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*Renaissance Period
in the English Literature*



**O'ZBEKISTON RESPUBLIKASI OLIIY VA O'RTA MAHSUS
TA'LIM VAZIRLIGI**

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Renaissance Period in the English Literature

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Ushbu o'quv-uslubiy qo'llanma ingliz adabiyoti fanidan bo'lib, filologiya va xorijiy til va adabiyoti (ingliz tili) bakalavriyat yo'nalishi talabalari uchun mo'ljallangandir. Qo'llanma o'z ichiga quyidagilarni oladi: ingliz adabiyotining rivojlanish tarixi, xususan, ingliz adabiyoti tarixida renessans davrining rivojlanish bosqichlari va davrlari, hamda har bir davrning ko'zga ko'ringan namoyandalarining ingliz adabiyotiga qo'shgan hissasi, ularning asarlari tahlili va hokazolar.

Ushbu o'quv-uslubiy qo'llanmadan ingliz tili o'qituvchilari hamda talabalari mashg'ulot va nazoratlarga tayyorlanish jarayonida foydali manba sifatida foydalanishlari mumkin.

Bundan tashqari, ushbu o'quv-uslubiy qo'llanma akademik litsey va kasb-hunar kollejlari talabalari uchun ham foydali o'quv qo'llanma bo'la oladi, chunki qo'llanma o'z ichiga turli xil asarlar tahlilini oladi. Qo'llanmada keltirilgan yozuvchilar hayoti va ijodi hamda ularning durdona asarlari tahlili o'quvchi – talabalar uchun dunyo yozuvchilari, xususan, ingliz yozuvchilari to'g'risida keng ma'lumot berib o'tadi.

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kafedrasida katta o'qituvchisi

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THE EARLY RENAISSANCE PERIOD

THE EARLY RENAISSANCE PERIOD CULTURE AND THE NOTION LITERATURE OF THE MIDDLE AGES

While the romances depicted the morals of the nobles, the common people presented their life in short stories known as fabliaux (sing. - fabliau). They portrayed townspeople - burghers: merchants, tradesmen, craftsmen, students, etc. They are described as prudent, practical, mocking at the nobles & churchmen. The most famous fabliaux are called "**The Land of Cockaigne**" ("Страна бездельников"). Fabliaux were very often quite frivolous; women in them were described as cunning, quarrelsome, ready to cuckold their husbands (a cuckold - "рогоносец").

Still another genre that emerged at that time was the genre of bestiary. Bestiaries were stories that had animals for their characters, which were endowed human features.

The 14 century was the period of the formation of the English nation and the English language. From the historical point of view it was quite a turbulent period in England, marked by the 100 Years' War with France (1337-1453), three epidemics of plague that killed half of England's population. In the country, new social phenomena began to appear: the towns and their population were growing, the village was changing, the trade was developing, etc. As a result the townspeople - the tradesmen and craftsmen - were becoming more and more powerful, giving birth to a new social class - bourgeoisie.

The 100 Years' War brought many hardships to common people, besides the oppression of the lower classes by the nobles was also growing. The second half of the 14th century was also marked by the growing protest against the Roman-Catholic church and the demand of a church reform. It led to the famous Peasants' Revolt in 1381. The leader of the revolt was Watt Tyler (Уот Тайлер), a craftsman, and the ideological leader of the revolt was John Ball (they often called him "mad priest" - "безумный священник"). The common people demanded the equality of the social classes, to stop the abuses (злоупотребления) of the church and to quit the privileges of the feudals. In the end, the revolt was severely suppressed.

The scholastic Latin Church literature still occupied an important place, but a new spirit was already felt in the cultural life in the country. The new spirit was marked by an optimism unknown to the Middle Ages. Speaking about the literature of the 14th century, one could mention John Wycliffe, William Langland and Geoffrey Chaucer. William Langland, according to his style and genres, is fully associated with the Middle Ages, while Geoffrey Chaucer can be regarded the last poet of the Middle Ages and the first English poet who opened the way to English realistic literature, free of the influence of the Church.

The genres of the period were quite diverse. Some of the genres belonged to the Middle Ages, others were new ones, more characteristic of the next periods. The main genres were allegorical poems of didactic character, chivalrous poetry, madrigals, messages, odes, poems (поэмы), visions, etc.

THE PLACE OF CULTURAL AND ANTIQUE HERITAGE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

The middle ages are like no other period in the Norton Anthology of English Literature in terms of the time span it covers. **Caedmon's Hymn**, the earliest English poem to survive as a text, belongs to the latter part of the seventh century. The morality play, *Everyman*, is dated "after 1485" and probably belongs to the early-sixteenth century. In addition, for the middle ages, there is no one central movement or event such as the English Reformation, the Civil War, or the restoration around which to organize a historical approach to the period.

The literary culture of the middle Ages was far more international than national and was divided more by lines of class and audience than by language. Latin was the language of the Church and of learning. After the eleventh century, French became the dominant language of secular European literary culture. Edward, the Prince of Wales, who took the king of France prisoner at the battle of Poitiers in 1356, had culturally more in common with his royal captive than with the common people of England. And the legendary king Arthur was an international figure. Stories about him and his knights originated in Celtic poems and tales and were adapted and greatly expanded in Latin chronicles and French romances even before Arthur became an English hero.

Chaucer was certainly familiar with poetry that had its roots in the old English period. He read popular romances in middle English, most

of which derive from more sophisticated French and Italian sources. But when he began writing in the 1360s and 1370s, he turned directly to French and Italian models as well as to classical poets (especially Ovid). English poets in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries looked upon Chaucer and his contemporary John Gower as founders of English literature, as those who made English a language fit for cultivated readers. In the renaissance, Chaucer was referred to as the “English homer”. Spenser called him the “well of English undefiled”.

Nevertheless, Chaucer and his contemporaries Gower, William Langland, and the Gawain poet – all writing in the latter third of the fourteenth century – are heirs to classical and medieval cultures that had been evolving for many centuries.

SOCIAL AND IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICTS DURING THE XIV CENTURY NATIONAL REACTIONS AND ITS EXPRESSION IN LITERATURE

In the 14th century, the Norman Kings made London their residence. It became the busiest town in England. The towns were achieving their freedom. Thanks to compact organization, they were loosening the bonds of their dependence on the lords or bishops to whom most of them paid taxes. Every peasant, who wished to get free of his or her masters, went to London. However, the life in the country was miserable especially with the so-called Hundred Year’s War flamed by King Edward against France. There was another burden on people’s shoulders – rich foreign bishops of the Catholic Church, who did not care about people’s sufferings.

The feudal system continued to rest cruelly on the peasants. Still bound, most of them, to the soil, they lived in dark and filthy hovels under indescribably unhealthy conditions, earning a wretched subsistence by ceaseless labor, and almost altogether at the mercy of masters who regarded them as scarcely better than beasts. Hand in hand with the State and its institutions, in this period as before, stood the Church. Holding in the theoretical belief of almost every one the absolute power of all men's salvation or spiritual death, monopolizing almost all learning and education, the Church exercised in the spiritual sphere, it attracted to itself the most ambitious and able men of all classes. The monasteries, though still performing important public functions as centers of education, charity, and hospitality, had relaxed

their discipline, and the lives of the monks were often scandalous. Then there were such unworthy charlatans as the pardoners and professional pilgrims, traveling everywhere under special privileges and fleecing the credulous of their money with fraudulent relics and preposterous stories of edifying adventure. All this corruption was clear enough to every intelligent person, and we shall find it an object of constant satire by the authors of the age, but it was too firmly established to be easily or quickly rooted out. The protest against the Catholic Church and the growth of national feeling during the first years of the War found the reflection in literature. There appeared poor priests who wandered from one village to another and talked to people. They protested not only against rich bishops but also against churchmen who were ignorant and could not teach people anything. Poets and priests William Langland and John Wyclif were among them.

WILLIAM LANGLAND (1332-1400) was a poor priest. He blamed the rich churchmen and said that everybody was obliged to work. His name is remembered for a poem he wrote, "The Visions of William Concerning Piers the Ploughman" (Piers-Peter). Nowadays the poem is called "Piers Plowman". "Piers Plowman" is an allegorical poem. In it Vice and Virtue are spoken of as if they were human beings. Truth is a young maiden, Greed is an old witch. The poem was very popular in the Middle Ages. Langland shows almost every side of 14th century life.



JOHN WYCLIF (1320-1384) is the most powerful English figure of the fourteenth century. He is remembered because he discussed political questions with the common people in the common tongue. His great work, which earned him his title of "father of English prose," is the translation of the Bible. It is impossible to overestimate the influence of this work, both on the English prose and on the lives of the English people.

His translation of the Bible was copied all over England, and fixed a national standard of English prose and for the first time in the history a standard of pure English was established in the homes of the common people.

GEOFFREY CHAUCER –THE BARD OF THE EARLY RENAISSANCE PERIOD LITERATURE

Modern English poetry begins with one of the most prominent persons of the Middle English Period – Geoffrey Chaucer, a diplomat, soldier and scholar.

GEOFFREY CHAUCER (1338?-1400) is considered one of the three greatest poets in English literature (along with William Shakespeare and John Milton). Chaucer (the name is French and seems to have meant originally 'shoemaker') came into the world probably in 1338, the first important author who was born and lived in London, which with him becomes the center of English literature. About his life, as about those of many of our earlier writers, there remains only very fragmentary information.



His father, a wine merchant, may have helped supply the cellars of the king (Edward III) and so have been able to bring his son to royal notice; at any rate, while still in his teens Geoffrey became a page in the service of one of the king's daughters-in-law. In this position, his duty would be partly to perform various humble work in the household, partly also to help amuse the leisure of the inmates, and it is easy to suppose that he soon won favor as a fluent story-teller. He early became acquainted with the seamy as well as the brilliant side of courtly life;

for in 1359 he was in the campaign in France and was taken prisoner. That he was already valued appears from the king's subscription of the equivalent of a thousand dollars of present-day money toward his ransom; and after his release he was transferred to the king's own service, where about 1368 he was promoted to the rank of esquire. He was probably already married to one of the queen's ladies-in-waiting.

