

**STRUCTURE****8.0 Objectives****8.1 Introduction****8.2 Major authors and their works****8.3 Let Us Sum Up****8.4 Key Words****8.5 Books Suggested****Answers**

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**8.0 OBJECTIVES**

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In this unit we shall

- discuss various major authors of Puritan age and
- major works of this writers and period.  
On completing this unit, you should be able to,
- have command over the major writers and works of Puritan age
- assimilate knowledge about this period through their works.

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**8.1 INTRODUCTION**

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The Puritan Age is significant in the development of various genres of literature in English. The European literature developed simultaneously and it affected the British Isles at large. The major impacting factor of this age is Christianity and Monarchy. Various prose forms got the first buds and the developmental phase led to the major genre of literature- Novel.

The Puritan's religion and socio-political background was the base of the literature of that time. The puritan literature is divided into three periods; the Jacobean (1603-1625), Caroline (1625-1649) and Commonwealth (1649-1660). Each period contributed variedly for the growth of this literature. Jacobean prose writers, Spenserian poets, The Metaphysical poets, religious poets and Cavalier poets all constructed the literature, what we now call Puritan Literature. They all crafted a new notion in literature. The influence of *The authorised version of the Bible* can be seen in the works of the Puritan writers. Donne's personal, religious experiences can be seen in his works; emotional appeal and some short of intellectual examples are the characteristics of his works. Donne also influenced the Metaphysical by his writings. This period has a craft-man of English literature –Milton. He is major contributor to English literature and language at large. By faith he was puritan. After

Milton ornate and plain prose trended. By the influences of Ben Johnson and Donne, the metaphysical poets such as George Herbert, Richard Crashaw, Henry Vaughan, Abraham Cowley and Andrew Marvell; their poetry showed another dimension to the development of poetry. Milton, Robert Burton, Sir Thomas Browne, Jeremy Taylor and Izaak Walton attacked with their satires. The satires were on the contemporary society and religious awakening in the society through their works. Milton's *Paradise Lost* is the epitome of this. After the decline of drama in 1642, prose was the medium of enjoyment of the class. *Areopagitica* (1644) by Milton showed the struggle for freedom for speech and expression. Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* deals with two types of melancholy; religious melancholy and love melancholy. Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici* (the religion of a Doctor), was written in 1635. It appeared in 1642, became immediately popular, and cleared the notion of religion. Here is the list of some prominent writer of the time; John Donne (1752-1631), George Herbert (1593-1633), John Milton (1608-1674), Andrew Marvell (1621-1678), Robert Burton (1577-1640), Thomas Browne (1605- 1682), Izaak Walton (1593-1683), Francis Bacon (1561-1626), Thomas Carew (1598-1639) and Abraham Cowley (1618-67) and their important works in the detail.

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## 8.2 MAJOR AUTHORS AND THEIR WORKS

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John Donne (1752-1631)

George Herbert (1593-1633)

John Milton (1608-1674)

Andrew Marvell (1621-1678)

Robert Burton (1577-1640)

Thomas Browne (1605- 1682)

Izaak Walton (1593-1683)

Francis Bacon (1561-1626)

### **John Donne (1752-1631)**

John Donne was born in London in the year 1557; his father was a rich iron merchant. He was a catholic by religion with paternal and maternal background. His education was could not be continued in Oxford and Cambridge due to his religion. Such an experience generally sets man's religious standards for life. Later on he declared himself as a humble Christian. He was generous enough to share his wealth with his relatives. During that time he had written two best of his poems, *The storm* and *The calm*. After journey of Europe for three years, he became secretary to Lord Egerton by marrying Anne More without his patron's permission. Donne's 'Pseudo Martyr' attracted the attention and favor of James I. He chose to become a preacher, affluent and intellectual, and grew rapidly. Within a short span of just few years he became the greatest one and Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in London. Donne's work embodies mystery; something is hidden and eager to reveal itself. It is the World of great exploration and deep understanding. His religious poetry dominates after 1610. The nineteen *holy sonnets* and *A Hymn to God the Father*, after his wife's death in 1617 are the masterpieces. The two are very

