THE RESTORATION AND THE AUGUSTAN AGE
1660 - 1760
THE RESTORATION 1660 - 1714

CHARLES II 1660 – 1685
- two political parties are founded: the Tories supported by both king and Church and the Whigs supported by the commercial middle classes
- in 1665 the plague causes 100,000 deaths
- in 1666 the ‘Great Fire’ destroys most of the city of London

JAMES II 1685 – 1688
- in 1688 the Glorious Revolution: the different factions show good sense and moderation in deciding the fate of England
MARY and WILLIAM OF ORANGE 1689-1702

- in 1689 the Bill of Rights defines the relations between monarchy and Parliament
- in 1689 the Toleration Act grants freedom of worship to Protestant dissenters

QUEEN ANNE 1702-1714

- 1707 the Act of Union between Scotland and England
- the Treaty of Utrecht 1713 gives Britain Minorca and Gibraltar and grants the monopoly of the slave trade from Africa to the Americas
The Hanoverian dynasty arrives in Britain with George I, George II and George III.

**BUT** the real power is held by the **Prime Ministers**:

- **ROBERT WALPOLE**
  a capable but corrupt politician

- **WILLIAM PITT**
  famous for his mercantilist policy, helps England to expand its colonial possessions
WHAT IS ENLIGHTENMENT?

- It’s a philosophical, scientific and rational movement begun in England in the 17th century
- some of its leading figures are Locke, Diderot, Kant
- main ideas: all men are equals as rational beings and deserve both legal equality and individual liberty
- beliefs should be accepted on the basis of reason
RESTORATION PROSE

- Prose as a vehicle of Reason
- Thomas Hobbe’s *The Leviathan* 1651
- John Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* 1690

RESTORATION POETRY

- like Prose, Poetry is linked to Reason
  → John Dryden’s *Absalom and Achitophel* 1681
- Satire is one the most relevant genres of Restoration poetry
  → Samuel Butler’s *Hudibras* 1674
RESTORATION COMEDY

COMEDY OF MANNERS: - European influences, Molière and Commedia dell’Arte
- were restricted to people of fashion and refinement from the Upper Classes
- changes in the stage design and in acting
AUGUSTAN POETRY

continues the Restoration trend for satire and **mock-heroic poems**: a foolish character is described in a heroic context

Alexander Pope’s *The Rape of the Lock* 1714

AUGUSTAN DRAMA

is partly censored by Robert Walpole’s *Theatres Licensing Act* of 1737

John Gay’s *The Beggar’s Opera* 1728

AUGUSTAN PROSE

- in the 18th century prose flourishes in many forms: **pamphleteering, journalism** and **essays**

- it is deeply connected to real life (thanks to the rise of philosophical rationalism, the influences of Puritanism, the expansion of the reading public)
DANIEL DEFOE  1660 - 1731
- excellent economic theorist
- works for the government as a secret agent
- considered the father of the English novel and of modern journalism

MAIN WORKS:
1719  Robinson Crusoe
1722  Moll Flanders, A Journal of the Plague Year, Colonel Jack
1724  Roxana
From the Origins to the Middle Ages

Literary Context

Robinson Crusoe 1719

- written in the first-person, in a diary-like sequence
- the style is very matter-of-fact
- it can be seen as a:

Religious Allegory: a puritan tract about man’s redemption from sin

Economic Allegory: it refers to merchant capitalism. Crusoe embodies the self-made man

Imperialist Allegory: it refers to British imperialism in its attempt to prove the white superiority over the “savages”
JONATHAN SWIFT 1667 – 1745
- born in Ireland, he moves to England in 1689
- becomes an Anglican priest
- the foremost prose satirist in the English language

MAIN WORKS:
1704  *A tale of A Tub*
1713  *The Importance of the Guardian Considered*
1726  *Gulliver’s Travels*
1729  *A Modest Proposal*
Gulliver’s Travels 1726

it can be read in more than one way:

- an **imaginary travel story**
- an **anticipation** of the modern trend known as “**fantasy**”:
- a **bitter satire** on England
- the profound **disgust** of the author towards mankind
HENRY FIELDING 1707 – 1754

- receives a classical education
- as a magistrate, he fights against legal corruption

MAIN WORKS:

1741  *An Apology for the Life of Miss Shamela Andrews*

1742  *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews*

1749  *Tom Jones*

1751  *Amelia*
**TOM JONES 1749**

- the **third-person omniscient narrator** intervenes and comments on the characters and the events:

- relative autonomy of the characters → the narrator still controls everything

- the author borrows rhetorical styles, scenes and stories form the classics for **comic purposes**
LAURENCE STERNE 1713 – 1768

- after graduating from Cambridge University he becomes a vicar
- in 1762 he moves to France

MAIN WORKS:

1759  A Political Romance
1759  The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman
1768  A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy
The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman 1759

- **anti-novel**: it lacks in plot and linearity

- **meta-novel**: it can be seen as a reflection on the creative process of writing

- the *narrator* is always commenting on the process of writing

- the series of typographical techniques gives us the idea of the *artificial nature of the novel* and the illusion of realism