**LITERARY MOVEMENTS IN ENGLISH LITERATURE**

**Classicism: Ancient Greece and Rome**

**• Greek Literature - Homer 9th – 8th B.C. through 300 AD**

**• Roman Literature from 500 BC to 500 A.D**

**• Major philosophy combines humanism and rationalism.**

**• The world is man’s to “interrogate, explore, and enjoy.”**

**• Man is the measurer and interpreter of all things.**

**Medieval Age – Middle Ages or Dark Age – 500 AD to 1500 AD**

**• From the fall of Rome to the Renaissance.**

**• Feudalism was the political structure but nations are reforming slowly.**

**• Mysticism - Christianity / Catholicism was the religion that was a major political force.**

**• Crusades**

**• Chivalry**

**• The Great Chain of Being**

**• Courtly Love**

**• Bubonic Plague**

**• Changes in the English Language.**

**Renaissance – 1300 - 1650**

**• Renaissance means “rebirth,” and the rebirth of classical knowledge, of rationalism and humanism.**

**• Beginning in Italy in the 1300’s, the Renaissance moves northward until the 1600’s.**

**• The attempt to integrate Christianity and humanism.**

**• In England, Shakespeare is part of the English Renaissance.**

**• The Reformation began on November 1, 1517 when Martin Luther posted the 95 theses on the church door of Wittenberg.**

**• Henry VIII of England splits England away from the Catholic Church and starts The Church of England.**

**Queen Elizabeth I makes England a great power.**

**Neoclassicism or The Age of Reason - 1650–1800 AD**

**• Rationalism, philosophy, reason, skepticism and wit**

**• Science and math dominate –**

**• Deism (mechanical universe set in motion by a rational God who left it to run according to mathematical laws.)**

**• Religious turmoil (Catholic vs. Protestant) Puritanism is a strict segment of Protestantism.**

**• Strong, absolute monarchies rule nations.**

* **marks the first great age of English literary** [**criticism**](http://literaryexplorer.blondelibrarian.net/crit.html)**.**
* **English literature was much influenced by contemporary** **French literature.**

**The Neoclassic Era can be subdivided:**

**• 1660 –1688 - English Restoration (after Cromwell, the English monarchy was restored with Charles II and remains through James II).**

**Romanticism - 1800 – 1830**

**are the prime years of the movement, but qualities of romanticism are in art and literature for another 30 years; so we could say 1800 – 1860.**

**• Emphasis on individualism and human rights**

**• Truth lies in the heart**

**• Imagination over reason**

**• Search for the ideal**

**• Emotions are valid, authentic, and the filter by which to judge the world around us**

**• Enthusiasm for nature**

**• Mysticism**

**• Admiration of classical and medieval history**

**• The Industrial Revolution ends romanticism.**

**The Romantic Period produced a wealth of authors including** [**Samuel Taylor Coleridge**](http://literaryexplorer.blondelibrarian.net/authors/stcoleridge.html)**,** [**William Wordsworth**](http://literaryexplorer.blondelibrarian.net/authors/wwordsworth.html)**,** [**Jane Austen**](http://literaryexplorer.blondelibrarian.net/authors/jausten.html)**, and** [**Lord Byron**](http://www.englishhistory.net/byron.html)**.**

[**Gothic literature**](http://www.litgothic.com/index.html) **was born. Two of the most famous Gothic novelists are** [**Anne Radcliffe**](http://www.victorianweb.org/previctorian/radcliffe/radcliffeov.html) **and** [**Mary Shelley**](http://www.litgothic.com/Authors/mshelley.html)

**• Transcendentalism**

**o A part of the romantic movement**

**(A philosophical form of romanticism)**

**o Important in New England in the U.S.**

**o Goal was to unite all individuals to both the natural world and to a person’s inner world.**

**o Combined the tenets of many religions and philosophies: Christianity, eastern religions, Platonism**

**o Each person has a portion of the cosmic divine force in him.**

**o Man could find God’s moral law in nature.**

**o Each person should trust his heart because intuition and conscience leads us to the truth.**

**Man had an Oversoul. Transcendentalists said that every living thing in nature came from and returned to the Oversoul, a cosmic force like God. Emerson said to think of the Oversoul like the ocean. When the tide comes in, water is trapped in puddles. Each puddle is a living thing, with a specific form (a person, a leaf, etc). When the tide comes in, the puddles disperse back into the great ocean. At the next tide, droplets from one puddle combine with droplets from**

