

Q & A

What is formal essay? What is informal essay?

Discuss the form, style, subject, and content of Montaigne's *Essays*.

Discuss the subject and content of Byron's *Manfred*.

In what sense is Byron a typical "Neoclassical writer" ?

Discuss the form, subject and theme in Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier*.

\*\* the notion of the ideal gentleman

\*\* the concept of sprezzatura

Discuss the importance of Petrarch in European Literature.

\*\* the first writer of the Renaissance

\*\* his "The Ascent of Mount Ventoux" displays the importance of individualism and humanism ; he emphasizes the significance of human contemplation and individual soul

\*\* Petrarchan convention

\*\* he creates the form of Petrarchan sonnet

What is Renaissance?

Renaissance means "rebirth." It is a name commonly applied to the period of European history following the Middle Ages. It is a literary movement that have begun in Italy in the late fourteenth century and to have continued, both in Italy and other countries of Western Europe, through the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The literal meaning of the word, "Renaissance," is "rebirth"; this meaning suggests that one impulse toward the great intellectual and artistic achievements of the period came from the example of ancient culture. Nowadays, this term conveys a general notion of artistic creativity, of extraordinary zest for life and knowledge, of sensory delight in opulence and magnificence, of spectacular individual achievement, therefore extending far beyond the literal meaning of rebirth and the strict idea of a revival and imitation of antiquity.

Renaissance has been described as the birth of the modern world out of the ashes of the Dark Ages; as the discovery of the world and the discovery of man; and as the era of the emergence of untrammelled individualism in life, thought, religion, and art. Humanism is the key concept in the age of Renaissance. This age emphasizes

the dignity of man; in other words, the positive, strongly affirmed awareness of the intellectual fulfillment of the human being is stressed. Definitions of the Renaissance must also take account of the period's preoccupation with this life rather than with the life beyond. Individual human action finds justification in its being a well-rounded achievement, perfect of its kind; in the zest and gusto with which it is, here and now, performed; and finally, in its proving worthy of remaining as a testimony to the performer's power on earth.

\*\* Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, Machiavelli's *The Prince*, Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier*, Shakespeare's plays, and so forth

#### **8. Discuss the characteristics of the Middle Ages.**

The period of the Middle Ages (approximately A. D. 500-1500) is distinguished by the unique fusion of a Heroic-Age society with Greco-Roman culture and Christian religion. It begins with the collapse of the Roman Empire in Western Europe and the settlement of Germanic peoples within the territory of the empire. It ends with the discovery of the Western Hemisphere, the invention of the printing press, the consolidation of

strong national states, the break in religious unity brought about by the Protestant Reformation, and the renewal of direct contact with Greek and Roman thought, art, and literature. The medieval centuries bequeathed to us such institutional patterns as the Christian church; the monarchical state; the traditional European social order -- combining church-power and state-power in the "lords spiritual," along with the hierarchy of nobility and gentry ranging from duke to knight, and the bourgeois; the university; the system and logical method of Scholastic philosophy; Romanesque and Gothic architecture; and a rich variety of literary forms, many in native and vernacular languages of various European peoples.

The literature of the earlier Middle Ages reflects directly the life and civilization of a Heroic Age. The dominant figure is the fighting king or chieftain; the favorite pursuit is war, either against one's Christian neighbors or the heathen Saracens (Muslims); the characteristic goals are power, wealth, and glory; and the primary virtues are valor and loyalty. *Beowulf*, the first English epic, is the product of the earlier Middle Ages.

The literature of the later Middle Ages reflects the

life and civilization of a courtly and chivalric age. It is an age when the political state is relatively weak, a person's strongest loyalties are to a feudal lord and to a code of chivalry. The dominant literary figure in this period is always both the fighting, courageous and devout Christian knight. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur* are two famous examples.

Christianity and Church are also the two key words in describing the characteristics of the Middle Ages. Despite the political disunity in medieval Europe, under the leadership and direction of the Church, there is achieved a remarkable unanimity of spiritual, moral, and intellectual attitudes and ideas. In this "age of faith," an individual's (especially for monks, friars, or nuns) strongest loyalty is to Christian order.

The Western literature in this period is based on the Christian view of humanity. Men and women, in this conception, are creatures of God; they should recognize their limitations. God is all-powerful, omnipotent and omniscient; men are insignificant. An ideal Medieval man or woman conceives of life on earth as transient and preparatory; his or her mode of action is basically oriented toward the thought of the afterlife.

\*\* the authors and the works in the Middle Ages

9. Analyze the characterization of Chaucer's "Prologue" in *Canterbury Tales*.
10. Discuss Chaucer's "Wife of Bath's Tale" in light of feminist approach.
11. Define fablieau? Why is Chaucer's "The Miller's Tale" a typical medieval fablieau?
12. Define exemplum. Discuss Chaucer's use of the device of exemplum in "The Pardoner's Tale."