Chaucer was now thirty years of age, and his practical sagacity and knowledge of men had been recognized; for from this time on he held important public positions. He was often sent to the Continent--to France, Flanders, and Italy--on diplomatic missions; and for eleven years, he was in charge of the London customs, where the uncongenial drudgery occupied almost all his time until through the intercession of the queen he was allowed to perform it by deputy. In 1386, he was a member of Parliament, knight of the shire for Kent; but in that year his fortune turned--he lost all his offices at the overthrow of the faction of his patron, Duke John of Gaunt (uncle of the young king, Richard II, who had succeeded his grandfather, Edward III, some years before). Chaucer's party and himself were soon restored to power, but although during the remaining dozen years of his life he received from the Court various temporary appointments and rewards, he appears often to have been poor and in need. When Duke Henry of Bolingbroke, son of John of Gaunt, deposed the king and himself assumed the throne as Henry IV, Chaucer's prosperity seemed assured, but he lived after this for less than a year, dying suddenly in 1400. He was buried in Westminster Abbey, the first of the men of letters to be laid in the book, which has since become the Poets' Corner.

Literary career of Geoffrey Chaucer

Chaucer's poetry is generally divided into three periods.

The French period. First is that of French influence, when, though writing in English, he drew inspiration from the rich French poetry of the period, which was produced partly in France, partly in England. Chaucer experimented with the numerous lyric forms which the French poets had brought to perfection; he also translated, in whole or in part, the most important of medieval French narrative poems, the thirteenth century '**Romance of the Rose**' of Guillaume de Lorris and **Jean de Meung**, a very clever satirical allegory, in many thousand lines, of medieval love and medieval religion. This poem, with its Gallic brilliancy and audacity, long exercised over Chaucer's mind the same

dominant influence, which it possessed over most secular poets of the age.

The Italian period. Chaucer's second period, that of Italian influence, dates from his first visit to Italy in 1372-3, where at Padua he may perhaps have met the fluent Italian poet Petrarch, and where at any rate the revelation of Italian life and literature must have aroused his intense enthusiasm. From this time, and especially after his other visit to Italy, five years later, he made much direct use of the works of Petrarch and Boccaccio and to a less degree of those of their greater predecessor, Dante, whose severe spirit was too unlike Chaucer's for his thorough appreciation. The longest and finest of Chaucer's poems of this period, '**Troilus and Criseyde**' is based on a work of Boccaccio; here Chaucer details with compelling power the sentiment and tragedy of love, and the psychology of the heroine who had become for the Middle Ages a central figure in the tale of Troy.

In Chaucer's own writing, the French models of his earliest years gave way to this Italian influence. To the Italian period can be assigned "**The House of Fame**", "**The Parliament of Fowls**" (birds), and "**Troilus and Cressida**" and "**The Legend of Good Women**", a dream-poem.

The English period. Chaucer's third period, covering his last fifteen years, is called his English period, because now at last his genius, mature and self-sufficient, worked in essential independence. First in time among his poems of these years stands 'The Legend of Good Women,' a series of romantic biographies of famous ladies of classical legend and history, whom it pleases Chaucer to designate as martyrs of love; but more important than the stories themselves is the Prolog, where he chats with delightful frankness about his own ideas and tastes.

After his return to London, Chaucer became a customs official at the port of London. He gave up his job in 1386 and began composing his masterpiece "**The Canterbury Tales**".

He died in 1400 and was buried in Westminster Abbey in a section, which later became established as the Poet's Corner. Chaucer was the last English writer of the Middle Ages and the first of the Renaissance. The greatest achievement of Chaucer's life is 'The Canterbury Tales.'

Chaucer's contribution to English literature is usually explained by the following:

1. "The Canterbury Tales" sum up all types of stories that existed in the Middle ages.

2. He managed to show different types of people that lived during his time and through these people he showed a true picture of the life of the 14th century.
3. Chaucer was the creator of a new literary language. He chose to write in English, the popular language of common people, though the aristocracy of his time read and spoke French. Chaucer was a true founder of English Literature.
4. Chaucer was by learning a man of the Middle ages, but his attitude towards mankind was so broad-minded that his work is timeless. He is the earliest English poet who may still be read for pleasure today.

REALISTIC EXPRESSION OF LIFE IN “CANTERBURY TALES” BY GEOFFREY CHAUCER

“**THE CANTERBURY TALES**”, for which Chaucer’s name is best remembered, is a long poem with a general introduction (“The Prologue”), the clearest picture of late medieval life. The framework, which serves to connect twenty-four stories, told in verse, is a pilgrimage from London to Canterbury. In the prologue thirty men and women from all ranks of society pass before the readers’ eyes. Chaucer draws a rapid portrait of thirty men and women from all ranks of society, thus showing his characters. Chaucer himself and a certain Harry Bailly, the host of a London inn, are among them. Harry Bailly proposes the following plan: each pilgrim was to tell two stories on the way to the shrine and two on the way back.

Chaucer planned to include 120 stories, but he managed to finish only twenty-four. The stories are of many kinds: religious stories, legends, fables, fairy-tales and romances. Short story writers in the following centuries learned much about their craft from Geoffrey Chaucer.

Chaucer introduces each of his pilgrims in the prologue, and then he lets us know about them through stories they tell. His quick, sure strokes portray the pilgrims at once as types and individuals true of their own age and, still more, representative of humanity in general. He keeps the whole poem alive by interspersing the tales themselves with the talk, the quarrels, and the opinions of the pilgrims.

The Canterbury Tales are a series of stories written in verse. The framework, which serves to connect them, is a pilgrimage to Canterbury. The distance from London to Canterbury is 60 miles, but in those days there was no straight road to go by.

Pilgrimages of every kind were extremely common in Chaucer's time. Such journeys were no doubt very valuable as a means by which to break the monotony of life in days when there were no newspapers, no printed books, nor any theatres. Many people looked forward to them as to pleasant holiday excursions. The months for these pilgrimages were April and May, because spring is the best season in the British Isles.

The most popular English pilgrimage was to Canterbury. Second to Canterbury was the town of Chester where people could see plays based on Bible stories performed in the churches. Pilgrimage towns were crowded with inns and churches. Bells were constantly ringing. Some churches had relics of the saints, and people believed these had the miraculous power to cure diseases. Other people were attracted by the beautiful monuments. At Canterbury Cathedral, there is the shrine of Thomas Becket, a bishop of the 12th century, who struggled against the king for the independence of the Church. He was murdered by the order of King Henry II, and later made a Catholic saint.

The pilgrimage was a "democratic institution", which means that rich and poor, noble and peasant rode side by side and stopped at the same inns. Chaucer opens his work with a prologue to the whole work.

In the prologue thirty men and women from all ranks of society pass before eyes. Chaucer draws a rapid portrait of each traveller, thus showing his character.

CREATIVE WORK OF WILLIAM LANGLAND

WILLIAM LANGLAND (1332-1400) was a poor priest. He blamed the rich churchmen and said that everybody was obliged to work. His name is remembered for a poem he wrote, "**The Visions of William Concerning Piers the Ploughman**" (Piers-Peter). Nowadays the poem is called "**Piers Plowman**". "**Piers Plowman**" is an allegorical poem. In it Vice and Virtue are spoken of as if they were human beings. Truth is a young maiden, Greed is an old witch. The poem was very popular in the Middle Ages. Langland shows almost every side of 14th century life. William Langland is a figure of whom

there is no mention in contemporary records. Everything written about his life is educated conjecture based on Langland's texts and later allusions. Langland was born sometime around 1330. In the B-Text of *Piers Plowman*, composed around 1377, Imagination says he has followed him "this five and forty winters." In the Dublin manuscript (D.4.1), a note in a fifteenth-century hand claims that Langland's father was one "Stacy de Rokayle." In mid-sixteenth century, Bale in his *Illustris Majoris Britanniae* wrote that Langland was from "Mortymers Clibury" (now Cleobury Mortimer) in Shropshire near the Malvern Hills where *Piers Plowman* opens. There was a hamlet named "Langley" nearby, which may explain his last name.

The poet was educated, inferred both from his own testimony and the quality of his writing, but it is not known where. He seems to have taken so-called 'minor orders' in the church, but, perhaps because he had married, had never taken the 'greater orders'. In *Piers Plowman*, he mentions "Kytte (Kitty, endearment for Katherine) my Wyf and Kalotte (endearment for Nicolette?) my daughter." At some point, Langland moved to London, where he made a starving wage as a "singer" of masses and as a clerk copying legal documents. He had the reputation of a man who did not bow to his superiors, a man "loathe to reverence lords or ladies, or any soul else."

Langland wrote and rewrote the *Vision of Piers Plowman* from around 1362 to the time of his death, in at least three different versions or editions, now classified into the A-Text, B-Text, and C-text. Over 50 versions are known to exist in manuscript form, some of them fragmentary. The first edition (A-Text) contains twelve passus or cantos, the second (B-Text) twenty, the third (C-Text) twenty-three. The first group contains no allusions beyond 1362, the second group is thought to have been composed around 1377, and the third group in the 1380s. There is also a "Z-Text", which has been claimed to be a draft even earlier than the A-Text, but acceptance of its authenticity is not unanimous. The B-Text is the most complete and strongest poetically, and the one usually studied by college students.

“THE VISIONS OF WILLIAM CONCERNING PIERS THE PLOUGHMAN”

Practically no aspect of English medieval life passes without comment in *Piers Plowman*. The text draws upon a number of literary

forms—among them the beast fable, sermon, and debate—but Langland is primarily a satirist working within a complex allegorical dream vision. In it Langland grapples with the most serious questions of his generation, so he must be viewed in the context of the religious, social and economic upheavals sweeping mid-to late-fourteenth-century England. *Piers Plowman* is a series of quests, of searches for answers as the dream narrator Will goes from authority to authority. The object of the search, however, changes as the poem proceeds. First the search is for what is expected of the Christian living in the world, then its object becomes Truth and salvation, and this transforms into a quest for Dowel, Dobet and Dobest (that is, do well, do better, and do best), which becomes in turn a vision of Faith, Hope, and Charity, which at length returns the Dreamer to the human world. The poem concludes with the beginning of yet another quest as Conscience vows to become a pilgrim “and walken as wide as the world lasteth, / To seken Piers the Plowman.” The fact that *Piers Plowman* concludes with a new quest makes it clear that Langland is concerned with searching; he does not offer any hard and fast solutions. Will the Dreamer is always directed toward a new path. The point is clear: the Christian quest for salvation is never ending.

