

Mohammed Kheidher University of Biskra
Faculty of letters & Foreign Languages
Department of English Language and Literature

Class: L1

Module: Literary Text

Instructor: Dr. BEN ABDERREZAK A.

2nd semester

Lecture Four: The Renaissance Period
Jacobean Age (1603-1625)

Tutorial Outcomes

By the end of this tutorial, students will be able to:

- Outline the historical and cultural contexts of the Jacobean Age within the broader Renaissance Period.
- Identify and analyze key literary works and their prevailing features during the Jacobean Era.
- Discuss the significance of major authors such as William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and John Donne in the Jacobean Age.

Prerequisites

Before delving into the Jacobean Age, please consider the following questions:

- How did the reign of James I differ from that of Elizabeth I, and what impact did these differences have on literature and culture?
- What were the major religious and political tensions of the Jacobean Age, and how were these reflected in the literature of the time?
- How did the literary styles and themes of the Jacobean Age evolve from those of the Elizabethan Era?

Terminology Used in This Tutorial

- **Metaphysical Poetry:** A style of poetry that explores abstract and philosophical concepts through complex metaphors and intellectual wit.
- **Puritanism:** A religious reform movement within the Church of England that sought to purify it of perceived Roman Catholic practices.

- Realism: The attribute of accepting the facts of life and favoring practicality and literal truth

Introduction

Following the Elizabethan Age, the Renaissance Period continued with the Jacobean Age (1603-1625), named after James I, who ruled England after Elizabeth's death. While the Renaissance spirit persisted, the Jacobean era brought its own distinct influences and literary characteristics. Some historians also identify a "Puritan Age" (1620-1660) within this period, noting Puritanism's growing influence on English life and literature.

1. Jacobean Age (1603-1625)

The Jacobean Age, named after James I (from the Latin "Jacobus"), spans from 1603 to 1625. While some consider the last five years of this period as part of the Puritan Age (1620-1660), the era is generally defined by James I's reign and its distinctive cultural and literary trends.

2. The Important Facts which Influenced the Literature of this Period

Several key factors influenced the literature of the Jacobean Age:

- Expansion of Colonial Territories: Continued expansion of English colonies, impacting trade and cultural exchange
- Religious Conflict: Resurgence of religious conflict, with Protestants divided into Anglicans, Presbyterians, and Puritans
- Renaissance Influence: Continued influence of the Renaissance, albeit with evolving expressions
- Union of Scotland and England: Scotland was brought under the rule of the King of England, leading to political and cultural integration.
- 3) Major Writers of the Period and Their Major Works
- The Jacobean Age featured both established and emerging literary talents:
- William Shakespeare (1564-1616): Though primarily known as an Elizabethan playwright, Shakespeare wrote twelve significant plays during the Jacobean Age, including Measure for Measure (1604), Othello (1604), Macbeth (1605), King Lear (1605), and The Tempest (1611). Despite composing these plays in the Jacobean

Age, he is typically regarded as an Elizabethan playwright, and the period from 1590-1616 is often termed the Shakespearean Age.

- Ben Jonson (1573-1637): Having started his career in the Elizabethan Period, Jonson wrote well-known plays such as *Volpone* (1605), *The Silent Woman* (1609), and *The Alchemist* (1610).
- Francis Bacon (1561-1626): Continued writing and published *Advancement of Learning* (1605) and *Novum Organum* (1620). New essays were added to the edition of his *Essays* (1625).
- John Webster (1580-1625): Known for his dark and intense tragedies, including *The White Devil* (1612) and *The Duchess of Malfi* (1614).
- Cyril Tourneur (1575-1626): Authored *The Revenger's Tragedy* (1600) and *The Atheist's Tragedy* (1611).
- John Donne (1572-1631) and George Herbert (1593-1633): These metaphysical poets began writing during this period, known for their intellectual and complex verse.

3. Prevailing Literary Features of the Age

The Jacobean Age exhibited distinct literary characteristics:

- Decline of Elizabethan Verse: The grace and felicity of Elizabethan verse began to diminish.
- Shift from Idealism to Realism: The Platonic idealism of the Elizabethan era waned, with a greater emphasis on realism.
- Continued Renaissance Influence: The spirit of the Renaissance remained a primary influence.
- Drama as the Dominant Genre: Drama continued to dominate the literary scene.
- Classical Rules Maintained: Ben Jonson and others maintained the classical rules of drama.
- Poetic Innovation: Poetry took new and surprising directions, particularly with the rise of metaphysical poetry.
- Decadence of Art: A sense of decadence began to emerge, with increased vulgarity in some works.
- Development of English Language: The English language continued to develop.
- Emergence of Satire: Satirical art began to gain prominence.

Practice

Analyze John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* as a representation of Jacobean tragedy. How does it reflect the era's concerns with power, corruption, and morality?

References

- Dollimore, J. (1984). *Radical tragedy: Religion, ideology and power in the drama of Shakespeare and his contemporaries*. University of Chicago Press.
- Heinemann, M. (1980). *Puritanism and theatre: Thomas Middleton and opposition drama under the early Stuarts*. Cambridge University Press.
- Jardine, L. (1996). *Reading Shakespeare historically*. Routledge.
- Norbrook, D. (1984). *Poetry and politics in the English Renaissance*. Routledge & Kegan Paul.