



British Literature  
&  
American Literature



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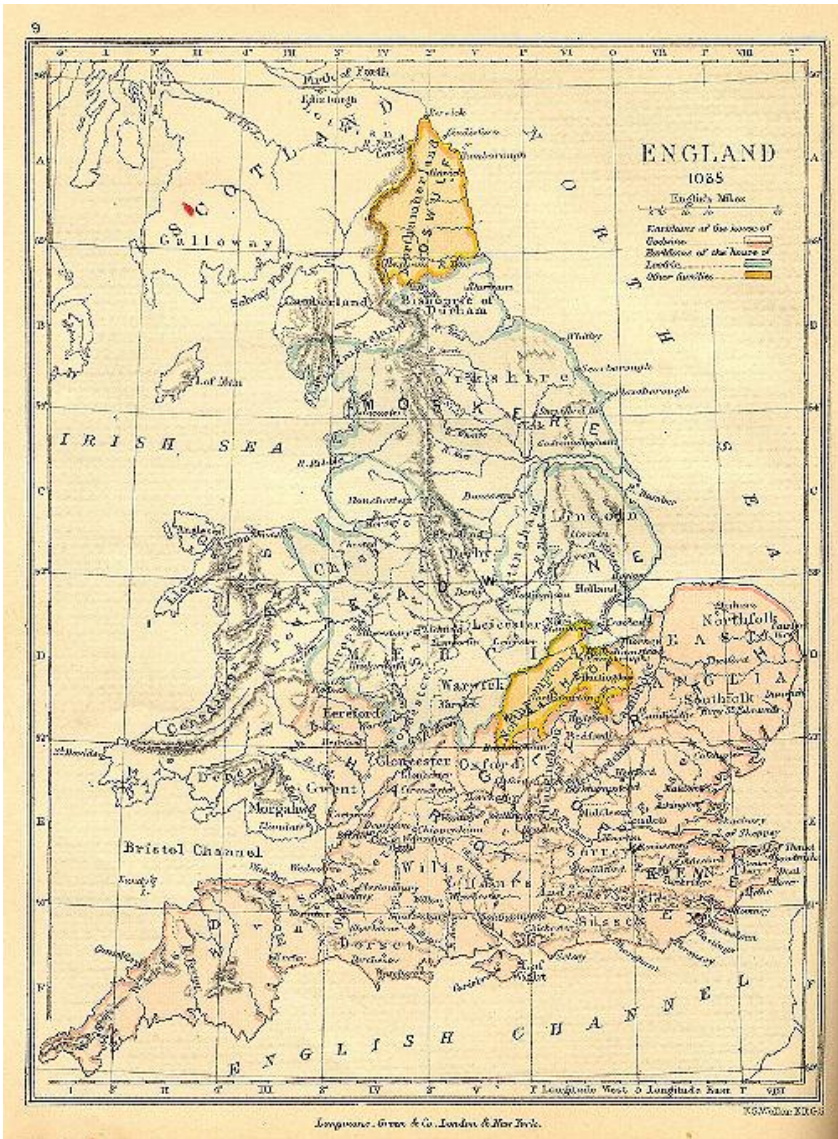
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# THE OLD ENGLISH MAP

MAP OF ENGLISH DIALECT



## The United States of America-The 13 Original States



## The United States of America – TODAY



# USEFUL INFORMATION TO STUDY LITERATURE

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## Taking Notes

1. In preparation for writing an essay or any other piece of work, your notes might come from a number of different sources: course materials, set texts, secondary reading, interviews, or tutorials and lectures. You might gather information from radio or television broadcasts, or from experiments and research projects. The notes could also include your own ideas, generated as part of the essay planning process.

2. The notes you gather in preparation for writing the essay will normally provide the detailed evidence to back up your arguments. They might also include such things as the quotations and page references you plan to use in your essay. Your ultimate objective in planning will be to produce a one or two page outline of the topics you intend to cover.

3. Be prepared for the fact that you might take many more notes than you will ever use. This is perfectly normal. At the note-taking stage you might not be sure exactly what evidence you will need. In addition, the information-gathering stage should also be one of digesting and refining your ideas.

4. Don't feel disappointed if you only use a quarter or even a tenth of your materials. The proportion you finally use might vary from one subject to another, as well as depending on your own particular writing strategy. Just because some material is not used, don't imagine that your efforts have been wasted.

5. When taking notes from any source, keep in mind that you are attempting to make a *compressed* and accurate record of information, other people's opinions, and possibly your own observations on the subject in question.

6. Your objective whilst taking the notes is to distinguish the more important from the less important points being made. Record the main issues, not the details. You might write down a few words of the original if you think they may be used in a quotation. Keep these extracts as short as possible unless you will be discussing a longer passage in some detail.

7. Don't try to write down every word of a lecture - or copy out long extracts from books. One of the important features of note-taking is that you are making a *digest* of the originals, and translating the information into your own words.

8. Some students take so many notes that they don't know which to use when it's time to write the essay. They feel that they are drowning in a sea of information.

9. This problem is usually caused by two common weaknesses in note-taking technique:

- transcribing too much of the original
- being unselective in the choice of topics

10. There are two possible solution to this problem:

- Select only those few words of the source material which will be of use. Avoid being descriptive. *Think* more, and *write* less. Be rigorously selective.
- Keep the essay question or topic more clearly in mind. Take notes only on those issues which are directly relevant to the subject in question.

11. Even though the notes you take are only for your own use, they will be more effective if they are recorded clearly and neatly. Good layout of the notes will help you to recall and assess the material more readily. If in doubt use the following general guidelines.

- Before you even start, make a note of your source(s). If this is a book, an article, or a journal, write the following information at the head of your notes: *Author, title, publisher, publication date, and edition of book.*
- Use loose-leaf A4 paper. This is now the international standard for almost all educational printed matter. Don't use small notepads. You will find it easier to keep track of your notes if they fit easily alongside your other study materials.



- Write clearly and leave a space between each note. Don't try to cram as much as possible onto one page. Keeping the items separate will make them easier to recall. The act of laying out information in this way will cause you to assess the importance of each detail.
- Use some system of tabulation (as I am doing in these notes). This will help to keep the items separate from each other. Even if the progression of numbers doesn't mean a great deal, it will help you to keep the items distinct.
- Don't attempt to write continuous prose. Notes should be abbreviated and compressed. Full grammatical sentences are not necessary. Use abbreviations, initials, and shortened forms of commonly used terms.
- Don't string the points together continuously, one after the other on the page. You will find it very difficult to untangle these items from each other after some time has passed.
- Devise a logical and a memorable layout. Use lettering, numbering, and indentation for sections and for sub-sections. Use headings and sub-headings. Good layout will help you to absorb and recall information. Some people use coloured inks and highlighters to assist this process of identification.
- Use a new page for each set of notes. This will help you to store and identify them later. Keep topics separate, and have them clearly titled and labelled to facilitate easy recall.
- Write on one side of the page only. Number these pages. Leave the blank sides free for possible future additions, and for any details which may be needed later.

12. What follows is an example of notes taken whilst listening to an Open University radio broadcast - a half hour lecture by the philosopher and cultural historian, Isaiah Berlin. It was entitled '*Tolstoy's Views on Art and Morality*', which was part of the third level course in literary studies A 312 - *The Nineteenth Century Novel and its Legacy*.

### Isaiah Berlin - 'Tolstoy on Art and Morality' 3 Sep 89

1. T's views on A extreme - but he asks important questions which disturb society

2. 1840s Univ of Kazan debate on purpose of A

T believes there should be simple answers to problems of life

3. Met simple & spontaneous people & soldiers in Caucasus *Crimean Sketches* admired by Turgenev & Muscovites but T didn't fit in milieu

4. Westernizers Vs Slavophiles - T agreed with Ws, but rejects science (Ss romantic conservatives)

5. 2 views of A in mid 19C - A for art's sake/ A for society's sake

6. Pierre (*W&P*) and Levin (*AK*) as egos of 'searchers for truth'

7. Natural life (even drunken violence) better than intellectual

8. T's contradiction - to be artist or moralist

9. T's 4 criteria for work of art

- know what you want to say - lucidly and clearly
- subject matter must be of essential interest
- artist must live or imagine concretely his material
- and must know the moral centre of situation

10. T crit of other writers

Shakespeare and Goethe - too complex

*St Julien* (Flaubert) inauthentic

Turgenev and Chekhov guilty of triviality

11. *What is Art?* Emotion recollected and transmitted to others [Wordsworth] Not self-expression - Only good should be transmitted
12. But his own tastes were for high art Chopin, Beethoven, & Mozart
- T Argues he himself corrupted
13. Tried to distinguish between his own art and moral tracts
14. 'Artist cannot help burning like a flame'
15. Couldn't reconcile contradictions in his own beliefs died still raging against self and society

## Essay Planning

1. **Strategy** » You can approach the composition of an essay using a number of different writing strategies. Some people like to start writing and wait to see what develops. Others work up scraps of ideas until they perceive a shape emerging. However, if you are in any doubt at all, it's a good idea to *plan* your work. The task of writing is usually much easier if you create a set of notes which outline the points you are going to make. Using this approach, you will create a basic structure on which your ideas can be built.
2. **Plans** » This is a part of the essay-writing process which is best carried out using plenty of scrap paper. Get used to the idea of shaping and re-shaping your ideas before you start writing, editing and rearranging your arguments as you give them more thought. Planning on-screen using a word-processor *is* possible, but it's a fairly advanced technique.
3. **Analyse the question** » Make sure you understand what the question is asking for. What is it giving you the chance to write about? What is its central issue? Analyse any of its key terms and any instructions. If you are in any doubt, ask your tutor to explain what is required.
4. **Generate ideas** » You need to assemble ideas for the essay. On a first sheet of paper, make a note of anything which might be relevant to your answer. These might be topics, ideas, observations, or instances from your study materials. Put down anything you think of at this stage.
5. **Choosing topics** » On a second sheet of paper, extract from your brainstorm listings those topics and points of argument which are of greatest relevance to the question and its central issue. Throw out anything which cannot be directly related to the essay question.
6. **Put topics in order** » On a third sheet of paper, put these chosen topics in some logical sequence. At this stage you should be formulating a basic response to the question, even if it is provisional and may later be changed. Try to arrange the points so that they form a persuasive and coherent argument.
7. **Arrange your evidence** » All the major points in your argument need to be supported by some sort of evidence. On any further sheets of paper, compile a list of brief quotations from other sources (together with page references) which will be offered as your evidence.
8. **Make necessary changes** » Whilst you have been engaged in the first stages of planning, new ideas may have come to mind. Alternate evidence may have occurred to you, or the line of your argument may have shifted somewhat. Be prepared at this stage to rearrange your plan so that it incorporates any of these new materials or ideas. Try out different arrangements of your essay topics until you are sure they form the most convincing and logical sequence.
9. **Finalise essay plan** » The structure of most essay plans can be summarised as Introduction - Arguments - Conclusion. State your case as briefly and rapidly as possible, present the evidence for this case in the body of your essay, then sum up and try to 'lift' the argument to a higher level in your conclusion. Your final plan should be something like a list of half a dozen to ten major points of argument. Each one of these points will be expanded to a paragraph of something around 100-200 words minimum in length.