**other puddles to form another living entity; therefore, trees, animals, various people, etc., are all part of each other.**

**Victorian Period - 1837 – 1901**

* **the Reign of Queen Victoria in England, but affected all Europe**

**• English Chauvinism**

**• Complacency**

**• Industrial Revolution**

**• High standard of decency and respectability**

**• Rise of the middle class**

**• Class-consciousness**

**• Hypocrisy**

**• Influenced by science**

**• Interest in the occult**

**• Suppressed emotions**

**• Exaggeration in architecture, home decorations, people’s dress**

**• Modernists revolted against this stifling era**

**• Gothic novels were popular**

* **Some contemporary issues that the Victorians dealt with include the social, economic, religious, and intellectual issues and problems surrounding the Industrial Revolution, growing class tensions, the early feminist movement, pressures toward political and social reform, and the impact of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution on philosophy and religion.**
* **Some of the most recognized authors of the Victorian era include** [**Alfred Lord Tennyson**](http://literaryexplorer.blondelibrarian.net/authors/atennyson.html)**,** [**Elizabeth Barrett Browning**](http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/ebb/browningov.html)**, her husband** [**Robert**](http://literaryexplorer.blondelibrarian.net/authors/rbrowning.html)**,** [**Matthew Arnold**](http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/arnold/arnoldov.html)**,** [**Charles Dickens**](http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/dickens/dickensov.html)**,** [**Charlotte Brontë**](http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/bronte/cbronte/bronteov.html)**,** [**George Eliot**](http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/eliot/eliotov.html)**, and** [**Thomas Hardy**](http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/hardy/hardyov.html)**.**
* **Within the Victorian Period, two other literary movements, that of The Pre-Raphaelites (1848-1860) and the movement of Aestheticism and Decadence (1880-1900), gained prominence.**
* **The Aestheticism and Decadence movement of English literature grew out of the French movement of the same name. The authors of this movement encouraged experimentation and held the view that art is totally opposed to "natural" norms of morality. This style of literature opposed the dominance of scientific thinking and defied the hostility of society to any art that was not useful or did not teach moral values. It was from the movement of Aestheticism and Decadence that the phrase art for art's sake emerged. A well-known author of the English Aestheticism and Decadence movement is** [**Oscar Wilde**](http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/wilde/wildeov.html)**.**

**Realism - 1850 - 1890**

**• Reaction against romanticism**

**• Truthful treatment of material**

**• Be the objective camera**

**• Concentrate on the present**

**• Influenced by the Civil War (for the U.S.), Freud, Industrial Revolution, Marx, and Darwin.**

**• Interest in the Middle Class (the bourgeoisie) and its problems, values, etc.**

**• Democratic attitude**

**Naturalism**

**• Extreme realism – also called calloused realism**

**• Influenced by the industrial revolution, Freud and Darwin**

**• Nature acts upon people who are victims of heredity and environment**

**• The universe is neutral to man’s suffering and joy.**

**• There is no higher purpose for living than just the activity of living.**

**• Clinical, documentary style**

**Symbolism - 1885 – 1895**

**• Emotional, romantic reaction to realism**

**• Origin – France about 1850 (Baudelaire)**

**• Edgar Allen Poe was an influence**

**• Deeply influenced British and American poetry in the 20th century**

**• The goal of art is the personal, emotional response**

**• Authors: Hugo, Tennyson, Joyce, Yeats, Singe**

**Impressionism - 1870’s +**

**• Adapted from the French art movement**

**• Depicts characters, scenes, moods as they appear to an individual at a precise moment. Uses details in a story poem, music like brush strokes.**

**• Concentrates on the impressions an object makes, not the object itself; so details are suggested**

**not stated.**

**• Interest in light**

**• Relies on images and imagery**

* **Uses stream of consciousness.**

**• Creates logic with psychological (free) association**

**• Details of the environment may be shadowy, but details of inner life will be vivid.**

**• (Impressionism differs from expressionism significantly because it avoids conscious distortion and abstraction.)**

**• Authors: Oscar Wilde, Joseph Conrad, Virginia Woolf**

**Modernist Movement – 1914 – 1965**

**The various artistic movements under the umbrella of modernism reject realism, naturalism, and scientific theory. The modernist artist rejects recorded history, traditional values, traditional rhetoric and language.**

