. Helena loves Demetrius; Demetrius used to love Helena but now loves Hermia. Egeus, Hermia's father, prefers Demetrius as a suitor, and enlists the aid of Theseus, the Duke of Athens, to enforce his wishes upon his daughter. According to Athenian law, Hermia is given four days to choose between Demetrius, life in a nunnery, or a death sentence. Hermia, ever defiant, chooses to escape with Lysander into the surrounding forest. Oberon and Titania, King and Queen of Fairies, are locked in a dispute over a boy whom Titania has adopted. Oberon instructs his servant Puck to bring him magic love drops, which Oberon will sprinkle on the Queen's eyelids as she sleeps, whereupon Titania will fall in love with the first creature she sees upon awakening. Meanwhile, Helena and Demetrius have also fled into the woods after Lysander and Hermia. Oberon, overhearing Demetrius's denouncement of Helena, takes pity upon her and tells Puck to place the magic drops upon the eyelids of Demetrius as well, so that Demetrius may fall in love with Helena. Puck, however, makes the mistake of putting the drops on the eyelids of Lysander instead. Helena stumbles over Lysander in the forest, and the spell is cast; Lysander now desires Helena and renounces a stunned Hermia. Oberon himself anoints Demetrius with the love potion and ensures that Helena is the first person he sees. At the end of the play, Oberon puts Lysander, Hermia, Helena, and Demetrius to sleep and gives Lysander the antidote for the love potion so that he will love Hermia again when they all wake up. Next, Oberon gives Titania the antidote, and the King and Queen reconcile.

[**The Two Noble Kinsmen**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Two_Noble_Kinsmen) is essentially an adaptation of Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*. The two kinsmen Palamon and Arcite are captured while fighting for Thebes against Athens. While imprisoned, the two cousins find themselves attracted to Emilia, who is the sister of Hippolyta, wife of Theseus. Theseus exiles Arcite from Athens and leaves Palamon in jail. Arcite disguises himself as a peasant in order to keep an eye on Emilia. Meanwhile, the jailer's daughter has fallen in love with Palamon. She helps him to escape and aids him once he's hiding in the nearby forest. There Arcite encounters him. The two men decide to duel for Emilia. However, as they prepare for the duel, the two are discovered by Theseus. Theseus asks Emilia to choose between them, with the loser being put to death. Emilia, however, can't decide, so Theseus declares that the matter will be settled by combat, Palamon and Arcite will fight for Emilia's hand, with the loser to be executed. The time for the contest comes about, and Arcite defeats Palamon. However, fate twists dramatically as Palamon awaits execution. A messenger arrives bringing news of Arcite's mortal wounding suffered in a horse riding accident. Arcite gives Emilia's hand to Palamon before he dies.

[**Measure for Measure**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Measure_for_Measure) is a tragicomedy.The Duke of Vienna, who is accused of not punishing seducers, appoints Angelo as his deputy and pretends to visit Poland, but he stays in Vienna as a disguised friar. Claudio is arrested for getting his fiancée, Juliet, pregnant before they are married; Angelo condemns him with a death sentence. Claudio's sister, Isabella, hastens to Angelo to plead for her brother's life. Angelo tells her that he will grant a pardon to Claudio if she sleeps with him. Isabella relates her tale to Claudio, who understandably is more willing to trade his sister's virtue for his life. While in the jail, the Duke (in disguise) eavesdrops upon the conversation and sets into motion a plot to save both Claudio and Isabella. The Duke knows of one Mariana, formerly engaged to Angelo, who still loves him. He persuades Isabella to accept Angelo's offer; when the moment comes, Mariana will switch places in the dark with Isabella. Mariana agrees readily to the plot, and the events transpire as planned. Angelo, however, decides to execute Claudio anyway. When the Duke gets this news, he reveals himself. The Duke orders that Angelo should marry Mariana and Claudio should marry Juliet. The Duke makes his own arrangements to be married with Isabella.

[**The Tempest**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Tempest): Shakespeare’s last play is a dramatic romance. Prospero, the Duke of Milan, who is absorbed in books and magic, is expelled by his brother Antonio and cast adrift with his baby daughter Miranda in a leaky boat. Prospero dwells on a desert island and makes servants out of the ethereal spirit Ariel and the subhuman Caliban. Twelve years later when magic reveals that a ship bearing his old enemies is sailing near the island; Prospero summons a storm to wreck their ship. The survivors make it to shore in scattered groups. Among these is Ferdinand, the son of Antonio. Ferdinand falls in love with Miranda. Prospero frees Ferdinand from his spell and entraps Antonio who is forgiven but must restore the dukedom to Prospero who renounces his magic, frees Ariel and sails for Italy, leaving Caliban the sole resident of the island. Prospero is often considered as Shakespeare, the magician- dramatist himself. Prospero buries his magic books just as Shakespeare leaves the theatre with this last play.

