

The British Restoration Period (1660-1798)

Also known as The Augustan Age, The Neoclassical Period, The Enlightenment, and The Age of Reason

I. Politics and Kings of the Period

A. The period begins with the RESTORATION of the Monarchy in 1660 bringing Charles II from his exile in France.

1. Brings with him the indulgent and artistic ways of Louis XIV's court
2. Two distinct political parties resulted, the Whigs and the Tories
 - a. Whigs want to limit royal authority
 - b. Tories support absolute royal authority.

B. James I (brother of Charles II) takes the throne and is voted out by Parliament due to his highly Catholic ways.

1. The Glorious or Bloodless Revolution is a reference to the lack of violence needed to change the throne from Catholic James I to his protestant daughter Mary and her husband William.
2. Shortly after James I's abdication of the throne,
 - a. Bill of Rights limiting the power of the King.
 - b. Parliament passed an act forbidding Catholics to rule.

C. George I of Hanover Germany took the throne in 1714 when his cousin Anne, daughter of William and Mary, died ending the rule of the Stuarts and beginning the rule of the House of Hanover.

1. George I and his son George II did NOT speak English and relied heavily on their advisors establishing the role of England's first Prime Ministers.
 - Richard Walpole for George I and William Pitt for George II
2. Under George I and George II and their Prime Ministers, the British thrived winning the Seven Years War (aka The French and Indian War) and adding French Canada and India to the Empire.

D. In 1760, George III became the first British born Hanover monarch although he was less effective than his father and grandfather.

- Because his English was reliable, he used his Prime Minister less and is held responsible for the loss of the American Colonies

II. Why this period is known as the Augustan and Neoclassical Period

A. The title of The Augustan Period refers to similarities between England at this time and Rome during the reign of Caesar Augustus, also known as Octavius (63 BC-14 AD).

- Octavius ruled in the time after Julius Caesar's assassination. He restored order and peace to the people of Rome and is often classified as its second founder.
- In a similar way, Charles II is taken from exile in France and restored England. He reopened playhouses, brought back a formal court, and had the body of Oliver Cromwell exhumed and decapitated.

B. Most educated people of the time are familiar with the classical works as well as the works of their own time and country and found enjoyment in their connection.

- They enjoyed allusions to the political connections of the time periods and references to the classical characters and themes.
- Works emphasizing these similarities are labeled "neoclassical" meaning "new classics."

III. This period is known as The Age of Reason and The Enlightenment because of the country's shift from an emotional approach to thinking to an educational and factual one.

A. The Industrial Revolution plus advances in science research and mathematics influence all aspects of British thought including the literature.

B. People no longer believe in signs and vast punishments from God (ie. The London Fire and Plague), but begin to turn to science and order. They begin asking "how" instead of "why."

C. The writing content, style, and order of scientists spill over into all of literature as sentences are shortened with the allusions and extended metaphors of their predecessors.

After completing and discussing the notes above, prove your understanding of the material by answering the questions below.

1. Name the succession of British Monarchs from Charles II to George III.
2. Why is this period known as the Restoration?
3. Why is this period known as the Augustan Period?
4. Why is this period known as the Neoclassical Period?
5. Why is this period known as the Age of Reason and The Enlightenment?