Françoise Grellet

Literature in English
Anthologie des littératures anglophones

NOUVELLE ÉDITION AUGMENTÉE

• The United Kingdom
• The United States
• The Commonwealth

HU ANGLAIS® Littérature

ANGLAIS Littérature

Edward Hopper, Gas, 1940 © Bridgeman Images.

Entièrement rédigé en anglais, Literature in English s’adresse aux anglicistes et à tous ceux qui veulent découvrir ou redécouvrir la diversité des littératures en langue anglaise des origines à nos jours. Les extraits des grands textes de la littérature anglophone (poésie, théâtre, fiction) sont replacés dans leur contexte historique et littéraire par des fiches et des introductions synthétiques. Une biographie détaillée des auteurs, un glossaire des principaux termes et mouvements littéraires, ainsi qu’un index complètent ce volume.

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- The United States
- The Commonwealth
Foreword

This anthology was written with two main purposes in mind:
– to present in one single volume texts by major British, Irish, American and Commonwealth writers,
– to provide students in their first years at university with clear guidelines to help them understand the main literary movements as well as the main ideas and spirit of a period.

For British and American literature, a number of well-defined periods have been distinguished. Each is introduced by a chronology and by a chapter which presents the historical and social background of the time as well as a survey of the major literary movements and tendencies of the period. Within each section, several pages have also been devoted to some important literary genres or trends.

Since the number of pages devoted to the Commonwealth was necessarily limited and since its literature is chiefly post World War II, a division into chronological periods was impossible. Instead, each of the countries represented here (Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Nigeria, India and the Caribbean) is introduced by a short summary of the main characteristics and trends in its literature.

In each part of the book, the authors appear chronologically, by genre (poetry, then drama and fiction), the chronology being determined not simply by date of birth but according to the time when their most influential works were published.

Each author is introduced by a few lines mentioning the salient points of his / her life and explaining his / her main themes and originality. This is accompanied by a chronology of the author’s main works. The texts have been selected not on the basis of originality, but because they are representative of these authors and can provide a good introduction for students. This sometimes means the choice of famous passages, but they are then canonical and part of any student’s store of literary knowledge. Some footnotes have been provided for rare or archaic words, literary or cultural allusions, and unusual structures.

The illustrations which appear in this anthology have all been chosen to underline the relationship between literature and the arts in the given period.

A glossary of literary terms can be found at the end of the book.

Any anthology is the result of a choice. The constraints of space mean that including an author can only be done at the expense of another. This is therefore in no way a comprehensive survey of British, Irish, American and Commonwealth literature. But I hope it can give students a genuine desire to read further and to discover longer texts.
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Medieval Literature

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<td>1066</td>
<td>Battle of Hastings. Norman Conquest. French will be the official language until around 1300.</td>
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<td>1100</td>
<td>Crusades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1215</td>
<td>Magna Carta (which defines some of the rights and liberties of freemen)</td>
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<td>1337-1453</td>
<td>Hundred Years’ War</td>
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<td>1348</td>
<td>Black Death</td>
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<td>1360-99</td>
<td>William Langland: <em>The Vision of Piers Plowman</em></td>
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<td>1375-1400</td>
<td><em>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</em></td>
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<td>1382-85</td>
<td>Chaucer: <em>Troilus and Criseyde</em></td>
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<td>1386-1400</td>
<td>Chaucer: <em>The Canterbury Tales</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1455-85</td>
<td>Wars of the Roses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1475</td>
<td>First book printed in English by William Caxton</td>
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<tr>
<td>1469</td>
<td>Sir Thomas Malory: <em>Le Morte d’Arthur</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1508</td>
<td><em>Everyman</em></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Political and religious background

One century after the Norman Conquest, French was the language of the court and church, though English was still used by the popular classes. It took another two centuries for a new English language to emerge, based on Old English, but with French influences. This was helped along by Wycliffe’s first complete translation of the Bible into English in the late 14th century.

Main trends in literature

The European influence was also felt in literature, with alliterative Anglo-Saxon versification gradually giving way to rhymed and more regular verse, while Celtic legends and northern sagas were little by little superseded by romances (tales of chivalrous deeds and courtly love) and lyric poetry. It is such hybridity, as well as the co-existence of cultured and popular styles, which gives the literature of the time its originality.