The opening lines of the prologue set the work in the familiar context of the dream vision: it is a usual May morning when the narrator, exhausted from his wanderings, falls asleep. The interesting aspect is the narrator’s state of dress. He is in “shroudes as [he] a sheep were, / In habite as an heremite unholy of werkes.” These details are symbolic of the narrator’s uncertain spiritual condition. The sheep represents the saved Christian in the New Testament, but the wording here suggests that the narrator might be a wolf in sheep’s clothing instead. Hermits are men and women who have renounced the world and devoted their lives to God in contemplation, but they can only do so at the expense of others. Other people must endow the monasteries or support hermits with alms. The potential for abuse is great, as the lazy individual dons the garb of the contemplative and lives comfortably off alms from the pious without giving anything in return. The false contemplatives are thus a drain on the resources of the community and also a threat to its spiritual health. The false contemplatives are wolves in sheep’s clothing, having the appearance of holiness—the habit—but none of the substance. Will thus puts himself into a position at the beginning of the poem that only raises

questions. As a hermit in sheep's clothing, is he part of the problem or the solution? What kind of hermit is he? How does one tell the true contemplative from the false?

A solution to this last question is implied in Will's description of himself as "unholy of werkes." The expression does not mean that Will is evil. It is part of Langland's emphasis throughout *Piers Plowman* on the spirit of James 2:2 (quoted at B, 1, 187a)—that faith without good works is dead. Later, during the quest for Dowel, Dobet, and Dobest, one cannot forget the verbal action implied in those terms. The Christian is *todo* well, not simply *be* well, for Christian faith must be expressed in actions before it is valid. Will, however, is "unholy of werkes" at the beginning—which means that he has performed no works at all and is metaphorically a child. By the end of the poem he will be an old man on the verge of death. The majority of the poem traces Will's development through life as he chooses between doing good and bad works. To some degree this life journey can be seen as autobiography, but primarily it is allegory. Will is not just William; he is the human will personified in human flesh—will being the intellectual faculty which enables an individual to make a choice and put it into action. The protagonist is thus an Everyman figure whose struggles represent the human struggle for salvation.

The dream landscape into which Will enters furthers this idea of choice. Again the details are symbolic. The wilderness is the earth and the unknown dangers it entails. The tower on a "toft" in the east is heaven; the deep dale and its dungeon are hell. These two put the poem in a cosmic perspective. What lies between the two extremes of heaven and hell is Langland's major concern: namely, the Field Full of Folk which represents the Christian community. The presence of heaven and hell reminds the reader that choices made during the transitory life on earth have eternal consequences. One is, in effect, challenged to choose between heaven and hell.

RENAISSANCE PERIOD LITERATURE

LITERATURE OF THE WESTERN EUROPE

The “dark” Middle Ages were followed by a time known in art and literature as the Renaissance. The word “renaissance” means “rebirth” and was used to denote a phase in the cultural development of Europe between the 14th and 17th centuries. In France of Renaissance we find the great writer Rabelais, in the Netherlands- Erasmus, in England - Tomas More, Francis Bacon and Shakespeare and Poland –the astronomer Copernic.

On the Continent, also, this new interest in the classics served to check the growth of native literatures. In Italy especially, for a full century after the brilliant age of Dante and Petrarch, no great literature was produced, and the Italian language itself seemed to go backward. The truth is that these great writers were, like Chaucer, far in advance of their age, and that the mediæval mind was too narrow, too scantily furnished with ideas to produce a varied literature. The fifteenth century was an age of preparation, of learning the beginnings of science, and of getting acquainted with the great ideals,--the stern law, the profound philosophy, the suggestive mythology, and the noble poetry of the Greeks and Romans. So the mind was furnished with ideas for a new literature.

The wave of progress reached the shores of England only in the 16th century. Many of the learned men in Italy came from the Great city of Constantinople. It was besieged and taken by the Turks in 1453. All the great libraries and schools in Constantinople had been broken up and destroyed. The ideas of the Renaissance came to England together with the ideas of the Reformation and were called the “New Learning”. Every year numbers of new books were brought out, these books sold openly, but few people could read and enjoy them. Foreign scholars and artists began to teach in England during the reign of Henry VIII. In painting and music, the first period of Renaissance was one of imitation. Painting was represented by the German artist Holbein, and music by Italians and Frenchmen. With literature the case was different, much of the learning was popularized by the English poets and dramatists.

The poetry of the earlier part of the 16th century is generally less important, with the exception of the work of John Skelton, which

exhibits a curious combination of medieval and Renaissance influences. The two greatest innovators of the new, rich style of Renaissance poetry is the last quarter of the 16th century were Sir Philip Sidney Spenser, both humanistically educated Elizabethan courtiers.

These lyrics profess to see in her an ideal of womanhood that in the Platonic manner leads to a perception of the good, the true, and the beautiful and consequently of the divine. This idealization of the beloved remained a favored motif in much of the poetry and drama of the late 16th century: it had its roots not only in Platonism but also in the Platonic speculations of humanism and in the chivalric idealization of love in medieval romance.

The greatest monument to that idealism, broadened to include all features of the moral life, is Spenser's uncompleted *Faerie Queen* (published, with the successive additions, 1590-1609), the most famous work of the period. In each of its completed six books it depicts the activities of a hero that point towards the ideal form of a particular virtue, and at the same time it looks forward to the marriage of Arthur, who is a combination of all the virtues, and Gloriana, who is the ideal form of womanhood and the embodiment of Queen Elizabeth. It is entirely typical of the impulse of the Renaissance in England that in this work Spenser tried to create out of the inherited English elements of Arthurian romance and an archaic, partly medieval style a noble epic that would make the national literature the equal of those of ancient Greece and Rome and of the Renaissance Italy. His effort in this respect corresponded to the new demands expressed by Sidney in the critical essay *The Defense of Poesie*, originally *Apologie for Poetrie* (written c.1583; posthumously published 1595). Spenser's conception of his role no doubt conformed to Sidney's general description of the poet as the inspired voice of God revealing examples of morally perfect actions in an aesthetically ideal world such as mere reality can never provide, and with a graphic and concrete conviction that mere philosophy can never achieve. The poetic and narrative qualities of *The Faerie Queen* suffer to a degree from the various theoretical requirements that Spenser forced the work to meet.

Like so much non dramatic literature of the Renaissance, most of these plays were written in an elaborate verse style and under the influence of classical examples, but the popular taste, to which drama was especially susceptible, required a flamboyance and sensationalism largely alien to the spirit of Greek and Roman literature. Only the

Roman tragedian Lucius Annaeus Seneca could provide a model for the earliest popular tragedy of blood and revenge, *The Spanish Tragedy* (1594) of Thomas Kyd. Kyd's skillfully managed, complicated, but sensational plot influenced in turn later, psychologically more sophisticated revenge tragedies, among them Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. A few years later Christopher Marlowe in the tragedies *Tamburlaine, Part I* (1590), and *Edward II* (1594), began the tradition of the chronicle play of the fatal deeds of kings and potentates. Marlowe's plays such as *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* (written c.1589; published 1604) and *The Jew Malta* (1633), are remarkable primarily for their daring depictions of world-shattering characters who strive to go beyond the normal human limitations as the Christian medieval ethos had conceived them; these works are written in a poetic style worthy in many of comparison to Shakespeare's.

THE AGE OF RENAISSANCE. RENAISSANCE IN ENGLAND

Renaissance was a great cultural movement that began in Italy during the early 1330's. It spread to England, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, and other countries in the late 1400's and ended about 1600. The word "Renaissance" comes from the Latin word "rinascere" and means rebirth. The Renaissance was the period when European culture was at its height. At that time, great importance was assigned to intellect, experience, scientific experiment. The new ideology proclaimed the value of human individuality. This new outlook was called Humanism. The humanists were scholars and artists who studied subjects that they believed would help them better understand the problems of humanity. These subjects included literature and philosophy. The humanists considered that the civilizations of ancient Greece and Rome had excelled in such subjects and could serve as models.

During the Middle Ages the most important branch of learning was theology. Renaissance thinkers paid greater attention to the study of humanity.

During the Renaissance period (particularly 1485-1603) Middle English began to develop into Modern English. By the late 1500's the English people were speaking and writing English in a form much like that used today.

The Renaissance in England is usually studied by dividing it into three parts: **the rise** of the Renaissance under the early Tudor monarchs (1500-1558), **the height** of the Renaissance under Elizabeth I (1558-1603), and **the decline** of the Renaissance under the Stuart monarchs (1603-1649).

The Rise of the Renaissance

The invention of printing press and improved methods of manufacturing paper made possible the rapid spread of knowledge. In 1476, during the Wars of the Roses, William Caxton set up the first printing press in London. Before that time, books and other literary works were slowly and laboriously copied by hand. Printing made it possible to produce far more books at lower costs. By 1640, Caxton's and other presses had printed more than 216,000 different works and editions. It is estimated that by 1530 more than half the population of England was literate. Learning at that time flourished not only at Oxford and Cambridge, but at the lower educational levels too.

At that period, new types of literature were imported from the European continent. Chief among these were the sonnet, imported by Wyatt and Surrey from Italy, where it had been perfected by Francis Petrarch; and the essay, imported by Sir Francis Bacon from France. Other verse forms were also borrowed from the Italian and the French. The native drama continued to develop and gain popularity.

The Height of the Renaissance

Under the reign of Elizabeth I (1558-1603), order was restored, and England entered upon her most glorious age. Elizabeth was only twenty-five when she assumed the throne, never married, and ruled wisely and well for forty-five years.

Interested in education, Queen Elizabeth established one hundred free grammar schools in all parts of the country. These schools were open to both sexes of all ranks. In 1579, Gresham College was founded in London to cater to the needs of the middle class. Unlike the classical curriculum offered by Oxford and Cambridge, its curriculum included law, medicine and other practical courses. As the children of the middle class grew better educated, the middle class itself grew in power.

During Elizabeth's reign, England began to gain supremacy on the seas. The Elizabethan Age is an age of poetry. Except perhaps for the essayist Francis Bacon and the critic Christopher Marlowe, people were

not yet writing prose of literary quality. Some Elizabethan writers dealt exclusively in lyric poetry, but many were also playwrights writing their plays in verse.

The Elizabethan period was golden age of English drama. In 1576, James Burbage built England's first playhouse, called **The Theatre**, in a suburb of London. Until this time, drama had been performed in the streets, in homes and palaces, and at English universities. After Burbage built **The Theatre**, other playhouses were constructed, which rapidly increased the popularity of drama.

A group of leading Elizabethan playwrights was known as the "University Wits" because they had attended the famous English universities at Oxford or Cambridge. These playwrights included Robert Greene, Christopher Marlowe, and George Peele. Marlowe was the most important dramatist among the Wits.

William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson and other more than a dozen first-rate playwrights also created their skillful dramas at that period. Blank verse, introduced into the language by Surrey, became the main form for writing tragedies and comedies.

