

# English Literature Course for Third Year Students

## Early Modern Prose

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## Early Modern Period

The literature of 17th c. may be divided into 2 periods:

**I. The Puritan age or the age of Milton (1620-1660)** which divided into 2 sub-periods

- Jacobean period, named after James I (in Latin language)
- Caroline periods, named after Charles I (in Latin language)

**II. The Restoration Period or the age of Dryden (1660-1700)**

- The Seventeenth Century up to 1660 was dominated by Puritanism, that's why it's called the Puritan Age.
  - This period is also called the Age of Milton, named after one of the greatest poets of English literature: John Milton.
  - Milton was the noblest representative of the Puritan spirit.
- The Puritan Age (1620-1660) is regarded as **the second greater Renaissance**. What's does it mean?
  - The Renaissance:
    - The Renaissance is **the rebirth of Greco-Roman arts** in Europe. It started in Italy.
    - The English Renaissance took place in 16<sup>th</sup> century. It is called Elizabethan Age. There was **revival or rebirth Greco-Roman literary genres** (classical genres), as for example the **epic** with Edmund Spenser, and the **drama** with William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlow and others.
    - Besides epic and drama, we have another classical genre: **Romance**.
  - The Renaissance was the intellectual awakening of Europe in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries.
    - In Italy, the Renaissance had been essentially **pagan**.
    - It had hardly touched the **moral** nature of man, and it brought little relief from the **despotism of rulers**.

- The Puritan Age is regarded as **the second greater Renaissance**, because it is **the rebirth (revival) of the moral nature of man**.
- Puritan movement had two chief objects:
  1. the first was **personal righteousness** (the quality of being morally right);
  2. the second was **civil and religious liberty**.

In other words, it aimed to make men **honest** and to make them **free**.

### ■ **Literary Characteristics.**

There are three main characteristics in which Puritan literature differs from that of the preceding age:

Elizabethan literature was characterized by:

#### (1) Elizabethan literature

- **The patriotism** of all classes (diverse classes);
- **Their devotion to a queen** who, with all her faults, sought first the nation's welfare.
- This patriotism and devotion to the queen was the reason of a marked **unity in spirit** at that period.

#### ≠ Puritan literature

Under the Stuarts all this was changed.

- **The kings were the open enemies of the** people (Puritans were against the absolute supremacy of kings).
- The country was **divided** by the struggle for political and religious liberty;
- and the **literature was as divided in spirit** as were the struggling parties (some authors supported king, and others rejected him, etc.)

#### (2) Elizabethan literature

- Literature is generally inspiring: **youth** and **hope** and vitality.

#### ≠ Puritan literature

- Writings speak age and **sadness** and **pessimism**.

### (3) Elizabeth Literature

- Literature is intensely **romantic**; the romance springs from the heart of youth, and believes all things, even the impossible.

#### ≠ Puritan Literature

- In the literature of the Puritan period one looks in **vain for romantic ardor**. Even in the lyrics and love poems a critical, **intellectual spirit takes its place**.

### ■ Puritan Age Literature Themes

Themes were religious :

1. The common themes include **religious and political idealism**.  
The religious discourse emphasizes the concept of **predestination and inevitability of sin** and a strong sense of **guilt and shame**.
2. The age is known for the heavy **influence of Biblical text**, for example, **Old Testament** and books like the book of Jeremiah.
3. There was an influence of **natural phenomena** like earthquakes, fires, floods etc. as the people of the age were interested in learning about nature and the signs for God's design in nature.
4. Other thematic works included the **idea of reformation or regeneration**.
5. The concept of struggle between the **World** and **spirituality** was also explored.

6. **Life was seen as a test:** failure meant eternal damnation and hellfire; success meant posthumous paradise.
7. The theme of the "**MILLENNIUM**," is common in Puritan literature, prophesying the return of Jesus to Earth, an end to human misery, and the beginning of a 1,000 years of PEACE AND PROSPERITY

## ■ Writing Style

The writing style of the Puritan Age reflected the spirit of Puritans.

