

Elizabethan Essayists

The Essay, which Montaigne began in France, was a very popular prose form during this period, the year 1597, when Sir Francis Bacon published his ten essays, marks the beginning of essay writing in England.

Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626)

Bacon, a man of versatile genius and achievements, wrote different types of prose which are philosophical in *The Advancement of Learning* (1605), Historical in the *History of Henry Seven* (1622), and speculative in *New Atlantis* (1626), which remained incomplete due to his death.

Bacon's character was full of contradictions. Macaulay said that he was the supreme example of shining intellect conjoined to an object and base moral nature.

“If parts allure thee, think how Bacon shined

The wisest the brightest and the meanest of mankind”

Bacon is the father of essay writing in English prose. He occupies a permanent place due to his essays, ten in number which appeared 1597. The second edition 1612 and the third edition 1625 raised the number of essays to 38 and 58 respectively. They are on familiar subject and express to quote his own words, “the dispersed meditations” of a trained and a disciplined mind. They contain practical wisdom and are written in clear, lucid and aphoristic style. Bacon’ essays are a record of his outlook on world throughout the years of his active life.

In his essay, Bacon writes, Rickett, emerges as “*the pioneer of clear, sententious English that suggests rather than expounds, and blends dignity with familiarity, in that pleasant and attractive manner which is the secret of the power of all our greatest essayists*”. His images and figures of speech are simple and clearly illustrate the idea that he wishes to communicate. His essays are argumentative and objective, not personal and subjective.

There are some other essayists of Elizabethan period who showed their talents and skills in the field of Essays.

For example, Ben Jonson’s essays are compiled in *The Timber* or *Discoveries* posthumously published about (1641). His essays are aphoristic like those of Francis Bacon, and are moral and critical in

nature. He treats subject in a simple and plain manner. John Seldon's *Table Talk* (1689) abounds sharp and acid natured aphorisms. His other works are *The Titles of Honours* (16140) and *The History of Titles* (1618).

So, we can say that Elizabethan period is not only famous for Drama but some wonderful and intellectual Essays have also been written to unlock the chains of ignorance of the people and also for the writers and as well as for the readers.

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