

CAUSES OF THE RISE OF NEO-CLASSICAL CRITICISM

There are various causes that led to the rise of Neo-Classical criticism in the second half of the 17th century.

1. The excesses of the Metaphysicals-the followers of John Donne-naturally led to a revolt in favor of order, balance and sanity in literature. Their extravagant hyperboles, far-fetched and violent similes and metaphors, and 'conceits' elaborated to a fantastic extent, prepared the ground for neo-classicism with its emphasis on 'correctness', and 'decorum'.
2. The predominance of French influence. Charles II and his courtiers returned from France imbued with French culture and the French respect for rules and the French theory and practice of Literature. In France, rigid rules and regulations had already been framed by the *French Academy* and they were now imported into England.
3. The rise of the scientific spirit and the new philosophy with their emphasis on rationalism, reason, clarity and simplicity in thought and expression, and the avoidance of all that was extravagant. Philosophers, like Hobbes, taught that 'fancy' should be guided and controlled by 'judgment'.
4. In the beginning Neo-Classicism was liberal, but with the passing of time it became more and more rigid. Instead of the rules being followed in spirit, there was a slavish adherence to the letter, often at the cost of spirit.

CHARACTERISTICS OF NEO-CLASSICAL CRITICISM

1. Neoclassical critics emphasized that literature should be characterized by order, accuracy, and restraint.
2. The principle of follow nature (Nature is the manifestation in the visible creation of the Order and Reason behind all things, a reflection of the medieval view that the likeness of God is imprinted in the very matter and organization of the universe).
3. Correctness, reason, good sense are emphasized.
4. The poet must deal with universal truth and general ideas.
5. In opposition to the Renaissance view, where man was seen as basically good, neoclassical critics saw man as inherently flawed.
6. The function of poetry is to teach and delight.
7. Neoclassical critics also emphasized restraint, self-control, and common sense.
8. The language of poetry is different from the language of prose; therefore, it must be noble and elevated.
9. Decorum (different types of poetry have different styles).
10. Rhyme is superior to blank verse.