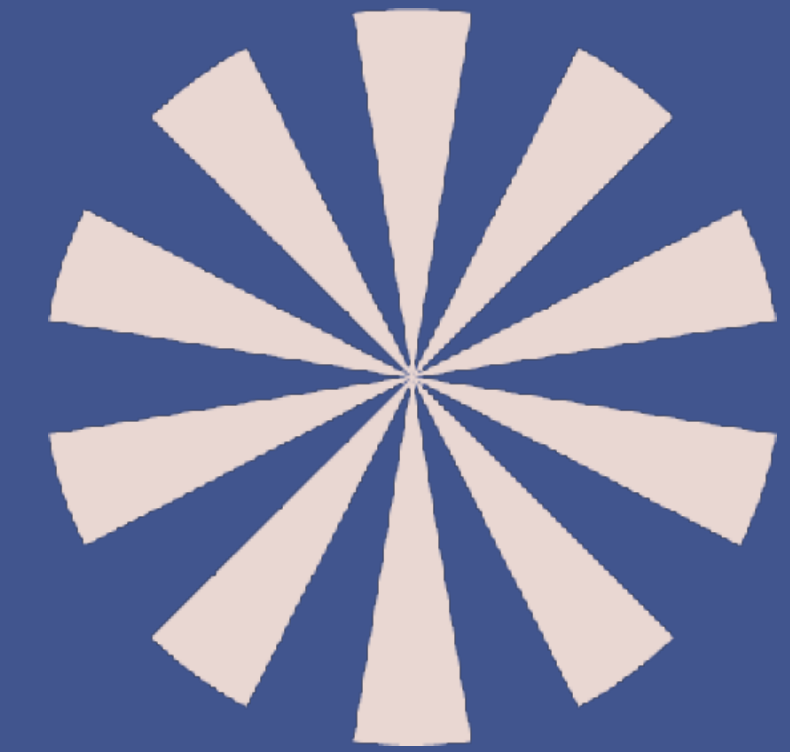

British Literature 1

for KVS / NVS



DR. KALYANI VALLATH

25 YEARS OF
EXCELLENCE



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Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama

Elizabethan Age

- The Elizabethan Age spans 1558–1603, aligning with the reign of Queen Elizabeth I.
- This era is celebrated as the Golden Age of English Drama, marked by extraordinary growth in theatrical production, creativity, and cultural influence.
- England experienced a major intellectual and cultural revival, influenced by Renaissance humanism, new learning from Europe, and the rediscovery of classical texts.
- The period saw immense growth and enrichment of the English language, enabling more expressive and sophisticated dramatic writing.
- Rapid urbanization, rising literacy, and a flourishing court culture created an enthusiastic audience for theatre, fostering a lively public stage.

The English Renaissance and Humanism

- The Elizabethan period coincides with the late European Renaissance.
- England witnessed a renewed fascination with classical antiquity, rational inquiry, and human potential.
- Humanism emphasized the dignity of man, the exploration of individual identity, and the study of classical texts.
- Petrarch was the father of Humanism
- Major British Renaissance humanists include Thomas More, Roger Ascham, Sir Thomas Elyot, and John Colet, who focused on classical scholarship and education.
- Later, humanist ideals were also reflected in poets and playwrights like Philip Sidney, Christopher Marlowe, and William Shakespeare.
- The humanistic worldview directly influenced drama, encouraging complex characters, psychological depth, and ethical questioning.

The Reformation

- England had recently undergone the Protestant Reformation, breaking from Rome and establishing the Church of England.
- Religious turbulence created anxieties and moral questions, reflected subtly in dramatic themes of guilt, authority, conscience, and power.
- Though overt religious drama was prohibited, morality concerns seeped into secular plays.

Rise of Nationalism and Imperialism

- Defeat of the Spanish Armada (1588) fostered national pride.
- Exploration, trade, and the beginnings of empire expanded England's worldview.
- History plays in particular expressed this rising nationalism and fascination with England's past.
- Colonies were established in the New World, starting with Jamestown.

Growth of Urban Culture and Literacy

- London became a bustling commercial metropolis with a growing middle class.
- Increasing literacy created an eager audience for theatre and printed drama.
- Theatre became a central public entertainment, much like cinema today.

