

Introduction to NEOCLASSICAL POETRY

The neoclassical school of poetry lies within the period of 1660 – 1798. The main poets of the school were John Dryden, John Milton, Oliver Goldsmith, and Alexander Pope. The student in this class should be aware of the definition and style of neoclassical poetry. The prefix "neo" means new, while "classical" means going back to the ideologies set by Greeks and Romans during the classic period. **Neoclassical poetry** interweaved the new and the old together to produce poetry that dignified the human condition with no ornaments that marked the Renaissance. Neoclassical poets employed logic and scattered language to establish work of arts that mark this school, including John Dryden, Oliver Goldsmith, John Milton, and Alexander Pope. Each one of these poets was a prominent figure during one of the three major segments of the neoclassic period. So, let us take a deeper look at the features and characteristics of neoclassical poetry and some of the school's major poets.

The Main Characteristics of Neoclassical Poetry

1- Rationalism

Rationalism is the main and significant feature of neoclassical poetry. Neoclassical poets viewed reason as the mainspring of learning, knowledge and inspiration for their poetry. Neoclassical poetry is a reaction against the

renaissance style of poetry. It is a unique outcome of intellect, not fancy and imagination. [Unlike romantic poetry, which is entirely the result of sentiments of the poet, neoclassical poetry is a “simulated, fabricated and stereotypical type of poetry”. In romantic poetry, sentiments play a vital role in writing of poetry, while in neoclassical poetry; reason and intellect are dominant elements. Romantic poets wrote poetry thoroughly at the impulse of their imagination. They didn't lay emphasis on reason to compose poetry.] The neoclassical poets made an effort to disregard imagination, emotion and feelings, while composing their poetry. That is the reason; their poetry may be branded as artificial and synthetic.

2- Realism

Realism is the stamp of neoclassical poetry. The neoclassical poets (unlike romantic poets) were not living in their own world of imagination. They were hard realists and they presented the true picture of their society. They didn't turn their eyes from the harsh realities of life. They were keen observers of the reality in their society; they reflected what they experienced with their open eyes in their poetry. [These poets were not escapists like romantic poets, who turned their back to the harsh realities of life and tried to escape from them with the help of plight of imagination]. Neoclassical poets were men of action and practically lived in the midst of people. That is why; they had a very keen observation of their society. They avoided abstract ideas, imaginative thoughts and idealism in their poetry.

3- Devotion to Classicism

One of the main features of neoclassical poetry was its imitation of classical Greek and Roman concepts. The neoclassical poets were undoubtedly great faithful of classical rules. The neoclassical poets respected the classical rules a great deal and they went to revive classical concepts in their poetry by following each and every rule of Classicism. Their highest concern was to adhere to the classical rules and employ them in their poetry as much as possible.

4- Objectivity

Objectivity is an important feature of neoclassical poetry. As these poets were completely against subjectivity in poetry, they strove hard to write objective poetry. They avoided giving vent to their feelings; rather they dwelt upon the miseries, hardships and problems of the people around them. That is why; we find very little information about the lives of neoclassical poets in their poetry.

5- Style of Satire

The most popular style of neoclassical poetry was satire. Even though its form and language were logical and restrained, a dash of wit was always welcomed. For example, poets were equivocating wit into their work by using an epic or ode to discuss a topic that didn't quite belong to it.