Principal works of the period

- William Langland’s *The Vision of Piers Plowman* is an allegorical poem about a dream-vision in which the poet sees Piers Plowman offering guidance to the pilgrims. The poem is both a defence of Christianity and a satire against the corruption of the church and the oppression of the poor by the rich.
- *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, an allegorical chivalric romance in alliterative verse which takes place at the court of King Arthur and illustrates such virtues as honour, courage and chastity.
- Geoffrey Chaucer’s works (see p. 10).
An illustration from *Pearl*, in the same manuscript as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (c. 1400), in which the dreamer sees his lost “Pearl” (his dead daughter) in paradise, on the other side of a river.
The British Library, London.

- Sir Thomas Malory’s *Le Morte d’Arthur* develops the Celtic and French legends of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, and is linked to another romance, that of Tristram and Isolde.

- It was also in the Middle Ages that native English plays appeared; at first short plays inspired by stories from the Bible (Mystery plays) or the lives of the saints (Miracle plays), then whole cycles of such plays (the York Cycle, the Chester Cycle). In the 14th century, a new type of play became popular, the Morality play, in which the characters are allegories of certain vices and virtues, with Good always winning over Evil in the end. The best-known of these plays is *Everyman*, which is about the doctrine of salvation: worldly goods and relationships are futile, only good deeds can save man from damnation. The use of allegorical figures (Fellowship, Beauty, Five Wits, Good Deeds, etc.) helps to dramatize the conflict of the soul.
Now, sire, now wol I telle forth my tale. –
As evere moote I drynken wyn or ale,
I shal seye sooth, tho housbondes that I
hadde,
As thre of hem were goode, and two
were badde.
The thre men were goode, and riche, and
olde;
Unnethe myghte they the statut holde
In which that they were bounden unto
me.
Ye woot wel what I meene of this, pardee!
As help me God, I laughe when I thynke
How pitously a-nyght I made hem
swynke!
And, by my fey, I tolde of it no stoor.

Now, Sir; now will I tell my tale. –
As I hope to drink good wine or ale,
I shall speak the truth, those husbands I
had,
Three of them were good, and two were
bad.
The three men were good, and rich, and
old;
They scarcely had the power to hold the
statute
With which they were bound to me.

You know well what I mean by this, by
God!
So help me God, I laugh when I think
How piteously at night I made them
work!
And, by my faith, I took no account of it.
They had me yeven hir lond and hir tresoor;  
Me neded nat do lenger diligence  
To wynne hir love, or doon hem reverence.  
They loved me so wel, by God above,  
That I ne tolde no deyntee of hir love!  
A wys womman wol bisye hire evere in oon  
To gete hire love, ye, ther as she hath noon.  
But sith I hadde hem hoolly in myn hond,  
And sith they hadde me yeven al hir lond,  
What sholde I taken keep hem for to plese,  
But it were for my profit and myn ese?  
I sette hem so a-werke, by my fey,  
That many a nyght they songen “weilawey!”  
The bacon was nat fet for hem, I trowe,  
That som men han in Essex at Dunmowe.  
I governed hem so wel, after my lawe,  
That ech of hem ful blisful was and fawe  
To brynge me gaye thynges fro the fayre.  
They were ful glad whan I spak to hem faire;  
For, God it woot, I chidde hem spitously.  
Now herkneth hou I baar me proprely,  
Ye wise wyves, that kan understonde.  
Thus sholde ye speake and bere hem wrong on honde;  
For half so boldly kan ther no man  
Swere and lyen as a womman kan.  
I sey nat this by wyves that been wyse,  
But if it be whan they hem mysavyse.  
A wys wyf, if that she kan hir good,  
Shal beren hym on honde the crow is wood.  
And take witnesse of hir owene mayde  
Of hir assent...  

They had given me their land and their treasure;  
I no longer needed any diligence  
To win their love or show them respect.  
They loved me so well, by God above,  
That I had no regard for their love!  
A wise woman will exert herself constantly  
To get their love when she has none.  

But since I had them wholly in my hand,  
And since they had given me all their land,  
Why should I take heed to please them,  
Except for my profit and my comfort?  
I set them working so, by my faith,  
That many a night they sang “woe is me!”  
The bacon was not fetched for them, I believe,  
That some men have in Essex at Dunmowe.  
I governed them so well, after my law,  
That each of them was blissful and eager  
To bring me gay things from the fair.  
They were glad when I spoke to them nicely;  
For God knows I scolded them spitefully.  
Now listen how well I conducted myself,  
You wise wives who can understand.  
Thus should you speak and prove them in the wrong;  
For no man can half so boldly  
Swear and lie as a woman can.  
I say not this for wives that have been wise,  
But if they have behaved inadvisedly.  
A prudent woman, if she knows her own good,  
Shall make him believe that the bird is mad.  
And take her maid as a witness  
In collusion...

