

# YR 8 – RENAISSANCE (Term 1)

## 1470-1660

*When the people of the English Renaissance were faced with new information—like, um, hey guys, the earth actually orbits the sun, not the other way around—some folks just couldn't handle it. They were happy with the way things were. Which is all well and good until a Galileo jumps out of nowhere and hits you in the head with a totally different take on our galaxy. So, sometimes you have no choice but to look up and reevaluate what you know to be true.*

### What was the Renaissance?

- Started in Italy in 14<sup>th</sup> century; in England 1470-1660
- Means rebirth in French
- Writers start using classical Greek & Roman ideas in their texts
- The texts focus on humans & human emotions/desires rather than everything being about God

### Who was Shakespeare?

- Probably born in Stratford-upon-Avon on 23<sup>rd</sup> of April, 1564; died on 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 1616.
- Unlike his contemporaries, he wrote all 3 play genres: historical, comedy & tragedy.
- Comedies: amusing language, plot twists, mistaken identity
- Tragedies: serious language, death, tragic hero, fatal flaws
- Histories: based on real historical figures, often propaganda for the monarchy

### How did Shakespeare influence the language we use?

- Shakespeare contributed at least 2000 new words (neologisms) to English, e.g. **fashionable**, **gossip**, **torture** & **eyeball** just to name a few!
- He also invented a lot of idioms (sayings) that we use today. For example, if you're saying that a friend has a **heart of gold** or that **you're in a pickle**, you're quoting Shakespeare!

### How did Shakespeare influence the drama we see?

- Shakespeare is often credited with the mixing of genres (hybrids), e.g. tragi-comedy
- Plays targeted the masses (not just the wealthy); themes reflected their lives (universal truths).
- Characters undergo change in plays.
- Characters' choices drive the plot forward.
- Characters use contemporary (modern of the time) language.

### Who was Aphra Behn?

- Born in 1640, died in 1689.
- Worked as a British spy in 1666!
- First professional woman writer in English.
- Very successful in her lifetime – was a celebrity. Her most successful play was *The Rover*.
- She was concerned with equal rights for the genders.

### Writing a review article

- Catchy heading (often using a pun) and subheadings
- Brief summary of the play plot (no spoilers though!)
- Facts about the play (e.g. writer, actors, awards, etc.)
- Opinion about the 'best bits' & 'worst bits'
- Draws a conclusion (disguising opinion as fact) saying whether something works for its audience & purpose

### What was Shakespearean theatre like?

- People from all classes attended.
- Cost a penny to enter, another penny for a seat & another for a cushion; those wooden seats were tough on the derriere!
- Audiences would heckle & sometimes throw things at the actors.
- Women didn't act in the plays.
- Actors only given own lines with last line of previous speaker (actor).

### Why was the King James bible important?

- Published in 1611
- The first authorised (by King James) English version (largely based on Tyndale's first translation)
- Lots of people learnt to read in order to read the bible.
- Shakespeare & other writers alluded to lots of biblical stories (e.g. Adam & Eve; Judas's betrayal of Jesus) in their texts.

### Othello Characters

- Othello** - The play's protagonist and hero. A Christian Moor and general of the armies of Venice, Othello is an eloquent and physically powerful figure, respected by all those around him. In spite of his elevated status, he is easy prey to insecurities because of his age, his life as a soldier, and his race.
- Desdemona** - The daughter of the Venetian senator Brabantio. Desdemona and Othello are secretly married before the play begins. While in many ways stereotypically pure and meek, Desdemona is also determined and self-possessed. She is equally capable of defending her marriage.
- Iago** - Othello's ensign (a job also known as an ancient or standard-bearer), and the villain of the play. Iago is 28 years old. While his obvious reason for desiring Othello's downfall is that he has been passed over for promotion to lieutenant, Iago's motivations are never very clearly expressed – it seems that he is obsessed with manipulation and destruction.
- Michael Cassio** - Othello's lieutenant. Cassio is a young and inexperienced soldier, whose high position is much resented by Iago. Truly devoted to Othello, Cassio is extremely ashamed after being involved in a drunken brawl and losing his place as lieutenant. Iago uses Cassio's youth, good looks, and friendship with Desdemona to play on Othello's insecurities about Desdemona's fidelity.