intense and depicts the inner-self of him. His prose work *Pseudo-Martyr* (1610) is polemical prose tract in English. The pamphlet war got another masterpiece and it is considered the first of prints for Donne. It advocated taking the Oath of Allegiance of James I of England for the people of England. The best prose was his *Devtions* (1614), which give an account of his spiritual struggle during a serious illness. And finest sermon was *Death's Duell* (1630); contain many features of his poetry. Intensely personal, their appeal was primarily emotional, and Donne used a dramatic technique which had a great hold on his audience.

Jesus Cora Alonso divided Donne's poetry into three main groups: - 'one, satires and cynically anti-Petrarchan love poems, two, sincere, deeply felt neo-platonic amatory poems and philosophical complimentary verses to influential female friends; and three, his devotional poems. *Devotion upon emergent Occasions* (1624) was a prose work dedicated to Charles I. *Deaths Duel* (1623) was last sermon by Donne. 'The Flea', 'The Sun Rising', 'The Good-Morrow', 'The Canonisation', 'A Valediction Forbidding mourning', 'The Ecstasy', 'elegy XX To His Mistress Going to Bed', 'Holy Sonnet X Death be not Proud', 'Holy Sonnet XIV Batter my heart, three-person'd God', 'Hymn to God, My God, In my Sickness', 'Good Friday', these were the best poems of John Donne. *Holy Sonnets* was dedicated to Magdalen Newport, mother of George Herbert.

### **George Herbert (1593-1633)**

"O day most calm, most bright," sang Herbert, through this we can stake line as expressive of the whole spirit of his writing. He has written some noble verses of prayer or aspiration, which expresses the underlying Puritan spirit of his age. None of his poems was published during his lifetime. Herbert's chief work *The Temple* consists of over one hundred and fifty short poems suggested by the Church, her holidays and ceremonials, and the experience of the Christian life. The first poem, "The Church Porch," is the longest and, though polished with a care that foreshadows the classic school, the least poetical. *The Temple* is a wonderful collection of condensed sermons, wise precepts, and moral lesson, suggesting Chaucer's "Good Counsel". Among the remaining poems of *The Temple* one of the most suggestive was "The Pilgrimage". Here in six short stanzas, every line close-packed with thought, probably the best known of all his poems is the one called "The Pulley," which generally appears, however, under the name "Rest," or "The Gifts of God" and *Love*, which may be read in any anthology, are enough to illustrate the quiet, soothing quality of his poems. The poems are peculiarly honest, quiet, and colloquial, and touched with a quaint humour. They are metaphysical in their unusual conceits and in the blend of thought and feeling. Herbert was a careful artist, precise and simple in expression, fond of unusual metrical patterns (as in *Easter wings*), and a lover of harmony. He himself described the works as "pictures of the many spiritual conflict that have passed between God and my soul, before I could subject mine to the will of Jesus my master; in whose service I

have now found perfect freedom.” The poems are peculiarly honest, intimate, sincere, and modest.

The best works of Herbert were *Oratio Qua auspiciatissimum Sernissimi Principis Caroli* (1623), *Memoriae Matris Sacrum* (1627), *The Temple*, *Sacred Poems and Private ejaculations* (1633), *Herbert’s Remains or Sundry Pieces Of that sweet singer of the Temple*-consisting of his collected writings from priest to the temple; or, *The Country person his character and rule of holy life and Jacula Prudentum or Outlandish Proverbs, sentences and c...* as well as letter, several prayers and three Latin poems (1652).