1. At Dunmowe a ham was the prize given to a couple who had not once during the year quarrelled or regretted their marriage;  
2. According to folklore, the chough (a bird of the crow family) could tell a husband if his wife was faithful.
# Renaissance Literature I: to the end of the Elizabethan Age

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<td>1516 More: <em>Utopia</em></td>
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<td>1534 Act of Supremacy</td>
<td>1564 Birth of Marlowe and Shakespeare</td>
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<tr>
<td>1536 Dissolution of the monasteries</td>
<td>1576 First permanent theatre built in</td>
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<td>1549 The Book of Common Prayer becomes the official liturgy of the</td>
<td>London</td>
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<td>Church of England.</td>
<td>1578 Lyly: <em>Euphues</em></td>
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<td>1553 Bloody Mary (Catholic reaction)</td>
<td>1579 Spenser: <em>The Shepherd’s Calendar</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1558 Accession of Elizabeth I</td>
<td>1587 Holinshed: <em>Chronicles</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1559 Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity define the Anglican Church as a</td>
<td>1588(?) Marlowe: <em>Doctor Faustus</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>via media between Catholicism and Puritanism.</td>
<td>1589-90 Sidney: <em>Arcadia</em> (pub.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1560-67 John Knox establishes Calvinism in Scotland.</td>
<td>1590-91 Shakespeare’s first plays (1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1578-80 Drake goes round the world</td>
<td>1592(?) Marlowe: <em>Edward II</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1587 Execution of Mary Queen of Scots</td>
<td>Kyd: <em>The Spanish Tragedy</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1588 Spanish Armada defeated</td>
<td>1593 Plague in London</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1595 Spenser: <em>Amoretti; Epithalamion</em></td>
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<td>1597 Bacon’s first essays</td>
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<td>1598 Jonson: <em>Every Man in His Humour</em></td>
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<td>1601-17 Campion: <em>Airs</em></td>
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<td>1601 Revolt and execution of Essex</td>
<td>1606 Jonson: <em>Volpone</em></td>
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<td>1603 Accession of James I (formerly James VI of Scotland)</td>
<td>Tourneur: <em>The Revenger’s Tragedy</em></td>
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<td>1604 Peace between England and Spain</td>
<td>Shakespeare: <em>Sonnets</em> (pub.)</td>
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<td>1605 Gunpowder Plot</td>
<td>1609 Shakespeare’s last plays</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1611(?) Webster: <em>The White Devil</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Authorized version of the Bible</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1612-13 Shakespeare’s last plays</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1613 (?) Webster: <em>The Duchess of Malfi</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1616 Death of Shakespeare</td>
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(1) For a detailed chronology of Shakespeare’s plays, see p. 23.
Political and religious background

The early part of the Renaissance, until 1603, roughly coincides with the reign of the Tudors (from the accession of Henry VII to the death of Elizabeth I). The first part of the 16th century was dominated by the political and religious problems brought about by the Reformation and by Henry VIII’s rebellion against papal authority. After his death, the Protestant Church gained further ascendancy under Edward VI, then was persecuted during the reign of Mary, who was a devout Catholic, until Elizabeth I found a via media, a compromise, between the two Churches. Though it never satisfied the Puritans, it brought years of relative stability.

The Bible and its translations

- Wycliffe’s first translation of the Bible into English in the late 14th century had little impact at a time when copies had to be made by hand. But the Reformation, with its transfer of power from the top of the church hierarchy to the individual’s own mind, led to several new versions in the 16th century: Tyndale’s Bible (1534), Coverdale’s (1535), the Great Bible (1539) – the first official Bible –, the Geneva Bible (1560), the Catholic Douai-Rheims Bible (1609-10).
- But it was undoubtedly the King James Bible (or Authorized Version) which was to become the most influential one. Commissioned by James I, it was the work of some fifty scholars who referred to the original texts as well as to preceding translations. The resulting text is striking for its simple poetic diction and its balanced syntax and has had a profound influence on English literature.

The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians

CHAPTER 13

THOUGH I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.
2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries,
During the long reign of Elizabeth, the country was further united by its fight against and victory over Spain, and by the authority and keen political sense of the Queen. Her reign, however, was accompanied by fears about the succession (the “Virgin Queen” had no heirs) and about the threat of rebellion (Essex was executed in 1601, the Gunpowder Plot was discovered early in the reign of James I). This confirmed existing ideas about the need for a strong, authoritative government, something reflected in Shakespeare’s plays.