Elizabethan Drama

- Elizabethan drama is deeply connected to the English Renaissance, which ushered in new attitudes toward humanity, individuality, art, and the natural world.
- Playwrights fused classical models (tragedy, comedy, Senecan structure, Aristotelian principles) with native English forms (morality plays, folk drama, interludes).
- The era encouraged innovation in plot, character, and form, resulting in drama that was structurally adventurous and emotionally powerful.
- Elizabethan drama foregrounded complex human motivations, moral dilemmas, psychological depth, and social concerns, making the theatre relatable and enduring.
- This period laid the foundation for modern English theatre and produced the greatest dramatists of the age, including Marlowe, Shakespeare, and Jonson.

The Beginnings of Drama

- Elizabethan drama developed out of:
 - Mystery Plays (biblical cycles)
 - Morality Plays (allegorical battles of good vs. evil)
 - Interludes (short humorous pieces performed at courts and schools)
- These early forms shaped Elizabethan drama's moral questioning, comic elements, and fondness for allegory.

Rise of Professional Theatres

- The late 16th century saw the establishment of the first permanent public theatres in England:
 - The Theatre (1576)
 - The Curtain
 - The Rose
 - The Swan
 - The Globe
- These polygonal, open-air structures allowed performances for thousands, uniting all classes—from apprentices to nobility.

Acting Companies

- Players belonged to licensed companies such as:
 - The Lord Chamberlain's Men
 - The Admiral's Men
 - The Queen's Men
 - The Children of Paul's
- Patronage protected them from censorship and conferred legitimacy.

Audience and Performance

- Performances were done in daytime, in open-air theatres with a thrust stage, and special effects like trapdoors. There were no actresses; boys played female roles.
- Minimal sets (no curtains or backdrop) with emphasis on language, gesture, elaborate costumes and imagination.
- Elizabethan drama freely blended:
 - Classical with native
 - Tragic with comic
 - Realistic with supernatural
- This hybridity is a defining hallmark of the age.
- Mixed-class audience—groundlings to aristocrats

Tragedy

- Romantic Tragedy that did not completely follow rules
- Influenced strongly by Senecan conventions: revenge motives, ghosts, rhetorical speeches, sensational violence.
- Moved beyond rigid classical forms to explore human psychology, moral ambiguity, and political corruption.
- First tragedy:
 - The Tragedie of Gorboduc, or Ferrex and Porrex (1561), by Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville

Comedy

- Drew from Plautus and Terence (Roman New Comedy) as well as English folk traditions.
- Typical features: mistaken identity, wordplay, festive spirit, romantic entanglements.
- Celebrated wit, social mobility, and youthful energy.
- First comedy:
 - Ralph Roister Doister by Nicholas Udall, probably composed between 1551 and 1553

Other Genres

- History Plays
 - Unique to England, dramatizing the lives of English kings and national crises.
 - Reflected the era's growing nationalism and political anxieties.
 - Explored power, legitimacy, rebellion, and statecraft.
- Romantic Tragicomedy
 - Blended serious and comic elements.
 - Known for sudden reversals, shipwrecks, supernatural events, reunions, and forgiveness.
 - Inspired by Italian romances and native folklore.
- Revenge Drama
 - A specialized sub-genre closely tied to Seneca.
 - Features: ghosts, intrigue, corruption, feigned madness, moral decay.
 - Holds a mirror to anxieties about justice and the collapse of moral order.

Dramatic Conventions

- Blank Verse (Unrhymed Iambic Pentameter)
 - Became the dominant dramatic medium.
 - Flexible, expressive, and close to natural speech rhythms.
 - Elevated drama to poetic intensity.
 - First non-dramatic use: Surrey in translation of Books II and IV of Aeneid
 - First dramatic use: Gorboduc
 - Marlowe's "Mighty Line" (Ben Jonson)
- Soliloquies and Asides
 - Enabled exploration of inner conflict and psychological depth.
 - Allowed characters to address the audience directly, blurring boundaries between public and private.
- The cult of the Machiavel (scheming villain).
- The Clown and the Fool had a satirical, subversive power to reveal social hypocrisy.