### **Milton (1608-1674)**

Milton was born and brought up in London. He received his education at Cambridge. He was known as ‘The Lady of Christ’ because of his long hair and physical appearance. His ideas after long silence create the big change and inspired him to write the great works in literature. He had much concern for mankind and struggle for human freedom. His works instigated protect and defend the divine right of a people. There are two incident that most affected the life of Milton; Marriage and his Blindness. In 1643, he married to Mary Powell, their marriage was unsuccessful. Therefore, he had written *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* and *Tetrachordon*. In 1653, his first wife died and he married another woman and she was celebrated in his works and in 1663, he married once again and she helped him after his blindness. *On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity*, *Lycidas*, *L’Allegro*, *II Penseroso*, *Arcades*, *Comus*, *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, *Eikon Basilike (Royal Image)*, *Eikonoklaster (Image Breker)*, *Defensio Pro Populo Anglicono*, *Areopagagitica* and *Samson Agoniste* are the best works of Milton. *On His Blindness* was the reflection of grief in darkness and spirit of sublime. When he was imprisoned, he wrote *Eikon Basilike (Royal Image)*, a description of king’s nature and his thoughts, condemning the Puritans. It becomes famous and its arguments were against the commonwealth. *Eikonoklaster (Image Breker)* was published in 1649, which break the idea of *Eikon Basilike (Royal Image)*. *Defensio Pro Populo Anglicono* (1651) was most controversial work in Literature. It was political argument in the support of current government. *Lycidas*, *L’Allegro* (the joyous or happy man), *II Penseroso* (the pensive or thoughtful man) twin poems, one is denoting the happiest man in the world in the presence of nature, where everything is beautiful and pleasurable. Whereas in second poem *II Penseroso* (the pensive or thoughtful man) whole atmosphere is same but a man is not happy. The mood of the poet is entirely different here. One poem presents the beautiful nature of morning or atmosphere of sun rising, while another poem deals with atmosphere of sunset. Everything is same but person’s mood is not as equal as it was in the first poem. In *Masque of Comus (1634)*, a lady and her two brothers lose their way. These brothers leave their sister for in search of guide. The lady falls in the trap of Comus, who forced the lady to drink the potion, which turn the face into those beasts.

Though the lady fight against Comus with chastity, she is victim and trapped in temptations. Later the divine spirit released her from Comus. Though many critics have different interpretation about *Comus*, the lack of dramatic interest, it is interesting and the argument was irrelevant. In *The Triumph of Virtue*, virtue and innocence is the theme of the masque, where both are walking on the same path, without harm. Here, it presents the description of triumph of good over evil. *Lycidas* (1637) is the pastoral elegy on the death of his college friend Edward King, who drowned in the Irish Sea. ‘On His Deceased Wife’, ‘To The Nightingale’, ‘On Reaching the Age of Twenty-Three’, ‘The Massacre in Piedmond’ were the best sonnet of Milton. If we look the prose work of Milton, we find the *Areopagagitica*. It is agitation against the law on abundance of freedom of press. Where he argues with government to free the publication houses and allow the press. *Paradise Lost*, the story deals with Adam, how he fell at the temptation by Satan, how he is punished for his sins and some critics says that it is manifestation of satan. *Samson Agonistes*, the story of Samson, the mighty champion of Israel, after his blindness at the old age, is working as a slave among the philistines. This is the successful tragedy because of personal agony and leading character is taken from dramas. These both cause leads the play successful in Literature.

#### **Andrew Marvell (1621-78)**

Andrew Marvell is a puritan poet and friend of John Milton. He assisted Milton as the Latin Secretary. His poetry combines the clarity and grace of Ben Jonson with the metaphysical wit of Donne. Marvell-whose best poems were written in the early 1650’s and did not publish during his lifetime. He is remembered for the poem *To His Coy mistress*. Marvell’s frankly sensuous enjoyment of nature, reminiscent of Keats, is best seen in his *Thoughts in a Garden*. In his *Horatian ode upon Cromwell’s return from Ireland*, he pays his homage to the protector and gives an imperishable tribute to the royal dignity of Charles I. Horatian, too, in another sense, is Marvell’s delight in gardens, fields and woods, so that, in a special sense he was the poet of the open air. He wrote poetry on Nature, The Mower, Religion, and Love, like *upon Appleton house*, *Bermudas*, *The Garden*, *the mower against Gardens*, *the mower to the Go-Worms*, *Damon Mower*, *the mower’s song*, *a dialogue, between soul and created pleasure*, *A dialogue between soul and body*, *the coronet*, *eyes and fears*, *the nymph complaining for the death of her fawn*, *young love*, *To his coy Mistress*, *the unfortunate lover*, *Daphnis and Chloe*, *the definition of love*, these are his best poetical insights. He wrote some poetry during Political era of Cromwell.

