• The death of Queen Elizabeth I in 1603 marks the beginning of this literary period.

• Elizabeth I, also known as the Virgin Queen, was childless. Her relation, James Stuart, succeeded her on England's throne as King James I (in Scotland, his title was King James VI).

• Elizabeth I's reign (1558-1603) is known as the Elizabethan period. James I's reign (1603-1625) is known as the Jacobean period, from the Latin for James, *Jacobus*. Charles I's reign (1625-1640) is known as the Caroline period, from the Latin for Charles, *Carolus*.

• James I was an authoritarian who believed kings derived their powers from God, not from the people. This belief caused political tension between the king, the Parliament, and the common people—tension that intensified throughout James I's reign, and culminated in the beheading of his son, Charles I, in 1649.

• Between 1642 and 1649, Royalist and pro-parliamentary forces fought a bloody series of civil wars on English soil.

• Following the execution of the king and the end of the English civil wars in 1649, the general of the parliamentary forces, Oliver Cromwell, ruled England as a commonwealth (a democratic state governed without a monarch). Cromwell was known as the "Lord Protector" of England.

• After Oliver Cromwell's death in 1658, his son Richard ruled briefly and ineffectually.

• In 1660, Parliament invited King Charles I's eldest son to return from exile in Europe to rule England as King Charles II. King Charles II's restoration to power and England's restoration of monarchical rule give the period that followed the name the "Restoration."

**STATE AND CHURCH, 1603-1640**

• The state's monetary difficulties during James I's reign were signs of conflict between the king and his people. The king was not supposed to tax regularly, except in time of war. However, declining Crown revenues, a demand for court honors and rewards, and the high costs of a court obsessed with feasting, drinking, and hunting all led King James I to impose illegal taxes.

• King James I's peace treaty with Spain (1604) made the Atlantic safe for English ships and for exploration.

• During James's reign the first permanent English settlements were established in North America (at Jamestown) and in the Caribbean. In 1611 the East India Company established England's first outpost in India.

• In the north of England, coal mines developed; in the east, newly drained wetlands yielded crops for the growing population. Appreciation for the practical arts and technology as a means of improving
human life influenced the scientific theories of Francis Bacon, who in turn inspired other scientists and inventors.

- Sixteenth and seventeenth-century English people argued over many religious questions, including the form of worship services, the qualifications of ministers, the interpretation of Scripture, the form of prayer, and the meaning of Communion.
- All people were legally required to attend Church of England services, and the form of the services was set out in the Book of Common Prayer.
- In the 1580s and 1590s, Catholic priests and those who harbored them were executed for treason. Protestant religious minorities had suffered persecution too. Although his mother was the Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots, James I was raised in the strict Reformed tradition of the Scottish Presbyterian Kirk and was consequently welcomed by both parties.
- James I's impulse towards religious toleration was halted by the Gunpowder Plot of 1605. A group of Catholics packed the cellar next to the Houses of Parliament with gunpowder, intending to eliminate much of England's ruling class at a single blast and leave England open to invasion by a foreign, Catholic power.
- The most important religious event during James I's reign was his newly commissioned, elegant, and diplomatic translation of the Bible, which remains known as the "King James Bible" today.
- James I's second son, Charles, came to the throne upon his father's death in 1625 (James's first son, Henry, had died of typhoid fever years earlier).
- King Charles I was financially more prudent than his father, but his refusal to allow powerful men and factions a share in the workings of the state alienated them, and he became cut off from his people.
- While King Charles was an Anglican, his wife, the French princess Henrietta Maria, was Catholic. Their love of splendor and ceremony led Puritans to suspect Charles of popish sympathies.
- Puritans were followers of the sixteenth-century reformer John Calvin. Puritans believed that salvation depended upon faith in Christ, not good works; they also believed that God predestined people to be saved or damned.
- King Charles I’s appointment of William Laud as archbishop of Canterbury (the ecclesiastical head of the English Church) further angered Puritans.
- Laud promoted the idea that God made redemption freely available to all humans, who could then choose whether or not to accept God's grace and work toward their salvation by acts of charity, devotion, and generosity to the church.
- In the 1630s, many Puritans emigrated to the colonies in New England, but those who remained in England were discontented.
Old Ideas and New

- Writers including John Donne, Robert Burton, and Ben Jonson invoked inherited ideas even though they were aware that these concepts were being questioned or displaced.
- Old ideas that resonated with these writers included the Ptolemaic universe (in which the earth is fixed, and other celestial bodies orbit it); the four elements (fire, earth, water, and air) that were thought to comprise all matter; and the four humors (choler, blood, phlegm, and black bile), which were believed to determine a person’s temperament and to cause physical and mental disease when out of balance.
- Analogy and order were important concepts—e.g., the "chain of being" that ordered creation (God, angels, humans, animals, plants, rocks) had its analogy in the state (king, nobles, gentry, yeomen, laborers). Each level in this chain has its own peculiar function, and each was connected to those above and below it by obligations and dependencies.
- A poet who compares a king to the king of the beasts is thus not forging an original metaphor so much as describing something that seemed an obvious fact of nature within this system of ideas.
- William Harvey’s discovery of the circulation of blood and Galileo’s confirmation of Copernican astronomical theories were among the new ideas that began to be embraced toward the end of the period.

