

## THE CLASSICAL MOVEMENT

The Classical age is known by three titles: The Classical age, the Augustan age and the age of Reason and Good Sense. It is called Classical age because it preached standards. It is called Augustan age because it resembled in the splendor of its literature to the age of Emperor Augustus. The Classical age is also called as the age of Reason and Good sense because the work during this movement was based on the “Good Sense” ideal of French critic Boileau, formulated in 1673.

Characteristics of the classical age:

### a) **Respect for Rules**

The literary transition from Metaphysical to Classical was a progressive movement from spirit of liberty, fancy, brilliance and adventure to rule and discipline, both in inspiration and in form.

This rule and discipline were accepted and practiced with enthusiasm by the new school. The Classical conventions governed every variety of verse - Drama, Epic, Satire, Ode or Pastoral. The subject matter was of minor importance. But the form was expected to be perfect.

### b) **Intellectual Quality**

The leading writers of this period were not extravagant and emotional. They were governed by spirit and reason and ‘good sense’. Their poetry was born in the head not in the heart and so it appealed to the intellectual and not the emotions. But they never **violated** the rules of writing. The dramas were written with high passions. But its classicism gave no appeal to the later generations.

The classical writing did not attract the modern readers, but even then these works are alive due to the quality which they maintained. They had a gift of pregnant and memorable phrase, descriptive, philosophical, malicious, critical or even pathetic. Pope is more often quoted than any other English poet. But Shakespeare and many of his sayings are so familiar that we never think of their authorship.

### c) **Insistence on a set Poetic style:**

The classical poetry insisted on usage of words refined from grossness of domestic use and it has to be free from the harshness of term appropriated to particular arts. The language of routine life was unacceptable and also new expressions were unaccepted. As a result the language of this age was standardized.

**d) Emergence of Heroic Couplet:**

The Heroic Couplet was the best medium for writing poetry. It was also suitable for drama, epic and satire. These three literary forms were very popular during Classical age. It had rules of its own, initiated by Waller and Denham and systematized by Dryden and Pope. It made lyrical measures outdated and unknowingly invited the Blank Verse for Dramatic purpose. It became the natural expression of the intellectual mood of the age.

**e) Treatment of Town Life:**

London became center point for the writers. The hopeful writers who wanted to make a career in Literature were attracted towards London. The Coffee-house was the place where men of different professions including authors usually met to discuss the topics of the depth. There were not less than 3000 Coffee-houses in London. These Coffee-houses helped to establish contact not only between author and reader but between author and author which had the benefit of immortal literature. For example, Dryden and Pope first met at a Coffee-house. All these had its influence on literature, which came to draw many of its subjects from town life rather than nature and the countryside. The London life and current fashion and controversies offered unlimited scope for satire.