University Wits

- **John Lyly (1553–1606)**
 - Courtly comedies, prose drama, euphuistic style.
 - Influenced Shakespeare's early style.
- **George Peele (1556–1596)**
 - Mythological and pageant-like drama; lyrical.
- **Thomas Lodge (1558–1625)**
 - Wrote Rosalynde, source of Shakespeare's As You Like It.
- **Robert Greene (1558–1592)**
 - Pastoral and romantic comedies; an early rival of Shakespeare.
- **Thomas Kyd (1558–1594)**
 - Founder of revenge tragedy.
 - The Spanish Tragedy influenced Hamlet.
- **Christopher Marlowe (1564–1593)**
 - "Father of English Tragedy."
 - Known for mighty line, overreaching protagonists, and heroic themes.
 - Key works: Doctor Faustus, Tamburlaine, The Jew of Malta.

William Shakespeare (1564–1616)

- The towering figure of the age.
- Innovator in blank verse, dramatic structure, characterization, and thematic depth.
- Works span tragedy, comedy, history, romance, and problem plays.

Soliloquy in Elizabethan drama serves chiefly to



- A. Reveal public declarations to other characters
- B. Provide comic interludes
- C. Display inner conflict, and moral dilemmas
- D. Replace external action with narrative commentary

ANS: C

The “Machiavel” figure enters English drama primarily from



- A. Native English morality tradition
- B. Medieval miracle cycles
- C. Classical Greek comedy
- D. Italian political thought

ANS: D

Senecan influence on Elizabethan tragedy is visible most clearly in



- A. Rustic humor and clown scenes
- B. Philosophical soliloquies and rhetorical violence
- C. Strict observance of unity of action
- D. Domestic, middle-class settings

ANS: B

Assertion (A): Elizabethan theatres encouraged direct contact between actors and audience.

Reason (R): Theatres were roofed, candlelit structures modelled on Italian court theatres.



A: True

R: False

Explanation: Theatres were open-air, not Italianate.

A: Comic interludes were frequently included even in serious plays.

R: Elizabethan drama aimed to satisfy a socially mixed audience.



True–True

R explains A

A: Elizabethan dramaturgy rarely obeyed the unities of time and place.

R: Playwrights valued imaginative freedom and episodic storytelling.



True–True

R explains A

A: Elizabethan comedies frequently use disguise and mistaken identity.

R: These devices were influenced by Roman New Comedy and Italian novelle.



True–True

R explains A

A: Printed quartos created a new readership for dramatic literature.
R: They were cheap, accessible, and circulated widely among literate urban classes.



True–True

R explains A

A: Elizabethan stagecraft relied heavily on props.

R: This reduced dependence on rhetorical language.



False—False

Arrange the following in chronological order:

A. Morality Plays

B. First permanent public theatres

C. Mystery Cycles

D. Tragicomedies



C-A-B-D

Match dramatic influences

- A. Seneca
- B. Plautus
- C. Morality Plays
- D. Italian Novelle

1. Comic patterns, mistaken identity
2. Rhetorical violence, revenge structure
3. Ethical conflict in allegorical form
4. Romantic plots involving travel and coincidence

A-2, B-1, C-3, D-4



Match socio-cultural forces

- A. Renaissance Humanism
- B. Reformation
- C. Nationalism
- D. Urbanization

1. Expanding literacy and middle-class audience
2. Exploration of human potential
3. Moral conflict and religious anxiety
4. Interest in national history and kingship

A-2, B-3, C-4, D-1



Match characteristics of Elizabethan drama

- A. Hybridity of genres
- B. Minimal scenery
- C. Festive tradition
- D. Revenge structure

- 1. Violent justice driven by personal grievance
- 2. Seasonal misrule and comic energy
- 3. Blending tragic and comic modes
- 4. Greater dependence on language and imagination

A-3, B-4, C-2, D-1



Jacobean Age

- Corresponds to the reign of King James I (1603–1625).
- Serves as a transitional phase between the Elizabethan and Caroline periods.
- Inherits the theatrical traditions, forms, and innovations of the Elizabethan stage.
- Builds on foundations laid by Shakespeare, Marlowe, and the University Wits.
- Marked shift toward a darker, more somber worldview.
- Drama becomes more cynical, introspective, and emotionally intense.

Jacobean Drama

- Greater emphasis on inner turmoil, mental instability, and psychological complexity.
- Characters often driven by obsession, guilt, ambition, and moral ambiguity.
- Dominant Themes
 - Moral corruption and the decay of ethical values.
 - Political intrigue, power struggles, and court conspiracies.
 - Revenge and the consequences of violence.
 - Sexual politics, desire, and transgression.
 - Death, decay, and the fragility of human life.