It was this stability as well as the growing prosperity of England which brought about a literary Renaissance in the late 1570s.

**New horizons**

The whole of the 16th century was characterized by a spirit of enquiry and a new awareness of the world and of man, which clearly appear through:

– geographical expansion and discoveries, as England began to explore westward and to develop trade.

– scientific development in anatomy, chemistry and biology.

– a new conception of the cosmos, as the Ptolemaic system was being replaced by the Copernican system (Copernicus, *On the Revolution of the Spheres*, 1543).

---

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**New horizons**

The whole of the 16th century was characterized by a spirit of enquiry and a new awareness of the world and of man, which clearly appear through:

– geographical expansion and discoveries, as England began to explore westward and to develop trade.

– scientific development in anatomy, chemistry and biology.

– a new conception of the cosmos, as the Ptolemaic system was being replaced by the Copernican system (Copernicus, *On the Revolution of the Spheres*, 1543).
– the rediscovery of classical learning (Homer, Cicero, Seneca, Virgil, Horace, Ovid) which helped move away from the rigid system of medieval scholasticism. The emphasis was now on individual capabilities and expression.
– the influence of the Italian Renaissance had begun much earlier and was being renewed. It often became a model for English literature: Petrarch for the sonnet, Machiavelli (*The Prince*) for political ideas, Castiglione (*The Courtier*) for codes of conduct.
– a new interest in the arts.
This humanism and New Learning was influenced by the court and universities and reflected in the works of writers such as Thomas More.

**Main trends in literature**

**Poetry**

There was a large and varied poetic production during the Elizabethan age, marked by both imitation and innovation. Pastoral poetry (influenced by Virgil, e.g. Sidney’s *Arcadia*), allegory (inherited from classical epic poems, e.g. Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*), narrative poetry (often inspired by Ovid, e.g. Marlowe’s *Hero and Leander*), as well as satire and epic poetry, flourished during the Renaissance. But it was also during this period that the Earl of Surrey experimented with blank verse (unrhymed iambic pentameter lines), which was to become the standard form of verse for heroic plays, and adapted the Petrarachan sonnet to English (see p. 21). Songs were also highly popular at a time marked by the revival of music.

**The golden age of drama**

Mystery and Morality plays had given audiences a taste for drama and during the Elizabethan Age, the theatre developed, diversified, losing its link with the church, and gaining enormous popularity.

All kinds of plays were then performed, many of them based on earlier stories and legends.

- Comedies ranged from romantic comedies (like many of Shakespeare’s works) to more realistic plays of low life such as Thomas Dekker’s *The Shoemaker's Holiday* (1600). Ben Jonson’s comedies put a new emphasis on intrigue, humours, and the satire of manners and morals.
- As for tragedies, there were two main sources of inspiration at the time:
  - The tragedies of Seneca, with their themes of the wheel of fortune, the crimes of usurpers, and man’s capacity to suffer and endure. Their melodramatic plots were full of ghosts and bloody deeds, and the language highly rhetorical. They had a strong influence on the highly popular Elizabethan and Jacobean “revenge tragedies”, which also developed the characters’ tension between their need for revenge and their knowledge that it was morally wrong. Some of the best-known plays of the period can thus be called revenge tragedies: Sackville and Norton’s *Corboduc* (1561); Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy* (1592?); Marlowe’s *The Jew of Malta* (1590); Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* (1601); Tourneur’s *The Revenger’s Tragedy* (1606); Webster’s *The White Devil* (1611?).
  - Holinshed’s *Chronicles* (1587) and the *Mirror for Magistrates* (1559) – instructive stories of kings and illustrious men – which inspired history plays (such as Shakespeare’s), often meant as a direct warning for princes.
- At the beginning of the 17th century, new types of plays appeared: Shakespeare’s darker tragedies and problem plays, and masques – entertainments combining speech, singing and dancing.

**The Elizabethan stage**

Until 1576, plays were performed in private homes or inns. When permanent theatres started being built in the years that followed, they were open-air theatres, built round an inner court or pit (were the groundlings stood) surrounded by galleries for the wealthier members of the audience. The stage – a thrust stage – jutted out into the pit. This meant a closer relationship between actors and audience and gave another meaning to soliloquies.

