

A CHRONOLOGY FOR THE 16th THROUGH 18th CENTURIES

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This is a first version of a historical survey of the 16th through 18th centuries in Britain for students of the literature of the period. Inevitably, omissions (and perhaps errors) will be found in a work of this nature; I shall endeavour to revise and improve the chronology and its usefulness over the coming months.

The literature of the period between the 16th and the 18th centuries is fundamentally marked by the rise and development of Protestantism. Because the vicissitudes of the Church of England are in turn inextricably linked to the conduct of the various monarchs, considerable attention must inevitably be paid to the Crown of England – after all, the King was both head of the English State and head of the English Church. In this sense, the study of the literature requires a study of the history, both political and ecclesiastical.

The chronology is broken up into more or less arbitrary periods for ease of perusal. After each period a series of major ‘strands’ or historical lines of development is offered. Names of kings or queens at the time of accession appear in bold type.

THE 'SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTION'

While no dates can be put to the so-called 'Scientific Revolution', it is clear that its inception can be traced to the 16th century, and that it reaches its culmination in the early 18th c., after which point science can be said to replace other means and forms of knowledge (such as alchemy and magic, theology, scholastic philosophy, mysticism, and so on). Any study of the period that interests us should bear in mind the long process of experiment and innovation that leads from the early empiricism of Francis Bacon to the birth of modern science and its impact on all cultural forms.

THE HOUSE OF TUDOR

- 1517 Martin Luther publishes his 95 theses: beginning of the German Reformation.
- 1531 **Henry VIII** proclaims himself Head of the Church of England.
- 1534 Act of Supremacy: Parliament confirms the Anglican State-Church.
- 1547 Death of Henry VIII. Son **Edward VI** crowned.
- 1553 Death of Edward VI. His Catholic daughter Mary Tudor (**Mary I**, 'Bloody Mary') crowned Queen of England and Ireland. Catholicism restored (1555).
- 1558 Mary I dies. Henry VIII's daughter, **Elizabeth I**, crowned. Anglican Church restored. Rise of Puritanism ('Advanced Protestants') seeking a 'purer' Reform.
- 1603 Death of Elizabeth I.

STRANDS: Beginning of the Reformation
Conflicts between the two churches
Rise of Puritanism as an 'advanced' form of Anglicanism

THE HOUSE OF STUART through the Restoration

- 1604 **James VI of Scotland** crowned **James I of England**. Bible translated into English ('King James' Bible').
- 1605 (November 5) The 'Gunpowder Plot' to restore Catholic Church.
- 1607 Three ships with 120 settlers sent by the Virginia Company reach Chesapeake Bay on May 24th, founding Jamestown. The John Smith story.
- 1611 Colonization of Catholic Ulster with Protestant English and Scots begins.
- 1620 (December 21) The *Mayflower* lands at Cape Cod (Plymouth Harbour, Mass.) with 101 Puritans ('The Pilgrim Fathers') fleeing from intolerance in England.
- 1623 Massachusetts Bay is settled at Cape Anne by fishermen engaged by the New England Company.
- 1624 The Virginia Company of London is dissolved; Virginia becomes the first *royal colony* (all customs duties on tobacco now go to the Crown).
- 1625 Death of James I. **Charles I** becomes king of England and Scotland.
- 1630 (April 8th) John Winthrop, sailing on the *Arbella* with 16 other ships, leads 1000 Puritans to Massachusetts Bay.
- 1630-1643 The Great Migration: massive migration of English Puritans to New England.
- 1638 Signing of the National Covenant in Scotland against Anglican impositions: the 'Presbyterian Revolution' abolishes bishops.
- 1640-60 The Long Parliament.
- 1641 Legislative measures by Parliament reduce powers of Charles I.
- 1642-46 The first English Civil War. Royalists allied to the Church Party ('Cavaliers') against Parliamentarian Party allied to Presbyterians ('Roundheads'). Charles I is defeated and imprisoned.
- 1643 English Parliament signs the Solemn League and Covenant with Scotland.
- 1647 Law requiring towns to maintain schools passed in Massachusetts (i.e. schooling is made compulsory).
- 1648-9 The second English Civil War.
- 1649 Execution of Charles I.
- 1649-53 Proclamation of The Commonwealth, a Republican form of government.
- 1649 Maryland Toleration Act, forbidding persecution on religious grounds.
- 1649 Virginia offers refuge to royalists. English naval blockade of the colony (1650), which submits to British Parliament representatives (1652). These are two of many instances where the colonies took a stand at odds with the position of the central government.
- 1652-1654 First Anglo-Dutch War.
- 1653-60 The Protectorate: a form of dictatorship by Oliver Cromwell (who yet refused the title of King).
- 1653-60 Ireland and Scotland united with England.
- 1660 The Restoration of the House of STUART: **Charles II** enthroned. End of the Puritan revolution.

