

**NEOCLASSICISM IN BRITISH LITERATURE: RESTORATION AND FIRST
HALF OF 18TH CENTURY: Questions with Answers.
(1660-1745)**

This handout was prepared by Dr. William Tarvin, a retired professor of literature. Please visit my free website www.tarvinlit.com. Over 500 works of American and British literature are analyzed there for free.

An answer key is provided at the end of this handout (pp. 12 – 14).

Text used: M. H. Abrams, ed. The Norton Anthology of English Literature, 7th ed. Vol. 1. New York: Norton, 2000.

**I. THE RESTORATION (1660-1702): POLITICAL AND SOCIAL
BACKGROUND**

A. KING CHARLES II'S RESTORATION

1. From 1642-1649, England was caught up in a _____ War between the basically Anglican Church supporters of King Charles I (called the _____) and the _____ supporters of Parliament (called the Roundheads).

2. It ended with the defeat and execution of King Charles I in 1649. A triumphant Parliament then abolished the monarchy and proclaimed England a _____ Commonwealth.

3. However, the real power lay with the victorious army headed by Oliver _____, who in 1653 was proclaimed Lord Protector and ruled dictatorially for the next five years, until his death in 1658.

4. Cromwell was succeeded by his incompetent _____, Richard, who fell before a military junta within eight months.

5. Charles _____, the son of the executed Charles I, who was living in exile in _____, was requested by the triumphant junta to return and rule as Charles II.

6. On May 29, 1660, Charles II was tumultuously welcomed to London, and the era of the _____ began.

7. His Restoration brought hope to a nation divided against itself and exhausted by twenty years of _____ wars. The restoration of the monarchy also

meant that the established _____ Church would be restored.

8. As king, _____ led a reckless and dissolute life, including openly keeping mistresses, having at least twelve illegitimate children—his wife Catherine was barren—drinking, and gambling.

9. A tone of _____ became fashionable, with court writers often mocking virtue, honor, and gratitude as lower class values.

10. On the political and religious fronts, the first Parliament of Charles II began to undo the _____ strictures of the Cromwell era.

a. Its Act of Conformity (1662) required all clergy, college students, and schoolmasters to belong to the _____ Church. Those who refused were termed Nonconformists or _____, since they held no allegiance to the established Anglican Church.

b. In effect, the act by and large excluded Protestant Dissenters and Roman _____ from public life; for instance, the great poet Alexander _____, a Catholic, could not attend a university, own land, or vote.

11. Two social disasters occurred soon after Charles II's Restoration, which some Puritans interpreted as God's judgment on the licentious court of Charles:

a. In 1665, London was devastated by _____ plague.

b. In 1666, London was virtually destroyed by the Great _____.

B. GROWING DIVISION BETWEEN THE KING CHARLES II AND PARLIAMENT

1. Charles II had promised the Puritan junta to govern through Parliament, but slyly he tried to consolidate _____ power, hiding all the time his true _____ sympathies.

2. Two political parties were gradually forming throughout the country:

(1) **TORY (Conservative)**: It supported the _____ and royal prerogative and drew its strength from the land owners and _____ country clergy.

(2) **WHIG (Liberal)**: It supported _____ and representative rule and received support from _____ merchants and financiers and _____ Dissenters.

3. By 1673, when it became apparent that Charles would not produce a legitimate heir and that he would be succeeded by his brother _____, who had converted to Roman _____, the Whig majority in Parliament passed the Test Act, which required all office holders to be _____.

4. The Whig leaders of Parliament also arranged the marriage of James's Protestant daughter, _____, to _____ of Orange (the Dutch branch of the royal family) in 1677.

C. THE TITUS OATES AFFAIR OF 1678

1. In 1678, _____, a Roman Catholic turncoat, concocted what became known as the Popish Plot. He produced a series of documents which asserted that Roman _____ in England planned to assassinate Charles II, place his Catholic brother James on the throne, and return England to the Roman Catholic fold.