**Tragedies**

[**Romeo and Juliet**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romeo_and_Juliet): Shakespeare’s first romantic tragedy in which the lovers fall in love at first sight, but they- are star- crossed lovers, cursed in a world made by their elders. Vendetta between the houses of Montague and Couplet leads to the deaths of two lovers.

[**Macbeth**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macbeth), a tragedy of evil, is the story of an ambitious general who encounters three witches called Weird Sisters. They tell him that he will be king and greet Banquo as the father of kings. Encouraged by his wife, Macbeth kills King Duncan who, as his kinsman and lord, has honored him by visiting him as a guest. Aiming at capturing the future, Macbeth kills Banquo and many others. Lady Macbeth becomes insane from guilt and commits suicide. The enemy troops headed by Duncan’s son Malcolm, approach Macbeth castle. Macbeth is killed and Malcolm is proclaimed king of Scotland.

[Troilus and Cressida](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Troilus_and_Cressida)

[**King Lear**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_Lear) deals with the error of judgement, moral blindness and gaining insight through suffering. The aging king Lear decides to divide his kingdom among his three daughters, Goneril, Regan and Cordelia. In the love test Cordelia, the youngest and the dearest daughter, fails and she is disinherited. The kingdom is divided between two elder daughters. Kent is banished for protesting and Cordelia marries the King of France. The elder daughters display ingratitude toward the old king who dashes out alone into a wild storm where he goes mad. Gloucester is blinded for helping Lear. Edgar helps his blinded father to Dover where Cordelia has landed with French troops to help Lear who regains his sanity. Cordelia and Lear are defeated and Lear dies in grief while carrying the dead body of Cordelia.

[**Othello**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Othello)**:** Othello is a general in Venetian army. He secretly marries Desdemona, the daughter of a senator. Since the Turks have attacked Cyprus, Othello proceeds to the island’s defense. In Cyprus, Iago, Othello’s ensign who is jealous of Cassio who is promoted, makes a plot to ruin Othello. He convinces Othello that Cassio is Desdemona’s lover. Othello smothers his wife; Iago’s treachery is revealed and Othello commit suicides.

**Hamlet**: [Prince Hamlet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prince_Hamlet) is visited by his father's ghost and ordered to avenge his father's murder by killing [King Claudius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_Claudius), his uncle. After struggling with several questions, including whether what the ghost said is true and whether it is right for him to take revenge, Hamlet, along with almost all the other major characters, is killed.

[**Timon of Athens**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timon_of_Athens) seems unfinished. Timon, a noble Athenian, ignores the warnings of his faithful steward Flavius and loses his wealth by entertaining his friends who later desert him when he seeks help in his poverty. He invites the ungrateful friends to a pretended banquet where the uncovered dishes reveal only warm water. Timon goes mad, flees to a cave in the woods, finds buried treasure, but eventually dies poor and insane.

[**Antony and Cleopatra**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antony_and_Cleopatra)is a Fall of Princes tragedy. Antony, though married to Fluvia, lives in Alexandria, Egypt with his mistress Cleopatra, the Queen of Egypt. Fueled by a disgust at his lifestyle in Egypt and anger over the wars caused by Antony's relatives, Caesar calls Antony home to Rome. Antony agrees, but only after Fluvia dies of an illness. Once in Rome, Caesar and Antony try to make amends through the marriage of Antony to Caesar's sister Octavia. Antony soon deserts Octavia, and returns to live with Cleopatra. Caesar, enraged, vows to attack and regain control of Egypt from Antony and Cleopatra. Antony, facing defeat, asks Eros (a friend) to kill him. Eros cannot, and instead kills himself. Antony then kills himself by falling on his sword. Cleopatra, in grief over Antony's death and determined never to fall under Caesar's command commits suicide by allowing poisonous asps to bite her.