- STRANDS:**
1. Consolidation of the Anglican Church.
 2. Struggles between Crown and Parliament
 3. Colonial settlements: Ulster, Virginia, Massachusetts
 4. The 'Great Migration' of Puritans to the New World. Splinter groups
 5. Colonial differences and frictions with the metropolis
 6. Gradual shaping of Great Britain and British Empire
 7. Moves towards absolutism
 8. The Book: Interpretation and opinion

THE RESTORATION PERIOD

- 1660 The *Act of Indemnity* pardons all involved in the Civil Wars excepting the regicides.
- 1661 The *Corporation Act* (first of the Clarendon Code acts) prevents Dissenters from access to public office.
- 1662 The Royal Society founded.
- 1662 A Cavalier parliament passes the *Act of Uniformity* excluding Nonconformist ministers from public office and supports the King's Catholic leanings and absolutist tendencies. The Whigs oppose them and side with Nonconformists.
- 1664 The *Conventicle Act* forbids Nonconformist acts of worship for groups over 5 persons.
- 1664 The *Five-Mile Act* forbids Nonconformist ministers from approaching within 5 miles of parishes where they preached during the Plague.
- 1664 (September 7) New Netherland colony surrenders to the Duke of York and is renamed New York. The Duke of York is Charles II's brother, later James II.
- 1665 The Great Plague kills 100000 in London (one fifth of its population).
- 1666 The Great Fire devastates 2 thirds of the old city of London in three days.
- 1673 The *Test Act* excludes Catholics from public office; the Duke of York has to resign his High Admiralship.
- 1677 First performance of Aphra Behn's *The Rover*.
- 1678 'Popish Plot' to murder the king and restore Catholicism uncovered by Titus Oates. Catholics are banned from both Houses of Parliament.
- 1680 'Petitioners' support Exclusion Bill to prevent Catholic James from succeeding his brother Charles II. 'Abhorers' oppose this. Eventually, these will become respectively WHIGS (insurgent Presbyterians in Scotland) and TORIES (outlawed Roman Catholics in Ireland).
- 1683 The Rye-House Plot to murder Charles II and his Catholic brother James fails.
- 1684 Massachusetts Bay charter revoked – it becomes a royal colony.
- 1685 Death of Charles II. Crowning of **James II**, who soon tries to restore Catholicism (and absolutism). New York, his private territory, is made a royal colony.
- 1685 Anti-Catholic rebellion by the Duke of Monmouth (Charles II's bastard son) (supported by Whigs) suppressed.
- 1685 Louis XIV of France revokes the Edict de Nantes which granted the protestants (Huguenots) freedom of worship. 400.000 Huguenots leave France.
- 1686 New York, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island and New Jersey charters and assemblies abolished: they are re-organized into the Dominion of New England, an attempt to exert direct control over the colonies, similar to the Spanish 'virreinato'. This provokes opposition, especially among Puritans and partisans of self-government.
- 1687 The *Declaration of Indulgence* repeals all penal laws against both Nonconformists and, especially, Catholics.
- 1687 Isaac Newton's *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica*.
- 1688 The Glorious Revolution: **William of Orange (William III)** and his wife Mary (daughter of James II) are offered the crown of England. James II flees to France. Whigs in power.
- 1689 The *Bill of Rights* excludes Catholics from succession. Power of the monarchy curtailed.