Major Tragedians

- **John Webster (c. 1580–c. 1634)**
 - Master of the macabre and psychological tragedy.
 - Works: The Duchess of Malfi, The White Devil.
- **Thomas Middleton (1580–1627)**
 - Versatile writer of dark comedies, city satires, and tragedies.
 - Works: The Changeling (with Rowley), Women Beware Women, A Chaste Maid in Cheapside.
- **Cyril Tourneur (1575–1626)**
 - Important contributor to revenge tragedy.
 - Works: The Revenger's Tragedy.

City Comedy & Satire

- **Ben Jonson (1572–1637)**
 - Although Elizabethan in origin, his major satirical comedies flourish under James I.
 - Master of comedy of humours, satire, classical form, and urban comedy.
 - Works: Every Man in His Humour, Volpone, The Alchemist, Bartholomew Fair.
- **Thomas Dekker (c. 1572–1632)**
 - Known for humane, urban comedies.
 - Works: The Shoemaker's Holiday, The Honest Whore.
- **John Marston (1576–1634)**
 - Bitter satire, stylistic intensity.
 - Works: The Malcontent, Antonio's Revenge.

Late Shakespearean Plays

- William Shakespeare (1564–1616)
 - His late romances and tragedies fall into the Jacobean period.
 - Works: King Lear, Macbeth, Othello, The Tempest.

Other Playwrights

- George Chapman – Classical influence; translator of Homer.
- Thomas Heywood – Domestic drama, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*.
- John Fletcher & Francis Beaumont – Pioneers of tragicomedy; *Philaster*, *The Maid's Tragedy*

Which of the following qualities most distinctly differentiates Jacobean tragedy from Elizabethan tragedy?



- A. Use of blank verse
- B. Focus on national identity
- C. Emphasis on moral corruption
- D. Incorporation of pastoral elements

ANS: C

Which playwright is most closely associated with the mature form of the revenge tragedy in the Jacobean period?



- A. John Lyly
- B. Cyril Tourneur
- C. Thomas Heywood
- D. Robert Greene

ANS: B

In Jacobean drama, which genre typically explores urban vice, mercantile ethics, and social mobility?



- A. City comedy
- B. Tragicomedy
- C. Masque
- D. Romance

ANS: A

The characteristic “decay imagery” seen in Jacobean tragedies symbolically represents



- A. Agricultural decline
- B. Human mortality and corruption
- C. The triumph of nature over society
- D. Nostalgia for medieval order

ANS: B

Jonson's theory of "humours" reveals



- A. Psychological imbalance
- B. Romantic reunions
- C. Human mortality
- D. Supernatural agents to resolve conflict

ANS: A

The macabre atmosphere in Webster's works often emerges from



- A. The use of allegorical abstractions
- B. Strict classical unities
- C. Mythological ornamentation
- D. Depiction of violent acts, disease, and decay

ANS: D

Which playwright most deliberately critiques Jacobean consumer culture and emerging capitalism?



- A. Thomas Kyd
- B. Thomas Dekker
- C. Ben Jonson
- D. John Lyly

ANS: C

A: Ben Jonson's comedies are less romantic than Shakespeare's Elizabethan comedies.

R: Jonson was a Moral Idealist who believed satire should correct human folly.



True–True

R explains A

A: Jacobean revenge tragedies frequently employ sensational violence.

R: These plays aimed to expose the brutal consequences of unrestrained ambition and corruption.



True–True

R explains A

Match the books and authors

- A. The Changeling
- B. The Duchess of Malfi
- C. Philaster
- D. A Shoemaker's Holiday

- 1. Thomas Dekker
- 2. Middleton and Rowley
- 3. John Webster
- 4. Beaumont and Fletcher

A-2, B-3, C-4, D-1



Match the books and authors

- A. Court Masques
- B. Private Theatres
- C. Public Theatres
- D. City Comedy

1. Artificial spectacle and aristocratic allegory
2. Intimate performances with elite audiences
3. Popular, louder performances with broad audiences
4. Mercantile corruption and urban satire

A-1, B-2, C-3, D-4