[**Titus Andronicus**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Titus_Andronicus) is Shakespeare's bloodiest play and a revenge tragedy. Tamora is the queen of the Goths. She and her sons are captured by Titus, a Roman general and brought to Rome. Saturnius sets her free and she sets out to take revenge on Titus and to destroy his family. Demetrius and Chiron, Tamora's sons kill Bassianus in the woods, then rape and mutilate Lavinia, leaving her without a tongue to speak or hands to write. Titus ensnares Demetrius and Chiron (who Lavinia has identified as her attackers), slays them, and sets to making a pie from their remains. When Tamora and Saturnius arrive Titus offers them a dinner, featuring pie as the main course. In the midst of the feasting, Titus slays Lavinia to relieve her misery, reveals the secret ingredient of his pie, and then turns his sword on Tamora, slaying her. Saturnius slays Titus in turn. Lucius slays Saturnius and becomes king.

**Tragedy of** [**Coriolanus**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coriolanus): The Roman military leader [Caius Martius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaius_Marcius_Coriolanus), after leading Rome to several victories against the [Volscans](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Volscans), returns home as a war hero with a new last name, Coriolanus, given for the city of Corioles which he conquered. However, after an attempt at political office turns sour, he is banished from Rome as a traitor. Hungry for revenge, Coriolanus becomes leader of the Volscan army and marches to the gates of Rome. His mother, his wife, and his son, however, beg him to stop his attack. He agrees and makes peace between Romans and Volscans, but is assassinated by enemy Volscans.

[**Julius Caesar**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julius_Caesar_%28play%29)is a Fall of Princes tragedy. [Cassius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaius_Cassius_Longinus) persuades his friend [Brutus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brutus) to join a conspiracy to kill [Julius Caesar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julius_Caesar), whose power seems to be growing too great for Rome's good. After killing Caesar, however, Brutus fails to convince the people that his cause was just. He and Cassius eventually commit suicide as their hope for Rome becomes a lost cause.

[**Troilus and Cressida**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Troilus_and_Cressida)**:**  The Trojans are under siege by the Grecian army of [Agamemnon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agamemnon). [Troilus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Troilus), a Trojan, falls in love with [Cressida](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cressida), a Greek captive. When Cressida is given back to the Greeks as part of a prisoner exchange, Troilus fears that she will fall in love with one of them. His fears prove to be true when he crosses enemy lines during a truce and sees her and a Greek man together.

**Characteristics of Shakespearean Comedy**

* A struggle of young lovers to overcome problems, often the result of the interference of their elders
* There is some element of separation and reunification
* Mistaken identities, often involving disguise
* A clever servant
* Family tensions that are usually resolved in the end
* Complex, interwoven plot-lines
* Frequent use of puns
* All Shakespearean comedies end happily. Most often, this happy ending involves marriage or pending marriage. Love always wins out in the end.
* Use of all styles of comedy

**Characteristics of Shakespearean Tragedy**

* Characters become isolated or there is social breakdown
* Ends in death
* There is a sense that events are inevitable or inescapable
* There is usually a central figure who is noble but with a character flaw which leads them towards their eventual downfall

**Shakespeare’s Influence**

* In Shakespeare's day, English grammar, spelling and pronunciation were less standardized than they are now,and his use of language helped shape modern English.
* Scholars have identified 20,000 pieces of music linked to Shakespeare's works. These include two operas by [Giuseppe Verdi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giuseppe_Verdi), [*Othello*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Otello) and [*Falstaff*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Falstaff_%28opera%29)*.*
* His work heavily influenced later poetry. The [Romantic poets](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanticism) attempted to revive Shakespearean verse drama, though with little success.
* Shakespeare's work has made a lasting impression on later theatre and literature. In particular, he expanded the dramatic potential of [characterization](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Characterisation), plot, [language](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Language), and [genre](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genre).
* Shakespeare influenced novelists such as [Thomas Hardy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Hardy_%28writer%29), [William Faulkner](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Faulkner), and [Charles Dickens](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Dickens).
* The American novelist [Herman Melville's](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herman_Melville) soliloquies owe much to Shakespeare; his Captain Ahab in [*Moby-Dick*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moby-Dick) is a classic [tragic hero](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tragic_hero), inspired by *King Lear.*
* The [psychoanalyst](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychoanalyst) [Sigmund Freud](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sigmund_Freud) drew on Shakespearean psychology, in particular that of Hamlet, for his theories of human nature
* Until [*Romeo and Juliet*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romeo_and_Juliet) romance had not been viewed as a worthy topic for tragedy. [Soliloquies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soliloquy) had been used mainly to convey information about characters or events; but Shakespeare used them to explore characters.
* Shakespeare used no less than 297 figures of speech. Shakespeare’s favorite stylistic devices were the antonyms and the linguistic repetitions. The combination of linguistic repetition and antonym results in frequent puns or wordplays. More than 200 puns occur in Love’s Labour’s Lost and more than 100 in All’s Well that Ends Well.
* Many well-known English sayings come from Shakespeare's work, and he had a great influence on the English language.
* He expanded the scope of English literature by introducing new words and phrases, experimenting with [blank verse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blank_verse), and also introducing new poetic and grammatical structures.
* He is the most quoted writer in the history of the English-speaking world.

