
JACOBEAN ERA

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Introduction

- Jacobean so called from Latin word 'Jacobus' which means James and thus belonging to the reign of James I (1603 – 25).
- A period which like the Elizabethan age, was particularly rich in literary activity. The king himself published four books: two on poetry, a work on demonology and the famous A Counterblast to Tobacco (1604).
- Among dramatists, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Webster, Tourneur, Ford, Middleton and Rowley were all very active. Donne and Drayton were two of the most famous of the lyric poets of the period. Bacon and Robert Burton were best known prose writers. In 1611 was published Kings Authorized version of Bible.

Historical Background

- James I of England and VI of Scotland ascended the throne of England after the death of Queen Elizabeth in 1603. Queen Elizabeth died childless that's why her cousin from Scotland was called to be the king of England.
- King James was a Protestant married to a Catholic Queen.
- Divine Rights of King's Proclaimed in 1604, according to it Kings were the representative of God and thus answerable to him alone.
- Forty-Seven translators were appointed to write Authorized Version of Bible in 1611.

Historical Background

- A series of plots were engineered to depose him. The most famous of these plots were; The Gunpowder Plot. In November 1605, a group of Roman Catholics planned to blow up the English house of Parliament at its opening by the king.
- To create a Roman Catholic rising in the Midland and secure a toleration for Catholics. One of the conspirators Francis Tresham betrayed.
- Guy Fawkes, the leader was discovered ready to fire and was executed along with eight other conspirators.

Characteristic of the Age

In a sense the Jacobean age was an age of great flowering of literature and in other sense it was an age of decadence. It was rich because many great writers who were born and nurtured in Elizabethan age produced some of their masterpieces in this age. Like – Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, John Donne, Francis Bacon, George Chapman, John Marston, Thomas Dekker, Francis Beaumont, John Fletcher, Thomas Heywood, John Webster, Cyril Turner, Thomas Middleton, Phillip Massinger, John Ford, James Shirley etc are only few to name among them. But if we enter into the heart of the matter, we shall see that among them most were born and nurtured in the Elizabethan age but wrote and published their works in the Jacobean age. In fact, the number of truly Jacobean writers were only a few and can be counted on the finger. Therefore, the writers born after 1570/75 or beyond were truly Jacobean for their art flowered in the Jacobean age.

Dramatist of Jacobean Age

1. Ben Jonson (1572-1637)
2. Francis Beaumont (1584-1616)
3. John Fletcher (1579-1625)
4. John Webster (1580-1625)
5. Philip Massinger (1584-1639)
6. John Ford (1586-1639)
7. James Shirley (1596-1666)
8. George Herbert (1593-1623)