#### **Robert Burton (1577-1640)**

Burton was a clergyman who resided permanently at Oxford. Of a brooding and melancholic temper, he was a bookworm who devoured the libraries of oxford and wrote *The Anatomy of Melancholy* to get relieve from his depression and was published in the year 1621. The book treats

the causes, symptoms and cures of melancholy or rather the disease called melancholia, which is now attributed to a bad liver. In *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, Burton described four different temperaments arising from four humours in the human body. The melancholic would have a preponderance of black bile, the choleric, of yellow bile, the phlegmatic, of phlegm the sanguine, of blood. *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, deals with two chief types of melancholy; Love melancholy and Religious melancholy. Ostensibly, a medical work, the book is really an anatomy of human folly enlivened with the author's grave humour. It is full of Latin quotations, sometimes with their translations, from authors, ancient and modern, known and unknown. The book is really an encyclopaedia of its professed subject as well as of curious learning and offers abundant material for learned conversation. He describes his style, "I neglect phrases, and labour wholly to inform my reader's understanding, and not to please his ear." Unbounded curiosity about man and a humane and sensible concern for his welfare were perhaps Burton's chief qualities; they are sufficient to give a tone but not to provide a method or principle of integration to his work. The long section on "heroically or love melancholy, with its powers, causes, symptoms, and cures, is the richest part of the book to modern eyes and its quizzical yet sympathetic tone, its profusion of information with a refusal to come down on any side of a controversy, is characteristic of Burton.

### **Thomas Browne (1605-82)**

He was born in London, established himself at Norwich, the city with his life was peculiarly associated. The Civil War disturbed the years of his maturity, but Brown, though Royalist and anti-Puritan by instinct and conviction, was so much a man of science as to feel that the struggle was no active concern of his. He pursued his quiet beneficent life of study and healing and waited for better time. Charles II knighted him 1671. An ideally happy and useful life ended on his birthday, 19 October 1682. Sir Thomas Browne's works are small tracts. The first of them, *Religio Medici* (the religion of a Doctor), was written in 1635. It was appeared in 1642 and became immediately popular. It was translated into many languages such as Latin, French, German, Dutch, and Italian. It was reprinted about eight times during his lifetime. It is an attempt to make his religious concept clear in his mind and to defend himself and his profession against the ancient charge of impiety, that doctors were atheists. He declares, "Every man's own reasoned the best Oedipus." In Greek and English titles *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* (1646-72) *emica* and *Vulgar Errors*. It is a discursive account of the errors and superstitions not only of the vulgar, as its title might suggest, but also of the learned. It wants to expose the popular errors: "that a drowned man's body rises on the ninth day; an elephant has no joints; a pelican opens her breast to feed her young ones with her blood." *The Garden of Cyrus* is printed with *Hydriotaphia*, is the best example, in Sainsbury's phrase, of Browne's 'mysticism fantastic'. *A letter to a friend* and *Christian Morals* both are interconnected, as some of the passages are common to both, the latter

starts with a description of a T.B patient with the details of the changes wrought by approaching death, passes to thoughts and precepts. These reflections and precepts in an expanded form make up the subject matter of *Christian Morals*.