In 1600, when the new century began, Elizabeth was an aging queen not in the best of health. She was childless. After her death, in 1603, King James of Scotland, the son of Mary Queen of Scots, became the king of England.

The Decline of the Renaissance

James I, the first Stuart king, had little first-hand knowledge of England. Elizabeth had managed to maintain religious balance between Protestants and Catholics, but under the Stuarts that balance was lost. Religious and political unrest was growing.

At that period, a number of young Cavaliers, loyal to the king, wrote about love and loyalty, but even in the love poems it is evident that the freshness of the Elizabethan era had passed. Among the best of these poets were Richard Lovelace and Robert Herrick.

Drama continued to flourish in England under the Stuarts. Shakespeare's great tragedies were written during the reign of King James, and Shakespeare's acting company, taken under the patronage of the king, became known as the **King's Men**. The theatre in fact remained a popular form of entertainment until the puritan government closed all playhouses in 1649.

The greatest of the Puritan poets, and one of the greatest English poets was John Milton, Latin secretary to the Puritan Commonwealth. While in this position his sight began to fail; eventually he became blind. He composed “Paradise Lost”, his greatest work and the most successful English epic, sightless.

THOMAS MORE AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ENGLISH RENAISSANCE LITERATURE

One of the outstanding representatives of the English Renaissance was **SIR THOMAS MORE**. He was a great English author, statesman, and scholar. More was born in London, probably in 1477 or 1478. He studied at Oxford. More began his career as a lawyer in 1494, and became an undersheriff of London in 1510, and then held various high positions. He served as Lord Chancellor, the highest judicial official in England, from 1529 to 1532. But More resigned because he opposed King Henry VIII’s plan to divorce his queen. He was beheaded in 1535 for refusing to accept the king as the head of the English church. More has since become an example of the individual who places conscience above the claims of authority. The Roman Catholic Church declared him a saint in 1935.



A member of the Oxford group in its second generation, a close friend of Erasmus, his house a center of humanism, he became even more noticeable in public life. A highly successful lawyer, he was rapidly advanced by Henry VIII in court and in national affairs. Thomas More is also well-known in world literature for his prose and poetry, written in English and Latin. He wrote his fine English work “A

Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation” while he was in prison. His other works include “The History of King Richard III”, written in English in 1513 and a series of writings in Latin in which he defended the church against Protestant attacks.

Thomas More was born in London and studied at Oxford, after which, like his father and grandfather before him, he became a lawyer and later, a judge. Very soon he acquired the reputation of being strict, but just and incorruptible, a brilliant Latin scholar and the wittiest man of his time. He became a Member of Parliament in 1504, and very soon brought upon himself the displeasure of Henry VII after persuading the members of Parliament not to vote to the king the huge sum of money he demanded.

After the crowning of Henry VIII, he came into great favour and made a rapid career as a statesman, at the same time writing works of a political, philosophical and historical character, and also Latin verse.

During a diplomatic mission to Flanders he began writing “**Utopia**”, which was printed in Louvain [’luvein] (Belgium) in 1516 under the supervision of his close friend Erasmus, “**Praise to Folly**”, was dedicated to More.) In 1529, More was made Lord Chancellor of England (highest judge to the House of Lords).

By that time, Henry VII decided to divorce his first wife, the Spanish princess Katherine of Aragon, and marry Anne Boleyn [‘bulin], her lady-in-waiting. It was apparent that England and Spain were becoming serious rivals in oversea expansion, and the king’s first marriage had lost its political sense. The Catholic religion forbids divorce, which only the Pope of Rome can grant, but he refused it to Henry VIII. After that the king decided to put an end to all relations with the Pope and proclaim himself head of the Church of England. Beside, such an action would give Henry VIII an admirable opportunity to increase his wealth by confiscating the estates of the Church, which, probably, was his main motive. More was a devout Catholic, and opposed this plan. Moreover, he understood that such measures, by strengthening the tyranny of the king, would make the life of the peasants much worse, would increase the number of paupers and vagabonds, and would enrich the courtiers and financial speculators. In 1532, after Henry’s second marriage, More refused to take the oath to the king, which would have meant his recognizing Henry VIII as head of the Church of England. From the official point of view this refusal was treason, and More was condemned to death. Efforts to reconcile

him with Henry VIII failed, and he was beheaded. Mounting the scaffold on Tower Hill, he said to an officer: "I pray you, Master Lieutenant, see me safe up, and for my coming down I shall shift for myself". As he put his head on the block he moved his beard aside remarking that his beard had done the king no offence.

CREATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF DRAMA AND THEATRE

There were fine works of poetry and prose in the Elizabethan age, but the greatest heights of literature at that period were reached in drama.

The Middle Ages knew religious drama; the Mysteries, Miracles, and Moralities as they were called. The Mystery plays dramatized episodes from the Bible; the Miracle plays, episodes from the lives of saints. Morality plays were allegorical, and dedicated to the struggle of the various virtues and vices for the human soul; more often than not, the vices and even the devil himself were shown in such plays in comic aspect. Between the episodes of these plays, comic scene were usually acted that bore almost no relation to the story, these were called interludes.

There was another type of performance in English cities the pageants; these were pantomimes re-enacting episodes from the history of that particular city. These pageants were the some of the historical plays) for which the English Renaissance drama is famous.

Sixteenth century England also knew a third type of performance plays staged by university students; they were plays by Roman dramatists, Seneca(tragedies), and Plautus and Terence(comedies), acted in Latin. Later on, original English plays written in imitation of these authors began to appear.

Such were the foundations of the glorious English drama of the Renaissance.

By the middle of the 16th century there were companies of strolling actors who performed in town squares, inn yards, and in the manors of the nobility. In 1572 Queen Elizabeth passed a degree against vagabonds , by this decree travelling actors were also to be considered as a vagabonds and treated as such, that is, with the almost barbarity. The only exception made was for those that were in the service of some nobleman. Many of these companies enlisted as servants of some peer, of course only nominally, and began settle down. In 1576, the company

of the Earl of Leicester's Men built the first regular playhouse, designed specially for performances, and called it, approximately enough, 'The Theatre' (a Greek word never used in England before); it was open to the sky, except for a sheltered gallery on three sides, and the stage was a large raised platform that came out into the audience like a sort of peninsula. No women were allowed to act, and all the female parts in plays were taken by boys. (The first actress in England appeared after the Restoration of 1660.)

Thus, theatres began to be stabilized, and their popularity kept growing. They gave public performances, and were also invited to the court. The most prominent theatre manager at the turn of the century was Philip Henslowe, whose son-in-law, Edward Alleyn, was the foremost tragedian of his generation.

As the public became more demanding and the art of theatre developed, old plays were considered too primitive. They did not deal sufficiently with the problems of the time. It became necessary to find new plays. The demand was answered by some university graduates, whose parents were of the middle-class or the impoverished gentry. They were, all things considered, the first professional authors in England to live (and very meagrely) by their pen alone.

This group of writers is known as the Academic Dramatists or the "**University Wits**". Among them were Thomas Kyd (1557? - 1595?), George Peele (1558? - 1597?), John Lyly (1554? - 1606?), Robert Greene (1560? - 1592), Christopher Marlowe (1564 - 1593), and Thomas Nashe (1567 - 1601).

One of the most famous dramatists of the time was Thomas Kyd, whose "Spanish Tragedy" set the standard for the "revenge", or "blood - and - thunder", tragedies; he was the author of a pre - Shakespearian play (now lost) on the subject of Hamlet. John Lyly and Thomas Nashe were famous not for their dramatic works only. Lyly wrote the prose romance "Euphues, or the Anatomy of Wit" that was very popular at the time; the book gave birth to the term "euphuism" which means a very artificial, over-ornamented and mannered style of expression. This style was carried to the heights of absurdity by some of Lyly's imitators, but we must remember that he was one of the first authors to reflect the complex feelings of his contemporaries, and he found it necessary to use a complex, embellished style for that purpose.

Thomas Nashe was the author of the 'The Unfortunate Traveller' (1594), the first picturesque novel in English literature. It tells of the

fortunes of Jack Wilton, a page; among its characters are More, Erasmus, Surrey, Luther, Henry 8, and many other people well-known at the time. The novel gives a vivid picture of the colorful and cruel life on the 16th century.

But, the true genius among the University Wits was Christopher Marlowe.

CREATIVE WORK OF FRANCIS BACON AND CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

FRANCIS BACON was born in London. His father was a government minister in Queen Elizabeth's court. In 1573, when he was only twelve, Bacon entered Trinity College, Cambridge. In 1576, he was admitted to Gray's Inn to study law. When he was sixteen, he travelled to France, Italy and Spain. At that time, such European tours were typical for promising young men of good families.

In 1579 his father, who was Lord Keeper of the Great Seal to Queen Elizabeth, died and Bacon was recalled to England. In 1584, he was elected to Parliament and began his political career. He was re-elected to this position a number of times. Then he rose rapidly: he was knighted in 1603, became Solicitor General in 1607, Attorney General in 1613, a member of the Privy council in 1616, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal in 1617, Lord Chancellor in 1618 and so on.

Bacon's political career ended that same year, when he was charged with misconduct in office, admitted his guilt and was fined. Retiring to the family estate, Bacon continued the writing and scientific experiments he had begun much earlier in life. In 1626, while he was conducting an experiment to determine whether stuffing a chicken with snow would prevent it from spoiling, he caught cold that developed into bronchitis, from which he died.

Although Bacon won fame in his day as a philosopher and scientist, he receives most attention today as an author, particularly an essayist. He introduced the essay form into English literature, and from 1597 to 1625, he published, in three collections, a total of fifty-eight essays. His essays were short, treated a variety of subjects of universal interest, and contained sentences so memorable that many of them are still quoted today.

Bacon is known also for other works, among them "The New Atlantis" (1626) which might be considered an early example of science

fiction, in which he describes an ideal state. In 1620 “Novum Organum” (“The New Instrument”), written in Latin, was published. It influenced future scientific research with its inductive method of inquiry. Thus, scientists today owe their reliance on the inductive method of reasoning to Bacon. That is, he promoted the idea that generalizations should be made only after careful consideration of facts. This idea is obvious to us but it was revolutionary during Bacon’s lifetime, when scholars preferred deductive reasoning - moving from generalizations to specifics.

