The English Renaissance

The English Renaissance covers the historical period from 1485 to 1625. It developed later than its European equivalents and was an original, typically English movement. The notion of calling this period "The Renaissance" is a modern invention, having been popularized by the historian Jacob Burckhardt in “*The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*”( 1860).

* Its main feature is its Protestant basis influenced by Henry VIII, who broke with Rome and declared himself -as a king- the head of the English church. In this way the king gets the spiritual and the temporal power (secularization).

* In this period man is divided between spirit and matter and his function is create balance between passion and reason. You can understand this frame of mind reading sonnets. The sonnet was introduced into England by Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, from Italy. They imitated Petrarch’s poetry because he used oxymoron to express a very emotional experience. This period is also called “ golden age” not only for the innovations of poetry but also for its great impact on music, on architectural and on art.
* In this period two dynasty governed in England: Tudor and Stuart.

Tudor: the main character in this dynasty is Elizabeth I (1558-1603), Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn’s daughter, she had a strong personality, a lively intelligence and a passionate character. She received tutoring and excelled at languages, music and she was a political genius. She was unmarried and used this as a political weapon, she often repeat that “ the Queen was married to her people”; eventually the people accepted this idea and began to make a cult of their “Virgin Queen”. Under her reign entertainment was an essential part of every day. The lives of Elizabethans were hard, the mortality rate was high due to frequent outbreaks of the Bubonic Plague and life expectation was low. Elizabethan entertainment was popular whenever there was something to celebrate. A betrothal, wedding, victories and festivals. Court entertainment was regular, often a nightly occurrence combined with feasts, jousts and banquets often accompanied by music and dancing.

Stuart:  James's reign in Scotland was longer than those of any of his predecessors. He achieved most of his aims in Scotland but faced great difficulties in England, including the [Gunpowder Plot](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gunpowder_Plot) in 1605 and repeated conflicts with the [English Parliament](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parliament_of_England). Under James, the "Golden Age" of [Elizabethan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elizabethan_era) literature and drama continued, with writers such as [William Shakespeare](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Shakespeare), [John Donne](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Donne), [Ben Jonson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ben_Jonson), and Sir [Francis Bacon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Bacon) contributing to a flourishing literary culture.