Plays were therefore performed in front of a varied audience and appealed to noblemen and to groundlings alike. Women’s parts were performed by young men,
which gave rise to endless play on disguise and sexual ambiguity. Performances took place in the afternoon, in daylight, since there was little other lighting. There were few props and no painted sets. Actors formed companies, under the patronage of an influential lord. The text of the play belonged to the company, which guarded it jealously since plays were in great demand and there was much competition between the different companies.

The following diagram gives an idea of what a theatre might have been like.

**Prose**

Though prose never reached such heights as poetry or drama, it is interesting in its experimentation with prose styles. Two main tendencies appeared.

- One was modelled on Cicero's elaborate, balanced and ornate prose. This led to euphuism (from John Lyly's *Euphues*, 1578), a highly rhetorical and affected style, full of comparisons, parallelisms and antitheses.
- The other, inspired by Seneca, was terser and livelier, with shorter sentences and changes in rhythm. It is best illustrated by Bacon's *Essays*. 

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**The Globe Playhouse 1599–1613**

One day I wrote her name upon the strand,
But came the waves and washèd it away:
Agayne, I wrote it with a second hand;
But came the tyde, and made my paynes
his pray.

Vayne man, sayd she, that doest in vaine assay,
A mortall thing so to immortalize,
For I my selve shall lyke to this decay,
And eek my name be wipèd out lykewise.

Not so, (quod I) let baser things devize
To dye in dust, but you shall live by fame:
My verse your vertues rare shall eternize,
And in the heavens wryte your glorious name.

Where, whenas Death shall all the world subdew,
Our love shall live, and later life renew.

Sonnets LXXV

Edmund SPENSER
(1552-1599)

Edmund Spenser was the son of a clothmaker and was educated at the Merchant Taylors’ School in London, then at Cambridge as a “sizar” (poor scholar). He was a friend of Sidney, of Sir Walter Raleigh and of the Earls of Essex and Leicester. In 1580, he was appointed secretary to the Lord Deputy of Ireland and remained in Ireland for most of his life, having failed to obtain advancement from the Queen.

Spenser believed that poetry could play a role in building a national myth and a Protestant culture in England, and he was active in the Aeropagus, a literary society which encouraged a new English poetry. It is with the same aim of enriching the language that he tried to revive Chaucerian English and often used archaic or dialectical words.

The Shepherd's Calendar is a collection of pastorals, one for each month of the year, each written in a different type of verse.

Amoretti is a sequence of sonnets (using Spenser's own rhyme scheme abab bcbc cdcd ee) written for his future wife and notable for their fluidity and musicality.

Epithalamion and Prothalamion are two marriage songs, the former written to celebrate his own marriage and full of both passion and serenity.

But his best-known poem, and perhaps the most important Elizabethan work of poetry, is The Faerie Queene, an epic chivalric romance as well as an allegory. Although only six books were completed, it was planned as a series of twelve exploits, each performed by a knight who exemplified one of the twelve cardinal virtues defined by Aristotle. Arthur appears in each book and his quest for Gloriana gives unity to the work.

The poem is imbued with the spirit of romance and is full of knights, dragons, enchantresses and magicians. But it is also a multiple allegory: moral (the Red Cross Knight is Holiness, Sir Guyon, Temperance, Britomart, Chastity, Arthegall, Justice), political (the twelve-day feast takes place at the court of Gloriana, the Queen of Fairies; the personification of Queen Elizabeth; parallels between her court and that of King Arthur), and religious (a defence of Protestantism against the Catholic Church). It is a highly learned poem, inspired by Ariosto's Orlando Furioso and by Tasso's Jerusalem Delivered, but also one in which Spenser developed his own stanza form (later called Spenserian stanza and used by Keats, Shelley and Byron): it consists of eight iambic pentameters followed by one iambic hexameter which slows the rhythm. The rhyme pattern is: ababbccbc. There is little psychological depth in the poem but the language is remarkably limpid and the descriptions richly beautiful.
The Faerie Queene (1590)

This is the very beginning of Book I. The Red Cross Knight is an image of St George (he will slay a dragon), of England and of Christ. The lady is Una (the true Church, that is to say the Church of England).

Stanza 1
1. pricking: riding and spurring; 
2. Y cladd: clad, dressed; 
3. armes: armour; 
4. dints: marks; 
5. steede: steed, horse; 
6. did chide: was impatient with; 
7. foming bitt: foaming bit; 
8. jolly: courageous; 
9. giusts: jousts (combat of knights on horseback with lances); 
10. fitt: fit.

