

MA Exam Themes

English Literature

Development of English drama from the late Middle Ages until the Elizabethan Age
What were the typical forms of late medieval drama? How did they develop? How did they influence the development of Renaissance English drama?
Describe the forms and main authors and works of the early Tudor drama? How do they relate to ancient (Latin and Greek) drama?

Development of English drama from the Elizabethan period until the closing of the theatres in 1642
Describe forms of Elizabethan playhouses. How did the layout of the buildings/halls influence the form of drama written for it?
Name the main Elizabethan dramatists. Assess their importance.
Name the main early Stuart dramatists. Assess their importance.

The work of William Shakespeare – poetry
Discuss the genres and themes of Shakespearean poetry. What is the importance of Shakespeare's narrative poems? What is the importance of Shakespeare's Sonnets?

The work of William Shakespeare – histories
What is the political and historical significance of Shakespeare's histories? Explain the main features of a Shakespearean history. How does Shakespeare retell English history? Discuss one Shakespeare's history and its typical features.

The work of William Shakespeare – drama/tragedies
Discuss the development of Shakespearean tragedy? Is there a typical Shakespearean tragic pattern? How does Shakespeare develop the earlier form of English tragedy? How does a Shakespearean tragedy relate to ancient tragedies, both Greek and Latin?

The work of William Shakespeare – drama/comedies
Discuss the development of Shakespearean comedy. What are typical features of a Shakespearean comedy? Why are certain comedies called "problem plays"? Discuss the problem plays.

The work of William Shakespeare – drama/romances
Discuss the development of Shakespearean romances. What are typical features of a Shakespearean romance? Is Henry VIII a romance or a history? Discuss.

Development of English prose from the late Middle Ages until the Elizabethan Age
What is Humanism? Who were the main European and English humanists? How did they want to reform medieval learning?

What is Arthurian tradition in English literature? How did it influence late medieval society and culture?

What are the main works of Humanist English prose? Assess their importance for the development of English prose.

What is the importance of Sir Philip Sidney for the development of Renaissance English prose?

Development of English verse from the high Middle Ages until the early Tudor period

What are chivalric romances? How did they influence English literature in the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance?

What is "courtly literature"? How did it influence European and English poetry?

Who was Geoffrey Chaucer? What are his main works? Why is he called "father of English poetry"?

How did English verse develop formally in the Middle Ages and the early Tudor period?

Development of English poetry from the Henrician period until early Elizabethan Age

Who was Sir Thomas Wyatt? How did he influence English poetry in the early Renaissance?

Who was Henry Howard, earl of Surrey? Assess the importance of his work.

What are the main themes of early Renaissance verse?

Development of English poetry in the age of Elizabeth I and James I

Who were the main poets in the Elizabethan Age? Discuss their work and importance.

What were the main genres of Elizabethan and Jacobean poetry?

Who were the Metaphysicals? Discuss their main representatives and their work? How were they rediscovered in the 20th century?

The work of John Milton

Who was John Milton? Discuss the political and social circumstances of his period.

How did his work develop? Discuss his major early works.

*What is the importance of **Paradise Lost**? Discuss the development of epic in the English Renaissance its typical features.*

Restoration drama and its poetics

How did English drama change its poetics in the Restoration period? Discuss the form and features of Restoration drama.

Who were the main Restoration dramatists? Discuss their major works.

The rise of the novel form in the late 17th and the beginning of the 18th century

How did the novel form develop in the late 17th century? Name the main figures of English prose in the late 17th century and assess their importance. Discuss the major works and compare them.

What are the social and cultural conditions that helped develop the genre of the novel?

Neoclassicist poetics and the work of Alexander Pope

What is the importance of Alexander Pope for the development of English (and American) literature in the 18th century?

What is mock-heroic? Discuss its typical features.

English satire in the late 17th and the beginning of the 18th century

How can we explain the rise of the satire in the late 17th century? Who are the main authors of this genre? Assess the importance of their major works.

English drama in the 18th century

Who are the main authors of 18th century English drama? Discuss their main works and their poetics. Discuss the typical genres and motifs.

