

English literature in Modern Age

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Abstract: England is one of the countries with a long and ancient history with literature, which is called English literature. The history of English literature returns to more than 5 centuries ago, through which the writers, poets and intellectuals in England have built their nation. This research aims to identify the different aspects of English literature in Modern Age according to the classification of different scientists, and the most important literary figures that represented English society aspects in their poems, novels or plays. It also reviewed some of the most dominant influences on writers, poets, and authors of that era such as: industrial era, World War I and World War II. The most famous books, poems, novels or plays were also listed in an attempt to summarize the most important features of this period starting from the early 19th century till now.

Keywords: English literature – Modern age.

1. INTRODUCTION

England is one of the countries with a long and ancient history with literature, which is called English literature. English literature is a term used for all literary forms narrative and poetic works written in English, regardless of its author. The history of English literature returns to more than 5 centuries ago, through which the writers, poets and intellectuals in England have built their nation. They have contributed in the formation of an identity to their community by using what has been reported throughout the history of English legends and novels and what has passed in them during the different periods of time of dramatic, Religious, economic or social events.

Since literature in its concept and meaning is aimed at education and pleasure, it also supports the aesthetic aspect more than the cognitive features. This type of art has received wide and significant attention from English authors, poets and writers.

It is also recognized that there is great interaction and harmony between literature and its contents of novels, poetry, plays and prose and the environmental conditions represented by the economic, social and political aspects surrounding it. English literature has been affected during this long period of history as the society was going through various environmental conditions and its transition from the rural nature based on farmers to the industrial nature with its technological and technical progress. Which led eventually to the emergence of the so-called modern era in English literature and this is what we will try to review some of its components, history and the most important of literarily characters from the perspective of an Arab researcher as the subject for this study.

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING ENGLISH LITERATURE

- 1 - The study of English literature helps to develop literary appreciation for texts and encourages the development of talent and creativity in the person who study it.
- 2 - We can understand the nature of English society through the novels, poetry and plays that reflect the nature of this society, its beliefs and ideas.
- 3 - It plays an important role in learning English language because this language depends on the development of some skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This can be achieved through the study of English literature compared to any other studies.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

English literature has been divided into different periods of time in which literature ranged between progress and prosperity in one period to decline in another period, in sequence along ages. Thus, many scientists have classified these stages. Through reviewing different studies and researches, the researcher pointed that the stages of English literature are as follow:

I): Old English literature in the period from 500 to 1100:

Anglo – Saxon period:

II) *English literature in the Middle Ages from 1100 to 1485.*

III) *English literature in the Renaissance era from 1485 to 1660.*

Some call it the Early Modern Age and it has been divided into four periods:

A - Tudor era in the time period from 1485 to 1603.

B - Elizabethan era in the time period from 1558 to 1603.

C – Jacobean era in the time period from 1603 to 1625.

D - Late Renaissance era (Puritans) in the time period from 1625 to 1660.

IV) *The modern classical era in the period from 1660 to 1797*, is also called the Age of Enlightenment. It included several periods of time:

A- Restoration era (The return of monarchy) in the period from 1660 to 1700.

B – Augustus era in the time period from 1700 to 1750.

V) *The age of English literature in the nineteenth century*

This era has been divided to several periods of time, including:

(A) The era of creativity (romanticism) in the period of time from 1784 to 1832.

B - Victorian era in the period of time from 1837 to 1901.

VI) *English literature in the twentieth century*

A - Edwardian era in the period from 1901 to 1910.

B - English literature between World War I and II.

C - English literature after World War II until the end of the twentieth century.

VII) English literature during the twenty-first century till now.

4. ENGLISH LITERATURE IN MODERN TIMES

There have been many opinions in many books and references on the history of English literature attempting to determine the actual timing of modern era of English literature. Many books and articles that discussed the topic, agreed for the most part that the beginning of the modern era of English literature begins in late Nineteenth century. This era has distinguished itself for traditional methods of writing using literary and expressive forms in an attempt by authors and poets to describe true feelings and sensations.

The modern era of English literature has been divided into multiple periods of time, which we will further discuss and study with emphasize on the most important literary figures and poets during each period.¹

I. English literature in the 19th century

1 - The creative era or (romantic era)

¹ Morley, Catherine, (2012). *Modern American Literature*. EDINBURGH University.

In this period, authors and poets were more concerned with the emotional aspect rather than the mental and intellectual aspect, in their literary writings or poetic poems, where idealism was dominant at that time with the emphasis that imagination was the main and fundamental source of creativity.