### **Izaak Walton (1593-1683)**

He was a small tradesman in London who had a passion for fishing. He was acquainted with the clergymen of his day and was fond of literature and literary men. He was the first professional English biographer. His intimate biographies of Donne, Sir Henry Wotton, Hooker, and Bishop Sanderson show his simplicity and hero-worship. But his fame rests on his *The Compleat Angler, or the Contemplative Man's Recreation* published in 1653. The *Angler* is a "piscatorial classic. "It is a book of general recreation that appeals to all, anglers and non-anglers alike. It is in the form of a dialogue between the author Piscator (fisherman) and his disciple Venator (hunter) who have been persuaded to give up his cruel sport in favour of the gentle art of angling. Besides instructing Venator in the art of catching various kinds of fish, Piscator gives him a good deal of religious and moral instruction. The charm of the book consists in its delightful pictures of the English countryside and in its revelation of author's personality- his sweet simplicity, his quaint and humours fancies, his old world wisdom, his unaffected piety and above all his transparent purity of heart. Walton himself describes it as "a recreation of recreation". After the death of Donne he composed *An elegy*, dedicated to Donne.

### **Francis Bacon (1561-1626)**

Bacon was meditating an ambitious scheme for laying anew the foundations of human knowledge on which could be reared an ever-increasing understanding and control of nature. It is known as the Great Instauration (or Renewal). He wrote *The advancement of learning book I* and *The advancement of learning book II* and *New Atlantis*. *New Atlantis*, published incomplete in 1627, is a slight work; it describes a group of seafarers come upon an unknown island in the South Sea, where they are hospitably entertained and told of the high state of morality and civilization prevailing there, notably of the wonders of Salomon's house, a research institution in the description of which Bacon illustrate his own ideas of how research should be carried on. It all seems rather naïve in an age when scientific research is as highly developed and as much taken for granted as it is now; but it is interesting as providing further evidence of Bacon's desired to popularized his views of the importance of experimental science, that "commerce between the mind of man and the nature of things, which is more precious than anything on earth" as he called it in his *Magna Instauration*.

**CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1**  
**ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.**

1. Give the timeline of John Donne.

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2. Name of important authors of Puritan age.

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3. Why Religion is the key feature of Puritan Age?

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4. What is *Metaphysical* poetry?

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5. *Religio Medici* by Thomas Browne, is about?

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6. Marvell's frankly sensuous enjoyment of nature, reminiscent of Keats, is best seen in his?

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7. Who is the protagonist of *Paradise Lost*?

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## CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

### State Whether The Following Statements Are True Or False

1. 'Death Duell' is a sermon written by George Herbert.
2. Milton is known as 'The Lady of Christ'.
3. 'To his Coy Mistress' is written by Andrew Marvell.
4. Izaak Walton is the author of 'New Atlantis'.
5. Religio Medici was written by Thomas Brown in the year 1635.

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## 8.3 LET US SUM UP

As we have seen the writer and their works in details, we can categorise them into the Metaphysical Poets, Cavalier poets, ornate and plane prose writers. For The Puritans, God become easier for everyone to understand and more relevant in their day to day life. A first person narrative, personal point of view- journals, diaries and day to day experience, religious theme, story of God, strict to order of society, feeling of surrounded by sin, and symbolism are seen in writing of these writers.

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## 8.4 KEY WORDS

- **The Metaphysical Poets:** A group of poets of seventeenth century –Donne, Marvell, Vaughan, Herbert, Crashaw, Traherne. They used metaphors and conceits in their poetry at large.
- **Cavalier Poets:** A group of poets during the reign of Charles I (1625-1649) –Richard Lovelace, Thomas Carew, Sir John Suckling, Edmund Waller and Robert Herrick. The title Cavaliers derived from the Italian for horseman or knight.
- **Jacobean:** It is applied to writing of the period of James I of England.
- **Catholic:** a member of the Roman Catholic Church.
- **Protestant:** a follower of any of the Western Christian Churches that are separate from the Roman Catholic Church in accordance with the principles of the Reformation, including the Baptist, Presbyterian, and Lutheran Churches.

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## 8.5 BOOKS SUGGESTED

1. History of English literature by Edward Albert
2. English Literature by W. J. Long
3. A Compendious History of English Literature by R. D. Trivedi
4. A Critical History of English Literature by David Daiches, Volume 1 & 2

## ANSWERS

1-False, 2-True, 3-True, 4-False, 5-True