Unlike Catholics and Anglicans, Puritans' style in writing and architecture was simple and plain. This is not because of lack of formal education.

- Catholic and Anglican architecture: churches: **images, statutes, decorations, icons**
- ✚ Puritan architecture: simple, **against images (icons)**, because in the Decalogue.
- Catholic and Anglican Writings: the style quite **elaborate**: complex syntax, full of figures of speech (metaphors, parables, riddles, allegories...)
- ✚ Puritan writings: Puritans claim that the purpose of writing is to teach about religion, and the best way remains the **plain and simple** style:
  - Texts written with simple sentences and language.
  - Metaphorical constructions were avoided
  - Latin quotations were avoided
  - Direct not oblique (figurative)
  - Puritans adopted the plain style because they believed that **it was a better tool for revealing God's truth** than more ornate language. Allusions to Greek mythology or to classical literature were considered **obstruction to the essential spiritual message**, by both Puritan readers and the writers.

- Interestingly, this question of style of writing has a close link with the interpretation of the Bible:
  - Catholics claimed that (1) **the Bible is extremely complex**, (2) hence very **difficult to understand**. (3) That's why only prelate (clergy, churchmen) had **access to Scripture**; (4) and **no translation**; (5) the Scriptures should be **interpreted spiritually** (figuratively).
  - ✚ Puritans claimed that (1) **the Bible is simple** and (2) **easy to understand**, (3) so everyone could read it **by himself**; (4) **translation** into vernacular languages; (5) the Scriptures should be **interpreted literally**.

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## PROSE OF PURITAN PERIOD

The main genres of writing are religious sermons, historical narrative, personal journals, fiction...

This period includes in prose great writers who strongly shaped English literature, namely, Francis Bacon, **John Bunyan**, Thomas Hobbes, John Milton, Burton, Thomas Brown, Richard Baxter, and, furthermore, the book which unquestionably occupies the highest place in English literature, that is the **King James Bible**.

## **I. The King James Bible**

It is virtually impossible to read English literature unless you have a thorough knowledge of the Bible.

Northrop Frye wrote, 'The Bible is the major informing influence on literary symbolism. Once our view of the Bible comes into proper focus, a great mass of literary symbolism, from Anglo-Saxon texts to TS Eliot, begins to take on meaning.' (Northrop Frye, *The Anatomy of Criticism*, (Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 316.)

The King James Bible was started in 1604 and completed in 1611. It became the standard Bible of the Church of England, and some consider it one of the greatest literary works of all time. This project was headed by James I himself, who supervised the work of forty-seven scholars.

**The Vulgate** (a Latin Bible from c. 400 CE, translated by Jerome).

The name Vulgate is based on a Latin phrase, *versio vulgata*, which means "the commonly used version". Latin was the common language of educated people in Western Europe. For centuries in the Middle Ages, the Vulgate was the main Bible used by Western Christians.

The Medieval Roman Catholic Church banned translation the Bible into vernacular languages.

**John Wycliffe** (ca. 1329-1384) the 'Morning Star of the Reformation' was the first with his associates to translate the entire Bible from Latin into English. He maintained that the Bible should be



translated so all people could read it. He was the most recognized scholar and theologian at Oxford University of his day.

Other revisions of the English Bible emerged.

**William Tyndale**, like Wycliffe, strove to render the Bible available to people. He translated the New Testament from Greek to English and published in 1526. His influence was great in the history of the English Bible.

### **The Geneva Bible**

The Geneva Bible is published in 1560 by English Puritans who had fled to Geneva.

During the Reformation of the 16th and 17th centuries, Protestants declared Scripture to be the ultimate source of faith, wisdom, knowledge and salvation. Simple people were encouraged to study the Bible themselves. To help them to understand God's word, the translators of the Geneva Bible added marginal annotations, chapter summaries, maps, and diagrams to explain the text for readers. Published in numerous editions between 1560 and 1650, inexpensive, readily available, and filled with aids to help the reader, the Geneva Bible, known as the People's Bible, was deeply loved by English Protestants, and not only those of the more zealous sort.