1. A Gentle Knight was pricking on the plaine,
Y cladd in mightie armes and silver shielde,
Wherein old dints of deepe wounds did remaine,
The cruell markes of many a bloody fielde;
Ye t armes till that time did he never wield:
His angry steede did chide his foming bitt,
As much disdayning to the curbe to yield:
Full jolly knight he seemd, and faire did sitt,
As one for knightly giusts and fierce encounters fitt.

Stanza 2
1. brest: breast; 
2. bloudie: bloody; 
3. as: as if; 
4. scored: marked; 
5. for: as a mark of; 
6. deede: deed, action; 
7. cheere: countenance, expression; 
8. ydrad: dreaded.

2. But on his brest a bloudie Crosse he bore,
The deare remembrance of his dying Lord,
For whose sweete sake that glorious badge he wore,
And dead as living ever him ador’ d:
Upon his shield the like was also scor’d
For soveraine hope, which in his helpe he had:
Right faithfull true he was in deede and word,
But of his cheere did seeme too solemne sad;
Ye t nothing did he dread, but ever was ydrad.

Stanza 3
1. bond: bound; 
2. Gloriana: Queen Elizabeth; 
3. earne: yearn; 
4. battell: battle; 
5. a Dragon: the symbol of sin.

3. Upon a great adventure he was bond
That greatest Gloriana to him gave,
That greatest Glorious Queene of Faerie lond,
To winne him worship, and her grace to have,
Which of all earthly things he most did crave;
And ever as he rode, his hart did earne
To prove his puissance in battell brave
Upon his foe, and his new force to learne;
Upon his foe, a Dragon horrible and stearne.

Stanza 4
1. Asse: ass, a symbol of humility; 
2. vele: veil (to hide Una’ s radiance); 
3. wimpled: folded; 
4. stole: robe; 
5. inly mourned: mourned in her heart; 
6. palfrey: horse; 
7. in a line: by a rope or leash; 
8. lad: led.

4. A lovely Ladie rode him faire beside,
Upon a lowly Asse more white then snow,
Yet she much whiter, but the same did hide
Under a vele, that wimpled was full low,
And over all a blacke stole she did throw,
As one that inly mourned, so was she sad,
And heavie sat upon her palfrey slow:
Seemed in heart some hidden care she had,
And by her in a line a milke white lambe she lad.

Stanza 5
1. an: and; 
2. lore: traditions; 
3. lynage: lineage, descent; 
4. of yore: in the past; 
5. feend: fiend; 
6. foule uprose: terrible uproar; 
7. forwarded: destroyed; 
8. compeld: summoned to her.

5. So pure an’ innocent, as that same lambe,
She was in life and every vertuous lore,
And by descent from Royall lynage came
Of ancient Kings and Queenes, that had of yore
Their scepters stretcht from East to Westernie shore,
And all the world in their subjection held;
Till that infernal feend with foule uprose
Forwarded all their land, and them expeld:
Whom to avenge, she had this Knight from far compeld.
As scholar, courtier, diplomat and soldier, Sir Philip Sidney represents the Renaissance model of the perfect gentleman, the ideal described by Castiglione’s Courtier. His life has become legendary, illustrating his accomplishments and moral idealism. The son of the Lord Deputy of Ireland, he was educated at Oxford and travelled extensively before returning to London, where he became a diplomat and a much admired courtier. He took part in several missions abroad and died fighting against Spain in the Netherlands.

Arcadia is a story in five prose acts, divided by verse eclogues. The plot, the adventures of two princes shipwrecked in Arcadia, is full of the artificial devices of romance – abduction, imprisonment, rescue and mistaken identity – and the style highly patterned and euphuistic. This romance is meant both as entertainment (it was originally written to amuse Sidney’s sister) and as moral guidance for the governing class since it includes many debates on metaphysical questions and on subjects such as public and contemplative life, reason and passion, and the duties of princes.

Astrophel and Stella is a sequence of 108 sonnets relating the love of Astrophel (which means “star lover”, as well as “masculine”) for Stella ("star" and “feminine”). The sonnets, which describe various moments in the poet’s emotions are often moving in their sincere account of a personal experience and make use of strong and striking imagery.

The Defence of Poesy, the first major work of English literary criticism, shows Sidney’s concern for a national English literature. It is a defence of poetry (which includes drama) against Puritan attacks (Gosson’s School of Abuse, 1579, had accused playwrights and poets of corrupting morality). Instead, Sidney argues that the poet presents an ideal, inspiring us to heroic virtues, and that he is a creator who uses his imagination to improve on nature.