However, the creative approach was greatly influenced by the industrial revolution and the industrial progress. There was a great difficulty for authors and poets to head to the lakes and rivers to enjoy the natural landscapes that inspired their imagination and their ability to produce creative works and beautiful and distinctive poems.²

Among the most important pioneers of this era:

A - William Blake

He is considered one of the most important poets and visual arts producers in this age. He has used the romantic English language and tried to introduce intaglio engraving to replace printing, so he engraved some expressions next to some drawings and images as illustrations on plates of copper.³

Among his most important works the paintings of "Book of Jacob", which are considered one of the most beautiful paintings based on the intaglio engraving as he wrote a poetry poem entitled "Little Black Boy" as well as "Songs of Innocence and of Experience" in 1798.⁴

B. Thomas de Quincey

He is one of the most important authors of romantic prose. His article "Confessions of an English Opium-Eater" in 1821 is one of the most important works he has done.

C - Jane Austen

She was one of the greatest novelists of the time. She wrote her novel "Pride and Prejudice" in 1813.

At the same time, there was another famous writer, **Sir Walter Scott**, who wrote a series of famous novels under the title: "Waverly novels" in 1814.⁵

2 - Victorian era:

It is the era of the reign of Queen Victoria, which ruled England until 1901. The country has witnessed great changes in all aspects of economic, social, political and cultural life.⁶ One of the most important pioneers in this era:

A - Charles Dickens

He is one of the most famous authors of the Victorian era. He wrote his novel "Oliver Twist" in 1839, and his novel "David Copperfield" in 1850, in which he shed light on the lives of children, the poor and the suffering of cruelty, poverty and misery as a result of the domination of the society elite at the time.

He wrote his novel "Bleak House" in 1852 and his novel "The Story of Two Cities" in 1859, which depicted the situation of the French working class during the French Revolution.⁷

B. William Makepeace Thackeray

He wrote one of the masterpieces of English literature, the novel "Vanity Fair" in 1848, which was decorated with pictures of his drawings and published in the form of a monthly series. It speaks of the days of the Napoleonic War. He also wrote his novel "Henry Esmond" in 1852, about a brave soldier who loved two women.⁸

²Thomas, Edward,(2001), *Four-and-Twenty Blackbirds*, introd. Richard Emeny. Cyder.

³ - Jean H. Hagstrom, William Blake, Poet and Painter,(1964) An introduction to the illuminated verse, University of Chicago.

⁴ G.E. Bentley (2001). *The Stranger From Paradise: A Biography of William Blake*.

⁵ Morrison, Robert, (2013), "De Quincey's Wicked Book." OUP Blog. Oxford University.

⁶ Barfoot, C.C., ed. Aldous Huxley,(2001), *Between East and West*. Studies in Comparative Literature

⁷ Stone, Harry,(1987), *Dickens' work notes for his novels*, Chicago.

C - Emily Bronte

She is an English writer and novelist who wrote one of the masterpieces of English narrative literature, the novel "Wuthering Heights" in 1847, which tells a story of intense love between the hero and the heroine, that amounts to self-destruction and the destruction of others around them.⁹

II - English literature at the beginning of the twentieth century*1) The Edwardian period from 1901 to 1914:*

This era has been marked by the emergence of many political, economic, social and cultural changes. Socialism has spread and the economic aspect of the country has become worse. Poverty has spread during this period. The fictional writing evolved about that idea which has also appeared in popular novels, and theatre gained a distinguished place.¹⁰

Some of the pioneers of this era:

A - Herbert George Wells (H.G. Wells)

He is an English novelist known for his novel "Old Wives Tales" (1908), which depicts the life of the middle classes in the cities and their sufferings from boredom and depression. He also wrote science fiction novels, such as the novel "The Time Machine" in 1895.¹¹

B. Joseph Conrad

He is an English writer from Polish origins who has depended in his writings on the psychological aspect and what he can represent in various subjects such as crime and honor. One of his novels is (Lord Jim) in 1900.¹²

C- Virginia Woolf

She is an English novelist who depicted the state in which the upper classes lived and their relation to the middle classes. In 1925, she wrote her novel "Mrs. Dalloway" about one day in the life of a lady during the preparation of a party that should be held at her home.¹³

D- George Bernard Shaw

He is an Irish author who moved to England at the beginning of his life. He is among the most famous authors and writers of the English theater throughout history. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1925 for his "Pygmalion".¹⁴

His most important work is "Widowers' Houses" in 1892 and his novel (Arms and the Man) in 1894.¹⁵

III. English literature between World War I and II

The outbreak of World War I left had left a profound impact on literature, poetry and the English theater as a result of the devastation and destruction of the war, which led to the sense of end of the world felt by all members of English society of the in general and the end of the English state and English society in particular. This left a great impact on the stories, novels and poems in English literature.¹⁶ At that time, the most important pioneers of this period of time were:

A- Thomas Stearns Eliot (T.S. Eliot)

An English poet who wrote a poetic poem describing the state of the English society and its impact on the results of the war named "The waste land" in 1922.¹⁷

⁸ - <http://data.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb119263058>

⁹ Grace Moore (2012), Wuthering Heights.