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE (1564 - 1593) was one of the greatest dramatists of his time. He was the first Elizabethan writer of tragedy. Marlowe was born in Canterbury and studied at Cambridge. Born in the same year as Shakespeare, he was killed in a brawl when he was only twenty-nine. If Shakespeare died at twenty-nine, his greatest plays would have remained unwritten, and we would scarcely know his name. Yet, Marlowe, by the time of his death had already established himself as a powerful dramatist, earning the title “father of English tragedy”. He wrote the tragedies: “**Dido, Queen of Carthage**”, “**Tamburlaine the Great**”, “**The Jew of Malta**”, “**The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus**”, a chronicle history play “**Edward II**”. Christopher Marlowe (1564 – 1593) was born two month before Shakespeare. He was the son of Canterbury shoe – maker, in 1580 he went to Cambridge on a scholarship. (A scholarship gave the right to free education after competitive examination.) Many details of his life are unknown to us, but it is almost certain that in his student days he went to the condiment on a secret official mission to establish contacts with the French Protestants, the allies of England against Catholic reaction.

While yet a student, Marlowe wrote his first – tragedies “**Dido Queen of Garbage**” (possibly in collaboration with Nashe) the story which was adopted from Virgil, and the first part of “**Tamburlaine [Tamburlaine] the Great**”. After that, much of his life remains unknown to us. There is a supposition that for a brief period hi was an actor, but after breaking his leg and becoming lame, he devoted all his energy to literature.

After “**Tamburlaine**”, he became a successful dramatist. During six years left to him he wrote five more plays: the second part of “Tamburlaine” the Massacre at Parts”, two major tragedies: “**The Jew**

of Malta” and “**The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus**” and the chronically history play “**Edward II**. Among his non – dramatic works his translations of the Roman poets Ovid and Lucan must be mentioned; he had also begun along poem “**Hero and Leander**“ which was finished after his death by the poet and dramatist George Chapman (1559? – 1634?), famous for his translations of Homer’s poems.

Marlowe was also the author of a small poem. “**Passionate Shepherd to His Love**”, which is probably the most beautiful lyrical piece written during the English Renaissance.

The more Marlowe’s fame grew the less desirable to the queen and her advisors he became. He was a member of Sir Walter Raleigh “academy”, a centre of free – thinking. Later Tomas Kyd gave information to the Privy Council accusing Marlowe of atheism (a very serious crime at the period) and treason. On May 30, 1593, Marlowe was killed by a dagger thrust in a tavern brawl: obviously, his murder was ordered by the Privy Council. Marlowe’s literary activity lasted for but a few years, yet he created an immortal place for himself in England drama and poetry. If he contemporary, William Shakespeare, had died at the same age, he would scarcely be known today.

Among the great merits of Marlowe was his reform of dramatic verse. In 1560 the first English play written in blank verse was produced; that was” Gorboduc, or Ferrex and Porrex “a tragedy by two scholarly nobles, Sir Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville Earl of Dorset. The verse of this play was dull, harsh and crude. It was Marlowe who gave wings to the meter: under his pen, blank verse became grand, sonorous and capable of expressing emotion. The poets imagery employed by Marlowe is monumental, highly coloured, and in perfect accord with the ideas of his tragedies. And what were the ideas?

In the opinion of some men of the Renaissance, man was free not only from the binding dogmas of the Church, but from all moral and ethical obligations whatever. This was an outlook typical of the period and Marlowe had insight enough to show not only the titanic energy and initiative of his heroes, but the inevitable inner crisis that they faced as well. His Tamburlaine, an obscure Scythian shepherd (which the historical Tamerlane was not), rises to the utmost height of power.

Barabbaras collects a colossal fortune; in order to achieve absolute knowledge and gain power over space and time, allies himself with the devil – eventually, all are defeated. In the plays of Marlowe, we can see

both his respect and admiration for the might of human individuality and his condemnation of individualism.

The plays of Marlowe had an enormous success, which Edward Alleyn, who played the parts of all his heroes, shared. But at the same period another actor, Richard Burbage, became Alleyn's serious rival.

Marlowe's literary activity lasted a few years, but he created an immortal place for himself in English drama and poetry. Marlowe established his theatrical reputation with "Tamburlaine the Great" written about 1587. In this tragedy, Marlowe wrote about the great conqueror, Tamburlaine. In "Tamburlaine the Great", the author tells how a Scythian shepherd rises from his lowly birth, and by the power of his personality becomes conqueror of the world. Elizabethan spectators found a keen pleasure in watching a brave but ruthless hero struggle against titanic forces on his way to the success. The story of Tamburlaine seemed to them an idealization of the lives of adventurers.

As we know, an outstanding feature of Renaissance ideology was the belief in man, himself the master and creator of his destiny. Marlowe's tragedies portray heroes who passionately seek power - the power of absolute rule (Tamburlaine), the power of money (Barabas, the Jew of Malta), and the power of knowledge (Faustus). Marlowe delights in the might and the strong will of his heroes.

Marlowe's major achievement lay in adapting blank verse to the stage. Ben Jonson expressed admiration when he referred to "Marlowe's mighty line". Marlowe's ability to compress thought, image and idea into superb lines of blank verse paved the way for Shakespeare and later practitioners of the art. In addition to his plays, Marlowe wrote one of the most famous of Elizabethan lyric poems, "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love." This **carpe diem poem** is an invitation to the pastoral life, the happy peaceful life of country shepherds.

THE WORLDWIDE IMPORTANCE OF THE LITERARY ACTIVITY OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

The English Renaissance gave birth to an amazing galaxy of great writers, but **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE** outshines them all. He had a greater influence on the development of the whole of world literature than any other author did. Characters created by him remain perfect depictions of the principal human passions and psychological traits.

But Shakespeare was not just a painter of abstract passions independent of space and time as many bourgeois scholars try to show him. His unsurpassed portrayals of human nature come as a result of his profound insight into the most important social and philosophical problems of period. With due apologies to the great Ben Jonson we may say that Shakespeare was “for all time” because he was very much “of an age” of his own age!



What, then, makes him the greatest of the great?

In the first place, a harmonious combination of all these qualities: in the second place, their being united in a thirty colossal intellect, capable of penetrating into the very core of things. A great poet, an unsurpassed dramatist, an unrivalled psychologist, he was also a philosopher of the first magnitude.

In many of his years, Shakespeare was far ahead of his time. He rejected feudalism. But was sober and shrewd enough to see the evils and vices of growing capitalism. He did not point out of any definite means towards the achievement of his ideals, which were rather vague, he could give no concrete answers to the problems he put forth, but he was truly great inquirer, and his unparalleled penetration into life gives us, his true heirs, in opportunity to answer his questions better than he could himself. His works are truly immortal, and will retain their immortality as long as human race exists. It is only natural that the greatest minds of the world admired Shakespeare.

The great poet and dramatist is often called by his people “Our National Bard”, “The Immortal Poet of Nature” and “The Great Unknown”. His works are truly immortal, and will retain their immortality as long as the human race exists. He is a true classic; every new generation finds something new in his works. His popularity all over the world grows from year to year. More than 400 years after his birth, the plays of the Shakespeare are performed even more often than they were during his lifetime. They are performed on the stage, in the movies, and on television. They are read by millions of people all over the world.

Shakespeare is considered by many to be the greatest writer in the English Language and the world’s prominent dramatist, as well as one of the greatest in Western Literature. Shakespeare is counted among the very few playwrights who have excelled in both tragedy and comedy, and his plays combine popular appeal with complex characterization, poetic grandeur and philosophical depth.

A poet and playwright William Shakespeare is the favorite author of millions of readers all over the world. No other writer’s plays have been produced so often and read so widely in so many different countries. He had a great influence on the world literature than any other author.

SHAKESPEARE’S BIOGRAPHY, PERIODS OF HIS ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT

William Shakespeare was born in 1564, on April 23 in Stratford-on-Avon, in England. His father, John Shakespeare, was a prosperous glove maker of Stratford, his mother, Mary Arden, came from a family of landowners. In his childhood, Shakespeare attended the Stratford Grammar school. In 1599 the best-known of Elizabethan theatres, the Globe was built and Shakespeare became a leading shareholder and the principal playwright to the theatre company. He was also an actor, but not a first-rate: the parts he played were the old servant Adam in “As you like it” and the Ghost in “Hamlet”.

In 1613, after the Globe had been destroyed by fire he retired and stopped writing. By then he was very ill. He died on April 23, 1616 and was buried in the Holy Trinity church in Stratford where he was christened.

Although some of Shakespeare’s plays were published during his life-time, not until his death was any attempt made to collect them in a

single volume. The first edition of Shakespeare's collected plays appeared in 1623. Most scholars agree that there exist 37 plays written by Shakespeare. Traditionally, his plays have been divided into 3 groups: comedies, histories, and tragedies.

All of the works of the great playwright are written in **four periods of his literary career**. Each of these periods reflects a general phase of Shakespeare's artistic development.

The first period includes all the plays written in 1590-1594. His comedies "**The Comedy of Errors**", "**The Taming of the Shrew**", "**The Two Gentlemen of Verona**", the histories "**Henry VI**", "**Richard III**", "**King John**" and the tragedy "**Titus Andronicus**" were written during this period. They belong to different genres, but they have much in common. The plots of these plays follow their sources more mechanically than do the plots of Shakespeare's later works. Besides, these plays generally emphasize more than the portrayal of characters.

During **the second period** (1595-1600), Shakespeare brought historical drama and Elizabethan romantic comedy to near perfection. The comedies: "**A Midsummer Night's Dream**", "**Love's Labor's Lost**", "**The Merchant of Venice**", "**As You Like It**", "**Much Ado About Nothing**", "**Twelfth Night**", the tragedies "**Romeo and Juliet**", "**Julius Caesar**", the histories "**Richard II**", "**Henry IV**", "**Henry V**", were written at this period, and in them the great playwright demonstrated his genius for weaving various dramatic actions into a unified plot, showed his gift for characterization.

During **the third period** (1601-1608) Shakespeare wrote his great tragedies ("**Hamlet**", "**Troilus and Cressida**", "**Othello**", "**King Lear**", "**Macbeth**", "**Timon of Athens**", "**Anthony and Cleopatra**", "**Coriolanus**"), which made him truly immortal. Every play of this period shows Shakespeare's awareness of the tragic side of life. Even the two comedies of the period "**All's Well That Ends Well**" and "**Measure for Measure**" are more disturbing than amusing. That is why they are often called 'problem' comedies or 'bitter' comedies. Shakespeare's sonnets were also written during the third period of his literary career. During **the fourth period** (1609-1613), the final period, Shakespeare wrote three comedies: "**Cymbeline**", "**The Winter's Tale**", "**The Tempest**", and the history - "**Henry VIII**".