Patrons, Printers, and Acting Companies

- Tudor social institutions and customary practices that supported and regulated writers changed only gradually before 1640.
- The Church of England continued to promote writings including devotional treatises, tracts, and sermons.
- Sermons were designed to explain Scripture, to instruct and to move, and they reached a large audience both in church and in print.
- Many writers depended upon aristocratic patrons. Often patronage took the form of an exchange of favors rather than that of a financial transaction. A patron might give a poet a place to live, employment, or valuable gifts of clothing.
- The reading public for sophisticated literary works was small. This audience was concentrated at court, in the universities, and the Inns of Court (law schools). Manuscript (handwritten) copies were an easy and effective way to circulate works.
- Many writers’ works appeared in print posthumously (e.g., Donne, Herbert, Shakespeare, Marvell). This practice, and the circulation of manuscript copies, often makes assigning concise composition dates to seventeenth-century works difficult.
• Printing of literary works became more common, especially after Ben Jonson collected and printed his own works in an impressive folio.

• Almost all printed works—except those printed at the universities—were printed in London, as a result of the monopoly on printing granted to the London Stationer’s Company by King Henry VIII.

• In exchange for the monopoly on printing, the Stationers were to submit all books for pre-publication censorship. Responsibility for a printed work, and ownership of that work, rested with the printer, not the author. Authorial copyright was not recognized until the early eighteenth century.

• Commercial theater enabled a few writers (Thomas Dekker, William Shakespeare, John Webster) to support themselves professionally. Again, the theater companies, not the playwrights, owned the texts. Acting companies also had to submit works to the censor before public performance.

• James I also promoted theater at court and acted as patron to Shakespeare’s acting company, which became known as the King’s Men. The intimate indoor spaces of court-affiliated theaters and the court’s taste both affected the repertoire of companies like the King’s Men.

JACOBEAN WRITERS AND GENRES

• Poets and writers of prose alike moved towards jagged, colloquial speech rhythms and short concentrated forms.

• Writers, most notably Ben Jonson, John Donne, and George Herbert, promoted new forms including love elegy and satire (modeled on classical works by Ovid and Horace), epigrams, verse epistles, meditative religious lyrics, and country-house poems.

• Jonson, a Londoner, earned his living from writing for the commercial and court theaters and receiving patronage for his poems and his court masques. Jonson became an influential figure through his decision to collect and print his works, and his mentorship of a group of young poets (known as the Tribe, or Sons, of Ben), which included Thomas Carew, Richard Lovelace, Sir John Suckling, Edmund Waller, Henry Vaughan and Robert Herrick.

• Donne, a friend of Jonson’s who also spent much of his life in or near London, wrote poems and sermons that are intellectually challenging and characterized by learned terms and unusual analogies. Donne’s poems circulated in manuscript, and most were printed after his death. Critics view Donne as the founder of a metaphysical school of poets, which included George Herbert, Thomas Carew, Richard Crashaw, John Cleveland, Abraham Cowley, and Andrew Marvell.

• Herbert left a privileged social position to become an Anglican priest in the small rural parish of Bemerton. Unlike Jonson’s aspiration to monumental status in print or Donne’s showy performances of witty self-doubt, Herbert’s writing promotes other models of poetic agency: the secretary taking dictation from a master or a musician playing in harmonious consort. Herbert destroyed his secular verse and left his religious verse to a friend to publish after Herbert’s death.
• The prose essay, invented by Michel de Montaigne, first appeared in English translation in 1603 and influenced writers including Francis Bacon and Sir Thomas Browne.

• Female writers from the nobility and gentry, who were better educated than most women of the period, began to appear in print, too. These women included Aemilia Lanyer, the first English woman to publish a volume of original poems, and Elizabeth Cary, Lady Falkland, the first English woman to publish a tragedy.

THE CAROLINE ERA, 1625-1640

• King Charles I and his wife Henrietta Maria, patronized artists including Peter Paul Rubens and Sir Anthony Van Dyke.

• Court masques during this era emphasized chivalric virtue and divine beauty or love, as symbolized in the marriage of the royal pair.

• While courtier poets wrote love lyrics that celebrated both platonic and physical love, in the world outside the court, Puritans opposed what they saw as the court’s immoral excesses.

• William Prynne exemplifies the most extreme Puritan views, as well as the inseparability of literature and politics in this period. Prynne wrote against stage plays, court masques, mixed dancing, and other forms of entertainment promoted by the court. For expressing these views in print, Prynne was severely punished: he lost his academic degrees and his job, was imprisoned, had his books burned and his ears cut off.