2. Although it turned out later that Oates (who is portrayed as the villain Corah in _____ poem Absalom and Achitophel) had fabricated the plot and forged the documents, his story, supported by _____, was widely believed.

3. As a result of religious frenzy and the public uproar, some thirty-five innocent _____ were executed.

4. Furthermore, the Whig-controlled House of _____ exploited the fear of Catholics by trying to force Charles II to exclude his Catholic brother _____ from succession to the throne (the Exclusion Bill of 1678).

5. Charles defeated this bill by dissolving _____, but Whigs continued in their desire to exclude James from succession, going so far as to try to force Charles to name one of his _____ sons, the popular James Scott, duke of Monmouth, as the heir presumptive.

6. The turmoil of this period is captured by Dryden's long poem Absalom and Achitophel (1681), where Charles II becomes the biblical King _____ and Monmouth becomes David's rebellious son _____.

7. Loyal to his brother James and desiring to avoid confrontation with the Whig Parliament, Charles II chose to rule his last five years without convening _____.

D. KING JAMES II

1. At King Charles II's death in 1685, his brother James came to the throne as James _____.

2. Almost immediately, Charles's illegitimate son, the Duke of _____, led an unsuccessful uprising against James, but was soundly defeated and beheaded in 1685.

3. Emboldened by this easy triumph, James, a closet _____, became determined to advance the cause of Roman Catholics in England.

4. He proceeded to replace many high officials who refused to accept the Roman Catholic faith and attempted to override the decrees of _____. Such behavior lost him the support of even the _____.

5. The birth of a son to James in 1688 and the consequent threat of a continued royal line of Roman Catholics forced _____ to action.

6. Both Tory and Whig parliamentary leaders (committed to the Protestant faith) began secret negotiations with the Dutchman _____ of Orange, the husband of James's Protestant daughter _____, to save England from _____.

7. On Nov. 5, 1688, _____ landed with a small army, but with parliamentary support.

8. Commoners and nobles alike flocked to William's standard, and James II was forced to flee to a permanent exile in _____ in 1688.

E. THE GLORIOUS REVOLUTION AND THE REIGN OF WILLIAM AND MARY

1. The 1688 coming of William is known as the _____ or _____ Revolution, and he and Mary began their rule in 1689.

2. In the same year, Parliament passed a Bill of Rights which
 —limited the power of the _____;
 —reaffirmed the supremacy of _____;
 —insured free worship to all _____ (but not Catholics and Jews) as long as they swore allegiance to the Crown; and
 —guaranteed important legal _____ to individuals.

3. This parliamentary bill effectively ended in England the doctrine of the divine right of kings.

4. William and Mary were the only _____ rulers in English history. Childless, _____ died in 1694, and William (who became William III on her death) died in 1702.

5. James II had died in France in 1701, and his son James Edward was

proclaimed by the Stuarts as king, but William was succeeded by _____, the younger sister of Mary and a _____, in 1702.

6. William's death and Anne's succession mark the end of the _____ Period.

II. NEOCLASSICISM: THE FIRST HALF OF 18TH CENTURY (1700-1745): POLITICAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND

A. QUEEN ANNE

1. _____ ruled from 1702-1714.
2. At first she governed with the Whigs, but in 1710, she dismissed her Whig ministers and called in Robert Harley and Henry St. John to form a _____ ministry.
3. However, a bitter rivalry soon broke out between Harley (the earl of Oxford) and St. John (then Viscount Bolingbroke), a rivalry which embroiled Swift and Pope, who were leading _____ supporters and personal friends of both men. Bolingbroke succeeded in ousting Oxford and controlled the government until _____ death in 1714.
4. Under Anne, England, Wales, and Scotland were united formally into Great _____ in 1707.
5. Her reign was a period of material prosperity at home and an expansion of the British _____ abroad.
6. However, living conditions were still hard. Only _____ child in four survived to adulthood in England. Workers commonly toiled twelve-to-fourteen _____ a day.
7. During the 18th century, the population of England doubled to more than _____ million. It was still by and large an _____ nation, although the balance of power began to shift toward _____ as industries and factory workshops multiplied, thereby heralding the _____ Revolution of the next century.
8. Anne's reign also marked the beginning of the vast expanse of the _____ Empire. In a series of wars against France from 1689 to 1763, colonies were annexed around the world, from _____ in the west to _____ in the east.

