**Points to ponder on Pope’s *Essay on Criticism***

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Michael Dahl, portrait of Alexander Pope, c. 1727

For class you will be reading an excerpt from this poem, often regarded as a touchstone of Augustan poetics.

What do you make of the fact that this poem about poetry addresses itself first and foremost to “criticism”? What might that tell you about the period in which Pope was writing?

What does Pope seem to mean when he speaks of “Nature”?

Which earlier writers does he take for his models?

In the long passage about poetic “numbers,” or rhythm (ll. 340-384), Pope famously embodies the effects he describes in his own verse. Can you find any instances of this? (This is easier if you know something about poetic rhythm, but you should be able to find a few even if you don’t know anything about prosody.)

What do think of Pope’s own style of writing? For instance, what rhyme scheme does he use and what are some of its effects on the reader?