

Probing English Literary History

English Literature · Answer Key · 14 Questions

1. Which historical event directly precipitated the 'Age of Johnson' in English literature, fostering a renewed interest in classical forms and reason?

A) The Glorious Revolution of 1688

- B) The establishment of the Royal Society in 1660
- C) The widespread adoption of the printing press
- D) The English Civil War (1642-1651)

2. The controversial 'The Lady of the Camellias,' which inspired Verdi's opera 'La Traviata,' was written by Alexandre Dumas fils. However, in English literature, which contemporary author famously critiqued societal hypocrisy with similar themes in 'Vanity Fair' (1848)?

A) Charles Dickens

B) William Makepeace Thackeray

- C) George Eliot
- D) The Brontë sisters

3. The Statute of Monopolies, enacted in 1624, had a significant, albeit indirect, impact on English drama by affecting the licensing of theatrical companies and the patronage available to playwrights. Which of the following playwrights, active just before and after this statute, is known for works that reflect the political and social anxieties of the Jacobean era?

- A) William Shakespeare
- B) Christopher Marlowe
- C) Ben Jonson

D) John Webster

4. The transition from the Augustan age to the pre-Romantic period was marked by a shift in sensibility. Which of the following poets, often associated with the 'Graveyard School,' exemplified this emerging melancholic and contemplative tone with works like 'The Complaint: or, Night-Thoughts on Life, Death, and Immortality' (1742-1745)?

- A) Alexander Pope
- B) James Thomson
- C) Edward Young**
- D) Thomas Gray

5. The Lollard movement, a significant religious and social reform movement in late medieval England, was heavily influenced by the theological ideas of John Wycliffe. Which contemporary literary work, though not directly part of the movement, is often seen as reflecting the spirit of questioning and vernacular expression prevalent during this era?

- A) Geoffrey Chaucer's 'The Canterbury Tales'
- B) Sir Thomas Malory's 'Le Morte d'Arthur'
- C) William Langland's 'Piers Plowman'**
- D) The mystery plays (e.g., the York Cycle)

6. The Victorian era saw the rise of the serialized novel as a popular form of entertainment and social commentary. Which of these novels was NOT initially published in installments?

- A) Charles Dickens' 'Bleak House'
- B) William Makepeace Thackeray's 'The Newcomes'
- C) George Eliot's 'Middlemarch'
- D) Charlotte Brontë's 'Jane Eyre'**

7. The Restoration period in English literature (beginning in 1660) saw a significant revival and transformation of theatre after the Puritan interregnum. Which playwright is most closely associated with the witty comedies of manners that satirized aristocratic society, such as 'The Way of the World' (1700)?

- A) John Dryden
- B) William Wycherley
- C) Aphra Behn
- D) William Congreve**

8. The early 20th-century literary movement known as Modernism was profoundly shaped by societal upheavals and philosophical shifts. Which historical event, culminating in 1918, is often considered a major catalyst for the disillusionment and experimentation characteristic of Modernist literature?

- A) The Boer War (1899-1902)
- B) The sinking of the Titanic (1912)
- C) World War I (1914-1918)**
- D) The Russian Revolution (1917)

9. The Enlightenment, or the Age of Reason, championed logic and individualism. In English literature, which prominent figure, known for his satirical prose and essays, also served as a key figure in the development of journalism and the essay form, publishing 'A Tale of a Tub' (1704)?

- A) Samuel Johnson
- B) Daniel Defoe
- C) Jonathan Swift**
- D) Joseph Addison

10. The Gothic novel genre, which emerged in the late 18th century, often explored themes of terror, the supernatural, and the sublime. Which author's 'The Castle of Otranto' (1764) is widely considered the first Gothic novel, establishing many of its conventions?

- A) Ann Radcliffe
- B) Matthew Lewis
- C) Horace Walpole**
- D) Mary Shelley

11. The literary landscape of the 1950s in Britain saw the emergence of the 'Angry Young Men' movement, which challenged post-war complacency and social conventions. Which playwright's seminal work, 'Look Back in Anger' (1956), is considered the defining play of this movement?

- A) Harold Pinter
- B) John Osborne**
- C) Arnold Wesker
- D) John Arden

12. The Anglo-Saxon epic poem 'Beowulf' is one of the earliest surviving works of English literature. While its exact dating is debated, scholarly consensus places its composition within a specific historical period, influencing its linguistic and thematic elements. This period is generally identified as:

- A) The Viking Age (c. 8th-11th centuries)
- B) The Roman occupation of Britain (c. 1st-5th centuries)
- C) The early Christian period (c. 6th-7th centuries)**
- D) The Norman Conquest (1066)

13. The Elizabethan era witnessed a flourishing of poetry and drama. The publication of Sir Philip Sidney's 'Astrophel and Stella' (1591) marked a significant development in English sonnet sequences. This development was heavily influenced by:

A) The rediscovery of classical Greek epics

B) The Petrarchan sonnet tradition from Italy

C) The rise of the English novel

D) French metaphysical poetry

14. The Romantic movement's emphasis on nature, emotion, and the individual found powerful expression in poetry. Which poet, known for his lyrical works and his philosophical engagement with nature, published 'Lyrical Ballads' (1798) with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, a foundational text for English Romanticism?

A) Lord Byron

B) Percy Bysshe Shelley

C) John Keats

D) William Wordsworth