9. For the unfortunate Anne, the last Stuart on the throne, life was largely a series of stillborn _____; none of her seventeen offspring survived her.

B. GEORGE I (1714-1727) AND GEORGE II (1714-1760)

1. Anne was succeeded by _____, the great-grandson of James I, of the German House of _____, the first of three Georges who were to occupy the throne during the rest of the 18th century.

2. The Hanoverians began to relegate power to ministers; soon the _____ Minister system was in place, the last major contribution of the 18th century to British political institutions.

3. With the Whig Robert _____ in 1721, England received its first true prime minister.

4. George I's virtual ignorance of English affairs and his total ignorance of the English language (the king and Walpole addressed each other in inept Latin) caused Walpole to become the actual _____ of the nation.

5. Walpole's rule instituted one of the most venal political eras of English history. To this prime minister are attributed the famous words, "Every man has his _____."

6. The political satire of Swift's Gulliver's Travels and Pope's great poem Dunciad—both of whom were Tories—use the Whig Walpole as an emblem of the _____ and commercialization of the whole social fabric.

7. Indeed, democracy in England at this time was limited: A few dozen great Whig and _____ families monopolized political life, with their eldest sons in the House of _____ and their younger sons in the House of _____: In fact, two-thirds of the members of Parliament were merely nominated, and the rest were elected by about 160,000 voters, many of whom were wholly maneuvered by political bosses.

8. Despite rampant political corruption under Walpole, the nation grew increasingly prosperous through war, trade, and the enlarging of the _____ Empire.

9. With the death of George I and the accession of George II in 1727, Walpole continued in office. Although the new monarch did speak English, albeit with a heavy _____ accent, actual government was still firmly in the _____ minister's hands.

10. In 1742, Walpole slipped up on a minor vote in the House of _____ and was deposed, but the ministerial system continued.

11. By the middle of the 18th century, although still politically divided between Whigs and Tories, England rallied around the coalition government of William _____.

Pitt was to be a forceful prime minister, one ready to lead England, which was poised on the brink of the _____ Revolution.

III. INTELLECTUAL BACKGROUND OF RESTORATION AND NEOCLASSICISM

A. SCIENCE

1. The new science, advanced by members of the English _____ Society, founded in 1662, rapidly altered views in the 18th century.

2. A _____, rationalistic, and materialistic viewpoint came to the fore.

3. Two inventions—the microscope and the _____—began to reveal that nature is more extravagant—teeming with tiny creatures and boundless galaxies—than anyone had ever imagined.

4. The scientist who towered over the 17th and 18th century is Isaac _____ (1642-1727), whose scientific discoveries about _____, calculus, and light centered the age's attention on discovering the laws of _____, not on the nature of God.

As Pope wrote in *An Essay on Man*, "Know then thyself, presume not God to scan; / The proper study of mankind is _____" (2:1-2).

B. PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

1. The preeminent philosopher of the period is John _____ (1632-1704). His philosophy stressed _____, the doctrine that regards all knowledge as derived from experience.

He advocated shunning metaphysics—the search for essential or ultimate principles of reality, transcending the _____—in favor of the more practical concerns of how we know what we know.

2. After the _____ turbulence of the 17th century, the public wanted a society of tolerance instead of controversy, calm instead of excitement, and _____ instead of religious fanaticism.

3. Discoveries, such as Newton's laws about gravity, seemed to support the idea that the universe had been created and was being directed by a beneficent _____.

This view led to the idea that God could best be seen, not in Holy Scripture, but in the book of _____. Out of this supposition came the concept of _____ or natural religion, which began to appeal to many “enlightened” minds in this century.

4. DEISM held that God was the First _____ who had set everything into being, dictating that the universe be run by certain natural laws (called _____ Causes).

Human beings should focus on these Second Causes.