An exemplum is a story told as a particular instance of the general theme in a religious sermon. The device was popular in the Middle Ages. In Chaucer's "The Pardoner's Tale," the Pardoner, preaching on the theme "Greed is the root of all evil," incorporates as exemplum the tale of the three drunken revelers who set out to find Death and find a heap of gold instead, only after all to find death when they kill one another in the attempt to gain sole possession of the treasure.

13. What is the beast fable? Discuss Chaucer's "The Nun's Priest's Tale" and the use of beast fable and mock-heroic.

**14. Explain the following**

1. humanism
2. satire
3. Courtesy books
4. Sprezzatura
5. Petrarchan convention
6. Paradox
7. Antithesis
8. Hyperbole
9. Oxymoron

**15. Discuss the characteristics of Renaissance. (You may illustrate your idea by analyzing some works in this period, such as Petrarch's "The Ascent of Mount Ventoux").**

\*Christian humanism

\*the Reformation

Martin Luther promoted a schism in the Roman Catholic Church in 1517, leading to the Protestant Reformation and England's separation from the Roman Catholic Church. England, under the rule of Queen Elizabeth, became strongly nationalistic as Britain gained control of the sea.

\*works: sonnet, drama (tragedy, comedy, tragicomedy),

prose, essay, poetry, epic

\*major authors: Sir Philip Sidney, Christopher Marlowe, Edmund Spenser, William Shakespeare, Sir Walter Raleigh, Francis Bacon, Ben Johnson, etc.

\*other works include King James translation of the *Bible*, and Erasmus's works

\*William Caxton

\*New Religion and the discovery of the New World

16. Define sonnet and state the three kinds of sonnet (you may give examples and analyze some poems you have read).
17. Define Niccolo Machiavelli as a typical "Renaissance man." (You have to closely analyze *The Prince* to support your argument.)
18. Petrarch first saw Laura on April 6, 1327, the anniversary of Christ's crucifixion, and Laura died on the same date twenty-one years later. What is the significance of his first seeing Laura on April 6? What use do the poems make of anniversaries and exact date?
19. Both Machiavelli's *The Prince* and Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* belong to the genre of manual instruction. Both books present sets of instructions and the description of an ideal type. Analyze the essential qualities of an ideal courtier (or the ideal gentleman) discussed in *The Book of the Courtier*.

20. Discuss the form, the targets of satire and the content in Erasmus' *The Praise of Folly*.

21. Define the following

1. Neoclassicism
2. Realism
3. Naturalism
4. Juxtaposition

22. What is romanticism? Define Rousseau's *Confessions* as a typical romantic text.

23. Compare the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

24. Discuss Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* and define Doctor Faustus as a typical Renaissance man.

Christopher Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* powerfully exemplifies the intellectual aspirations of the Renaissance. Doctor Faustus portrays an ambitious hero who passionately seeks the power of knowledge. He is an "overreacher," striving beyond the bounds of human capacity, or at least the limits imposed upon human achievement. In the play, Faustus seeks the power that comes from knowledge, no matter at what cost that knowledge is acquired. To get this power, Faustus must make -- or choose to make -- a bargain with the devil. Faustus on

his part is in search of the power that comes from black magic, but the devil on his side exacts a fearful price in exchange -- the eternal damnation of Faustus's soul. Doctor Faustus's dissatisfactory desire to pursue infinite knowledge and individual fulfillment leads to a catastrophic end; but such aspiration and visions give the figure of Dr. Faustus a heroic stature.

**25. Compare epic and mock epic.**

**26. What is Neoclassicism?**

\*neoclassicism

\*the age of Enlightenment

\*the age of satire

\*traits: the emphasis on reason, universal laws, rules of poetry, common sense, decorum, grace, craft, social opinions, imitation or translation of the classical works (such as Homer's epics)

**27. What is romanticism?**

**28. What are the characteristics of romanticism?**

\*Traits: poetic innovation and revolution, the emphasis on creativity, originality, and imagination, individualism, the stress on passion, feeling and

emotion, the emphasis on the primitive, and on nature and landscape

\*poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful Feelings" (Wordsworth)

\*English poets: Robert Burns, William Blake, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, George Gordon, Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and John Keats

\*American poets: Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

\*Prose writers: Charles Lamb, William Hazlitt, Thomas De Quincy, and Mary Wollstonecraft (the first feminist writer in English literature)

## **29. Compare realism and naturalism.**

Realism in a nineteenth-century literary movement motivated by a theory that the purpose of art is to represent life without idealization or distortion of any kind. The masters of realistic fiction include Balzac, Flaubert, Tolstoy, Mark Twain, and Henry James, and so forth. Naturalism, especially that of the nineteenth century, is often referred to as an extreme type of

realism.

Naturalism, in literature, is the application of scientific objectivity to the study of life. Nineteenth-century naturalists like Zola, Balzac, and the Goncourt brothers wrote "experimental" fiction emphasizing fatalism and materialism, and tended to stress the coarser and sub-normal forms of existence. In America, Stephan Crane and Jack London are naturalist novelists.