10. **Relevance** » At all stages of essay planning, and even when writing the essay, you should keep the question in mind. Keep asking yourself 'Is this evidence directly relevant to the topic I have been asked to discuss?' If in doubt, be prepared to scrap plans and formulate new ones - which is much easier than scrapping finished essays. At all times aim for clarity and logic in your argument.

11. **Example** » What follows is an example of an outline plan drawn up in note form. It is in response to the question 'Do you think that depictions of sex and violence in the media should or should not be more heavily censored?'. [It is worth studying the plan in its entirety. Take note of its internal structure.]

*'Do you think that depictions of sex and violence in the media should or should not be more heavily censored?'*

**Introduction** » Sex, violence, and censorship all emotive subjects

## Case against censorship

1. *Aesthetic*: inhibits artistic talent, distorts art and truth.
2. *Individual judgement*: individuals have the right to decide for themselves what they watch or read. Similarly, nobody has the right to make up someone else's mind.
3. *Violence and sex as catharsis* (release from tension): portrayal of these subjects can release tension through this kind of experience at 'second hand'.
4. *Violence can deter*: certain films can show violence which reinforces opposition to it, e.g. - *A Clockwork Orange*, *All Quiet on the Western Front*.
5. *Censorship makes sex dirty*: we are too repressed about this subject, and censorship sustains the harmful mystery which has surrounded us for so long.
6. *Politically dangerous*: Censorship in one area can lead to it being extended to others - e.g., political ideas.
7. *Impractical*: Who decides? How is it to be done? Is it not impossible to be 'correct'? Any decision has to be arbitrary

## Case for censorship

1. *Sex is private and precious*: it should not be demeaned by representations of it in public.
2. *Sex can be offensive*: some people may find it so and should not have to risk being exposed to what they would find pornographic.
3. *Corruption can be progressive*: can begin with sex and continue until all 'decent values' are eventually destroyed.
4. *Participants might be corrupted*: especially true of young children.
5. *Violence can encourage imitation*: by displaying violence - even while condemning it - it can be legitimised and can also encourage imitation amongst a dangerous minority.
6. *Violence is often glorified*: encourages callous attitudes.

**Conclusion** » Case against censorship much stronger. No necessary connection between the two topics.

## How to Summarize

1. A summary - or précis - is a shorter version of a longer piece of writing. The summary captures all the most important parts of the original, but expresses them in a [much] shorter space.

2. Summarizing exercises are usually set to test your understanding of the original, and your ability to re-state its main purpose.
3. Summarizing is also a useful skill when gathering information or doing research.
4. The summary should be expressed - as far as possible - in your own words. It's not enough to merely copy out parts of the original.
5. The question will usually set a maximum number of words. If not, aim for something like one tenth of the original. [A summary which was half the length of the original would not be a summary.]
6. Read the original quickly, and try to understand its main subject or purpose.
7. Then you will need to read it again to understand it in more detail.
8. Underline or make a marginal note of the main issues. Use a highlighter if this helps.
9. Look up any words or concepts you don't know, so that you understand the author's sentences and how they relate to each other.
10. Work through the text to identify its main sections or arguments. These might be expressed as paragraphs or web pages.
11. Remember that the purpose [and definition] of a paragraph is that it deals with one issue or topic.
12. Draw up a list of the topics - or make a diagram. [A simple picture of boxes or a spider diagram can often be helpful.]
13. Write a one or two-sentence account of each section you identify. Focus your attention on the main point. Leave out any illustrative examples.
14. Write a sentence which states the central idea of the original text.
15. Use this as the starting point for writing a paragraph which combines all the points you have made.
16. The final summary should concisely and accurately capture the central meaning of the original.
17. Remember that it must be in your own words. By writing in this way, you help to re-create the meaning of the original in a way which makes sense for you.

**Example of an Original text**

*'At a typical football match we are likely to see players committing deliberate fouls, often behind the referee's back. They might try to take a throw-in or a free kick from an incorrect, but more advantageous positions in defiance of the clearly stated rules of the game. They sometimes challenge the rulings of the referee or linesmen in an offensive way which often deserves exemplary punishment or even sending off. No wonder spectators fight amongst themselves, damage stadiums, or take the law into their own hands by invading the pitch in the hope of affecting the outcome of the match.'* [100 words]

**Summary-** Unsportsmanlike behaviour by footballers may cause hooliganism among spectators. [9 words]

## Some extra tips

Even though *notes* are only for your own use, they will be more effective if they are recorded clearly and neatly. Good layout will help you to recall and assess material more readily. If in doubt use the following general guidelines.

- Before you even start, make a note of your source(s). If this is a book, an article, or a journal, write the following information at the head of your notes: *Author, title, publisher, publication date, and edition of book.*
- Use loose-leaf A4 paper. This is now the international standard for almost all educational printed matter. Don't use small notepads. You will find it easier to keep track of your notes if they fit easily alongside your other study materials.
- Write clearly and leave a space between each note. Don't try to cram as much as possible onto one page. Keeping the items separate will make them easier to recall. The act of laying out information in this way will cause you to assess the importance of each detail.
- Use a new page for each set of notes. This will help you to store and identify them later. Keep topics separate, and have them clearly titled and labelled to facilitate easy recall.
- Write on one side of the page only. Number these pages. Leave the blank sides free for possible future additions, and for any details which may be needed later.

## Qualities of a character

Mental Qualities		Moral Qualities	
intelligent educated smart wise gifted clever ingenious brilliant learned scholarly astute competent sensible talented intellectual precocious rational perceptive	unintelligent unschooled dumb ignorant simple puerile obtuse vacuous narrow-minded shallow dull incompetent unreasonable incapable bigoted witless irrational cunning	moral kind considerate idealistic innocent righteous upstanding truthful honest honorable loyal helpful virtuous pure puritanical austere polite respectable	immoral cruel inconsiderate unprincipled corrupt vile deceitful lying unscrupulous dishonorable untrustworthy self-centered dissolute vulgar degenerate sensual insulting base
Physical Qualities		Social Qualities	
strong healthy handsome beautiful pretty cute robust hardy dainty delicate charming ravishing adroit skillful lively robust	weak sickly hideous ugly graceless emaciated clumsy awkward grotesque odious coarse repulsive ungainly unkempt decrepit frail	cooperative hospitable congenial cheerful supportive urbane worldly debonair suave elegant courteous tactful cordial convivial encouraging merry	contentious inhospitable impolite sullen antagonistic boorish provincial brusque obsequious unpolished petulant crude crabby critical caustic grumpy

## Author's tone

Across the top of the chart, you will find ten words that can be used to identify an author's tone. Below each of the ten words are other words associated with that tone that might better pinpoint or describe a tone.

reverence	love	joy	happiness	calm	hope	sadness	anger	hate	fear
awe veneration	affection cherish fondness admiration tenderness sentiment romantic Platonic adoration narcissism passion lust rapture ecstasy infatuated enamor compassion	exaltation zeal fervor ardor elation jubilant buoyancy	glad pleased merry glee delight cheerful gay sanguine mirth enjoy relish bliss	serene tranquil placid content	expect anticipate trust	somber solemn melancholy sorrow lament despair despondent regret dismal funereal saturnine dark gloomy dejection grave grief morose sullen woe bleak remorse forlorn distress agony anguish depression misery barren empty pity	vehement enraged rage outrage antipathy irritation indignant vexation incensed petulant irascible riled bitter acrimony irate fury wrath rancor hostility miffed choleric frustration futility aggravate umbrage gall bristle	vengeance detest abhorrence animosity enmity malice pique rancor aversion loathing despise scorn contempt disdain jealousy repugnance repulsion resentment spite disgust	timidity apprehension anxiety terror horror dismay agitation sinister alarm startle uneasy qualms angst trepidation intimidation spooky dread phobia appalled

### COMPARING TWO POEMS WITH SIMILAR THEMES

Read the two poems below and answer the questions.

<p>Thumbprint Eve Merriam</p> <p>In the heel of my thumb are whorls, whirls, wheels in a unique design: mine alone. What a treasure to own! My own flesh, my own feelings. No other, however grand or base, can ever contain the same. My signature, thumbing the pages of my time. My universe key. My singularity. Impress, implant, I am myself, of all my atom parts I am the sum. And out of my blood and my brain I make my own interior weather, My own sun and rain. Imprint my mark upon the world, Whatever I shall become.</p>	<p>The drum Nikki Giovanni</p> <p>daddy says the world is a drum tight and hard and I told him I'm gonna beat out my own rhythm</p>
---	---

- The theme of each poem deals with
  - the world

- B. individuality
- C. birth
- D. solutions

2. Poets often use the rhythm of their poems to reinforce the theme. Which statement below is true about the rhythm of these poems?

- A. Both poems have a set rhythm.
- B. Only "Thumbprint" has a set rhythm.
- C. Only "the drum" has a set rhythm.
- D. Neither of the poems has a set rhythm.

3. Poets use punctuation and capitalization to suit the effect they wish their poem to have. Why does Nikki Giovanni not use any punctuation or capitalization?

- A. She is stressing the individuality of her speaker.
- B. She is showing the lack of education of her speaker.
- C. She is deliberately omitting the standards of the world.
- D. She didn't carefully proofread her poem and her editor thought she meant to omit them.

4. "the world is/a drum"

What is this line an example of?

- A. alliteration
- B. personification
- C. simile
- D. metaphor

5. Study both poems. What in each poem leads you to believe that the speaker is young?

6. Why do you think the poets chose to use young speakers for their poems?



## ANALYSING FICTION / LITERARY TERMS

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**Vocabulary** » The author's choice of individual words - which may be drawn from various registers such as colloquial, literary, technical, slang, journalism, and may vary from simple and direct to complex and sophisticated.

**Grammar** » The relationships of the words in sentences, which might include such items as the use of adjectives for description, of verbs to denote action, switching between tenses to move between present and past, or any use of unusual combinations of words or phrases to create special effects.

**Syntax** » The arrangement and logical coherence of words in a sentence. The possibilities for re-arrangement are often used for emphasis or dramatic effect.

**Figures of speech** » The rhetorical devices often used to give decorative and imaginative expression to literature. For example - simile, metaphor, puns, irony.

**Literary devices** » The devices commonly used in literature to give added depth to a work. For example, imagery, point of view, symbolism, allusions.