The Geneva Bible was the first English version to be brought to America, and it was the Bible used by Shakespeare, Spenser, Milton and Bunyan.

## King James Bible

James disliked The Geneva Bible for the political implications of its marginal notes, which represented the third of the book. For him, these political subversive notes, written by great Protestant theologians like John Calvin and John Knox, were dangerous, because they portrayed kings as tyrants to reject. Such interpretations were completely contrary to the doctrine of 'the divine right of kings,' which asserts that monarchs were anointed by God, accordingly, all people should submit themselves to the rulers.

James declared that the Geneva Bible was 'the worst of all' translations, and a new translation was needed.

In the calling of the Hampton Court Conference in 1604, James decided for a new translation. He decided that marginal notes, like those of the Geneva Bible, were forbidden in the new translation, except as a means to clarify difficult words.

The final manuscript was completed in 1611.

In 1616, King James prohibited against printing the Geneva Bible in England.

The King James Bible was not initially successful. It was criticized for its archaic language, and for its numerous printing errors.

The King James Version became to be popular among the British people only after the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660, and began to impose itself and, finely, supersede the Geneva Bible.

The King James Bible influenced and shaped the modern language of English. 'No book has had greater influence on the English language.'  
Alan G. Thomas

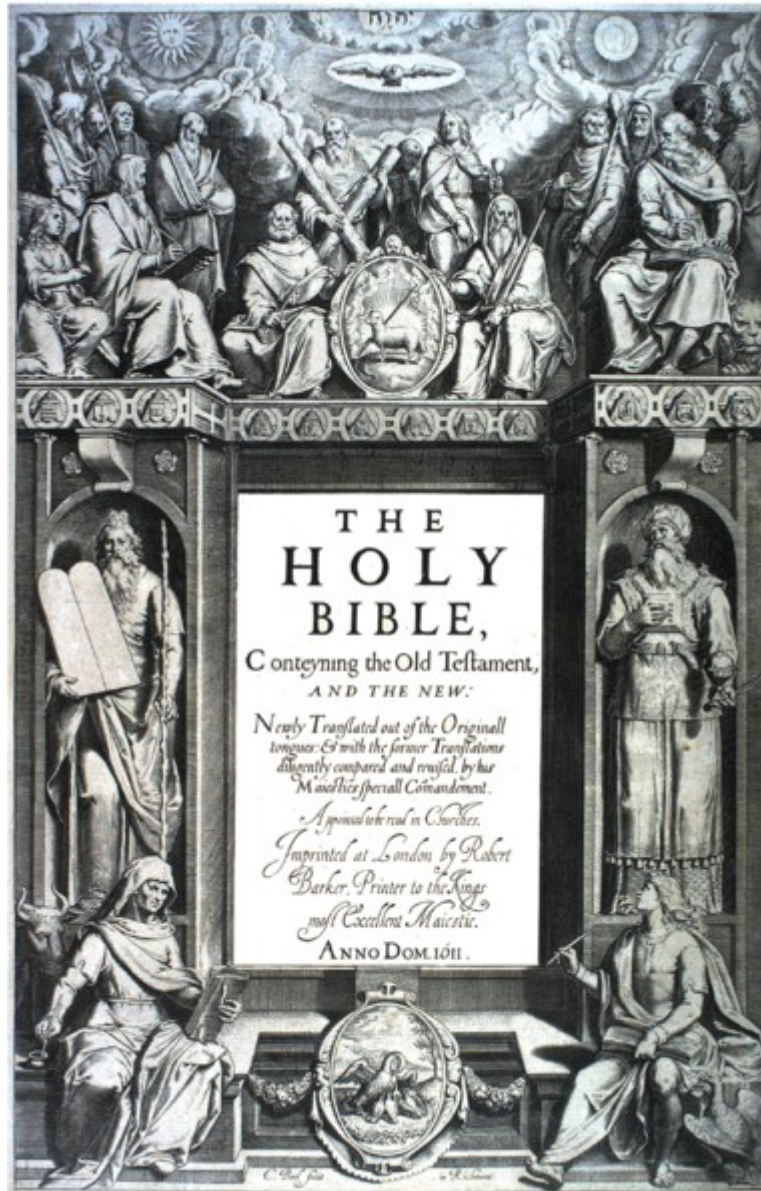
The King James Bible introduced hundreds of new words, phrases, expressions, and still used today.