Many periods in Shakespeare's life remain obscure to us. Subject matter for his biography began to be collected only about a hundred

years after his death, and many of the facts gathered are very doubtful. There is nothing surprising in that, because in the time of Shakespeare, the work of a public theatre playwright was considered the least respectable of all literary arts and no one paid much attention to dramatists' lives. However, the life of Shakespeare is better known to us than the life of other dramatists of his time, with the exception of Ben Jonson; of some of his other colleagues we have practically no data at all. Our short survey of Shakespeare's life is founded only on authentic (trustworthy) sources.

William Shakespeare was born in 1564, in the town of Stratford-on-Avon. He was christened in Holy Trinity ['triniti] Church in Stratford on April 26. As it was customary to christen children on the third day after birth, we may suppose that he was born on April 23. His father, John Shakespeare, was a prominent citizen who became an alderman. In 1570, a serious rebellion broke out in the north of England: the powerful feudal families of Percy and Neville rose in revolt against Queen Elizabeth. Shakespeare would have seen government troops marching north, and, since his father was an alderman whose duty it was to organize militia, the boy was in the very centre of events. For month, the talk of his elders must have been of rebels, armies, bloodshed and the threat to stability. No doubt, these events produced a great impression on the future poet.

In his childhood, Shakespeare probably attended the Stratford Grammar School, where he could have acquired a considerable knowledge of Latin. Later he satirized the school education of his time in his comedies "Love's Labour's Lost" and "The Merry Wives of Windsor".

The first record we have of his life after his christening is that of his marriage to Anne Hathaway ['hæθəweɪ] in 1582. A daughter was born to them in 1583 and twins, a boy and a girl, in 1585. By that time, John Shakespeare had been ruined and was quite poor.

After the birth of the twins, we know absolutely nothing about Shakespeare's life for the next seven years. Scholars have put forth various theories concerning that period, some are very interesting and clever, but none of them can be either proved or disproved. We know for certain that in 1592 Robert Greene published a pamphlet in which he made some insulting remarks about Shakespeare, from which we may conclude that by that year Shakespeare had arrived in London and had not only become a dramatist whose work attracted general

attention, but was growing to be a serious competitor to the University Wits.

In 1593, a very serious epidemic of the plague broke out, and the theatrical performances were temporarily stopped. During that time, Shakespeare must have written his narrative poem, “Venus and Adonis [‘vi:nəs and ə’dounɪs]”, published in the same year and dedicated to the Earl of Southampton [sau’θæmptən]. In certain memoirs, it is stated that for the Southampton made Shakespeare a present of £ 1,000, but by the standard of the time, the sum was so colossal that we suspect the author of the memoirs of adding an extra nought. However, we may say for certain, that Shakespeare was acquainted with Southampton and his friends, a circle of exquisite young aristocrats, among whose number was the Earl of Essex, Queen Elizabeth’s favourite at one time. We may suppose that the acquaintance was a lasting one, for in the next year Shakespeare dedicated to Southampton another poem, “Lucrece [lu:’kri:s]”. These two poems were the only works in the publication of which Shakespeare took part himself.

At the same time, Shakespeare became closely allied to the theatre company of the Lord Chamberlain’s headed by the great tragedian, Richard Burbage. In 1599, the company built and occupied the best-known of Elizabethan theatres, the Globe. Shakespeare eventually became a leading share-holder and the principal playwright to the company. He was also an actor, but, obviously not a first-rate one: the parts which we know for certain he played were the old servant Adam in “As You Like It” and the Ghost in “Hamlet”. By 1597, he had prospered to such a degree that he bought the largest house in Stratford.

The first (and very complimentary) mention of Shakespeare as dramatist was made by the writer Francis Mares in 1958; Mares drew up a list of Shakespeare’s plays, and also made mention of his sonnets, some of which were probably written at an earlier date. The sonnets appeared in a separate edition only in 1609, when the fashion for sonnets was on the decline, and the book didn’t attract much attention.

In 1601 the Earl of Essex, fallen into great disfavour with the queen, attempted to raise an armed revolt against her.

Among his allies were Southampton and many of his friends. On the day of their uprising they ordered Shakespeare’s historical play “Richard II” to be performed at the Globe for propaganda purposes: they hoped that showing the dethronement of an unworthy king would arouse the people to follow them. The revolt turned out a complete

failure; Essex was beheaded, Southampton and others imprisoned. We may suppose that Burbage and Shakespeare had a very narrow escape.

This was also the time, when Shakespeare's great tragedies began to appear.

During the last years of his life Shakespeare wrote less and less; he tried composing in a new manner, originated by Beaumont and Fletcher and every fashionable at the time. In 1603 after the Globe had been destroyed by fire during a performance of "Henry VIII", he retired to Stratford and seems to have stopped writing altogether. We may suppose that by then he was a very ill man. On April 23, 1616, he died and was buried in the same Holy Trinity Church in Stratford where he was christened.

In 1623, two of Shakespeare's fellow-actors, John Heminge and Henry Condell, collected and published all his plays in a single volume, which is now known as the First Folio. 16 plays in the collection were printed for the first time, among them such masterpieces as "Julius Caesar", "Measure for Measure", "Timon of Athens", "Macbeth", "Antony and Cleopatra", "Coriolanus", and "The Tempest". Ben Johnson also took part in the publication; his great poem to the memory of Shakespeare, some lines of which from the epigraph to this chapter, was included in the book.

SHAKESPEAREAN SONNETS AND COMEDIES. REFLECTION OF LIFESTYLE AND LIFE-GIVING PECULIARITIES IN COMEDIES

In addition to his plays and two narrative poems, Shakespeare wrote a sequence of 154 **SONNETS**. His sonnets were probably written in the 1590s but first published in 1609.

Shakespeare's sonnets occupy a unique place in the Shakespearian heritage, because they are his only lyrical pieces, the only things he has written about himself.

The three main characters in the sonnets are the poet, his friend and the dark lady. The poet expresses the warmest admiration for the friend. The dark lady is the beloved of the Poet; unlike the idealized ladies in the sonnets of Petrarch and his followers, she is false and vicious, but the poet, though aware of the fact, can't help loving her. And then comes the tragedy: the friend and the dark lady betray the poet and fall in love with each other.

By reading between the lines of the sonnets, we may see a tragedy in Shakespeare's life, a tragedy that he might not have fully understood himself. Despite the author's intention, we feel that the poet's friend, who is praised so warmly, is a shallow, cruel and petulant man; the dark lady is wicked and lying. Thus, in the sonnets we may see the great misfortune of a genius, who wasted his life and soul for the sake of persons unworthy of him.

There is a major theme running through the cycle: the theme of the implacability of Time. How can one triumph over it. The poet gives two answers: the first is: one lives forever in one's children, in one's posterity. The second is one may achieve immortality if one's features are preserved by art, and particularly in poetry.

Scholars and critics have made many attempts to discover all the mysteries of Shakespeare's sonnets, as they may shed light on his life, but generally to no avail. It is important to remember that Shakespeare's sonnets were written at a time when such sequences were fashionable, and thus the sonnets may be more an exercise in literary convention than in autobiography.

The sonnets show how Shakespeare's poetic style was forged and perfected; to some extent they raise the veil over his private life, of which we know so little.

Shakespeare's **COMEDIES** did not establish a lasting tradition in the theatre, as did those written by Ben Jonson. Jonson's plays portray the everyday life of their time with the exaggerated satirical characters. Shakespeare's comedies are composed on opposite principles. The scenes of his comedies are usually set in some imaginary country, and the action is based on stories that are almost fairy-tales. But the characters placed in these non-realistic settings and plots, are true-to-life and are depicted with the deep knowledge of human psychology for which Shakespeare is famous. Each comedy has a main plot and one or two sub-plots, and sometimes sub-plots attract even more attention than the main plots. The comic characters of these plays always have English colouring, even if the scene is laid in other countries.

All these plays are written in easy-flowing verse and light, tripping prose. The text is full of jokes and puns, but some of the texts contain topical allusions, which are hard to understand for the readers of our time. All the comedies tell of love and harmony, at first disturbed, and finally restored. In them Shakespeare supports the right of a human being to free choice in love, despite the existing conventions and

customs. More often Shakespeare embodies this tendency in female characters. His typical comedy heroines are brave, noble, free in speech, and enthusiastic.

Another motif stressed in the comedies is the contrast between appearance and reality. Shakespeare makes his readers understand the importance of self-knowledge. In the complicated plots of Shakespearian comedies the heroes and heroines often select wrong partners because they have formed wrong opinions about their own characters, that is they do not know or understand their own self and feelings. But their mistakes are treated good-humoredly and the comedies end happily, because at the end of the plays the characters understand themselves and those they love.

Let's look more closely at one of his so-called "golden comedies" – "Twelfth Night", the last play of his second period.

"Twelfth Night" This comedy centers on the typical Shakespearian conflict between true and false emotion. Duke Orsino tries to convince himself that he is in love with Countess Olivia and grows more absorbed by his feelings after each refusal received from her. But Olivia is in deep grief for her dead brother and renounces all joy of life.

The solution of the complicated plot is provided by the twin sister and brother, Viola and Sebastian. They become separated during a shipwreck. Finding herself stranded in the country of Illyria, Viola disguises herself as Cesario, a page, and enters the service of Duke Orsino. The duke sends the page to woo the countess Olivia for him. But Olivia falls in love with Caesario. The marriage of Orsino to Viola and Sebastian to Olivia brings the desired happy ending, with the true passion in each case driving out the artificial one. Viola is one of the famous Shakespearian comedy heroines, a true woman of the renaissance: she is brave, adventurous, clever, witty, and capable of deep feeling. We see that in "Twelfth Night" three types of emotions are contrasted: the genuine and active love of Viola, the self-induced infatuation of Orsino, and the so-called "love" of Malvolio, born out of his desire for gain and social elevation.

The play is written with great skill: the comic sub-plot of Sir Toby, Sir Andrew Ague-cheek [ˈeɪɡju:tʃi:k], Maria and Malvolio is intermingled with the lyrical story that forms the main plot, by the hand of a truly great master. Comedy and poetry are, so to speak, brought to

a common denominator. The songs in “Twelfth Night” are probably the best Shakespeare ever wrote.

The songs are sung by Feste, Olivia’s jester. He strikes a sobering note in the play. The wisest of all, he is able to see through all pretence, and the play turns on pretences, conscious or unconscious. An onlooker in all the events, he is the only character who finds no personal happiness in the final count. He gains nothing for himself, and the merry comedy ends with his sad song about “the rain that raineth every day”...