- STRANDS:**
1. Decline of the Catholics
 2. Decline of the Stuarts
 3. The end of absolutism in Britain
 4. Formation of party system
 5. Stability
 6. Triumph of 'natural philosophy'

THE AGE OF REASON

- 1689 The *Toleration Act* grants Dissenters some freedom of worship (but does not repeal much of the Clarendon Code).
1689 Last execution for witchcraft in England.
1690 Battle of the Boyne: William defeats James' attempt at recovering the throne.
1690 onw. The 'Agrarian Revolution'.
1692-1693 Salem witch trials (Mass.). After hysterical fits on the part of some young girls, a panic fear leads to a witch-hunt; denunciations mount; nearly 150 people are arrested, 31 tried, 19 hanged, one pressed to death; two die in jail. These are the last deaths for witchcraft in North-America.
1693 'Financial Revolution': beginning of the National Debt.
1694 Establishment of the Bank of England.
1695 'The Great Recoinage': debased or clipped silver coins are replaced .
1698 Thomas Savery invents the 'fire engine' pump.
1701 *Act of Settlement* determines that Anne Stuart (James II's daughter, sister of Queen Mary) will inherit the crown, followed by her closest Protestant relative.
1702 Death of William III. **Anne I** is crowned queen.
Her reign (1702-13) begins with the War of the Spanish Succession ('Queen Anne's War' to the colonists). Charles II of Spain names Philip of Anjou as his successor. Fearing a Spanish-French alliance, England, supported by the Netherlands and most German states, declares war on France.
1702 *The Daily Courant*, first English daily periodical.
1704 *The Boston News Letter*, first American newspaper.
1707 Act of Union of England and Scotland.
1708 Thomas Newcomen invents a steam engine.
1709 Abraham Darby proposes a new smelting method.
1709 First Copyright Act.
1709-11 Richard Steele's *The Tatler*.
1711-12 Joseph Addison and Richard Steele's *The Spectator*.
1711 Alexander Pope publishes his *Essay on Criticism*.
1713 Treaty of Utrecht ends Queen Anne's War. Britain gains Gibraltar, Minorca, Nova Scotia, Hudson Bay, and Newfoundland. Spain loses all its European territories and, so, its connections with the Habsburg empire.
1714 Queen Anne dies. **George I** of HANOVER (great grandson of James I) becomes king.

- STRANDS:**
1. The rise of the press
 2. The end of superstition
 3. Agrarian and Financial revolutions
 4. Beginnings of the Industrial Revolution
 5. Decline of Spanish Empire, rise of British Empire

THE AGE OF SENSIBILITY

- 1715 First Jacobite Rebellion, supported by Tories, fails. Tories fall from power for 45 years.
- 1719 Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*.
- 1720-1721 Boylston introduces smallpox inoculation in Boston.
- 1722 Last execution for witchcraft in the English-speaking world (Scotland).
- 1722 Daniel Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year*.
- 1727 Death of George I. His son **George II** succeeds him.
- 1727 Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*.
- 1728 Chambers' *Cyclopaedia*.
- 1728 John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*.
- 1733 John Kay invents the flying shuttle.
- 1734-1740 The Great Awakening – surge of religious fervour kindled by Jonathan Edwards in the American colonies.
- 1738 The Great Revival (Methodism) initiated by John Wesley and George Whitefield.
- 1739 War of Jenkins' Ear.
- 1740 Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*.
- 1741 Jonathan Edwards' sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God".
- 1741 Benjamin Franklin begins editing the *General Magazine*, first such venture in America.
- 1742 Henry Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*.
- 1742-47 Edward Young's *The Complaint, or Night Thoughts*.
- 1743 James Blair's *The Grave*.
- 1744-1748 War of Austrian Succession ('King George's War' to the colonists). England and New England volunteers take the French Fort Louisbourg, later exchange it for Madras (India).
- 1745 Second Jacobite rebellion, led by prince Charles Edward Stuart.
Hoggarth paints *Marriage a la Mode*.
- 1746 Battle of Culloden: the Young Pretender ('Bonnie Prince Charlie') is defeated in 1746. End of the second Jacobite Rebellion and of Stuart intrigues.
- 1747 Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle: end of the War of Austrian Succession.
Discovery of Pompeii.
- 1748 Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa*.
- 1748 Tobias Smollett's *The Adventures of Roderick Random*.
- 1749 Henry Fielding's *The History of Tom Jones*.
- 1749 Handel's *Music for the Royal Fireworks* performed in St. James' Park.
Henry Fielding becomes Bow Street magistrate. Publication of *Tom Jones*.
John Cleland's *Fanny Hill, or the Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*.
- 1751 The Gin Act restricts the retail of spirits.
Thomas Gray's poem *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*.
- 1753 Founding of the British Museum.
- 1754 Dr. Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language*, basis for *The Oxford English Dictionary*.
- 1756 Edmund Burke's *Enquiry Concerning our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*.
- 1756 Seven Years' War begins. Britain captures Quebec.
- 1758 Britain pays 670,000 pounds to Frederick the Great of Prussia to maintain troops in Germany.
British troops capture the French Fort Duquesne in Canada, rename it Pittsburgh.