Sentimentalism in 18th century literature

What is "sentimentalism" in literature? What are typical features of sentimental poetry?

What are typical features of sentimental prose?

Who are the main representatives of English sentimental poetry? Discuss their work and their importance.

Who are the main representatives of English sentimental prose? Discuss their work and their importance.

Gothic novel

What is a "gothic novel"? Discuss its typical features. Who are the main representatives of gothic novel in English literature? Discuss their work

Early Romanticism

How did the Romantic movement begin in England? What drove the Romantic movement in the late 18th century? Discuss the social and political circumstances of the period.

Who are the Lake Poets? How did they understand poetry? Name the major representatives and discuss their poetics and their influence.

Discuss the development of Romantic fiction.

The work of Keats, Shelley and Byron

What are the typical features of Keats's poetry? What are the typical features of Shelley's poetry? What are the typical features of Byron's poetry? Discuss their major works.

Discuss major English Romantic dramas? Can they be staged today? What is their appeal for contemporary readers and spectators?

Victorian novelists

Discuss the formal and technical development of the Victorian novel. How does the Victorian novel develop? Name the main representatives and discuss their work.

How are the social, political and cultural issues reflected in the Victorian novel? Take two novelists and discuss their main topics and their technique.

Victorian poetry

Who are the main Victorian poets? What are the typical formal and thematic features of Victorian poetry?

Discuss the importance of Lord Tennyson and Gerard Manley Hopkins.

Late Victorian drama

Who was G. B. Shaw? What are the main features of Shaw's dramas?

Discuss the importance of Oscar Wilde for the development of English drama.

The work of Thomas Hardy

Discuss the development of Hardy's work. Assess the impact of Thomas Hardy on later English novelists. Discuss Hardy's poetics and compare it to his predecessors. Discuss Hardy's world outlook, namely his pessimism and fatalism.

Late Victorian and Edwardian novel

Who were the main novelists in the last years of Queen Victoria's reign and during the Edwardian period? Discuss the main representatives and main features of the late Victorian and Edwardian novel.

Modernist poetry

Who were the chief representatives of English modernist poetry? Outline the modernist poetics and identify its main features. Assess the impact of modernism on future development of literature.

Modernist novel

Identify the main representatives of the modernist novel and specify the characteristics of the genre, namely key concepts and motifs. Set the modernist novel in the context of English literature.

Post-war poetry

Identify the main trends in post-war poetry, the chief representatives and their key works. Assess their poetics and compare the main topics of their works.

Post-war English novel

Talk about the post-war novel of the 1950s and 1960s. Name the principal representatives and give an account of their works.

Late 20th century novel

Discuss the novel at the end of the 20th century, its main topics and features. Identify the main representatives.

Late 20th century drama

Assess the development of drama in the late 20th century. Discuss the main representatives and their works.

Theory

Renaissance theory of poetry

How did the Renaissance define poetry? Who are the main representatives of Renaissance poetics in England? Discuss their work and their major ideas.

Dryden's theory of English drama

*How does Dryden define English drama as opposed to French drama? What is the main purpose of the **Essay on Dramatic Poesy**?*

Sir Thomas Browne & Robert Burton

Discuss the beginnings of English critical thinking and the emergence of theory.

Pope's **Essay on Criticism**

What are the main ideas of the work? How would you define neoclassicist critical theory?

John Locke, George Berkeley and David Hume

Discuss English empiricism.

Thomas Hobbes and John Locke

Discuss the emergence of political theory and its impact on future developments.

Romantic poetics and Coleridge's *Biographia litteraria*

Explain the importance of the sublime in early Romantic poetic theory.

*What is the importance of Coleridge's **Biographia litteraria**? What are the typical features of Romantic poetic theory?*

Edmund Burke

Discuss the theory of the sublime and Burke's political opinions.

Victorian criticism

Discuss utilitarianism of J.S. Mill and the Romantic theory of Thomas Carlyle

Modernist theory

Discuss the development of the theory at the end of the 19th and 20th century, namely the work of Bradley, James and Dewey and its outcome in modernism.

Late 20th century theory

Discuss New Criticism, the work of Frank Kermode and the reception of post-structuralism in Britain.