**Modernists elevate the individual, the inner man (over the social man), and the power of the subconscious.**

**Artists experimented with form, color, and language. They used symbols and myths to express truth.**

**There are many literary and artistic movements in the Modernist Movement.**

***Modernist Movement begins after World War I***

**• All of the sub-movements:**

**• Reject realism, naturalism, and the scientific theories that are the basis of these;**

**• Reject history;**

**• Reject all the past and present societies of recorded history;**

**• Reject traditional values;**

**• Reject traditional rhetoric and language;**

**• Elevate the individual;**

**• Elevate the inner man over the social man**

**• Elevate the subconscious over the conscious mind**

**Expressionism 1905 – 1930’s**

**• Begun in Germany before WWI**

**• Goal before 1920 was to renew an idealistic attitude;**

**• Goal after 1920 was to be “merely aggressive;”**

**• Anti-authoritarian, especially Victorian paternalism;**

**• Techniques:**

**o Anti-realistic and naturalistic techniques**

**o Grotesqueness**

**o Violent distortion**

**o Nightmare setting plot, mood**

**o Use of allegory, symbols, images**

**o Artists and authors present outer world only to express mood, personality, character**

**Surrealism 1924 – 1960”s**

**• Strong in France, Spain, Latin America, U.S. Led by the poet Andre Breton.**

**• Outgrowth of DADAism**

**• Dreamlike, Freudian**

**• Goal is to destroy or pervert the rules of art, philosophy, and logic**

**• Creation of conscious madness**

**• Against the insanity of war**

**• Use of startling or incompatible images**

**• Unusual typography**

**• Use of made-up words**

**• Irrationality**

**• Some authors tried automatic writing to reveal the true process of thought**

**• Authors / artists: Robert Lowell, Dali**

**Existentialism: 1940 + During and after WW II**

**• Human reason is inadequate**

**• Things / people have no meaning except as individuals create their own meaning by acting.**

**• Being or becoming nothing is people’s greatest fear**

**• Efforts to act in a meaningless or absurd world lead to anguish, loneliness, and**

**hopelessness;**

**• Humans are totally free but totally responsible for what they make of themselves. a condition, which creates great anxiety in individuals. There is a possibility of improvement.**

**• Existence comes before essence**

**• Je pense que je suis (I think; therefore, I am.” Descartes)**

**• Since nothing is absolute, a single person can improve himself and society if the person acts authentically and independently;**

**• Improvements in human nature and society can come only from within individual people and their individual actions; existentialism can be an optimistic philosophy (change is possible if individuals enact it.**

**• Authors: Jean Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Beckett, Ionesco, Dostoyevsky**

**• Camus’ essay “The Myth of Sisyphus” explains existentialism.**

**Absurdism – 1950 +**

**• The Theater of the Absurd**

**• Abandons rational devices to present the absurdity of the human condition.**

**• Existentialism forms Absurdism philosophical base**

**• Expressionism and surrealism give Absurdism give Absurdism many of its devices and techniques;**

**• Humans are cut off from their religious and philosophical roots;**

**• Humans live in meaningless isolation in an alien universe;**

**• Humans move from the nothingness from which they came to the nothingness in which they will end; Humans live an existence of anguish and absurdity;**

**• There is no way for people to establish a significant relationship between themselves and their environment;**

**• Extreme forms of illogic, inconsistency and nightmarish fantasy are characteristics;**

**• Incidents are not connected to tell a story; rather pattern of images present people as bewildered beings in an incomprehensible universe.**

**• Authors: Albee, Heller, Pynchon, Grass, Vonnegut, Pinter, Ionesco, Beckett, and Stoppard.**

**Post Modernism 1965 +**

**• Pessimistic attitude**

**• Denial of order or hopeful future**

**• Belief that humans can no longer construct order**

**• The presentation of highly fragmented universe**

**• Incorporation of phenomenology**

**o The theory that something only exists if it exists in one’s consciousness. Existence of**

**anything is entirely subjective and, therefore, not really provable. Thus, no one will be**

**able to agree on anything – not even the meaning of words. For example, two people look**

**at a door, which they think is blue. Person A’s idea of blue may be different from Person**

**B’s idea of blue, and we have no way of knowing or testing.**

**o Authors: Pinter, Pynchon, Fowles, and Stoppard.**