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Class - B.A - I Paper - I  
Topic - Neo-classical  
Poetry, Augustan  
Age

The death of Dryden in 1700 closed the Restoration period and opened a new one. When Dryden died, the apparent state of English literature seemed somewhat rotten to a Hamlet, considerably less hypochondriacal than the actual prince of Denmark. Swift, Addison, Steele, Defoe and Pope with their meagre achievements could not fill the vacuum caused by Dryden's death. But Dryden and the Restoration period had left behind a rich heritage, which gradually developed into a full-fledged literary tendency. The period from 1700 to 1798, that is the whole of 18th century, is called the Augustan Age. The poets of this age, namely Pope, and Samuel Johnson grounded their claim on classicism, just as the great Roman poets of the golden age of Latin poetry in the reign of Emperor Augustus had done. The authors of this period thought, felt and wrote as Virgil, Ovid and Horace. Hence the period is known as Augustan period.

The Augustan Age is known as the Neo-classical Age in English literature. The writers of this period wanted to create a literature that was polished, rational and perfect. The stress was always on balance and discipline, neatness and clarity, simplicity and perfection - the classical ideal was, after all, a natural result of the Renaissance. The Romantic spirit had been aroused among other things by a study of Greek and Roman classics. But the weakness of Romanticism lay in its lack of form, its proneness to extravagance. None saw it more clearly than Ben Jonson and his influence was thrown on the classical side. The classicism was fostered and encouraged by the political needs of the age. In the meantime the French writers of the same period exerted a profound classical influence. ~~the political needs of the age. In the meantime the French writers of the same period. influence~~