The influence of JKB is huge in literature. Great writers were familiar with this version.

Winston Churchill called it a 'masterpiece'.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge claimed its study would 'keep any writer from being vulgar, in point of style.'

The KJB is an authoritative reference: *Chambers' Dictionary of Quotations*, *Oxford Anthology of Quotations*, the best-selling *International Thesaurus of Quotations*, *Webster's Dictionary* and others all use the King James Bible as the standard text for quotations or definitions.



Frontispiece to the King James' Bible, 1611, shows the Twelve Apostles at the top. Moses and Aaron flank the central text. In the four corners sit Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

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## JOHN BUNYAN'S *THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS*

This course is designed to guide readers to approach the text of John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (Part One) in a deep way. Students should read the whole book, which is available online for free.

The course begins with introductory material on the book and the author.

The course is outlined in different units, following the steps of the journey of Christian, the main character of in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. These steps are also called sections of the book.

Each unit contains several questions that students should answer from the information given in the book.

## Introduction to John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*

### John Bunyan

John Bunyan (1628-1688) was born at Elstow, near Bedford. He learned to read and write at the village school, and prepared in his early teen years to follow his father's trade of tinker (mender of pans and other metal utensils). In 1644, however, he was swept up in the Civil War, and served as a soldier in the Parliamentary army. After leaving the army 1647, he underwent a prolonged and agonizing spiritual crisis. Following his religious conversion, he joined a Puritan church (more exactly a Baptist church) in Bedford where he began to preach. This led, in 1656, to the beginning of a literary career in the course of which he would publish some sixty works. In 1660, following the Restoration of Charles II, he was imprisoned for twelve years in Bedford goal because of his refusal to stop preaching and conform to the worship practices of the Church of England (Anglican Church), and became then a dissenter. While in prison he published several books, among them *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666), now recognized as one of the classics of Puritan spiritual autobiography. It was not, however, until the publication in 1678 of *The Pilgrim's Progress* that his genius fully declared itself. The imaginative intensity and authenticity of his allegory of the Christian life made the book an extraordinary best-seller, and has earned Bunyan a unique place in literary history. It was followed in 1680 by its sequel, *The Life and Death of Mr Badman*, by the allegory *The Holy War* in 1682, and by Part Two of *The Pilgrim's Progress* in 1684, works which substantiate Bunyan's claim to be among the founders of the English novel. It is worth noting that Bunyan regarded the Bible as the authority for faith. He clearly claimed his preference to the Scripture than two universities, namely Oxford and Cambridge, because it is God's Word.

## ***The Pilgrim's Progress***

After the Bible, John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* is the most published book in the history of the English language.

*The Pilgrim's Progress* contains two parts. Part One, based largely on Bunyan's own experiences, relates Christian's journey to the Celestial City. Part Two is the lesser-known story of Christian's wife, Christiana, and their children as they undertake a similar journey.

From the moment of its publication, *The Pilgrim's Progress* has appealed to an extraordinary large and varied readership. No other work in English, except the Bible, has been so widely read over such a long period. First published in 1678, with a second part added in 1684, *The Pilgrim's Progress: From This World to That Which Is to Come, Delivered Under the Similitude of a Dream* has never been out of print. It has been published in innumerable editions, and has been translated into over 200 languages. Such was its success that imitations, adaptations, abridgements, and translations began to appear almost immediately, a publishing phenomenon that has continued to this day. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it became established as a classic book for children. So widespread was its influence in the nineteenth century that it has been described as one of the 'foundation texts of the English working-class movement'. Images, names, and phrases from it are part of the common currency of English language. If ever a book deserved to be described as one of the 'world's classics', it is *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