**Astrophel and Stella (1591)**

Loving in truth, and fain¹ in verse my love to show,
That she, dear she, might take some pleasure of my pain,
Pleasure might cause her read, reading might make her know,
Knowledge might pity win, and pity grace obtain,

I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of woe:
Studying inventions² fine, her wits to entertain:

Oft turning others’ leaves, to see if thence would flow
Some fresh and fruitful showers upon my sunburned³ brain.

But words came halting forth, wanting Invention’s stay;
Invention, Nature’s child, fled stepdame Study’s blows;
And others’ feet⁴ still seemed but strangers in my way.

Thus great with child to speak, and helpless in my throes,
Biting my truant pen, beating myself for spite:
“Fool!” said my Muse to me, “look in thy heart, and write.”

**Sonnet 1**

Come, Sleep! O Sleep, the certain knot of peace,
The baiting-place¹ of wit, the balm of woe,
The poor man’s wealth, the prisoner’s release,
The indifferent judge between the high and low;

With shield of proof shield me from out the prease² of those fierce darts Despair at me doth throw;
Oh make in me those civil wars to cease.
I will good tribute pay, if thou do so.
Take thou of me smooth pillows, sweetest bed,

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1. fain: willing; 2. inventions: during the Renaissance, people believed there were three phases in composition: inventio (invention), dispositio (structure), elocutio (style); 3. sunburned: a conventional Elizabethan metaphor: those who had stayed too long in the sun of the Ancients were supposed to be parched; 4. feet: metrical feet as well.

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1. baiting-place: place of refreshment; 2. prease: crowd.
A chamber deaf to noise and blind to light,
A rosy garland and a weary head;
And if these things, as being thine by right,
Move not thy heavy grace, thou shalt in me,
Livelier than elsewhere, Stella’s image see.

Sonnet 39

Nicholas Hilliard, Young Man against a Rose Tree. Inscribed:
Dat poenas laudata fides
(My praised faith procures my pain).
Victoria and Albert Museum, UK.

Lovers were said to be melancholic and many Elizabethan paintings depict young men leaning against a tree, seeking the solace of nature. In this miniature by Nicholas Hilliard (1547-1619), one of the two great miniature painters of the time (the other was Isaac Oliver), the melancholy young man seems to have been there for ever so that the rose tree has grown around him.
Sonnets were very popular during the Renaissance. Those of Dante and Petrarch were much admired, and in the mid-sixteenth century, the genre was adapted to English by Sir Thomas Wyatt and the Earl of Surrey. The popularity of the sonnet reached a climax during the last two decades of the century. It then became fashionable to use such poetry to admire the beloved lady as though she were a celestial and ethereal beauty and to sing the pains and joys of platonic love. Between 1591 and 1597, some twenty books of sonnets were published, the best-known being those of Sidney, Spenser and Shakespeare, who did not simply reproduce the carpe diem theme common at the time, but who showed more personal inspiration.

- Sir Philip Sidney’s Astrophel and Stella (1591) is more realistic and self-centred. The main subject of interest is the poet’s emotions. Sensuality, with the conflict between carnal and spiritual desires, becomes a common subject.
- Edmund Spenser’s Amoretti (1595) describes Spenser’s love for Elizabeth Boyle with deep peace and serenity.
- William Shakespeare’s Sonnets (1609) is partly addressed to a young man (perhaps the Earl of Southampton, Shakespeare’s protector), with the possibility of either passionate friendship or homosexuality, and partly to a lady (perhaps Lucy Morgan), often with deep passion. The poet seeks carnal satisfaction with the lady, the very opposite of Petrarchism. The themes include an invitation to the young man to get married so that his children will reproduce his image; the threats of time; the inconstancy of the friend; the ups and downs of love; the friend’s betrayal; the friend’s seduction by the mistress; doubts about the poet’s own writings and his position in the world; and sensual passion for a married woman of dark beauty.

Sonnets consist of three quatrains and a couplet. Most sonnets have a logical development, their interest partly lying in their progression. The verse is usually iambic pentameter with variations. Alliteration, assonance and consonance are common. There is frequent use of metaphors and conceits. There are two main types of sonnets in English poetry: the Petrarchan and the Shakespearean.