**Tone** » The author's attitude to the subject as revealed in the style and the manner of the writing. This might be for instance serious, comic, or ironic.

**Narrator** » The person telling the story. This may be the author, assuming a full knowledge of characters and their feelings: this is an omniscient narrator. It might alternatively be a fictional character invented by the author. There may also be multiple narrators. You should always be prepared to make a clear distinction between Author, Narrator, and Character - even though in some texts these may be (or appear to be) the same.

**Narrative mode** » This is usually either the first person singular ('I am going to tell you a story about...') or the third person singular ('The duchess felt alarmed...').

**Narrative** » The story which is being told: that is, the history of the events, characters, or whatever matters the narrator wishes to relate to the reader.

**Characterisation** » The means by which characters are depicted or created - commonly by accounts of their physical appearance, psychological characteristics, direct speech, and the opinions of the narrator or other characters about them.

**Point of view** » The literary strategy by which an author presents the events of a narrative from the perspective of a particular person - which may be the narrator or may be a fictional character. The point of view may be consistent, or it may switch between narrator and character(s). It should not be confused with the mere opinion of a character or the narrator.

**Structure** » The planned underlying framework or shape of a piece of work. The relationship between its parts in terms of arrangement or construction.

**Theme** » The underlying topic or issue, often of a general or abstract nature, as distinct from the overt subject with which the work deals. It should be possible to express theme in a single word or short phrase - such as 'death', 'education', or 'coming of age'.

**Genre** » The literary category or type (for instance, short story, novella, or novel) to which the work belongs and with whose conventions it might be compared. We become aware of genre through cultural experience and know for instance that in detective stories murder mysteries are solved; in fairy stories beautiful girls marry the prince; and in some modern short stories not much happens.

**Cultural context** » The historical and cultural context and the circumstances in which the work was produced, which might have some bearing on its possible meanings. A text produced under conditions of strict censorship might conceal its meanings beneath symbolism or allegory.

# WHAT IS LITERATURE?

---



**LITERATURE(n.)** creative writing of recognized artistic value; the profession or art of a writer; "her place in literature is secure"

1. The body of written works of a language, period, or culture.
2. Imaginative or creative writing, especially of recognized artistic value: "*Literature must be an analysis of experience and a synthesis of the findings into a unity*" (Rebecca West).
3. The art or occupation of a literary writer.
4. The body of written work produced by scholars or researchers in a given field: *medical literature*.
5. Printed material: *collected all the available literature on the subject*.
6. *Music*. All the compositions of a certain kind or for a specific instrument or ensemble: *the symphonic literature*.

[Middle English, book learning, from Old French litterature, from Latin litterātūra, from litterātus, lettered.]

## Literary dictionary

**literature**, a body of written works related by subject-matter (e.g. the literature of computing), by language or place of origin (e.g. Russian literature), or by prevailing cultural standards of merit. In this last sense, 'literature' is taken to include oral, dramatic, and broadcast compositions that may not have been published in written form but which have been (or deserve to be) preserved. Since the 19th century, the broader sense of literature as a totality of written or printed works has given way to more exclusive definitions based on criteria of imaginative, creative, or artistic value, usually related to a work's absence of factual or practical reference. Even more restrictive has been the academic concentration upon poetry, drama, and fiction. Until the mid-20th century, many kinds of non-fictional writing—in philosophy, history, biography, criticism, topography, science, and politics—were counted as literature; implicit in this broader usage is a definition of literature as that body of works which—for whatever reason—deserves to be preserved as part of the current reproduction of meanings within a given culture (unlike yesterday's newspaper, which belongs in the disposable category of ephemera). This sense seems more tenable than the later attempts to divide literature—as creative, imaginative, fictional, or non-practical—from factual writings or practically effective works of propaganda, rhetoric, or didactic writing. The Russian Formalists attempt to define literariness in terms of linguistic deviations is important in the theory of poetry, but has not addressed the more difficult problem of the non-fictional prose forms.

## Forms of literature

### Poetry

A poem is commonly defined as a composition written in verse (although verse has been equally used for epic and dramatic fiction). Poems rely heavily on imagery, precise word choice, and metaphor; they may take the form of measures consisting of patterns of stresses (metric feet) or of patterns of different-length syllables (as in classical prosody); and they may or may not utilize rhyme. One cannot readily characterize poetry precisely. Typically though, poetry as a form of literature makes some significant use of the *formal* properties of the words it uses — the properties attached to the written or spoken form of the words, rather than to their meaning. Metre depends on syllables and on rhythms of speech; rhyme and alliteration depend on words that have similar pronunciation. Some recent poets, such as e.e.cummings, made extensive use of words' visual form.

Poetry perhaps pre-dates other forms of literature: early known examples include the Sumerian Epic of Gilgamesh (dated from around 2700 B.C.), parts of the Bible, the surviving works of Homer (the Iliad and the Odyssey), and the Indian epics Ramayana and Mahabharata. In cultures based primarily on oral traditions the formal characteristics of poetry often have a mnemonic function, and important texts: legal, genealogical or moral, for example, may appear first in verse form.

Much poetry uses specific forms: the haiku, the limerick, or the sonnet, for example. A traditional haiku written in Japanese must have something to do with nature, contain seventeen onji (syllables), distributed over three lines in groups of five, seven, and five, and should also have a kigo, a specific word indicating a season. A limerick has five lines, with a rhyme scheme of AABBA, and line lengths of 3,3,2,2,3 stressed syllables. It traditionally has a less reverent attitude towards nature.

Language and tradition dictate some poetic norms: Persian poetry always rhymes, Greek poetry rarely rhymes, Italian or French poetry often does, English and German can go either way (although modern non-rhyming poetry often, perhaps unfairly, has a more "serious" aura). Perhaps the most paradigmatic style of English poetry, blank verse, as exemplified in works by Shakespeare and by Milton, consists of unrhymed iambic pentameters. Some languages prefer longer lines; some shorter ones. Some of these conventions result from the ease of fitting a specific language's vocabulary and grammar into certain structures, rather than into others; for example, some languages contain more rhyming words than others, or typically have longer words. Other structural conventions come about as the result of historical accidents, where many speakers of a language associate good poetry with a verse form preferred by a particular skilled or popular poet.

Works for theatre (see below) traditionally took verse form. This has now become rare outside opera and musicals, although many would argue that the language of drama remains intrinsically poetic.

In recent years, digital poetry has arisen that takes advantage of the artistic, publishing, and synthetic qualities of digital media.

## Drama

A play or drama offers another classical literary form that has continued to evolve over the years. It generally comprises chiefly dialogue between characters, and usually aims at dramatic / theatrical performance (see theatre) rather than at reading. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, opera developed as a combination of poetry, drama, and music. Nearly all drama took verse form until comparatively recently. Shakespeare could be considered drama. Romeo and Juliet, for example, is a classic romantic drama generally accepted as literature.

- - Geek drama exemplifies the earliest form of drama of which we have substantial knowledge. Tragedy, as a dramatic genre, developed as a performance associated with religious and civic festivals, typically enacting or developing upon well-known historical or mythological themes. Tragedies generally presented very serious Theme. - - With the advent of newer technologies, scripts written for non-stage media have been added to this form. War of the Worlds (radio) in 1938 saw the advent of literature written for radio broadcast, and many works of Drama have been adapted for film or television. Conversely, television, film, and radio literature have been adapted to printed or electronic media.

## Essays

An essay consists of a discussion of a topic from an author's personal point of view, exemplified by works by Francis Bacon or by Charles Lamb.

'Essay' in English derives from the French 'essai', meaning 'attempt'. Thus one can find open-ended, provocative and/or inconclusive essays. The term "essays" first applied to the self-reflective musings of Michel de Montaigne, and even today he has a reputation as the father of this literary form.

Genres related to the essay may include:

- the memoir, telling the story of an author's life from the author's personal point of view
- the epistle: usually a formal, didactic, or elegant letter.
- the blog, an informal short rant about a particular topic or topics, usually opinion

## Prose fiction

Prose consists of writing that does not adhere to any particular formal structures (other than simple grammar); "non-poetic writing," writing, perhaps. The term sometimes appears pejoratively, but prosaic writing simply says something without necessarily trying to say it in a beautiful way, or using beautiful words. Prose writing can of course take beautiful form; but less by virtue of the formal features of words (rhymes, alliteration, metre) but rather by style, placement, or inclusion of graphics. But one need not mark the distinction precisely, and perhaps cannot do so. Note the classifications:

- "prose poetry", which attempts to convey the aesthetic richness typical of poetry using only prose
- "free verse", or poetry not adhering to any of the structures of one or another formal poetic style

Narrative fiction (narrative prose) generally favours prose for the writing of novels, short stories, graphic novels, and the like. Singular examples of these exist throughout history, but they did not develop into systematic and discrete literary forms until relatively recent centuries. Length often serves to categorize works of prose fiction. Although limits remain somewhat arbitrary, modern publishing conventions dictate the following:

- A Mini Saga is a short story of *exactly* 50 words
- A Flash fiction is generally defined as a piece of prose under a thousand words.
- A short story comprises prose writing of less than 10,000 to 20,000 words, but typically more than 500 words, which may or may not have a narrative arc.
- A story containing between 20,000 and 50,000 words falls into the novella category.
- A work of fiction containing more than 50,000 words falls squarely into the realm of the novel.

A novel consists simply of a long story written in prose, yet the form developed comparatively recently. Icelandic prose sagas dating from about the 11th century bridge the gap between traditional national verse epics and the modern psychological novel. In mainland Europe, the Spaniard Cervantes wrote perhaps the first influential novel: *Don Quixote*, the first part of which was published in 1605 and the second in 1615. Earlier collections of tales, such as Boccaccio's Decameron and Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, have comparable forms and would classify as novels if written today. Earlier works written in Asia resemble even more strongly the novel as we now think of it — for example, works such as the *Chinese Romance of the Three Kingdoms* and the *Japanese Tale of Genji* by Lady Murasaki. Compare to *The Book of One thousand and One Nights*.

Early novels in Europe did not, at the time, count as significant literature, perhaps because "mere" prose writing seemed easy and unimportant. It has become clear, however, that prose writing can provide aesthetic pleasure without adhering to poetic forms. Additionally, the freedom authors gain in not having to concern themselves with verse structure translates often into a more complex plot or into one richer in precise detail than one typically finds even in narrative poetry. This freedom also allows an author to experiment with many different literary and presentation styles — including poetry— in the scope of a single novel.

## Other prose literature

Philosophy, history, journalism, and legal and scientific writings traditionally ranked as literature. They offer some of the oldest prose writings in existence; novels and prose stories earned the names "fiction" to distinguish them from factual writing or nonfiction, which writers historically have crafted in prose.