**\*\*\*Ben JONSON (1572-1632)**

Jonson’s chief contribution to drama was to enrich the possibilities of the genre called comedy of humors, in which stock characters- cheeky slaves, miserly oldsters and braggart soldiers- are played against each other.

* **Every Man in His Humor***: The play belongs to the subgenre of the "humors," in which each major character is dominated by an overriding humor or obsession.* Stock characters- a jealous husband, country bumpkin, deceived father and simple squire are linked together. The play overtly about a father's concern over his son's morals. But the father, Kno-well, doesn't express that concern directly. Instead, he resorts to indirect, questionable means by having a servant spy upon his son's activities.
* **Volpone (or The Fox)** is a satiric [comedy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comedy), drawing on elements of [city comedy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/City_comedy), [black comedy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_comedy) and [beast fable](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beast_fable). A merciless [satire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satire) of greed and lust, it remains Jonson's most-performed play, and it is among the finest [Jacobean](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_literature#Jacobean_literature) comedies. Volpone, a rich Venetian, has no relative to make his heir; he must name someone his beneficiary. So, he pretends to be fatally ill. Several rivals try to attain his favor by bringing the sick Volpone gifts that they hope will be returned tenfold.
* **The Alchemist:** With his master Lovewit resting in the country to avoid an outbreak of plague in London, a clever servant named Face develops a scheme to make money and amuse himself. He gives Subtle, a charlatan, and a prostitute named Dol Common access to the house. Subtle disguises himself as an alchemist, with Face as his servant; Doll disguises herself as a zealous Puritan. Together, the three of them cheat foolish clients.
* **Epicoene, or the Silent Woman** is a farce. It is the story of Morose, a wealthy old man who cannot stand noise and marries a young girl, Epicoene, who is supposed to be quiet all day long. She turns out to be an incessant talker and a boy in disguise, a friend of the old man’s disinherited nephew.
* His famous comedies are The Case is Altered, Every Man in His Humor, Every Man out of His Humor, Epicone or The Silent Woman, The Alchemist, The Bartholomew Fair, The Devil is an Ass, The Light Heart, Humor Reconciled and A Tale of A Tub. Ben Jonson also wrote two tragedies Sejanus and Cataline. In The Masque of Blackness Queen Anne held the leading role.
* Jonson as a poet wrote epigrams, epistles, odes. His most often mentioned poems are To Celia, the egocentric Ode to Himself and especially To the Memory of My Beloved, the Author (also known as Jonson’s Eulogy).
* In 1616 Ben Jonson was named England's first poet laureate; however, the title did not become an official royal office until 1668, when John Dryden assumed the honored post. Since that time, the office has been awarded for life. The poet laureate is responsible for composing poems for court and national occasions. At the time of each laureate's death, it is the duty of the prime minister to nominate successors from which the reigning sovereign will choose. It is the Lord Chamberlain who appoints the poet laureate by issuing a warrant to the laureate-elect. The life appointment is always announced in the *London Gazette*.

**The Cavalier Poets**

Called the tribe of Ben (or Sons of Ben) because they were greatly influenced by Ben Jonson, they were sophisticated poets who supported the King and opposed the sober Puritans.

**Robert Herrick:** the greatest of the Cavalier poets and the only one not a courtier, he extolled the ides of Carpe diem (size the day) and wrote many love poems. The best-known is To the Virgins to Make Much of Time**.**

**Thomas Carew.:** He wrote lyric poems. He used analogy, euphemism, and paradox. [Ask Me No More](http://www.poetry-archive.com/c/song_carew.html), A Cruel Mistress, the Unfading Beauty.

**Sir John Suckling:** His greatest contribution to poetry was the use of the language of ordinary conversations among courtiers. He used irony and realism in dealing with conventional love themes as in Why So Pale and Wan, Fair Lover?

**Richard Lovelace:** His best known works are "[To Althea, from Prison](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/To_Althea%2C_from_Prison)," and "[To Lucasta, Going to the Warres](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/To_Lucasta%2C_Going_to_the_Warres)."