- In Petrarchan sonnets (first used by Petrarch but later by other sonneteers too), the fourteen lines are made up of:
  - an octave,
  - the last quatrain + the couplet = the sestet.
  There is usually a shift in thought between the octave and the sestet. The most common rhyme pattern is abba abba cdcd cd or abba abba cdle cde.
- One of the problems with writing sonnets in the English language is that rhyme is more difficult in English than in Latin languages. This is why there was a drift towards the Shakespearean sonnet, with seven rhymes instead of five.

Structure:
- Q1 = proposition, explanation of a theme.
- Q2 = reasoning, argumentation.
- Q3 = development of the reasoning (confirmation, refutation or amplification).
- C = conclusion, the couplet giving emphasis to the final thought. The most common rhyme pattern in Shakespeare’s sonnets (but there are variations in other sonnets, like those of Spenser) is abab cdcd efef gg.

Christopher MARLOWE
(1564-1593)

Christopher Marlowe was born in Canterbury, the son of a shoemaker, and studied at Cambridge University. He led a turbulent life, working both as a playwright for the Admiral’s Men and as a spy in the Elizabethan secret service. He was said to be violent and possibly to have dealt in black magic. But he also moved in the literary circles of the time and was acquainted with Sir Walter Raleigh and Thomas Kyd. Just before he was to appear in court, accused of treasonable and heretic ideas, he was murdered at an inn, in mysterious circumstances, possibly by other spies or on the orders of the government.

Marlowe’s dramatic heroes are hubristic beings who overreach themselves in their search for glory and limitless power. Their excess is conveyed by Marlowe’s “mighty line”:...

Main works
1586
The Tragedy of Dido
1587
Tamburlaine the Great, Part I (pub. 1590)
1588
Tamburlaine the Great, Part II (pub. 1590)
powerful rhetorical language, richly metaphorical and rhythmical.

*Tamburlaine* relates the exploits of a cruel and passionate Scythian shepherd who yearns for power and beauty and rises to rule the Mongol empire. The play is one of the first to experiment with blank verse in drama.

In *The Jew of Malta*, a kind of revenge tragedy, it is the desire for wealth which drives the Machiavellian character of the Jew, Barabas.

*The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* is about the desire to possess forbidden knowledge which leads Faustus to sell his soul to the devil. The play symbolizes the aspirations and ambitions of Renaissance man, who tries to free himself from the religious constraints of the old faith. It contains striking scenes which illustrate the struggle between good and evil in Faustus’s mind, his doubts and his torment, his final awareness of man’s weakness and transience on earth. But there is little other characterization, and the scenes of farce and foolery in the middle part of the play (possibly not written by Marlowe) are often tedious.

As for *Edward II*, it is a historical tragedy about a weak king, infatuated with a man of low birth, Gaveston, and the victim of Mortimer’s desire for political authority. He is finally imprisoned, then murdered by his barons.

Marlowe’s poem *Hero and Leander* is an epyllion (a short epic) which reworks Ovid’s tales into a dramatic and erotic poem.

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**The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus (1588?)**

Faustus has sold his body and his soul to Lucifer in order to gain unlimited knowledge. In this scene, he has just been visited by a Good Angel, who urged him to repent, and by an Evil Angel, who told him that he would never repent. Mephostophilis is one of Lucifer’s ministers and is now at Faustus’s command.

**FAUSTUS**

My heart’s so hardened I cannot repent!

Scarce can I name salvation, faith, or heaven,

But fearful echoes thunders in mine ears,

“Faustus, thou art damned”: then swords and knives,

Poison, guns, halters¹ and envenomed steel

Are laid before me to dispatch myself:

And long ere ² this, I should have done the deed,

Had not sweet pleasure conquered deep despair.

Have not I made blind Homer sing to me

Of Alexander’s³ love, and Oenon’s death?

And hath not he, that built the walls of Thebes⁴

With ravishing sound of his melodious harp,

Made music with my Mephostophilis?

Why should I die then, or basely despair?

I am resolved! Faustus shall not repent.

Come Mephostophilis let us dispute again,

And reason of divine astrology.

Speak, are there many spheres above the moon?

Are all celestial bodies but one globe,

As is the substance of this centric earth?

¹ *halters*: the ropes of the hangman;
² *dispatch myself, done the deed*: kill(ed) myself;
³ *ere*: before;
⁴ *Alexander*: Homer’s name for Paris. He fell in love with Oenone and, when wounded, was carried at her feet, where he died. Oenone stabbed herself;
⁵ *the walls of Thebes*: they rose spontaneously at the sound of Amphion’s harp.