The "literary" nature of science writing has become less pronounced over the last two centuries, as advances and specialization have made new scientific research inaccessible to most audiences; science now appears mostly in journals. Scientific works of Euclid, Aristotle, Copernicus, and Newton still possess great value; but since the science in them has largely become outdated, they no longer serve for scientific instruction, yet they remain too technical to sit well in most programmes of literary study. Outside of "history of science" programmes students rarely read such works. Many books "popularizing" science might still deserve the title "literature"; history will tell.

Philosophy, too, has become an increasingly academic discipline. More of its practitioners lament this situation than occurs with the sciences; nonetheless most new philosophical work appears in academic journals. Major philosophers through history -- Plato, Aristotle, August, Descartes, Nietzsche -- have become as canonical as any writers. Some recent philosophy works are argued to merit the title "literature", such as some of the works by Simon Blackburn; but much of it does not, and some areas, such as logic, have become extremely technical to a degree similar to that of mathematics.

A great deal of historical writing can still rank as literature, particularly the genre known as creative nonfiction. So can a great deal of journalism, such as literary journalism. However these areas have become extremely large, and often have a primarily utilitarian purpose: to record data or convey immediate information. As a result the writing in these fields often lacks a literary quality, although it often and in its better moments has that quality. Major "literary" historians include Herodotus, Thucydides and Procopius, all of whom count as canonical literary figures.

Law offers a less clear case. Some writings of Plato and Aristotle, or even the early parts of the Bible, might count as legal literature. The law tables of Hammurabi of Babylon might count. Roman civil law as codified in the Corpus Juris Civilis during the reign of Justinian I of the Byzantine Empire has a reputation as significant literature. The founding documents of many countries, including the United States Constitution, can count as literature; however legal writing now rarely exhibits literary merit.

Game Design Scripts - In essence never seen by the player of a game and only by the developers and/or publishers, the audience for these pieces is usually very small. Still, many game scripts contain immersive stories and detailed worlds making them hidden literary gems.

Most of these fields, then, through specialization or proliferation, no longer generally constitute "literature" in the sense under discussion. They may sometimes count as "literary literature"; more often they produce what one might call "technical literature" or "professional literature".

### Related Narrative Forms

- Graphic novels and comic books present stories told in a combination of sequential artwork, dialogue and text.
- Films, videos and broadcast soap operas have carved out a niche which often parallels the functionality of prose fiction.
- Interactive Fiction, a term for a prose-based genre of computer games, occupies a small literary niche.
- Electronic literature is a developing literary genre meant to be read on a computer screen, often making use of hypertext.

## Genres of literature

A literary genre refers to the traditional divisions of literature of various kinds according to a particular criterion of writing.

### Literary genre

A **literary genre** is a genre of literature, that is " a loose set of criteria for a category of literary composition", depending on literary technics, tone, or content.

The most general genres in literature are (in chronological order) epic, tragedy, comedy, novel, and short story. They can all be in the genres prose and poetry, which shows best how loosely genres are defined. Additionally, a genre like satire, allegory or pastoral might appear in any of the above, not only as a subgenre (see below), but as a mixture of genres. Finally, they are defined by the general cultural movements of the historical period in which they were composed.

### Subgenres

Genres are often divided into subgenres. Literature, for instance, is divided into three basic kinds of literature, classic genres of Ancient Greece, poetry, drama, and prose. Poetry may then be subdivided into epic, lyric, and dramatic. Subdivisions of drama includes foremost comedy and tragedy, while eg. comedy itself has subgenres, including farce, comedy of manners, burlesque, satire, and so on. However, any of these terms would be called "genre", and its possible more general terms implied.

To be even more flexible, hybrid forms of different terms have been used, like a prose poem or a tragicomedy. Science Fiction has many recognized subgenres; a science fiction story may be rooted in real scientific expectations as they are understood at the time of writing (see Hard science fiction). A more general term, coined by Robert A. Heinlein, is "speculative fiction," an umbrella term covering all such genres that depict alternate realities. Even fiction that depicts innovations ruled out by current scientific theory, such as stories about or based on faster-than-light travel, are still science fiction, because science is a main subject in the piece of art.

Dramatic poetry, for instance, might include comedy, tragedy, melodrama, and mixtures like tragicomedy. This parsing into subgenres can continue: "comedy" has its own genres, for example, including comedy of manners, sentimental comedy, burlesque comedy, and satirical comedy.

Usually, the criteria used to divide up works into genres are not consistent, and may change constantly, and be subject of argument, change and challenge by both authors and critics. However, even very loose terms like fiction ("literature created from the imagination, not presented as fact, though it may be based on a true story or situation") are not applied to any fictitious literature, which is almost restricted to the use for novel, short story, and novella, but not fables, and is also usually a prose text.

A subgenre may join non-contradicting criteria: *Romance* and *mystery* are marked out by their plots, and *Western* by its setting, which means that a work can easily be a Western romance or Western mystery.

Genres may be easily be confused with literary techniques, but though only loosely defined, they are not the same, examples are parody, Frame story, constrained writing, stream of consciousness.

## Important terms for poetry

**allegory** (AL-eh-GOR-ee): a narrative that serves as an extended metaphor. Allegories are written in the form of fables, parables, poems, stories, and almost any other style or genre. The main purpose of an allegory is to tell a story that has characters, a setting, as well as other types of symbols, that have both literal and figurative meanings. The difference between an allegory and a symbol is that an allegory is a complete narrative that conveys abstract ideas to get a point across, while a symbol is a representation of an idea or concept that can have a different meaning throughout a literary work (*A Handbook to Literature*). One well-known example of an allegory is Dante's *The Divine Comedy*. In *Inferno*, Dante is on a pilgrimage to try to understand his own life, but his character also represents every man who is in search of his purpose in the world (*Merriam Webster Encyclopedia of Literature*). Although Virgil literally guides Dante on his journey through the mystical inferno, he can also be seen as the reason and human wisdom that Dante has been looking for in his life.

**alliteration** (a-LIT-uh-RAY-shuhn): a pattern of sound that includes the repetition of consonant sounds. The repetition can be located at the beginning of successive words or inside the words. Poets often use alliteration to audibly represent the action that is taking place. For instance, in the *Inferno*, Dante states: "I saw it there, but I saw nothing in it, except the rising of the boiling bubbles" (261). The repetition of the "b" sounds represents the sounds of bubbling, or the bursting action of the boiling pitch. In addition, in Sir Phillip Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella*, the poet states: "Biting my truant pen, beating myself for spite" (Line 13). This repetition of the "t" sound represents the action of the poet; one can hear and visualize his anguish as he bites the pen. Also in *Astrophel and Stella*, the poet states, "Oft turning others' leaves, to see if thence would flow, / Some fresh and fruitful showers upon my sunburn'd brain" (7-8). Again, the poet repeats the "fr" sounds to emphasize the speaker's desire for inspiration in expressing his feelings. Poets may also use alliteration to call attention to a phrase and fix it into the reader's mind; thus, it is useful for emphasis. Therefore, not only does alliteration provide poetry or prose with a unique sound, it can place emphasis on specific phrases and represent the action that is taking place

**allusion** (a-LOO-zhuhn): a reference in a literary work to a person, place, or thing in history or another work of literature. Allusions are often indirect or brief references to well-known characters or events. Specific examples of allusions can be found throughout Dante's *Inferno*. In a passage, Dante alludes to the Greek mythological figures, Phaethon and Icarus, to express his fear as he descends from the air into the eighth circle of hell. He states:

*I doubt if Phaethon feared more - that time  
he dropped the sun-reins of his father's chariot  
and burned the streak of sky we see today -*

*or if poor Icarus did - feeling his sides  
unfeathering as the wax began to melt,  
his father shouting: "Wrong, your course is wrong" (Canto XVII: 106-111).*

Allusions are often used to summarize broad, complex ideas or emotions in one quick, powerful image. For example, to communicate the idea of self-sacrifice one may refer to Jesus, as part of Jesus' story portrays him dying on the cross in order to save mankind (Matthew 27:45-56). In addition, to express righteousness, one might allude to Noah who "had no

faults and was the only good man of his time" (Genesis 6:9-22). Furthermore, the idea of fatherhood or patriarchal love can be well understood by alluding to Abraham, who was the ancestor of many nations (Genesis 17:3-6). Finally, Cain is an excellent example to convey banishment, rejection, or evil, for he was cast out of his homeland by God (Genesis 4:12). Thus, allusions serve an important function in writing in that they allow the reader to understand a difficult concept by relating to an already familiar story.

**connotation** (KAH-nuh-TAE-shun): an association that comes along with a particular word. Connotations relate not to a word's actual meaning, or denotation, but rather to the ideas or qualities that are implied by that word. A good example is the word "gold." The denotation of gold is a malleable, ductile, yellow element. The connotations, however, are the ideas associated with gold, such as greed, luxury, or avarice. Another example occurs in the Book of Genesis. Jacob says: "Dan will be a serpent by the roadside, a viper along the path, that bites the horse's heels so that its rider tumbles backward" (Gen 49:17). In this passage, Dan is not literally going to become a snake. However, describing Dan as a "snake" and "viper" forces the reader to associate him with the negative qualities that are commonly associated with reptiles, such as slyness, danger, and evil. Dan becomes like a snake, sly and dangerous to the riders. Writers use connotation to make their writing more vivid and interesting to read.

**couplet** (KUP-let): a style of poetry defined as a complete thought written in two lines with rhyming ends. The most popular of the couplets is the heroic couplet. The heroic couplet consists of two rhyming lines of iambic pentameter usually having a pause in the middle of each line. One of William Shakespeare's trademarks was to end a sonnet with a couplet, as in the poem "Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day":

*So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,  
So long as lives this, and this gives life to thee.  
By using the couplet Shakespeare would often signal the end of a scene in his plays as well. An example of a scene's end signaled by a couplet is the end of Act IV of Othello. The scene ends with Desdemona's lines:  
Good night. Good night. Heaven me such uses send.  
Not to pick bad from bad, but by bad mend.*

**denotation** (DEE-no-TAE-shuhn): the exact meaning of a word, without the feelings or suggestions that the word may imply. It is the opposite of "connotation" in that it is the "dictionary" meaning of a word, without attached feelings or associations. Some examples of denotations are:

1. **heart**: an organ that circulates blood throughout the body. Here the word "heart" denotes the actual organ, while in another context, the word "heart" may connote feelings of love or heartache.
2. **sweater**: a knitted garment for the upper body. The word "sweater" may denote pullover sweaters or cardigans, while "sweater" may also connote feelings of warmth or security.

Denotation allows the reader to know the exact meaning of a word so that he or she will better understand the work of literature.