### Writing a play script

- Layout** - The name of the character who is speaking should be written at the left-hand margin of the page. It is a good idea to print it in capitals. Then write a colon.
- Dialogue** – what the characters say
- Stage directions** – instructions to the actors and director. In brackets and/or italics
- Act** – often only 3 or 5 acts. They separate the major sections of the play
- Scene** – a 'chapter' in a play
- Aside** – dialogue that is said confidentially (secretly) to the audience when other characters are on the stage.

### Grammar

**ARTICLE:**  
**Definite article** – 'the'  
**Indefinite article** – 'a/an'

**ADJECTIVE:** describes a noun.  
**Descriptive adjective** – describes factual attributes e.g. tall, red  
**Emotive adjective** – evokes an emotion in the reader e.g. starving, emotional  
**Evaluative adjective** – opinion-based, e.g. amazing, boring  
**Comparative adjective** - e.g. Mrs Travis is a **better** teacher than Mr. Johnson.  
**Superlative adjective** - e.g. Mrs Travis is the **best** teacher.

**PERSONAL PRONOUN:**  
 Replace a subject or object in a sentence.  
**SUBJECT** = I, you, he, she, we, you, they.  
**OBJECT** = me, you, him, her, us, them.

### Themes in Othello

- Military Heroism Vs Love**
- The danger of Isolation**
- Jealousy**
- Deception and Trickery**
- Justice**

### Stretch yourself

Look up John Milton, John Donne, Edmund Spenser & Christopher Marlowe.

### Language techniques

Simile

Metaphor

Personification

Alliteration

Neologism

Pun

Term of address

### Structure techniques

Act

Scene

Enjambment

Punctuation

Listing

### Form techniques

Dialogue

Monologue

Soliloquy/ aside

Stage directions

Props

Plot

Character

Playwright

Prose/verse

Fiction

Non fiction

### ***Dr Faustus***

Doctor Faustus is an Elizabethan tragedy by Christopher Marlowe that was first performed in 1604. It is Marlowe's best-known play.

Faustus raises moral questions about the exploitation of magic as a means of gaining power and the links between two 'potent Arts' – sorcery and theatre.

The play's tragic hero, Faustus, is a brilliant German scholar who feels he has reached the limits of divine academic learning, and devotes himself to the study of magic. He makes a pact signed in blood, with the evil spirit Mephistopheles, to sell his soul to the devil. In exchange for 24 years of service, Lucifer gives Faustus a life of pleasure, magical power and illicit knowledge of the secrets of the universe.

### ***Christopher Marlowe***

Playwright and poet, Christopher Marlowe was at the forefront of the 16th-century dramatic renaissance. His works influenced William Shakespeare and generations of writers to follow.

There is a theory that Marlowe was a secret agent working for Sir Francis Walsingham's intelligence service. No direct evidence supports this theory, but a council letter clearly suggests that Marlowe was serving the government in some secret capacity.

Christopher Marlowe was an atheist and, at the time, atheism was a serious offense, for which the penalty could be as severe as being burnt at the stake. Marlowe avoided this, but was later killed in a fight.

### ***Milton & Paradise Lost***

The epic poem *Paradise Lost* remains a work of unparalleled imaginative genius that shapes English literature even now.

In more than 10,000 lines of blank verse, it tells the story of the war for heaven and of man's expulsion from Eden. Its dozen sections are an ambitious attempt to understand the loss of paradise.

Even to readers in a secular age, the poem is a powerful meditation on rebellion, longing and the desire for redemption.

A committed republican, he rose to public prominence after England's bloody civil war. In *Paradise Lost*, Milton draws on the classical Greek tradition to conjure the spirits of blind prophets.

### ***John Donne***

Donne was an English writer and Anglican cleric. He was born in 1572 to Roman Catholic parents, when practising that religion was illegal in England.

Donne's essay "Meditation 17" contained the now famous line 'no man is an island', comparing people to countries, and arguing for the interconnectedness of all people with God.