\*\* Heredity and environment

**30. Define the Symbolist Movement in France (French symbolism).**

**31. Compare the metaphysical poetry and the cavalier poetry in England.**

**32. Define Irish Renaissance.**

\*\* it is also called Celtic Revival

\*\* a literary movement led by William Bulter Yeats

\*\* Irish National Theatre

\*\* the other members include Lady Gregary, J. M. Synge, and so forth

**33. Define Harlem Renaissance.**

**34. Choose one Irish writer you read before, and discuss one of his works (content, theme, characters, and son on).**

\*\* Yeast's poetry

\*\* James Joyce "Araby" and "Clay"

\*\* Jonathan Swift's "The Modest Proposal"

\*\* J. M. Synge's *The Rider to the Sea*

**35. What is modernism?**

Modernism is a literary movement in the twentieth century. In a broad sense, the word "modern" is applied to writing marked by a strong and conscious break with traditional forms, styles, subjects, and techniques of expression. It exploits a distinctive kind of imagination, one that insists on having its general frame of reference within itself. Therefore, it practices the solipsism of which Allen Tate accused the modern mind: it believes that we create the world in the act of perceiving it. Modernist movement implies a historical discontinuity, a sense of alienation, of loss, and of despair. It rejects traditional values and assumptions, and it rejects equally the traditional ways of conceiving the human self. Modernist movement elevates the individual and the inner being over the social human being,

and prefers the unconscious to the self-conscious.

Most of modernist texts violates the accepted conventions and set out to create ever-new artistic forms and styles and to introduce hitherto neglected, and sometimes forbidden, subject matter. Typical modernist writings include James Joyce's *Ulysses*, T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, Ezra Pound's *Cantos*, William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, and so on.

### **Keywords**

\*persistent and multidimensional experiments in subject and form, and style

\*fiction -- stream-of-consciousness novels (James Joyce and Virginia Woolf)

\*Poetry - imagism

\*play -- two kinds

1) Irish National Theatre and the Irish Literary Revival (William Bulter Yeats, John Millington Synge)

2) The Theatre of the Absurd (Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*)

\*the new forms of construction in verse, prose,  
and sentence structure

\*Avant-garde movement: violate the accepted  
Conventions

\*novelists: James Joyce (he is an Irish writer who  
composes *Dubliners*, *Portrait of the Artist as A Young  
Man*, *Ulysses*), Virginia Woolf (she writes *Mrs. Dalloway*,  
*To the Lighthouse*), D. H. Lawrence (the author who  
composes *Sons and Lovers*, *Women in Love*), Joseph Conrad  
(he writes *Lord Jim*, *Heart of Darkness*), E. M. Forster  
(his famous novels include *A Room with a View*, *Howard's  
End*, *A Passage to India*), George Orwell (the author who  
composes *Animal Farm* and *1984*), Graham Greene, Doris  
Lessing

\*Poets: Thomas Hardy, A. E. Housman, Wilfred Owen, T. S.  
Eliot, William Bulter Yeats, W. H. Auden, and so on

**36. Choose one short story written by a twentieth-Century  
writer and analyze its theme, content and character.**

**37. Choose one play composed by a twentieth-century writer  
and discuss the text.**

38. Select one American writer in the nineteenth century and discuss one of his works.

39. What is postmodernism?

40. Discuss the main ideas of Lucretius's *On the Nature of Things*.

Lucretius is a Roman poet. His poem *On the Nature of Things* presents the philosophical system of Epicurus, a Greek philosopher of the fourth century B. C. The following points are the main ideas of *On the Nature of Things*. First, The book contends that the universe is the blind combination of atoms of which we as part of the universe are composed. Death, a re-arrangement of atoms, is only not-being and is nothing to be afraid of. Secondly, the text contends that the gods play no part. The gods, according to Lucretius, exist. But they have no interest in us. We cannot win their favor by piety nor rouse their indignation by crime. Thus, we should free our minds from religious fear. Third, Lucretius advocates the pursuit of pleasure by living a virtuous life. He aims at obtain the painlessness of the body and the tranquility of mind and soul.

41. Who is Epicurus?

He is a Greek philosopher. His philosophy is a materialistic hedonism. In ethics, he taught that pleasure is the chief end of life. He also advocates that human body and soul are composed of atoms; so men are mortal.

**42. Gary Snyder:**

He is a twentieth-century American nature writer. He is an ecological poet. He composes *Myth and Text*, *Riprap*, *The Practice of the Wild*, and so forth.

**43. Nature writing:**

\*\* Thoreau's *Walden*

\*\* Snyder's and Jeffer's poetry

\*\* John Muir and Aldo Leopold are famous nature writers in America

**44. What is novella or novelette?**

It is prose fiction longer than a conventional short story and shorter than a novel. Examples are Henry James' *Daisy Miller* and Leo Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, and so forth.

45. What is eco-criticism (ecological criticism)?

46. What is postmodernism?

47. What is Cultural Studies?

48. Compare Modernism and Postmodernism.

49. What is "Public Literature"?