**elegy** (EL-e-je): a type of literature defined as a song or poem, written in elegiac couplets, that expresses sorrow or lamentation, usually for one who has died. This type of work stemmed out of a Greek work known as a "elegus," a song of mourning or lamentation that is accompanied by the flute. Beginning in the 16th century, elegies took the form we know today. Two famous elegies include Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" and Walt Whitman's "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd". Gray's elegy is notable in that it mourned the loss of a way of life rather than the loss of an individual. His work, which some consider to be almost political, showed extreme discontent for strife and tyranny set upon England by Oliver Cromwell. This work also acted as an outlet for Gray's dissatisfaction with those poets who wrote in accordance with the thoughts and beliefs of the upper class. In his elegy, Gray mourned for his country and mourned for its citizens. Whitman, inspired by the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, wrote his elegy in its classic form, showing sorrow for the loss of an individual. See *A Reader's Companion to World Literature*, and *Dictionary of World Literature*.

**epigram** (ep-e-gram): a short poem or verse that seeks to ridicule a thought or event, usually with witticism or sarcasm. These literary works were very popular during the Renaissance in Europe in the late 14th century and the Neoclassical period, which began after the Restoration in 1660. They were most commonly found in classic Latin literature, European and English literature. In Ancient Greek, an epigram originally meant a short inscription, but its meaning was later broadened to include any very short poems. Poems that are meditative or satiric all fall into this category. These short poems formulated from the light verse species, which concentrated on the tone of voice and the attitude of the lyric or narrative speaker toward the subject. With a relaxed manner, lyricists would recite poems to their subjects that were comical or whimsical. Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1771-1834), an English poet, essayist and critic, constructed an epigram to

show humor in Romanticism. His thoughts, "On a Volunteer Singer", compares and contrasts the death of swans with that of humans:

*Swans sing before they die- 'twere no bad thing  
Should certain people die before they sing!  
The ballad, "Lord Randall" illustrates a young man who set off to meet his one true  
love and ends up becoming "sick at heart" with what he finds. The young man later  
arrives home to his family about to die and to each family member he leaves  
something sentimental. When asked what he leaves to his true love, he responds:  
I leave her hell and fire...  
This epigram tried to depict what happens to love gone sour. Epigrams have been  
used throughout the centuries not only to criticize but also to promote  
improvement.*

**figurative language** (fig-YOOR-a-tive LAN-gwije): a type of language that varies from the norms of literal language, in which words mean exactly what they say. Also known as the "ornaments of language," figurative language does not mean exactly what it says, but instead forces the reader to make an imaginative leap in order to comprehend an author's point. It usually involves a comparison between two things that may not, at first, seem to relate to one another. In a simile, for example, an author may compare a person to an animal: "He ran like a hare down the street" is the figurative way to describe the man running and "He ran very quickly down the street" is the literal way to describe him. Figurative language facilitates understanding because it relates something unfamiliar to something familiar. Some popular examples of figurative language include a simile and metaphor.

**gothic** (goth-ik): a literary style popular during the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th. This style usually portrayed fantastic tales dealing with horror, despair, the grotesque and other "dark" subjects. Gothic literature was named for the apparent influence of the dark gothic architecture of the period on the genre. Also, many of these Gothic tales took place in such "gothic" surroundings, sometimes a dark and stormy castle as shown in Mary Wollstonecraft Shelly's *Frankenstein*, or Bram Stoker's infamous *Dracula*. Other times, this story of darkness may occur in a more everyday setting, such as the quaint house where the man goes mad from the "beating" of his guilt in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart". In essence, these stories were romances, largely due to their love of the imaginary over the logical, and were told from many different point of view. This literature gave birth to many other forms, such as suspense, ghost stories, horror, mystery, and also Poe's detective stories. Gothic literature wasn't so different from other genres in form as it was in content and its focus on the "weird" aspects of life. This movement began to slowly open many people's eyes to the possible uses of the supernatural in literature.

**hyperbole** (hi-per-bo-lee): an extravagant exaggeration. From the Greek for "overcasting," hyperbole is a figure of speech that is a grossly exaggerated description or statement. In literature, such exaggeration is used for emphasis or vivid descriptions. In drama, hyperbole is quite common, especially in heroic drama. Hyperbole is a fundamental part of both burlesque writing and the "tall tales" from Western America. The conscious overstatements of these tales are forms of hyperbole. Many other examples of hyperbole can be found in the romance fiction and comedy genres. Hyperbole is even a part of our day-to-day speech: 'You've grown like a bean sprout' or 'I'm older than the hills.' Hyperbole is used to increase the effect of a description, whether it is metaphoric or comic. In poetry, hyperbole can emphasize or dramatize a person's opinions or emotions. Skilled poets use hyperbole to describe intense emotions and mental states. Othello uses hyperbole to describe his anger at the possibility of Iago lying about his wife's infidelity in Act III, Scene III of Shakespeare's play *Othello*:

*If thou dost slander her and torture me,  
Never pray more; abandon all remorse;  
On horror's head accumulate;  
Do deeds to make heaven weep, all earth amazed;  
For nothing canst thou to damnation add  
Greater than that.*

In this passage, Othello is telling Iago that if he is lying then Othello will have no pity and Iago will have no hope for salvation. Adding horrors with still more horrors, Othello is describing his potential rage. Othello even declares that the Earth will be confounded with horror at Othello's actions in such a state of madness.

**lyric** (LEER-ick): a lyric is a song-like poem written mainly to express the feelings of emotions or thought from a particular person, thus separating it from narrative poems. These poems are generally short, averaging roughly twelve to thirty lines, and rarely go beyond sixty lines. These poems express vivid imagination as well as emotion and all flow fairly concisely. Because of this aspect, as well as their steady rhythm, they were often used in song. In fact, most people still see a "lyric"



as anything that is sung along to a musical instrument. It is believed that the lyric began in its earliest stage in Ancient Egypt around 2600 BC in the forms of elegies, odes, or hymns generated out of religious ceremonies. Some of the more note-worthy authors who have used the lyric include William Blake, William Wordsworth, John Keats, and William Shakespeare—who helped popularize the sonnet, another type of lyric. The importance of understanding the lyric can best be shown through its remarkable ability to express with such imagination the innermost emotions of the soul.

**metaphor** (met-AH-for) [from the Gk. *carrying one place to another*]: a type of figurative language in which a statement is made that says that one thing is something else but, literally, it is not. In connecting one object, event, or place, to another, a metaphor can uncover new and intriguing qualities of the original thing that we may not normally notice or even consider important. Metaphoric language is used in order to realize a new and different meaning. As an effect, a metaphor functions primarily to increase stylistic colorfulness and variety. Metaphor is a great contributor to poetry when the reader understands a likeness between two essentially different things. In his *Poetics*, Aristotle claims that for one to master the use of metaphor is "...a sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars" (*The Poet's Dictionary*). A metaphor may be found in a simple comparison or largely as the image of an entire poem. For example, Emily Dickinson's poem "My Life had stood – a Loaded Gun" makes use of a series of comparisons between the speaker and a gun. Dickinson opens the work with the following: "My Life had stood – a Loaded Gun - / In corners – till a Day / The Owner passed – identified - / And carried me away". Of course, the narrator is not really a gun. The metaphor carries with it all the qualities of a "Loaded Gun". The speaker in the poem is making a series of comparisons between themselves and the qualities of a gun. The narrator had been waiting a long time before their love found them. The narrator loves her fellow so desperately that she feels as a protective gun that would kill anyone wishing to harm him. To this effect, Dickinson writes, "To foe of His – I'm deadly foe –." Dickinson's poem ends up being one extended comparison through the use of metaphor between herself and a gun with "...but the power to kill".

**metonymy** (me-TAH-nah-me): a figure of speech which substitutes one term with another that is being associated with the that term. A name transfer takes place to demonstrate an association of a whole to a part or how two things are associated in some way. This allows a reader to recognize similarities or common features among terms. It may provide a more common meaning to a word. However, it may be a parallel shift that provides basically the same meaning; it is just said another way. For example, in the book of Genesis 3:19, it refers to Adam by saying that "by the sweat of your brow, you will eat your food." Sweat represents the hard labor that Adam will have to endure to produce the food that will sustain his life. The sweat on his brow is a vivid picture of how hard he is working to attain a goal. Another example is in Genesis 27:28 when Isaac tells Jacob that "God will give you...an abundance of grain and new wine." This grain and wine represents the wealth that Jacob will attain by stealing the birth right. These riches are like money that is for consumption or material possessions to trade for other goods needed for survival. Furthermore, in the play *Othello*, Act I Scene I features metonymy when Iago refers to Othello as "the devil" that "will make a grandsire of you." This phrase represents a person that is seen as deceitful or evil. An understanding of metonymy aids a reader to see how an author interchanges words to further describe a term's meaning.

**narrative poem** (nar-RAH-tiv po-EM): a poem that tells a story. A narrative poem can come in many forms and styles, both complex and simple, short or long, as long as it tells a story. A few examples of a narrative poem are epics, ballads, and metrical romances. In western literature, narrative poetry dates back to the Babylonian epic of Gilgamesh and Homer's epics the Iliad and the Odyssey. In England and Scotland, storytelling poems have long been popular; in the late Middle Ages, ballads-or storytelling songs-circulated widely. The art of narrative poetry is difficult in that it requires the author to possess the skills of a writer of fiction, the ability to draw characters and settings briefly, to engage attention, and to shape a plot, while calling for all the skills of a poet besides.

**personification** {PER-son-E-fih-ka-shEn): A figure of speech where animals, ideas or inorganic objects are given human characteristics. One example of this is James Stephens's poem "The Wind" in which wind performs several actions. In the poem Stephens writes, "The wind stood up and gave a shout. He whistled on his two fingers." Of course the wind did not actually "stand up," but this image of the wind creates a vivid picture of the wind's wild actions. Another example of personification in this poem is "Kicked the withered leaves about....And thumped the branches with his hand." Here, the wind is kicking leaves about, just like a person would and using hands to thump branches like a person would also. By giving human characteristics to things that do not have them, it makes these objects and their actions easier to visualize for a reader. By giving the wind human characteristics, Stephens makes this poem more interesting and achieves a much more vivid image of the way wind whips around a room. Personification is most often used in poetry, coming to popularity during the 18th century.