**\*\*\*John DONNE (1572-1631) - Metaphysical Poetry**

The poetry of Donne represents a sharp break with that written by his predecessors and most of his contemporaries. The clichés of earlier love poetry (bleeding hearts, checks like roses, lips like cherries, cupid shooting the arrows of love) appear in Donne’s poetry only to be mocked.

Donne was the leading exponent of a style of poetry called ―metaphysical poetry. Metaphysical poetry synthesizes passion and intellect to display both feeling and learning. Metaphysical poetry typically employs unusual verse forms, complex figures of speech, surprising metaphorical conceits, and learned themes discussed according to eccentric and unexpected chains of reasoning often by deliberate harshness or rigidity of expression. In addition to conceits, Donne makes frequent use of paradoxes, imagery, puns and relies on conversational language to give the lyrics a sense of immediacy.

* **Go and Catch a Falling Star** wittily comments on the impossibility of finding a faithful woman.
* **The Indifferent** is spoken by a bachelor who demands disloyalty in love.
* **A Valediction Forbidding Mourning** Donne uses the metaphor of compass to show the union of the two lovers even as they are separated.
* **The Flea** The poem uses the [conceit](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conceit) of a [flea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flea), which has sucked blood from the male speaker and his female lover, to serve as an extended [metaphor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metaphor) for the relationship between them. The speaker tries to convince a lady to sleep with him, arguing that if their blood mingling in the flea is innocent, then sexual mingling would also be innocent.
* **The Ecstasy** makes a mystical religious experience of the joining souls of two lovers
* **The Canonization** The speaker begs his friend not to dissuade him from loving, but to insult him for other reasons instead, or to focus on other matters entirely. He supports his plea by asking whether any harm has been done by his love. The speaker describes how dramatically love affects him and his lover, claiming that their love will live on in legend, even if they die. They have been “canonized by Love.”
* **Good Friday 1613, Riding Westward** has the poet turn his back to the scene of Crucifixion to receive corrections.

[John Donne](http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Donne%2C%2BJohn) was the leading Metaphysical poet; others include [George Herbert](http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Herbert%2C%2BGeorge), [Henry Vaughan](http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Vaughan%2C%2BHenry), [Andrew Marvell](http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Marvell%2C%2BAndrew), and [Abraham Cowley](http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Cowley%2C%2BAbraham).

 [**George Herbert**](http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Herbert%2C%2BGeorge): Virtue, the Collar and the Temple, the Elixir are his best-known poems.

All of Herbert's English surviving poems are [religious](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion), and some have been used as [hymns](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hymn)

Herbert's "[Easter](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Easter) Wings", a [pattern poem](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pattern_poem) in which the work is not only meant to be read, but its shape is meant to be appreciated. In this case, the poem was printed on two facing pages of a book, sideways, so that the lines suggest two birds flying upward, with wings spread out

[**Henry Vaughan**](http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Vaughan%2C%2BHenry): His best- known poem is The Retreat.

**Andrew Marvell** was an [English](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/England) [metaphysical poet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metaphysical_poets) and politician. His poems include [*To His Coy Mistress*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/To_His_Coy_Mistress), [*The Garden*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Garden_%28poem%29), *An* [*Horatian*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horatian) *Ode upon* [*Cromwell*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oliver_Cromwell)*'s Return from Ireland*, [*The Mower's Song*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Mower%27s_Song) and the [country house poem](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Country_house_poem) [*Upon Appleton House*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Upon_Appleton_House).

[**Abraham Cowley**](http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Cowley%2C%2BAbraham)**:** The Mistress is a sequence of love poems that includes the popular lyric ‘The Wish’ a eulogy of country life. He was also praised for his Pindaric odes in which he introduced the type of irregular ode much imitated by John Dryden.

**\*\*\*John MILTON (1608- 1674)**

[**Areopagitica**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Areopagitica) is among history's most influential defenses of free speech and freedom of the press.

**Paradise Lost**the [blank-verse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blank-verse) [epic poem](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epic_poetry) in twelve books was composed by the blind Milton .As a blind poet, Milton dictated his verse to a series of aides in his employ. Based on the Bible and other writing available in Renaissance, the epic begins with the fall from the Heaven of the rebel angels, and continues through Satan’s temptation of Adam and Eve and their expulsion from the Garden of Eden.

**Lycidas** is a pastoral elegy on the death of his friend, the poet Edward King.

**Paradise Regained** is an epic poem in four booksdescribing Christ’s temptation in the wilderness**.**

**Samson Agonistes** is a closet tragedy (i.e. not intended for the stage)