**Genres.** Religious text, Puritan prose.

**Tense.** *The Pilgrim's Progress* is told in the past tense. The characters speak to each other in the present tense.

**Setting for the Story.** An imaginary realm that is too filled with symbols.

**Main Characters.** Christian is the protagonist of the story. Interpreter, who explains the truth of the Christian faith to Christian. Faithful, a sometime traveling companion of Christian who fled the City of Destruction shortly after Christian did. Hopeful, who becomes Christian's traveling companion on the last third of his pilgrimage (after Faithful is martyred).

**Plot Summary.** The story begins when the hero and narrator of the story resolves to flee his hometown called the City of Destruction. The main action for the remainder of part 1 is Christian's journey from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City. This is obviously the story of the salvation of the human soul. Every character and place that Christian encounters is either an aid or an obstacle in his progress toward Heaven and his growth in the Christian life. The main action is Christian's perseverance in the face of adversity and temptations to be diverted from his journey to Heaven.

### **Cultural context**

Bunyan witnessed some of the most turbulent and momentous events in seventeenth-century English history. In 1642, while he was boy, civil war broke out between King Charles I and Parliament, during which the king was executed. Monarchy was abolished and England became republic for the first time, led by Oliver Cromwell. When the latter, supported by Puritan Parliamentarians, dismantled the structure of establish Church, many radical independent congregations and new religious groups emerged, advocating the right to govern themselves by their own. Ever since childhood he has suffered from nightmares about devils and Hell. He was obsessed by the idea to be marked out for damnation. In 1653, an important stage in his conversion came when he made contact with the Independent (radical Puritan) church in Bedford, and became shortly an eloquent preacher.

Bunyan's most important intellectual development took place in the context of the radical peaching, the dramatic political changes, and the struggles that characterized the English Revolution. In the



atmosphere of religious toleration during the 1650s, he began to write. When Charles II was restored to the throne in 1660, Bunyan was still a young man. His greatest works were yet to be written, and to a large extent those works, including *The Pilgrim's Progress*, can be seen as products of the aftermath of revolution, when religious freedom was extremely restricted. Parliament suppressed every trace of religious dissent in England, and passed an Act of Uniformity. Non-conformists were to be punished. To this was now added the savage series of laws that came to be known collectively as the 'Clarendon Code', forbidding all religious meeting not conducted according to the liturgy of the Church of England, and punishing offenders with imprisonment. For the next thirty years Puritans were persecuted. It was what to be called the 'Great Persecution'.

Bunyan's fate was particularly hard, and indeed in some ways his punishment was an exemplary one. He was imprisoned for more than twelve years, one of the longest sentences served by any Dissenter or Puritan. In 1672 he was released. But in 1677 he was imprisoned again, and it was during this second imprisonment that he put the finishing touches to *The Pilgrim's progress*.

The Bible was absolutely central to religious thought and practice in the seventeenth century, and to artistic, scientific, and political thought as well. It is worth noting that Bunyan regarded the Bible as the authority for faith. He clearly claimed his preference to the Scripture than two universities, namely Oxford and Cambridge, because it is God's Word. 'I prefer the BIBLE before them; and having that still with me, I count my self far better furnished than if I had [without it] all the Libraries of the two Universities' (MW, 7:9, 3:1–2). The importance of the Bible in *The Pilgrim's Progress* is obvious. He frequently quotes from it explicitly. The margins of the text are filled with a series of notes, some of them commenting on what is happening, but often also referring to biblical texts.

## Bunyan's Allegorical Characters

As a literary form, allegory is very popular in the Middle Ages and down to the end of the seventeenth century.

*The Pilgrim's Progress* is an allegory, which means that the names of people and places not only describe those people and places, but also personify or present abstract qualities or ideas. The allegorical characters are created by taking an adjective (such as *faithful*) or noun (such as *evangelist*), capitalizing it (Faithful, Evangelist), and thereby making it a 'personified abstraction.' For example, the journey of the protagonist in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, seeking after salvation from sin, represents the Christian experience of conversion.