**rhyme** (rime): repetition of an identical or similarly accented sound or sounds in a work. Lyricists may find multiple ways to rhyme within a verse. End rhymes have words that rhyme at the end of a verse-line. Internal rhymes have words that rhyme within it. Algernon C. Swinburne (1837-1909), a rebel and English poet, used internal rhymes in many of his Victorian poems such as "sister, my sister, O fleet sweet swallow." There are cross rhymes in which the rhyme occurs at

the end of one line and in the middle of the next; and random rhymes, in which the rhymes seem to occur accidentally in no specific combination, often mixed with unrhymed lines. These sort of rhymes try to bring a creative edge to verses that usually have perfect rhymes in a sequential order. Historically, rhyme came into poetry late, showing in the Western world around AD 200 in the Church Latin of North Africa. Its popularity grew in Medieval Latin poetry. The frequently used spelling in English, r\*h\*y\*m\*e , comes from a false identification of the Greek word “rhythmos.” Its true origin comes from Provençal, which is a relation to Provence, a region of France. The traditional Scottish ballad, “Edward,” uses end rhymes to describe what he has done with his sword and property:

*And what wul ye doe wi' your towirs and your ha'*

*That were sae fair to see, O?*

*Ile let thame stand tul they doun fa'*

*Rhyme gives poems flow and rhythm, helping the lyricist tell a story and convey a mood.*

**rhyme scheme** (rime skeem): the pattern of rhyme used in a poem, generally indicated by matching lowercase letters to show which lines rhyme. The letter "a" notes the first line, and all other lines rhyming with the first line. The first line that does not rhyme with the first, or "a" line, and all others that rhyme with this line, is noted by the letter "b", and so on. The rhyme scheme may follow a fixed pattern (as in a sonnet) or may be arranged freely according to the poet's requirements. The use of a scheme, or pattern, came about before poems were written down; when they were passed along in song or oral poetry. Since many of these poems were long, telling of great heroes, battles, and other important cultural events, the rhyme scheme helped with memorization. A rhyme scheme also helps give a verse movement, providing a break before changing thoughts. The four-line stanza, or quatrain, is usually written with the first line rhyming with the third line, and the second line rhyming with the fourth line, abab. The English sonnet generally has three quatrains and a couplet, such as abab, cdcd, efef, gg. The Italian sonnet has two quatrains and a sestet, or six-line stanza, such as abba, abba, cde, cde. Rhyme schemes were adapted to meet the artistic and expressive needs of the poet. Henry Howard Surrey is credited with introducing the sonnet form to England. This form differed from the Italian form because he found that there were fewer rhyming words in English than there were in Italian.

*Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?*

*Thou art more lovely and more temperate.*

*Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May.*

*And summer's lease hath all too short a date.*

*Excerpt from Shakespeare's "Sonnet XVIII", rhyme scheme: a b a b.*

**simile** (sim-EH-lee): a simile is a type of figurative language, language that does not mean exactly what it says, that makes a comparison between two otherwise unlike objects or ideas by connecting them with the words "like" or "as." The reader can see a similar connection with the verbs resemble, compare and liken. Similes allow an author to emphasize a certain characteristic of an object by comparing that object to an unrelated object that is an example of that characteristic. An example of a simile can be seen in the poem “Robin Hood and Allin a Dale”:

*With that came in a wealthy knight,*

*Which was both grave and old,*

*And after him a finikin lass,*

*Did shine like glistening gold.*

In this poem, the lass did not literally glisten like gold, but by comparing the lass to the gold the author emphasizes her beauty, radiance and purity, all things associated with gold. Similarly, in N. Scott Momaday's simple poem, “Simile.” he says that the two characters in the poem are like deer who walk in a single line with their heads high with their ears forward and their eyes watchful. By comparing the walkers to the nervous deer, Momaday emphasizes their care and caution.

**short story** (short store-ey): a prose narrative that is brief in nature. The short story also has many of the same characteristics of a novel including characters, setting and plot. However, due to length constraints, these characteristics and devices generally may not be as fully developed or as complex as those developed for a full-length novel. There are many authors well known for the short story including Edgar Allan Poe, Sherwood Anderson and Ernest Hemingway. According to the book *Literary Terms* by Karl Beckson and Arthur Ganz, “American writers since Poe, who first theorized on the structure and purpose of the short story, have paid considerable attention to the form” (257). The written “protocol” regarding what comprises a short versus a long story is vague. However, a general standard might be that the short story could be read in one sitting. NTC's *Dictionary of Literary Terms* quotes Edgar Allan Poe's description as being ‘a short prose narrative, requiring from a half-hour to one or two hours in its perusal’ (201). Please refer to *Literary Terms* by Karl Beckson and Arthur Ganz and NTC's *Dictionary of Literary Terms* by Kathleen Morner and Ralph Rausch for further information.

**slant rhyme** (slänt rime) is also known as near rhyme, half rhyme, off rhyme, imperfect rhyme, oblique rhyme, or pararhyme. A distinctive system or pattern of metrical structure and verse composition in which two words have only their final consonant sounds and no preceding vowel or consonant sounds in common. Instead of perfect or identical sounds or rhyme, it is the repetition of near or similar sounds or the pairing of accented and unaccented sounds that if both were accented would be perfect rhymes (stopped and wept, parable and shell). Alliteration, assonance, and consonance are accepted as slant rhyme due to their usage of sound combinations (spilled and spoiled, chitter and chatter). By not allowing the reader to predict or expect what is coming slant rhyme allows the poet to express things in different or certain ways. Slant rhyme was most common in the Irish, Welsh and Icelandic verse and prose long before Henry Vaughn used it in English. Not until William Butler Yeats and Gerald Manley Hopkins began to use slant rhyme did it become regularly used in English. Wilfred Owen was one of the first poets to realize the impact of rhyming consonants in a consistent pattern. A World War I soldier he sought a powerful means to convey the harshness of war. Killed in action, his most famous work was written in the year prior to his death.

*Now men will go content with what we spoiled  
Or, discontent, boil bloody, and be spilled,  
They will be swift with the swiftness of the tigress.  
None will break ranks, though nations trek from progress.  
Courage was mine, and I had mystery,  
Wisdom was mine, and I had mastery:  
To miss the march of this retreating world  
Into vain citadels that are not walled.*

**sonnet** (sonn-IT): a sonnet is a distinctive poetic style that uses system or pattern of metrical structure and verse composition usually consisting of fourteen lines, arranged in a set rhyme scheme or pattern. There are two main styles of sonnet, the Italian sonnet and the English sonnet. The Italian or Petrarchan sonnet, named after Petrarch (1304-1374) a fourteenth century writer and the best known poet to use this form, was developed by the Italian poet Guittone of Arezzo (1230-1294) in the thirteenth century. Usually written in iambic pentameter, it consists first of an octave, or eight lines, which asks a question or states a problem or proposition and follows the rhyme scheme a-b-b-a, a-b-b-a. The sestet, or last six lines, offers an answer, or a resolution to the proposed problem, and follows the rhyme scheme c-d-e-c-d-e.

*When I consider how my light is spent  
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,  
And that one talent which is death to hide  
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent  
To serve therewith my Maker, and present  
My true account, lest he returning chide;  
"Doth God exact day-labor, light denied?"  
I fondly ask; but Patience to prevent  
That murmur, soon replies, "God doth not need  
Either man's work or his own gifts; who best  
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state  
Is kingly. Thousands at his bidding speed  
And post o'er land and ocean without rest:  
They also serve who only stand and wait."*

John Milton, "When I Consider How My Light Is Spent" - The sonnet was first brought to England by Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, in the sixteenth century, where the second sonnet form arose. The English or Shakespearean sonnet was named after William Shakespeare (1564-1616) who most believed to be the best writer to use the form. Adapting the Italian form to the English, the octave and sestet were replaced by three quatrains, each having its own independent rhyme scheme typically rhyming every other line, and ending with a rhyme couplet. Instead of the Italianic break between the octave and the sestet, the break comes between the twelfth and thirteenth lines. The ending couplet is often the main thought change of the poem, and has an epigrammatic ending. It follows the rhyme scheme a-b-a-b, c-d-c-d, e-f-e-f, g-g.

**Shakespeare, Sonnet XVIII.**

<i>Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?</i>	a
<i>Thou art more lovely and more temperate:</i>	b
<i>Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,</i>	a
<i>And summer's lease hath all too short a date:</i>	b
<i>Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,</i>	c
<i>And often is his gold complexion dimm'd:</i>	d
<i>And every fair from fair sometime declines,</i>	c

*By chance, or nature's changing course, untrimm'd.* d  
*By thy eternal summer shall not fade* e  
*Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;* f  
*Nor shall Death brag thou wander'd in his shade,* e  
*When in eternal lines to time thou growest:* f  
*So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,* g  
*So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.* g

# A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Adapted from Douglas F. Hasty

We speak English but do we know where it comes from? We did not know until we start to study on this subject and we learn where it comes from and how it has developed. The importance of this part is that we can not understand reading literature if we do not know the history of the language, the culture, and the people.

The history of English begins a little after A.D. 600. The ancestors of the language were wandering in the forests of northern Europe. Their language was a part of Germanic branch of Indo-European Family. The people talking this language spread to the northern coast of Europe in the time of Roman Empire. Among this people the tribes called Angels, Saxons, Jutes which is called Anglo-Saxons come to England. The first Latin effect was in that period. Latin effected the language with the merchants traveling the tribes. Some of the words taken from Latin are; kettle, wine, cheese, butter, cheap.

When Anglo-Saxons became Christian in 597 they learned Latin. According to the effects to English, the history of the language divided in to three; Old English(7th century-1100), Middle English(1100-1450/1500), Modern English (1500-now). In some books Modern English is divided in to two Early modern (1500-1700), Late Modern (1700-now).

When England was established there were several kingdoms and the most advanced one was Northumbria. It was this period that the best of the Old English literature was written, including the epic poem *Beowulf*, that is why we must read part of this epic poem.

In the 8th century Northumbrian power declined, West Saxons became the leading power. The most famous king of the West Saxons was Alfred the Great, who founded and established schools, translated or caused to be translated many books from Latin in to English.

After many years of hit-and-run raids between the European kingdoms, the Norseman landed in the year of 866 and later the east coast of the island was Norseman's. Norse language effected the English considerably. Norse wasn't so different from English and English people could understand Norseman. There were considerable interchanges and word borrowings (sky, give, law, egg, outlaw, leg, ugly, talk). Also borrowed pronouns like they, their, them. It is supposed also that the Norseman influenced the sound structure and the grammar of English.

Also in the 14th century Rome Empire weakened because Goths attacked to Mediterranean countries of Roman Empire and Anglo-Saxons attacked to empire. On the other hand the Celtic tribes in Scotland and Wales developed. At the end in 410 the last roman emperor left the island to Celtic and Anglo-Saxons. Celtic and Anglo-Saxons fought for 100 years and Anglo-Saxons killed all the Celts. In 550 Anglo-Saxons established England. During Roman Empire Latin was not the native language of the kingdom because people in the country were talking Celtic.

Old English had some sound which we do not know have now. In grammar, Old English was much more highly inflected than Middle English because there were case endings for nouns, more person and number endings of words and a more complicated pronoun systems, various endings for adjectives. In vocabulary Old English is quite different from Middle English. Most of the Old English words are native English which were not borrowed from other languages. On the other hand Old English contains borrowed words coming from Norse and Latin.