Deists argued that in essence, God was like a “_____” (First Cause) who devised and set the clock running by certain mechanical principles (_____ Causes) and then stood back, not _____.

5. Since this aspect of Deism challenged aspects of the _____ and the intervention of Christ, it was unacceptable to many Christians, although some found it possible to accept both natural religion and Christianity.

6. Many intellectuals of the period were “closet” _____, believing that Deism promoted a more tolerant and moderate intellectual temper.

C. VIEWS ON HUMAN BEINGS AND SOCIETY

1. An optimistic view of human nature began to develop; 18th-century educators and social reformers often believed that the problems of the world could be solved through science and _____.

2. Thus, the 18th-century outlook minimized original sin—the doctrine that people were inherently _____ and deserving of damnation—and asserted that human beings are naturally _____ and find their highest happiness by doing good to others.

3. This viewpoint brought an emphasis on good _____, rather than _____, as the way to salvation (although a powerful new religious sect, _____, did arise in the 18th century which insisted on faith over works as the way to salvation).

4. The 18th century saw the first serious manifestations in England of social reform--the improvement of jails and mental _____, the establishment of orphanages and _____, and the abolition of the _____ trade.

IV. LITERATURE FROM 1660-1745

A. RESTORATION AND NEOCLASSICAL LITERATURE: The literature of the period between 1660 and 1745 can be divided into two sub-periods:

1. 1660-1700 – RESTORATION LITERATURE: The critical principles of _____ were formulated during the Restoration. John _____ was the literary “giant” of the era, although this is also the period of Aphra _____, the first major woman writer in English.

Its beginning date, 1660, is the year the Stuarts were restored to the throne; its end date is the death of _____ (1700).

2. 1700-1745 - NEOCLASSICAL OR AUGUSTAN LITERATURE: The writers of this period (Swift, Pope, and Gay stand out) are often called Neoclassical (“New _____”) or Augustan writers because they sought to emulate the enlightenment, refinement, and taste of the era of Caesar _____, the first Roman emperor, when the classical writers Virgil and Horace flourished.

The beginning date is 1700 (the death of Dryden) and the terminal date is 1745 (the death of the great satirist Jonathan _____).

Determined to preserve good sense and civilized values, the writers of this period turned their wit against _____ and innovation. Hence this is a great age of _____.

The writers were deeply _____. Pope and Swift were _____ satirists in an age of Whig political domination.

B. LITERARY PRINCIPLES OF THE RESTORATION AND NEOCLASSICISM

1. The writers advocated calm _____ and sound _____ as preferable to vulgar enthusiasm and passionate exuberance.

Neoclassical writers typically opposed the intricacy, boldness, and extravagance of the literature of the major 17th century writers (Shakespeare, Donne, and _____).

Instead, reacting against the difficulty and extravagance of this late Renaissance literature, Neoclassicism favored greater regularity, _____, clarity, and good _____. The Neoclassical writers praised symmetry and _____, as is seen in the simple grace and loveliness of Chippendale furniture from 18th century England.

Neoclassicism counseled a middle way among opposing _____.

2. **BATTLE OF THE BOOKS:** This classical orientation is seen in what has become known as “the battle of the _____,” an 18th century debate over the

comparative merits of _____ and _____ literature.

Modernists insisted that the _____ (classical Greek and Latin writers and the fathers of the church) had not known about the _____ system, the _____ of blood in the body, the existence of microscopic organisms, or Newton's laws of _____. In this respect the moderns were much wiser, they argued.

However, champions of the ancients, such as Swift and Pope, held that the classical writers and the fathers of the church, while faulty about _____ matters, taught something more important—ethics and _____, the study of which gives enduring truths about human nature and the world, truths which have been, are, and will be true for everyone in all times, everywhere.

3. Neoclassical writers deprecated the _____ and the _____ in observation. The greatest value in art, they argued, has a _____ significance.

4. The period had a critical and analytical spirit, wishing not to praise _____ but to weigh judiciously.

5. It exalted _____. By reason, the 18th century meant _____ sense, or the calm balanced judgment of an entrenched and secularly oriented class which extolled the status _____ in society.