SHAKESPEARE’S CHRONICLES AND TRAGIC WORKS

Shakespeare’s are more closely related to his tragedies than to comedies. This was the genre, in which he started his career as a playwright, and beginning with his first works, he gives us a vast dramatic cycle in which he deals with themes in the historical process, the laws of historical development, and the nature of power.

In his first historical tetralogy, which includes the three parts of “Henry VIII” and “Richard III”, Shakespeare shows the evils of feudalism. In these plays, which show the Wars of Roses, the predatory nature of the feudal overlord is made very clear. The plays are a series of battles and conspiracies, of alliances formed and broken; they are full of treachery, brutality and suffering. Among the warring lords, there arises a figure, which is, probably, the most sinister one in all Shakespeare’s plays. This is Richard, son of the Duke of York, who later becomes King Richard III.

This blood-thirsty hunchback is drawn as a villain on the grandest scale imaginable. Cruel, hypocritical, utterly unscrupulous, he is helped in his career by a tremendous will-power, an unshakable courage, a mighty intellect, a deep knowledge of human psychology, and a genuine, if cynical, wit. In “Richard III”, we see how, having attained the crown, for the sake of which he has committed one crime after another, he finds his former energy gone. Only on the Eve of the Battle of Bosworth, where he is to perish, do his powers return, and he addresses his followers, proclaiming his immoral creed.

In the Middle Ages, a tragedy meant a literary work dealing with the hero’s transition from fortune to misfortune and ending with death. Some Elizabethan tragedies also fall into this category. Shakespeare brought something new to the tragedy; this new element was first introduced to Marlowe, but it was Shakespeare who carried it to

perfection. The hero of any Shakespearian tragedy perishes by reason of some trait of character that makes him either prefer some positive ideal to life, or else makes him betray an ideal and hence, meet his doom. All the tragic characters of Shakespeare are shown in their development; a hero at the end of the tragedy isn't the man he was at the beginning, his soul having undergone great changes. This is the first innovation introduced by Shakespeare. He didn't master this manner of constructing tragedies at the beginning of his career. If we take "Romeo and Juliet", we can easily imagine a happy ending; if Friar Laurence had arrived at the Capulets tomb five minutes earlier, there would have been no tragedy. But the logic of the characters in the great tragedies leads them to the inevitable end: even if Emilia had had the opportunity to prevent Othello from strangling Desdemona, still he would have killed himself, having understood the depth of his moral degradation; even if Edgar had had the chance to save Cordelia, Lear, having experienced all the evils of society, would never have returned to the throne to be the king he was at the beginning of the tragedy. The characters of Romeo and Juliet do not change to such a degree!

Shakespeare's second innovation is his way of explaining the evolution (degradation) of his heroes by the social factors that form their psychology and influence their lives. The problems raised in Shakespeare's great tragedies still produce a terrific impression on our emotions and on our intellect.

In some of the tragedies, Shakespeare treats important ethical themes. "Othello", for instance, shows us the conflict between the two moralities that have replaced medieval ideology (still strong, and represented in the play by Senator Brabantio. A new morality, the morality of the Renaissance, is reflected in Othello and Desdemona, who refuse to obey outworn rules and united by true love, unrestrained by social or racial prejudices. The other morality of the time, in reality utter immorality, is to be seen in the hateful figure of Iago. "Put money in the purse" is his motto. And falling under his influence, the noble Othello loses all the features that endeared him to us at the beginning of the play. This tragedy expresses the crisis of humanism: the Renaissance titans are no longer needed, and it is the Iagos who come to the top.

Many of Shakespeare's great tragedies are devoted to his favourite themes: the themes of state and society, the nature of power in general and the institution of monarchy in particular. If in the histories, he

shows us a gallery of none-too-attractive kings, while admitting that a good monarch is possible, if only theoretically, in his great tragedies he comes to the conclusion, that monarchy is evil in its very essence, and can be nothing else. The different aspects of this idea are shown in “Hamlet”, “Macbeth”, and “King Lear”, which form an anti-monarchic trilogy. There are some parallel motifs even in the plots of these plays. Have you noticed, for instance, that the theme of “Macbeth” is like that of “King Lear”, but reversed, as in a mirror? If we formulate them in a rather simplified manner, they may be stated as follows:

Macbeth was human: he wanted to become a king; he became a king, and became a monster. Lear was a king, and a monster: when he ceased being a king, he became human.

And where does “Hamlet” come in? Well, have you noticed that the plots of “Hamlet” and “Macbeth” are essentially the same? A usurper (Claudius, Macbeth) murders his near relative, the lawful king (Hamlet Senior, Duncan), and seizes the throne, the son of the murdered king and lawful heir to the throne (Hamlet, Malcolm, begins his struggle against the usurper. But if in “Macbeth” the stress is on the psychology of the usurper, in “Hamlet” the main character is the man who opposes him.

“ROMEO AND JULIETTE” – THE NOVEL ABOUT THE GREAT HUMAN LOVE, WHICH CONQUERED THE MIDDLE AGES FANATICISM.

“ROMEO AND JULIET” is a tragedy based on “Romeus and Juliet”, a poem by the English author Arthur Brooke. It was first published in 1597 and first performed in 1596. Romeo and Juliet is a story of love and hate. It deals with two teen-aged lovers in Verona, Italy, who are caught in a bitter feud between their families, the Montagues and the Capulets. It is a story of two young people who fall in love at first sight, marry secretly because their families are bitter enemies, and die because each cannot bear to live without the other. It is also a story of two families whose hatred for each other drives a son and daughter to destruction. Only after they have lost their children the parents learn the folly of hatred and agree to end their feud. Love eventually conquers hate, but at a terrible cost.

It is not a simple story of good and bad people, for all the major characters bear some responsibility for the disaster. Romeo and Juliet

have little chance to preserve both their love and their lives in the hatred that surrounds them. They are driven to destruction by events they cannot control. Yet the final choice is theirs, and they choose to die together instead of living apart. Shakespeare sets the scene of “Romeo and Juliet” in Verona, Italy, as earlier tellers of the story had done. The time of the action is vague, although it clearly takes place at some time before Shakespeare’s days.

Apart from the early *Titus Andronicus*, the only other play that Shakespeare wrote prior to 1599 that is classified as a tragedy is *Romeo and Juliet* (c. 1594 -96), which is quite untypical of the tragedies that were to follow. Written more or less at the time when Shakespeare was writing *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Romeo and Juliet* shares many of the characteristics of romantic comedy. Romeo and Juliet are not persons of extraordinary social rank or position, like Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, and Macbeth. They are the boy and girl next door, interesting not for their philosophical ideas but for their appealing love for each other. They are character types more suited to Classical comedy in that they do not derive from the upper class. Their wealthy families are essentially bourgeois. The eagerness with which Capulet and his wife court Count Paris as their prospective son-in-law bespeaks their desire for social advancement. Accordingly, the first half of *Romeo and Juliet* is very funny, while its delight in verse forms reminds us of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. The bawdry of Mercutio and of the Nurse is richly suited to the comic texture of the opening scenes. Romeo, haplessly in love with a Rosaline whom we never meet, is a partly comic figure like Silvius in *As You Like It*. The plucky and self-knowing Juliet is much like the heroines of romantic comedies. She is able to instruct Romeo in the ways of speaking candidly and unaffectedly about their love rather than in the frayed cadences of the Petrarchan wooer.

The play is ultimately a tragedy, of course, and indeed warns its audience at the start that the lovers are “star-crossed.” Yet the tragic vision is not remotely that of *Hamlet or King Lear*. Romeo and Juliet are unremarkable, nice young people doomed by a host of considerations outside themselves: the enmity of their two families, the misunderstandings that prevent Juliet from being able to tell her parents, whom it is that she has married, and even unfortunate coincidence (such as the misdirection of the letter sent to Romeo to warn him of the Friar’s plan for Juliet’s recovery from a deathlike sleep). Yet there is the

element of personal responsibility upon which most mature tragedy rests when Romeo chooses to avenge the death of Mercutio by killing Tybalt, knowing that this deed will undo the soft graces of forbearance that Juliet has taught him. Romeo succumbs to the macho peer pressure of his male companions, and tragedy results in part from this choice. Yet so much is at work that the reader ultimately sees *Romeo and Juliet* as a love tragedy – celebrating the exquisite brevity of young love, regretting an unfeeling world, and evoking an emotional response that differs from that produced by the other tragedies. Romeo and Juliet are, at last, “Poor sacrifices of our enmity” (Act V, scene 3, line 304). The emotional response the play evokes is a strong one, but it is not like the response called forth by the tragedies after 1599.

“HAMLET”, “OTHELLO”, “KING LEAR” – A NEW PERIOD IN THE ACTIVITY OF SHAKESPEARE.

“H a m l e t, Prince of Denmark”

“Hamlet” is one of Shakespeare’s greatest creations, but it is also considered the hardest of his works to understand. Some critics count it even mysterious. The source of the plot can be found in a Danish chronicle written around 1200. The plot of the tragedy is following: a usurper Claudius murders his brother, the lawful king, and seizes the throne. The son of the murdered king and lawful heir to the throne Hamlet, discovering the crime, struggles against usurper. But the struggle ends tragically for him too.

As you see, there is nothing mysterious in the plot of the tragedy, but mysterious is the complex character of Hamlet himself. First we see Hamlet plunged into despair: he is grieved by the death of his father, shocked and horrified by the inconstancy and immorality of his mother, filled with disgust and hatred for Claudius, and begins to be disgusted with life in general.

Later, after talking to the Ghost, he learns of the murder of his father. He sincerely wants to kill Claudius, and avenge for his father. The readers also want him to do so. But Hamlet delays and goes on delaying. He even rejects a chance to kill Claudius while he is on his knees in prayer. Why does he delay avenging his father’s murder? Why can’t he make up his mind? This is the mystery. Various explanations have been offered by a number of critics, but still they have not come

to a conclusion, which could satisfy all the readers and investigators of Shakespeare.

Instead of Claudius Hamlet, by mistake, kills Polonius, Ophelia's father. It happens because Polonius, the king's adviser, decides to eavesdrop on Hamlet while the prince is visiting his mother in her sitting room. He hides behind a curtain, but Hamlet becomes aware that someone is there. Hamlet stabs Polonius through the curtain and kills him.

The king, Claudius, exiles Hamlet to England for the murder. He also sends secret orders that the prince be executed after he arrives in England. But Hamlet intercepts the orders and returns to Denmark safe and sound. He arrives in time and sees Ophelia's burial.