**Old English, until 1066** - Immigrants from Denmark and NW Germany arrived in Britain in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Centuries A.D., speaking in related dialects belonging to the Germanic and Teutonic branches of the Indo-European language family. Today, English is most closely related to Flemish, Dutch, and German, and is somewhat related to Icelandic, Norwegian, Danish, and Swedish. Icelandic, unchanged for 1,000 years, is very close to Old English. Viking invasions, begun in the 8<sup>th</sup> Century, gave English a Norwegian and Danish influence which lasted until the Norman Conquest of 1066.

**Old English Words**- The Angles came from an angle-shaped land area in contemporary Germany. Their name "Angli" from the Latin and commonly-spoken, pre-5th Century German mutated into the Old English "Engle". Later, "Engle" changed to "Angel-cyn" meaning "Angle-race" by A.D. 1000, changing to "Engla-land". Some Old English words which have survived intact include: *feet, geese, teeth, men, women, lice, and mice*. The modern word "like" can be a noun, adjective, verb, and preposition. In Old English, though, the word was different for each type: *gelica* as a noun, *geic* as an adjective, *lician* as a verb, and *gelice* as a preposition.

**Middle English, from 1066 until the 15<sup>th</sup> Century** - The Norman Invasion and Conquest of Britain in 1066 and the resulting French Court of William the Conqueror gave the Norwegian-Dutch influenced English a Norman-Parisian-French effect. From 1066 until about 1400, Latin, French, and English were spoken. English almost disappeared entirely into obscurity during this period by the French and Latin dominated court and government. However, in 1362, the Parliament opened with English as the language of choice, and the language was saved from extinction. Present-day English is approximately 50% Germanic (English and Scandinavian) and 50% Romance (French and Latin).

**Middle English Words**- Many new words added to Middle English during this period came from Norman French, Parisian French, and Scandinavian. Norman French words imported into Middle English include: *catch*, *wage*, *warden*, *reward*, and *warrant*. Parisian French gave Middle English: *chase*, *guarantee*, *regard*, *guardian*, and *gage*. Scandinavian gave to Middle English the important word of *law*. English nobility had titles which were derived from both Middle English and French. French provided: *prince*, *duke*, *peer*, *marquis*, *viscount*, and *baron*. Middle English independently developed *king*, *queen*, *lord*, *lady*, and *earl*. Governmental administrative divisions from French include *county*, *city*, *village*, *justice*, *palace*, *mansion*, and *residence*. Middle English words include *town*, *home*, *house*, and *hall*.

**Early Modern English, from the 15<sup>th</sup> Century to the 17<sup>th</sup> Century**- During this period, English became more organized and began to resemble the modern version of English. Although the word order and sentence construction was still slightly different, Early Modern English was at least recognizable to the Early Modern English speaker. For example, the Old English "*To us pleases sailing*" became "*We like sailing.*" Classical elements, from Greek and Latin, profoundly influenced work creation and origin. From Greek, Early Modern English received *grammar*, *logic*, *arithmetic*, *geometry*, *astronomy*, and *music*. Also, the "*tele-*" prefix meaning "far" later used to develop *telephone* and *television* was taken.

**Modern English, from the 17<sup>th</sup> Century to Modern Times**- Modern English developed through the efforts of literary and political writings, where literacy was uniformly found. Modern English was heavily influenced by classical usage, the emergence of the university-educated class, Shakespeare, the common language found in the East Midlands section of present-day England, and an organized effort to document and standardize English. Current inflections have remained almost unchanged for 400 years, but sounds of vowels and consonants have changed greatly. As a result, spelling has also changed considerably. For example, from Early English to Modern English, *lyf* became *life*, *deel* became *deal*, *hoom* became *home*, *mone* became *moon*, and *hous* became *house*.

**Advantages and Disadvantages of Modern English**- Modern English is composed of several languages, with grammar rules, spelling, and word usage both complimenting and competing for clarity. The disadvantages of Modern English include: an alphabet which is unable to adequately represent all needed sounds without using repeated or combined letters, a limit of 23 letters of the 26 in the alphabet which can effectively express twice the number of sounds actually needed, and a system of spelling which is not based upon pronunciation but foreign language word origin and countless changes throughout history. The advantages of Modern English include: single consonants which are clearly understood and usually represent the same sounds in the same positions, the lack of accent marks found in other languages which permits quicker writing, and the present spelling displays European language origins and connections which allows European language speakers to become immediately aware of thousands of words.

**Modern English Words** - British English, known as Standard English or Oxford English, underwent changes as the colonization of North American and the creation of the United States occurred. British English words changed into American English words, such as *centre* to *center*, *metre* to *meter*, *theatre* to *theater*, *favour* to *favor*, *honour* to *honor*, *labour* to *labor*, *neighbour* to *neighbor*, *cheque* to *check*, *connexion* to *connection*, *gaol* to *jail*, the *storey* of a house to *story*, and *tyre* for *tire*. Since 1900, words with consistent spelling but different meanings from British English to American English include: *to let* for *to rent*, *dual carriageway* for *divided highway*, *lift* for *elevator*, *amber* for *yellow*, *to ring* for *to telephone*, *zebra crossing* for *pedestrian crossing*, and *pavement* for *sidewalk*.

**American English, from the 18<sup>th</sup> Century until Modern Times**- Until the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, British and American English were remarkably similar with almost no variance. Immigration to America by other English peoples changed the language by 1700. Noah Webster, author of the first authoritative American English dictionary, created many changes. The "*-re*" endings became "*-er*" and the "*-our*" endings became "*-or*". Spelling by pronunciation and personal choice from Webster were influences.

**Cough, Sought, Thorough, Thought, and Through**- Why do these "ough" words have the same central spelling but are so different? This is a characteristic of English, which imported similarly spelled or defined words from different languages over the past 1,000 years.

**Cough** - From the Middle High German *kuchen* meaning *to breathe heavily*, to the French-Old English *cohian*, to the Middle English *coughen* is derived the current word *cough*.

**Sought** - From the Greek *hegeisthai* meaning *to lead*, to the Latin *sagire* meaning *to perceive keenly*, to the Old High German *suohhen* meaning *to seek*, to the French-Old English *secan*, to the Middle English *sekken*, is derived the past tense *sought* of the present tense of the verb *to seek*.

**Thorough** - From the French-Old English *thurh* and *thuruh* to the Middle English *thorow* is derived the current word *thorough*.

**Thought** - From the Old English *thencan*, which is related to the French-Old English word *hoht*, which remained the same in Middle English, is derived the current word *thought*.

**Through** -From the Sanskrit word *tarati*, meaning *he crossed over*, came the Latin word, *trans* meaning *across* or *beyond*. Beginning with Old High German *durh*, to the French-Old English *thurh*, to the Middle English *thurh*, *thruh*, or *through*, is derived the current word *through*.

## History and Structure of the English Language

### General Considerations

**English** the language which originated in England and is now widely spoken on six continents. It is the primary language of the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Ireland, New Zealand, and various small island nations in the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean. It is also an official language of India, the Philippines, and many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, including South Africa. English is a member of the western group of the Germanic languages (itself part of the Indo-European language family) and is closely related to Frisian, German, and Netherlandic (Dutch and Flemish).

In the 16th century, English was the mother tongue of only a few million people living in England, but owing to that nation's colonization of other parts of the globe and other historical factors, English was the native language of more than 350 million people by the late 20th century. It is thus the mother tongue of more people than any other language except Mandarin Chinese. English is the most widely taught foreign language and is also the most widely used second language--*i.e.*, one that two people communicate in when they cannot understand each other's native speech. It became the international language of scientific and technical discourse in the 20th century and was also widely adopted for use in business and diplomacy. In the entire world, one person in seven speaks English as either a primary or secondary language.

English is an analytic (*i.e.*, relatively uninflected) language, whereas Proto-Indo-European, the ancestral tongue of most European, Iranian, and North Indian languages, is synthetic, or inflected. (Inflections are changes in the form of words to indicate such distinctions as tense, person, number, and gender.) Over thousands of years, English has lost most of its inflections, while other European languages have retained more of theirs. Indeed, English is the only European language in which adjectives have no distinctive endings, aside from determiners and endings denoting degrees of comparison.

Another characteristic is flexibility of function. This means that one word can function as various parts of speech in different contexts. For example, the word "book" can be an adjective in "book review," a noun in "read a book," or a verb in "book a room." Because other European languages retain more inflectional endings than does English, they almost never have this characteristic. A third feature, openness of vocabulary, allows English to admit words freely from other languages and to create compounds and derivatives.

In England, British Received Pronunciation (RP) is the usual speech of educated people. In the United States, Inland Northern (popularly known as General American) is commonly used. In both countries, however, other pronunciations are acceptable.

British Received Pronunciation and American Inland Northern show several divergences: (1) After some vowels American has a semiconsonantal glide. (2) The vowel in "cod," "box," and "dock" is pronounced like "aw" in British and a sound similar to "ah" in American. (3) The vowel in "but," "cut," and "rung," is central in American but is fronted in British. (4) The vowels in the American "bath" and "bad" and in the British "bad" are all pronounced the same, but the

vowel in the British "bath" is pronounced like "ah," since it is before one of the fricatives *s*, *f*, or *th* (as in "thin"). (5) When a high back vowel is preceded by *t*, *d*, or *n* in British, a glide (consonantal *y*) is inserted between them (e.g., "tulip," "news"); in American the glide is omitted.

The 24 consonantal sounds comprise six stops (plosives): *p*, *b*, *t*, *d*, *k*, *g*; the fricatives *f*, *v*, *th* (as in "thin"), *th* (as in "then"), *s*, *z*, *sh* (as in "ship"), *zh* (as in "azure"), and *h*; two affricatives, *ch* (as in "church") and *j* (as in "jam"); the nasals *m*, *n*, and *ng* (as in "young"); the lateral *l*; the vibrant or retroflex *r*; and the semivowels *y* and *w*. American and British consonants have the same pronunciation with two exceptions: (1) When *r* occurs after a vowel, it is dropped in British but pronounced in American. (2) A *t* between two vowels is pronounced like *t* in "top" in British, but in American the sound is close to that of a *d*.

English is a strongly stressed language, with four degrees of stress: primary, secondary, tertiary, and weak. A change in stress can change the meaning of a sentence or a phrase. Although in comparison with other languages English stress is less predictable, there is a tendency toward antepenultimate (third syllable from the last) primary stress. This is apparent in such five-syllable words as equanimity, longitudinal, and notoriety. French stress is often sustained in borrowed words, e.g., *bizárre*, *critique*, and *hotél*.

Pitch, or musical tone, may be falling, rising, or falling-rising. Word tone, which is also called pitch, can influence the meaning of a word. Sentence tone is called intonation and is especially important at the end of a sentence. There are three important end-of-sentence intonations: falling, rising, and falling-rising. The falling intonation is used in completed statements, commands, and some questions calling for "yes" or "no" answers. Rising intonation is used in statements made with some reservation, in polite requests, and in certain questions answerable by "yes" or "no." The third type of intonation, first falling and then rising pitch, is used in sentences that imply concessions or contrasts. American intonation is less singsong and stays in a narrower range than does British.

