Bartholomew Dandridge, A Lady reading Belinda beside a fountain, 1745, Yale Center for British Art, New Haven.

Restoration and Augustan literature

Performer Heritage
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1. Restoration poetry

- Metaphysical conceits replaced by order and clarity.
- The real world became the main object of interest.

Restoration poetry was satiric due to the study and translation of the classic writers like Horace, Martial, and Juvenal.

John Dryden was the main poet of the age.
The new scientific attitude encouraged self-confidence and a belief in human progress.
3. Restoration drama

Theatres were made legal by **Charles II** after 1660

A great change in

- The structure of theatres
- Acting
- The style of plays

The audience
4. The structure of the theatre

The Elizabethan playhouse
- Unroofed
- Lit by daylight
- No curtain
- Absence of any scenery effects

The Restoration playhouse
- Roofed
- Artificially lit with candles
- A drop curtain
- Painted movable scenery
- Footlights
5. Acting

Elizabethan Age

- Female roles → played by boys
- Actors linked by cooperative sharing bonds

Restoration Age

- First professional actresses
- Actors and actresses tied to the theatre by a contract
- Both actors and actresses became public personalities
### 6. The Elizabethan and the Restoration theatre

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Elizabethan theatre</th>
<th>Restoration theatre</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main themes</strong></td>
<td>• universal themes</td>
<td>• vices and follies of the upper-middle class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Characters</strong></td>
<td>• kings, princes, warriors</td>
<td>• ordinary people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Audience</strong></td>
<td>• drawn from all social classes</td>
<td>• literate upper classes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. Style

**Elizabethan play**
- Poetry
- Elevated tone
- Solemn language

**Restoration play**
- Prose
- Formal, witty, satirical language
8. The Comedy of Manners

The main themes:

- **Marriages** were rebellious and without love
- **Sexual desires and infidelity**
- **Vices and follies of the upper class**

New characters:
gullible husbands cheated by their wives →
the cynic “fop” / “gallant” or “fortunate” lover;
witty heroines more interested in fashion than in morals

**Aim:** to excite laughter by making fun of the manners and absurdities of an artificial society.
The 18th-century key concepts were:

- political stability;
- individualism;
- liberal thought and free will;
- optimism;
- reason and common sense;
- desire for balance, symmetry, refinement.
10. The reading public

The increase in the reading public in the Augustan Age was due to:

- The growing importance of the middle class
- The individual’s trust in his own abilities
- The practice of reason and self-analysis

Most readers were middle-class women.

They used to borrow books from circulating libraries.

Coffee-houses allowed the circulation of news and opinions.
The interest of middle-class people in literature gave rise to:

- **journalism**
  - The Tatler’ and ‘The Spectator’ → the first English newspapers
  - Their style → simple, lively
  - Their aim → didactic

- **the novel**
  - Where the belief in the power of reason and the individual’s trust in his own abilities found expression
Restoration and Augustan literature

11. The novelist

1. The spokesman of the middle class.

2. The fathers of the English novel:

- Daniel Defoe the realistic novel
- Jonathan Swift the utopian novel
- Samuel Richardson the epistolary novel
- Henry Fielding the picaresque novel
- Laurence Sterne the anti-novel novel
12. The novelist’s aim

- **To be understood widely** He wrote in a simple way.

- **Realism** not only linked to the life presented, but to the way it was shown.

- **Speed and copiousness** His most important economic virtues since it was the bookseller and not the patron who rewarded him.
13. The characters

- The hero: A bourgeois, self-made, self-reliant man
- The mouthpiece of the author: The reader is expected to sympathise with him
- All the characters have contemporary names and surnames (Robinson Crusoe): They struggle for survival or social success
### 14. The narrative technique

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1ST-PERSON NARRATOR</th>
<th>3RD-PERSON NARRATOR</th>
<th>PATTERN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daniel Defoe</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fictional autobiographies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samuel Richardson</td>
<td></td>
<td>Letters exchanged between the main characters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Fielding</td>
<td></td>
<td>Picaresque style</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
15. The setting

- Chronological sequence of events.
- References to particular times of the year or of the day.

* I was born in the year 1632, in the city of York *

* Robinson Crusoe *

- Specific references to names of countries, towns and streets.
- Detailed descriptions of interiors to make the narrative more realistic.
16. Themes

1. Real life.

2. Everything that could alter a social status.

3. The sense of reward and punishment linked to the Puritan ethics of the middle class.