THE REVOLUTIONARY ERA, 1640-1660

• The beheading of King Charles I, which took place on 30 January 1649, was a cataclysmic event in English history. The assumption that kings ruled by divine right was overturned as commoners accused the king of treason and executed him.

• Some historians believe that long-term social and economic changes led to rising social tensions and conflict, particularly among the educated, affluent gentry class, who were below nobles but above artisans and yeomen in the social order. This class was growing, but traditional social hierarchies did not grant them the economic, political, and religious freedoms they desired.

• Other historians (the "revisionists") believe that short-term avoidable causes of the English civil wars included luck, personal idiosyncrasies, and poor decisions made by individuals.

• Between 1640 and 1660, new concepts emerged that became central to bourgeois liberal thought for centuries to come—that is, religious toleration, freedom from press censorship, and the separation of church and state.
• These ideas came from three disputed questions: 1) What is the ultimate source of political power? 2) What kind of church government is laid down in Scripture and therefore ought to be established in England? 3) What should the relation be between church and state?

• Frustrated with Parliament’s frequent refusal to endorse taxes that would help the Crown, King Charles I had dissolved Parliament three times by 1629 and subsequently ruled for more than ten years without a Parliament at all.

• In 1640, the so-called Long Parliament convened to assert its rights. Parliament did not disband when the king would have liked but instead remained in session, abolishing extralegal taxes, trimming the bishops’ powers, and arresting, trying, and executing Archbishop Laud and the king’s minister, the Earl of Strafford.

• Parliament disrupted not only the usual governance of the state and but also the usual censorship of the press. Weekly newsbooks that reported on current domestic events from various religious and political perspectives flourished.

• In July 1642, Parliament voted to raise an army, and by August, England’s First Civil War (1642-1646) had begun.

• Parliament and the Presbyterian clergy that supported it aimed to secure the rights of the House of Commons, to limit the king’s power over the army and the church (though not to depose the king), and to make Presbyterianism the national faith.

• However, the Puritan forces were not solely made up of Presbyterians. There were a variety of dissenters from the Church of England as well (Congregationalists, Independents, Baptists, and others). Each of these groups had different ideas about what policies and faiths ought to be tolerated.

• In 1648, after negotiation and a brief Second Civil War, the king’s army was defeated. King Charles I was imprisoned on the Isle of Wight.

• As long as the king remained alive, there was the possibility that one or more factions might support him. Leaders from Cromwell’s New Model Army therefore expelled royalists and Presbyterians, who still wanted to come to an understanding with the king, from the House of Commons. The remaining part of the House of Commons became known as the "Rump Parliament." They abolished the House of Lords, tried the king for high treason, and executed him.

• After King Charles I’s execution, the Scots and the Irish, who had not been consulted about the trial, proclaimed the king’s eldest son, the exiled Prince Charles, the new king. Oliver Cromwell and his army brutally crushed rebellions in Scotland and Ireland.

• Cromwell was sworn in as “Lord Protector” of England for life. His son Richard ruled from his father’s death in 1658 until General George Monck called “full and free” elections in Parliament, which opened seats again to supporters of the monarchy as well as of the republic.

• The new Parliament recalled the exiled prince, proclaiming him King Charles II on May 8, 1660.
• The period that followed is called the Restoration, for it saw the restoration of the monarchy and the court, the Church of England, and the professional theater.

• Monarchy was now limited, however; Parliament retained legislative supremacy and the power of taxation and assembled by its own, and not the king’s, authority.

• The journalistic debate that had begun in the 1640s continued to grow. Modern political parties developed out of what had been the royalist and republican factions during the civil wars.

LITERATURE AND CULTURE, 1640-1660

• The English civil wars were disastrous for English theater. Parliament abolished public plays in 1642, with the result that performances were rare and often conducted in semiprivate locations.

• Courtly patronage collapsed along with the king’s government, as the usual networks of manuscript circulation were disrupted.

• Many royalist "Cavalier" writers wrote in locations removed from the hostile center of parliamentary power. These writers included Katherine Philips (who circulated poems in manuscript in Wales); Margaret Cavendish (exiled with the queen in Paris, Cavendish published two collections of lyrics upon her return to England in 1653); and Thomas Hobbes, exiled in Paris, who wrote *Leviathan*, a defense of absolute sovereignty based on a theory of social contract.

• Autobiographies and memoirs by royalists Lady Anne Halkett and Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, and by republican Lucy Hutchinson demonstrate the way in which the revolutionary era placed women in novel circumstances and introduced new subject matter into their writing.

• Most writers of this period were royalists, but Andrew Marvell and John Milton sided with the republic.

• Milton supported the revolution because he was hopeful that it might lead to religious toleration for all Protestants and freedom from censorship. Milton wrote sonnets and pro-revolutionary treatises but is best known for his epic blank-verse poem, *Paradise Lost*, which tells the story of the Creation and man's fall from divine grace and expulsion from Eden.