

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE (PERIODIZATION) AND ITS PLACE IN WORLD LITERATURE

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### Annotation

This article examines the historical development of English literature through its major literary periods and analyzes its significant role in world literature. English literature has evolved over centuries, reflecting social, political, religious, and cultural changes. From the early Anglo-Saxon period to postmodern and contemporary literature, English literary traditions have influenced global literary movements, genres, and critical theories. The article highlights key characteristics of each literary period and emphasizes the universal impact of English literature on world culture and thought.

### Keywords:

English literature, periodization, world literature, literary history, cultural influence

English literature is one of the most influential literary traditions in the world. Its development is usually studied through periodization, which helps scholars

understand how historical and cultural changes shaped literary forms and themes. English literature not only reflects the history of England but also occupies an important place in world literature due to its global reach and lasting influence.

**Old English (Anglo-Saxon) Period (c. 450–1066)-** The Old English period began with the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons in Britain. Literature of this period was mainly oral and religious. The most famous work of this era is *Beowulf*, an epic poem that reflects values such as heroism, loyalty, and bravery. Religious texts and chronicles were also common, showing the strong influence of Christianity on literature<sup>1</sup>.

**Middle English Period (1066–1500)-** The Norman Conquest in 1066 introduced French influence into English culture and language. Literature became more diverse, including romances, allegories, and religious writings. Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* is the most significant work of this period, representing social classes and everyday life in medieval England<sup>2</sup>.

**Renaissance Period (1500–1660)-** The English Renaissance was marked by humanism, interest in classical learning, and artistic creativity. Drama reached its peak with playwrights such as William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe. Poetry also flourished, focusing on love, beauty, and individual experience. English Renaissance literature greatly influenced European and world literature<sup>3</sup>.

**Neoclassical Period (1660–1798)-** This period emphasized reason, order, and rules, inspired by classical Greek and Roman literature. Satire became a popular genre, especially in the works of Jonathan Swift and Alexander Pope. Literature was often didactic, aiming to teach moral lessons and promote social harmony<sup>4</sup>.

**Romantic Period (1798–1837)-** Romanticism reacted against reason and industrialization by emphasizing emotion, imagination, and nature. Poets such as

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<sup>1</sup> Baugh, A. C. *A History of the English Language*. Routledge, 2013, p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> Chaucer, G. *The Canterbury Tales*. Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 15

<sup>3</sup> Sanders, A. *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*. Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 134.

<sup>4</sup> Pope, A. *Selected Poetry and Prose*. Penguin Classics, 1998, p. 89.

William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Lord Byron celebrated individual freedom and natural beauty. This movement influenced literary traditions worldwide<sup>5</sup>.

Victorian Period (1837–1901)- Victorian literature reflects the social and moral concerns of the Industrial Age. Novelists like Charles Dickens, George Eliot, and Thomas Hardy addressed issues such as poverty, class inequality, and moral responsibility. The English novel became a dominant literary form with global impact<sup>6</sup>.

Modern and Postmodern Periods (20th Century–Present)- Modernist writers such as James Joyce and Virginia Woolf experimented with narrative techniques and explored psychological depth. Postmodern literature challenged traditional structures and emphasized fragmentation and multiple perspectives. Contemporary English literature continues to shape global literary discourse<sup>7</sup>.

The Place of English Literature in World Literature- English literature holds a central position in world literature due to colonial history, globalization, and the widespread use of the English language<sup>8</sup>. English literary works are studied, translated, and adapted across cultures. Themes and genres developed in English literature have influenced writers worldwide and contributed to global literary theory<sup>9</sup>.

The development of English literature through distinct periods reflects the historical and cultural evolution of society. Its contribution to world literature is undeniable, as it has shaped literary forms, themes, and critical thought globally.

Understanding English literary periodization allows readers to appreciate its richness and universal significance<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Abrams, M. H. *The Mirror and the Lamp*. Oxford University Press, 1971, p. 201.

<sup>6</sup> Dickens, C. *Hard Times*. Penguin Classics, 2003, p. 7.

<sup>7</sup> Bradbury, M. *Modern British Novel*. Penguin Books, 1994, p. 56.

<sup>8</sup> Damrosch, D. *What Is World Literature?* Princeton University Press, 2003, p. 24.

<sup>9</sup> Eagleton, T. *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. Blackwell, 2008, p. 67.

<sup>10</sup> Carter, R., & McRae, J. *The Routledge History of Literature in English*. Routledge, 2016, p. 412.

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