1758	Franklin's "The Way to Wealth".
1759	'Annus mirabilis' of British victories in Seven Years War.
1760-67	Laurence Sterne's <i>Tristram Shandy</i> .
1760	Death of George II. Grandson George III .
1760	Britain captures Montreal. All of Canada comes under British control.
1761	Britain conquers Pondicherry, and puts an end to French control of Madras.
1762	Britain takes Grenada from the French.
1762	James Macpherson's <i>Fingal, An Ancient Epic Poem</i> .
1763	Treaty of Paris: end of Seven Year War. Britain takes formal possession of Canada, Nova Scotia, Florida, Dominica, Grenada and Tobago.

- STRANDS.**
1. End of Stuart aspirations to the crown
 2. Birth of the English novel
 3. Consolidation of British Empire in America and India
 4. Growth of an emotional religiosity
 5. The 'Graveyard School' of poetry and the aesthetics of emotion
 6. Rise of museums, dictionaries, encyclopedias

THE AGE OF REVOLUTION

- 1764 Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*: beginning of the Gothic genre.
1764 Eight-year old Mozart visits England for a year.
1765 The Stamp Act imposes unwanted taxation on American colonists.
1765 James Watt invents an improved steam engine.
1765 Bishop Percy's *Reliques of English Poetry*.
1766 Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield*.
1766 James Hargreaves invents the 'spinning jenny'.
1767 Herder's *Fragmente über die neuere deutsche Literatur*.
1768 The Royal Academy of Arts founded.
1768 *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* founded.
1769 James Watts' steam engine patented.
1769 Richard Arkwright invents a water-powered frame for spinning.
1771 Franklin begins his *Autobiography*.
1773 Phillis Wheatley's *Poems on Various Subjects*.
1774 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Werther*.
1775-1783 American War of Independence.
1776 (January) Thomas Paine publishes *Common Sense* in Philadelphia.
1776 (July, 4th) The *Declaration of Independence* is adopted by Congress.
1777 Thomas Chatterton's *Poems* (posthumous).
1779 Samuel Crompton invents the spinning 'mule'.
1780 Anti-Catholic Gordon Riots in London.
1781 Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller's *Die Räuber*.
1781 Immanuel Kant's *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*.
1781-88 Jean Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions*.
1782 Jean de Crevecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer*.
1782 Exhibition of Henri Fuseli's *The Nightmare* at the Royal Academy.
1783 Treaty of Versailles ends the war.
1783 William Blake's *Poetical Sketches*.
1783-4 Henry Cort invents the 'puddling and rolling' method for refining iron.
1784 Edmund Cartwright invents the power loom.
1785 Founding of *The Times*.
1785 William Cowper publishes *The Task*.
1786 Robert Burns' *Poems Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*.
1786 William Beckford's Gothic-Orientalist novel *Vathek*.
1789 French Revolution: fall of the Bastille.
1789 *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African* is published in London (repr. in New York 1791).
1789 Publication of Blake's *Songs of Innocence*.
1790 Edmund Burke publishes *Reflections on the Revolution in France*.
1791 The first part of Franklin's *Autobiography* is published (in French).
1792 Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*.
1793 Eli Whitney invents the cotton gin.

1793	Execution of Louis XVI.
1794	William Godwin publishes <i>Caleb Williams</i> .
1794	Ann Radcliffe publishes <i>The Mysteries of Udolpho</i> .
1795	Methodists secede from the Church of England.
1795	G.M.Lewis publishes <i>The Monk</i> .
1797	Ann Radcliffe publishes <i>The Italian</i> .
1798	William Wordsworth and Samuel T. Coleridge's <i>Lyrical Ballads</i> .

- STRANDS:**
1. The aesthetics of loss
 2. The rise of Gothic literature
 3. Triumph of the Industrial Revolution
 4. Formation of an American identity
 5. The growth of the British Empire
 6. The American and French Revolutions
 7. The emergence of black literature
 8. The coming of Romanticism

(THE AGE OF ROMANTICISM)

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