6. The period saw the evolution of a plain expository _____ style, which is direct and gets to the point.

7. In poetry the heroic _____ dominated. The heroic couplet is a rhymed couplet written in iambic pentameter, which typically presents a complete statement, closed by a punctuation mark.

The second line of the couplet might closely parallel the first in structure and meaning or the two lines might antithetically play against each other.

Also because normally the length of a pentameter line requires a slight pause, called a _____, one part of the line can be made parallel with or antithetical to the other or even to one part of the following line.

Unlike the couplet form used by Chaucer and Shakespeare, 18th century neoclassical rules allowed the heroic couplet to show no enjambment between the lines.

8. Poets were taught to plan their works in one of the classical _____—epic, tragedy, comedy, pastoral, satire, or ode—and to choose a language appropriate to that genre.

Since the lyric was not regarded as a classical genre, the lyric's principal subtypes—the song and the _____—basically went out of fashion during the 18th century.

9. Devices of what came to be known as _____ diction are prominent in poems:

a. _____ (representing a thing or abstraction in human form);

b. _____ (a roundabout way of avoiding homely words, such as by calling fish “finny tribes”);

c. _____ syntax where the normal SVO (subject-verb-object) becomes VSO or OSV or an _____ may follow, instead of precede, the noun it modifies.

10. _____ became a principal literary form, the targets being those who _____ from the accepted _____ social and literary standards.

ANSWER KEY

I.

A.

1. Civil; Cavaliers; Puritan.
2. Puritan.
3. Cromwell.
4. son.
5. Stuart; France.
6. Restoration.
7. civil; Anglican.
8. Charles II.
9. cynicism.
10. Puritan; Anglican; Dissenters; Catholics; Pope.
11. bubonic; Fire.

B.

1. royal; Catholic.
2. king; parliamentarian; London; Protestant.
3. James; Catholicism; Anglicans.
4. Mary; William.

C.

1. Titus Oates; Catholics.
2. Dryden's; Whigs.
3. Catholics.
4. Commons; James.
5. Parliament; illegitimate.
6. David; Absalom.
7. Parliament.

D.

1. II.
2. Monmouth.
3. Catholic.
4. Parliament; Tories.
5. Parliament.
6. William; Mary; Catholicism.
7. William.
8. France.

E.

1. Glorious; Bloodless.
2. Rights; monarch; Parliament; Protestants; rights.
3. divine.

4. joint; Mary.
5. Anne; Protestant.
6. Restoration.

II.

A.

1. Anne.
2. Tory.
3. Tory; Anne's.
4. Britain.
5. Empire.
6. one; hours.
7. ten; agricultural; cities; Industrial.
8. British; Canada; India.
9. children.

B.

1. George I; Hanover.
2. Prime.
3. Walpole.
4. ruler.
5. price.
6. corruption.
7. Tory; Lords; Commons.
8. British.
9. German; prime.
10. Commons.
11. Pitt; Industrial.

III.

A.

1. Royal.
2. scientific.
3. telescope.
4. Newton; gravity; nature; Man.

B.

1. Locke; empiricism; physical.
2. religious; reason.
3. Creator; Nature; Deism.
4. Cause; Second; watchmaker; Causes; intervening.
5. Scriptures.
6. deists.

C.

1. education.

2. sinful; good.
3. works; faith; Methodism.
4. institutions; hospitals; slave.

IV.

A.

1. neoclassicism; Dryden; Behn; Dryden.
2. Classical; Augustus; Swift; fanaticism; satire; conservative; Tory.

B.

1. detachment; reasoning; Milton; restraint; sense; balance; extremes.
2. books; classical; modern; ancients; solar; circulation; gravity; scientific; morality.
3. individual; particular; universal.
4. emotionally.
5. rationalism; common; quo.
6. prose.
7. couplet; caesura.
8. genres; sonnet.
9. poetic; personification; periphrasis; inverted; adjective.
10. Satire; deviated; neoclassical.