¹⁰ www.wikiwand.com.

¹¹ <http://data.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb119290531>.

¹² Zdzisław Najder, *Joseph Conrad*, (2007), *a Life*, translated by Halina Najder, Rochester, Camden House.

¹³ Lee, Hermione, (1997), Virginia Woolf. Knopf.

¹⁴ - Priestley, J. B., (1970), The Edwardians. London: Heinemann.

¹⁵ Michael Holroyd, (2006), "Send for Shaw, not Shakespeare". The Times Literary Supplement.

¹⁶ Very R J, (2015), *The Inter-war Crisis, 1919–1939*. London, New York.

¹⁷ Bert, Stephen and Lowen, Jennifer, (2001), "Poetry and New Criticism." Companion to twentieth century poetry, Neil Roberts, editor. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

B - David Herbert Lawrence (D.H. Lawrence)

He is a famous English novelist. He wrote many novels such as "Women in love" in 1920. He also wrote a novel inspired by his personal life (Lady Chatterley's Lover) in 1928.¹⁸

C - Graham Greene

He worked as an editor in the "Times". Then he wrote many of his most famous novels (Stamboul Train) in 1935. He was famous for his novels on religious persecution and political and moral problems, such as his novel "Power and the Glory" in 1940.¹⁹

IV - English literature in the twentieth century until now

The English writers and authors - during this period - wrote novels and poems which were inspired by the attempt to discover the future and new societies that they could resort to as a result of their fears generated by the horrors of World War I and World War II. During this period, the writers tended to go back into their past with their increased fears of history as a result of the occurrence of some international conflicts and wars between different countries, especially the Arab-Israeli conflict and the outbreak of the Gulf War with the emergence of new global issues that did not exist before, such as thermal containment.

Also the multiplicity of races and ethnics that have become characteristic of English society, which led to the multiplicity of cultures and its divergence, and the technological and industrial progress, which happened in the world have resulted in an interest in science fiction novels inspired by real events which depicted what can happen in the future and increased the focus on poetic plays.

Among the most important pioneers in this period:

A - George Orwell

He is an English journalist and novelist who wrote extensively in poetry, fiction and literary criticism. He has always warned of the absence of social justice. The most famous of his novels is (Animal Farm) in 1945.

And he wrote his novel (1984), in 1949. He was famous for his narrative technique especially in his novel (Homage to Catalonia) in 1938.²⁰

B - John Osborne

An English writer who described poor young people in English society at the time and their view of society and contempt for the upper classes of English society, in his novel (Look Back in Anger) in 1956.²¹

C. Doris Lessing

She is a novelist and an English writer who won the Nobel Prize in 2007. She has written novels based on scientific imagination, including her novel "The Golden Notebook" in 1962.²²

D- D. M. Thomas

He is one of the English writers who appeared in the late 20th century. In his novels, he relied on mixing fantasy with real events that have already taken place, as well as on real people who already exist in society, as in his novel "The White Hotel" in 1981.²³

E- Ted Hughes

He is an English poet and writer who is considered one of the most famous fifty writers in the history of English literature, according to the classification conducted by "The Times". He was famous for writing for children. In 2008, he was

¹⁸<http://data.bnf.fr/ark>.

¹⁹ Graham Greene, (1994), Man of Paradox. Edited by A. F. Cassis. Chicago: Loyola University.

²⁰ Brendon (2003), "The saint of common decency" The Guardian UK

²¹ Braine, John Gerard: 1922–1986, (2004) writer | Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.

²² Biography of the writer Doris Lessing, (2007), of "The Swedish Academy.

²³ Brown, Mark, (2018). "Dennis Potter's adaptation of The White Hotel.

awarded a prize bearing his name for his new works in poetry. One of the most important of his works is (crow) in 1970.²⁴

F- Harold Pinter

He is one of the writers of the English theater, who was born of Jewish parents and has worked as an actor in the beginning of his life. His plays are characterized by ambiguity and silence for long periods, so he was called the poet of silence and his work "The homecoming" in 1964. He received the Nobel Prize in Literature, in 2005 from the Swedish Academy.²⁵

G- Dennis Christopher George Potter

He is one of the most famous English writers. He is considered one of the most famous writers of plays and drama. He wrote many works for television. He was famous for using narrative storytelling and his most important work "Pennies from Heaven" in 1981 and "The Singing Detective" in 1986.²⁶

H- Joanne Rowling (J.K. Rowling)

She is a famous English writer and screen player. She has produced many films and have been awarded the British Medal of Honor .She also received an award from the University of Exeter in classical literature. She has gained fame after writing her series of famous novels "Harry Potter" in 1998, which later turned into a series of films that still find a great admiration from the viewer when broadcasted any time.²⁷

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²⁷ <https://www.jkrowling.com>.

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