

Mac Flecknoe

By John Dryden

Sub: British Literature
from Chaucer to 18th
Century(PG 1)
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2020-2022

John Dryden

- Born in 1631, Both his parents had strong Puritan tendencies.
- Later he changed into Roman Catholic.
- Stand between 2 very different ages – the age of Milton and the age of Pope. He serves as a transition from one to the other.
- Harbinger of 18th century Neo-Classical poetry.
- Wrote some verse on the death of Oliver Cromwell: *Heroic Stanzas*
- Dryden's official recognition: *Essay on Dramatic Poesy*
- *The 18th century Titan of Satires*
- England's first Poet Laureate in 1668.
- Dominating literary figure in Restoration England – Age of Dryden
- Sir Walter Scott called him “Glorious John”.



Poetic Style

- His poetry's subject matter was factual
- Expressed in the most precise and concentrated manner
- Established the heroic couplet as a standard form of English poetry .
- Alexander Pope was influenced by him.
- Wrote many successful Satires.
- Dryden's satires raised English satires to the level of that superb satirical literature.
- He was the master of perfect poetic expression
- Both personal and political motives prompted him to write satires.
- Dryden's satires are directed against men than manners.
- Dryden and Pope run in almost the same train of satirical writing
- Dryden was a master of contempt and maintained the tradition of rational conduct of personal prejudices.
- There is spontaneity, flow of interest, expression of his art
- Dryden's satires are known for its biblical settings, imaginative theme, direct allusions.

COMPOSITION OF MAC FLECKNOE

- The poem is stated as a reply to The Medal of John Bayes , a coarse personal attack to Dryden written by Thomas Shadwell.
- Cause of composition was a personal quarrel between Dryden and Shadwell.
- Reasons : In Dryden's view Shadwell had no understanding of true wit or the merit of Ben Johnson whom he professed to imitate.
- Dryden : Tory, Shadwell : Whig (political party)
- Dryden : Shakespeare Shadwell : Ben Johnson
- Dryden : Catholic Shadwell : Protestant
- Shadwell is portrayed mock heroically as a literary dunce.
- It is written in the form of a Mock Epic.(Elevated style, A mock epic pretends that a person, a place or a thing or an idea is extraordinary, actually it will be trivial.
- The age is Restoration period when works were more prose than poetic, focused on reason than imagination, followed classical authors severely, importance to wit.
- Age of Political rancour and rivalry

- **Title of the poem: Mac Flecknoe (son of Flecknoe)**
- **Subtitle : A Satire on the true blue protestant poet T.S.**
- **Richard Flecknoe: Fictitious character based on the real English dramatist and poet.**
- **Tone : Mocking**
- **Shadwell' works: Psyche, Virtuoso, Empson Wells, The Miser, The humorist, The hypocrit,**
- **Shadwell's publisher : Herringman**
- **Other writers mentioned: George Etherdege, Panton, Ben Johnson, John Fletcher, Charles Sedley, Sherly, Heywood, Oglby**