# UNIT 1

## From the City of Destruction to the Wicket-Gate

- What do you recall most vividly about the first section?
- What are you most interested in reading this section?
- What is Christian's situation at the beginning of this story?
- What needs to change?
- What is the hope that is extended to Christian and to others in his situation?
- What does Christian carry upon his back?
- Why does Christian cry and tremble?
- While reading the book, Christian wants from judgment. Does he know where to go?
- What was his cry as he walked in the fields?
- Who is Evangelist?
- What does Evangelist say to Christian to do?
- Why is Christian eager to reach the Wicket-Gate?
- In what ways did the neighbors react to Christian's running toward the shining light?
- Why did Pliable have no burden on his back?
- What is Mr. Worldly Wiseman's solution to Christian's the burden of guilt?

## UNIT 2

### Through the Wicket-Gate and in the Interpreter's House

- Who is Interpreter?
- What is the significance of Interpreter's House?
- What can Christians learn from Interpreter's House?
- What does the 'dust' in second room symbolize?
- What is the significance of the image of a man secretly fueling a fire?
- What is the significance of the image of a man in an iron cage?
- What does it mean for a professing Christian to apostatize?
- Why is a 'man' in the seventh room frightened?

## UNIT 3

### The Cross and Difficulty Hill

- What happens when Christian reaches the cross?
- What is the significance of the Cross?
- What do each of the three Shining Ones say or do to Christian?
- What is the 'Roll' that the three Shining Ones give to Christian?
- What do Formalist and Hypocrisy symbolize?
- What happened when Christian reached the top of the hill?
- What is the result for Formalist and Hypocrisy when they take the paths Danger and Destruction?
- What do Timorous and Mistrust symbolize?

## UNIT 4

### The Palace Beautiful

- What is the significance of the Palace Beautiful?
- What is the significance of the virgins?
- What do the 'two lions' symbolize?
- What does Christian reveal as the reason that his family would not come with him on his journey?

## UNIT 5

### **The Valley of Humiliation and Valley of the Shadow of Death**

- Why were the two running men giving up and turning back?
- What is Apollyon's reaction when Christian announces that he serves a new master?
- How does Bunyan describe Appolyon?
- How does Bunyan describe the Valley of the Shadow of Death?
- What did the evil creature whisper in Christian's ear?

## UNIT 6

### On the Holy Way with Faithful

- What do Madame Wanton and Adam the First symbolize?
- What words did Faithful utter in the darkness?
- What does Talkative symbolize?



## UNIT 7

### Vanity Fair

- What does Vanity Fair symbolize?
- Why do the pilgrims endure such opposition from the people of Vanity Fair?
- What are Christian and Faithful accused of?
- How do Christian and faithful respond to their persecution?
- Why is Faithful victor even in his death?
- Why is Mr. By-ends named with this nickname?

## UNIT 8

### **By-Path Meadow and Doubting Castle**

- How do the pilgrims wander onto the giant's estate?
- What do the giant Despair urge Christian and Hopeful to do?
- What does the key symbolize?
- Do you agree with critics who maintain that Doubting Castle is not a place but just a state of mind?
- How do Hopeful and Christian try to help future pilgrims avoid the trouble they had experienced at Doubting Castle?

## UNIT 9

### The Delectable Mountains and the Enchanted Ground

- What does a man 'black of flesh, but covered with a very light robe' symbolize?
- What does the character named 'a Shining One' symbolize?
- What does Ignorance represent?
- Why does Ignorance meet "With no trouble or difficulty" in his pilgrimage?

## UNIT 10

### The Celestial City

- According to you, why do Hopeful's feet touch the bottom of the river not Christian's?
- What are some of the characteristics of the country of Beulah?
- Who meet Christian and Hopeful on the other side of the river?
- What does happen to Ignorance?