Ophelia is the daughter of Polonius and the girl whom Hamlet loves. She goes insane after her father's death and drowns herself. Laertes, Ophelia's brother, blames Hamlet for his sister's and father's death. He agrees to Claudius's plan to kill Hamlet with a poisoned sword in a fencing match. Laertes wounds Hamlet during the duel, and is wounded himself by the poisoned weapon. Hamlet's mother, watching the match, accidentally drinks from a cup of poisoned wine prepared by Claudius for Hamlet. Dying from the wound, Hamlet kills Claudius. At the end of the play, Hamlet, his mother, Claudius, and Laertes all lie dead.

The role of Hamlet in this outstanding play is considered one of the greatest acting challenges of the theatre. Shakespeare focused the play on the deep conflict within thoughtful and idealistic Hamlet. Hamlet reveals this conflict in several famous monologues. The best known of them is his monologue on suicide, which begins with "To be, or not to be."

"OTHELLO"

In *Othello* Desdemona is the only daughter of Brabantio, an aging senator of Venice, who dies heartbroken because his daughter has eloped with a dark-skinned man who is her senior by many years and is of another culture. With Othello, Desdemona is brief happy, despite her disobedience, until a terrible sexual jealousy is awakened in him, quite without cause other than his own fears and susceptibility to Iago's insinuations that it is only "natural" for Desdemona to seek erotic pleasure with a young man.

Driven by his own deeply irrational fear and hatred of women and seemingly mistrustful of his own masculinity, Iago can satisfy his own inner torment only by persuading other men like Othello that their inevitable fate is to be deceived.

As a tragedy, the play exemplifies the traditional Classical model of a good man brought to misfortune tragic mistake. As Othello grieves, he is one who has “loved not wisely, but too well”.

KING LEAR

In “King Lear” Shakespeare shows the very foundations of the monarch to be inhuman, demoralizing, and monstrous. In the first scenes of the play Lear is an old king, drunk with the sense of his almighty power. This sense prompts him to put his power to a final proof by renouncing his royal authority and dividing his kingdom between his three daughters. The reason for this action lies in Lear’s conviction of his personal greatness, which, as he thinks, does not depend upon his kingship but will be with him in any circumstances. He is sure that the kingdom will remain a kingdom without a king, and the king will remain without his kingdom. He calls this intention “our darker (that is, hidden, top-secret) purpose”, although at the very beginning of the play, we learn that this plan is known among the countries, for Gloucester says that “equalities are so weighed, that curiosity in neither can make choice of either of either’s moiety”, which means that the kingdom is divided into absolutely equal shares, and no princess will have cause to consider herself dealt with unfairly.

Now, that is pure demagoguery: the plans for the kingdom’s division have been drawn up beforehand, and it is impossible to suppose that even if one daughter were to outshine her sisters in her declarations of love, the dealing out of the shares would be changed. No, the old tyrant simply wants to feast on words of praise. And the contest of flattery begins. The elder daughters, Goneril and Regan, make flowery and insincere speeches in which they declare their affection for the willful and stupid old man.

Even if Cordelia had pleased Lear the most, she could not have drawn “a third more opulent”, because there remained only that part of the kingdom originally intended for her. Cordelia revolts against Lear’s pretension and love of flattery; she is also disgusted by her sisters hypocrisy. Lear flies into a rage, and drives her away. Another person revolts against Lear, the earl of the Kent, but for a different reason. Kent

is endowed with the slavish psychology of a feudal vassal, and protests against Lear's behavior, which he considered unworthy of a true king. Kent, to quote a French saying, is more royalist than the king himself". It is this psychology of a vassal that makes Kent disguise himself and serve Lear again, despite the fact that the king has unjustly punished him and deprived him of all his rights. Lear's personality and behavior give no cause for such affection. It is not Lear himself that Kent loves, but the principle of monarchy personified in him. At the end of the play, Edgar, a truly heroic and noble character, tells the Duke of Albany how Kent followed Lear, in disguise, "and did him service improper for a slave". Hardly a compliment, is it?

Very soon Lear begins to understand that, having renounced his crown, he can no longer lay claim to any honor and respect whatever, even from his daughters. He is helped to understand this by his Fool, "a bitter Fool", who calls the old man "Lear's shadow" and by his stinging jokes makes the ex-monarch see the true state of things.

The sub-plot of the tragedy tells of the relations between the Earl of Gloucester and his two sons. There is a parallel and also a contrast between Lear and Gloucester. Like Lear, Gloucester rejects the worthy child and favours the unworthy, for which he suffers greatly; but,

SHAKESPEARE'S HISTORICAL DRAMAS AND THEIR ROLE IN THE HISTORY OF GREAT BRITAIN

The first historical tetralogy was written in a monumental, and yet in a rather crude manner, there is no subtle psychology in it, man characters are painted all black or all white (mostly all black). In the second historical tetralogy, which deal with an earlier period of English history (it consists of "Richard II", the two parts of "Henry IV", and "Henry V"). Shakespeare rose to the heights of his poetic and dramatic power. The theme of feudal decay is developed here with considerably greater finesse than in the first tetralogy. Probably the figures that embody the theme most vividly are to be seen in "Henry IV". The first is Henry Percy, nicknamed Hotspur. All the feudal virtues are seen in him he is brave, straight forward, honourable, strong willed. Although his manners are rude and he is fiery-tempered and quarrelsome, we never doubt his honesty and his great ability as a warrior. Yet despite all this, Shakespeare shows Hotspur to be historically doomed; his participation in feudal civil wars brings disaster to the country, and his

valour serves only to forward his personal ambition and make all his heroic deeds fruitless. Another character in "Henry IV" is Sir John Falstaff, one of Shakespeare's greatest creations.

If Hotspur is the concentration of feudal honour, Falstaff is a knight utterly devoid not only of feudal prejudices, but of all moral principles. When he has to take part in battle, he tries to avoid it and discourses as follows:

"Can honour set to a leg? No: or an arm? No: or take away the grief of a wound? No. honour hath no skill in surgery, then? No. What is honour? A word. What is that word, honour? What is that honour? Coward, glutton, drunkard, Falstaff is cynical to the last degree; but he possesses a marvelous sense of humour and does not hesitate to aim his irony at himself as well; and this good-natured sense of humour gives him a peculiar charm.

When Shakespeare began analyzing the nature of power and politics, the situation in England was such that the necessity of political stability, guaranteed by an undisputed monarchy, was apparent, and such a point of view was upheld by the theory of the Divine Right Kings. By this theory, royal power is granted by God Himself, and anyone revolting against the lawful king is in a state of moral sin. Consciously or unconsciously, in his chronicle plays Shakespeare undermined this theory to a great extent. In such histories as "Richard II and "Richard III" he proves convincingly that the dethronement and even the killing of an unworthy or a villainous king is a righteous and justifiable act.

But that is not all. If we look at Shakespeare's histories as a single whole may see that, all other things apart, they contain a profound and detailed treatise upon the nature of monarchy. In them, Shakespeare care us all the possible types of autocratic rulers.

King John – a mediocre villain.

Richard III – a great villain who, all the same, is a true genius. The historical Richard III was not such a dyed-in-the-wool (absolute scoundrel as Shakespeare shows him: in depicting him, Shakespeare wanted to demonstrate the depths of depravity, to which a villainous king would sink if endowed with the intellect of a genius.

Henry VI – a kind, learned, weak-willed, religious man: he has none of the qualities necessary to be ruler of a kingdom, so he brings as much suffering upon his country as a villainous king would.

Richard II- a vain, shallow, foppish king with the soul of an artist. In him, Shakespeare portrays egotism with the same skill as he portrays ambition in *Macbeth* or jealousy in *Othello*. It is only after losing his crown and being imprisoned that Richard begins to understand life and attains a certain majesty. His cousin Henry Bolingbroke l'bolupbrukl. Later King Henry is a shrewd but unscrupulous politician. Having dethroned Richard, he establishes a dangerous precedent and his former allies, various of feudal civil wars. Into his mouth, Shakespeare puts one of the most beautiful soliloquies he ever wrote. It is night. The old king, mortally ill, roams the empty halls of his palace his soul is tortured by the news of feudal uprisings, and he is unable to sleep. But there is an antithesis to all these monarchs.

Shakespeare's Ideal King. At first we see him in "**Henry IV**" as Harry, Prince of Wales, when he is far from ideal. A brave but cynical young man, he spends his days in riotous living and forgets the feelings and duties of a son. Upon learning of his father's mortal illness, however, he suddenly changes and after becoming Henry V, turns into a model of virtue with a speed that is hardly convincing.

In "**Henry V**" he is as different from Prince Hal in "Henry IV" as, incidentally, is the dull and stupid Falstaff in "The Merry Wives of Windsor" from the wonderful figure in "Henry IV".

Henry V is endowed with all the qualities, which, in Shakespeare's opinion, a good king should possess to be really good. Shakespeare's Henry bears no resemblance to the historical Henry V, a cruel, effeminate and unscrupulous ruler. But Shakespeare used the figure of Henry V for the purpose of creating his ideal king just as he used the figure of Richard III to show the most vicious king possibly.

The king in the play is brave, open-hearted, generous and democratic, more resembling a well-to-do farmer or artisan than the first aristocrat of the land. Courting the French princess, he says himself "... thou wouldst find me such a plain king, that thou wouldst think. I had sold my farm to buy my crown". Unlike all other kings described by Shakespeare, he places the interests of his country far above his personal interests. Under his scepter he unites the different national inhabiting the British Isles on a basis of perfect equality. What is more important, he achieves a harmonious unity of all classes, paying particular attention to the common people. Indeed, the victory at Agincourt is shown in the play as the victory of the English peasantry

over the arrogant French nobility, who simply ignored the common people.

And yet the play is a failure, that is to say, a failure for Shakespeare. Had it been written by any one else, its author would have been proclaimed a genius, but for Shakespeare it is inferior to many of his other works. Some passage, including many of Henry's own speeches, the address of the Duke of Burgundy in which he persuades, the warring monarchs to come to a peace agreement, and especially the speeches of the Chorus, rank among the highest achievements of the great poet. But the figure of Henry, which forms the centre of the play, is lifeless and unconvincing, and no wonder the character has no model in real life. In all European history we won't find a single monarch resembling Shakespeare's King Harry even distantly. But still in "Henry V" Shakespeare made an attempt to prove that a good king is possible, if only theoretically.

Such were his views in his younger days. But when the time of his great third period came, they underwent considerable change...

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