The words of the English language can be divided according to their function or form into roughly eight categories, or parts of speech: nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections. Modern English nouns, pronouns, and verbs are inflected, but adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections are not. Most English nouns have the plural inflection (-*e*s), though some remain unchanged (e.g., *deer*). Five of the seven personal pronouns have separate forms for subject and object. English verbs are not complex. Regular or weak verbs have only four forms, strong verbs have five, and "to be" has eight. Some verbs ending in *t* or *d* have only three forms.

Besides employing inflection, English exhibits two other main morphological (structural) processes - affixation and composition - and two subsidiary ones - back-formation and blend. Affixes, word elements attached to a word, may either precede as prefixes (pre-, dis-) or follow as suffixes (-able, -er). They can be native (over-, -ness), Greek (hyper-), or Latin (-ment). English makes varied use of affixes; often, many different ones have the same meaning, or the same one has many meanings. Suffixes are attached more closely to the stem than are prefixes and often remain permanent.

Composition, or compounding, describes putting two free forms together to form a new word. The new word can differ from the previous forms in phonology, stress, and juncture. Five types of compounds are defined by describing the relationship of the free forms to each other: (1) a compound in which the first component noun is attributive and modifies the second noun (e.g., *cloverleaf*, *beehive*, *vineyard*); (2) one made up of a noun plus an agent noun, itself consisting of a verb-plus-agent suffix (e.g., *icebreaker*, *landowner*, *timekeeper*); (3) a verb plus an object (e.g., *pastime*, *scarecrow*, *daredevil*); (4) an attributive adjective plus a noun (e.g., *bluebell*, *grandson*, *shorthand*); and (5) a noun and a present participle (e.g., *fact-finding*, *heartrending*, *life-giving*).

Back-formation, the reverse of affixation, is the analogical formation of a new word falsely assumed to be its derivation. The verbs "to edit" and "to act" have been formed from the nouns "editor" and "actor," respectively. Blends fall into two groups: (1) coalescences, such as "bash" from "bang" and "smash," and (2) telescoped forms, called portmanteau words, such as "motorcade" from "motor cavalcade."

In English syntax, the main device for indicating the relationship between words is word order. In the sentence "The girl loves the boy," the subject is in initial position, and the object follows the verb; transposing the order of "boy" and "girl" would change the meaning. In contrast to this system, most other languages use inflections to indicate grammatical relationships. In *puerum puella amat*, which is the Latin equivalent of "The girl loves the boy," the words can be given in any order (for example, *amat puella puerum*) because the -*um* ending on the form for "boy" (*puerum*) indicates the object of the verb regardless of its position in the sentence.



English sentences generally start with the subject first, followed by the verb and then by the object. Adjectives or other single words that modify nouns are placed before the noun, while whole phrases acting as modifiers are usually placed after the noun. Adverbs are normally more mobile than adjectives, and they can occur either before or after the verb they modify. As their etymology implies, prepositions usually precede nouns, but there are a few exceptions, *e.g.*, "the whole world over." Because of the laxity of syntactic principles, English is a very easy language to speak poorly.

English has the largest vocabulary of any language in the world, chiefly because of its propensity for borrowing and because the Norman Conquest of England in the 11th century introduced vast numbers of French words into the language. The vocabulary of Modern English is thus approximately half Germanic (Old English and Scandinavian) and half Romance or Italic (French and Latin), with copious importations from Greek in science and borrowings from many other languages. Almost all basic concepts and things come from Old English, or Anglo-Saxon, as do most personal pronouns, all auxiliary verbs, most simple prepositions, all conjunctions, and almost all numbers. Many common nouns, adjectives, and verbs are of Scandinavian origin, a fact due to the Scandinavian invasions of Britain. The English language owes a great debt to French, which gave it many terms relating to dress and fashion, cuisine, politics, law, society, literature, and art. Comparison between French and English synonyms reveals the former to be more intellectual and abstract, and the latter more human and concrete. Many of the Greek compounds and derivatives in English have Latin equivalents with either similar or considerably different meanings.

The English adopted the 23-letter Latin alphabet, to which they added the letters *W*, *J*, and *V*. For the most part, English spelling is based on that of the 15th century. Pronunciation, however, has changed greatly since then. During the 17th and 18th centuries, fixed spellings were adopted, although there have been a few changes since that time. Numerous attempts have been made to reform English spelling, most of them unsuccessful.

The history of the English language begins with the migration of the Jutes, Angles, and Saxons from Germany and Denmark to Britain in the 5th and 6th centuries. Their Anglo-Saxon language is known as Old English. The formation of separate kingdoms in Britain to some extent coincided with the development of the Old English dialects of Northumbrian, Mercian, West Saxon, and Kentish. Northumbrian was in a position of cultural superiority until the destructive Viking raids of the 9th century caused cultural leadership to pass to the West Saxon kingdom of Wessex.

The Norman Conquest of 1066 set in motion the transition to Middle English. For the first century after the Conquest, a vast number of loanwords entered the English language from the dialects of northern France. The Conquest also served to place all four Old English dialects on the same cultural level and to allow them to develop independently. So West Saxon lost its supremacy, and the centre of culture gradually shifted to London. During this Middle English period the Northumbrian dialect split into Scottish and Northern, and Mercian became East and West Midland. Another outcome of the Norman Conquest was the adoption of the Carolingian script, then in use on the European continent, and changes in spelling.

The transition from Middle to Modern English started at the beginning of the 15th century. This century witnessed three important developments: the rise of London English, the invention of printing, and the spread of new learning. The Renaissance in England produced many more scholars who were knowledgeable in foreign languages, especially Greek and Classical Latin. Their liberal attitude toward language made possible the introduction of a great number of words into English. Scholars generally date the beginning of the Modern English period at 1500. The language was subsequently standardized through the work of grammarians and the publication of dictionaries, and its vocabulary underwent another vast expansion in the 19th and 20th centuries to accommodate developments in the sciences and technology.

## **Origins and Basic Characteristics**

English is a West Germanic language of the Indo-European language family that is closely related to Frisian, German, and Netherlandic languages. English originated in England and is now widely spoken on six continents. It is the primary language of the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Ireland, New Zealand, and various small island nations in the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean. It is also an official language of India, the Philippines, and many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, including South Africa.

English belongs to the Indo-European family of languages and is therefore related to most other languages spoken in Europe and western Asia from Iceland to India. The parent tongue, called Proto-Indo-European, was spoken about 5,000 years ago by nomads believed to have roamed the southeast European plains. Germanic, one of the language groups descended from this ancestral speech, is usually divided by scholars into three regional groups: East (Burgundian, Vandal, and Gothic, all extinct), North (Icelandic, Faeroese, Norwegian, Swedish, Danish), and West

(German, Netherlandic [Dutch and Flemish], Frisian, English). Though closely related to English, German remains far more conservative than English in its retention of a fairly elaborate system of inflections. Frisian, spoken by the inhabitants of the Dutch province of Friesland and the islands off the west coast of Schleswig, is the language most nearly related to Modern English. Icelandic, which has changed little over the last thousand years, is the living language most nearly resembling Old English in grammatical structure.

Modern English is analytic (*i.e.*, relatively uninflected), whereas Proto-Indo-European, the ancestral tongue of most of the modern European languages (*e.g.*, German, French, Russian, Greek), was synthetic, or inflected. During the course of thousands of years, English words have been slowly simplified from the inflected variable forms found in Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, Russian, and German, toward invariable forms, as in Chinese and Vietnamese. The German and Chinese words for "man" are exemplary. German has five forms: *Mann*, *Mannes*, *Manne*, *Männer*, *Männern*. Chinese has one form: *jen*. English stands in between, with four forms: man, man's, men, men's. In English only nouns, pronouns, and verbs are inflected. Adjectives have no inflections aside from the determiners "this, these" and "that, those." (The endings *-er*, *-est*, denoting degrees of comparison, are better regarded as noninflectional suffixes.) English is the only European language to employ uninflected adjectives; *e.g.*, "the tall man," "the tall woman," compared to Spanish *el hombre alto* and *la mujer alta*. As for verbs, if the Modern English word *ride* is compared with the corresponding words in Old English and Modern German, it will be found that English now has only five forms (*ride*, *rides*, *rode*, *riding*, *ridden*), whereas Old English *ridan* had 13, and Modern German *reiten* has 16 forms. In addition to this simplicity of inflections, English has two other basic characteristics: flexibility of function and openness of vocabulary.

Flexibility of function has grown over the last five centuries as a consequence of the loss of inflections. Words formerly distinguished as nouns or verbs by differences in their forms are now often used as both nouns and verbs. One can speak, for example, of "planning a table" or "tabling a plan," "booking a place" or "placing a book," "lifting a thumb" or "thumbing a lift." In the other Indo-European languages, apart from rare exceptions in Scandinavian, nouns and verbs are never identical because of the necessity of separate noun and verb endings. In English, forms for traditional pronouns, adjectives, and adverbs can also function as nouns; adjectives and adverbs as verbs; and nouns, pronouns, and adverbs as adjectives. One speaks in English of the Frankfurt Book Fair, but in German one must add the suffix *-er* to the place-name and put attributive and noun together as a compound, *Frankfurter Buchmesse*. In French one has no choice but to construct a phrase involving the use of two prepositions: *Foire du Livre de Francfort*. In English it is now possible to employ a plural noun as adjunct (modifier), as in "wages board" and "sports editor"; or even a conjunctive group, as in "prices and incomes policy" and "parks and gardens committee."

Openness of vocabulary implies both free admission of words from other languages and the ready creation of compounds and derivatives. English adopts (without change) or adapts (with slight change) any word really needed to name some new object or to denote some new process. Like French, Spanish, and Russian, English frequently forms scientific terms from Classical Greek word elements. English possesses a system of orthography that does not always accurately reflect the pronunciation of words; this is discussed below in the section Orthography .

## Characteristics of Modern English

### Phonology

British Received Pronunciation (RP), by definition, the usual speech of educated people living in London and southeastern England, is one of the many forms of standard speech. Other pronunciations, although not standard, are entirely acceptable in their own right on conversational levels.

The chief differences between British Received Pronunciation, as defined above, and a variety of American English, such as Inland Northern (the speech form of western New England and its derivatives, often popularly referred to as General American), are in the pronunciation of certain individual vowels and diphthongs. Inland Northern American vowels sometimes have semiconsonantal final glides (*i.e.*, sounds resembling initial *w*, for example, or initial *y*). Aside from the final glides, this American dialect shows four divergences from British English: (1) the words *cod*, *box*, *dock*, *hot*, and *not* are pronounced with a short (or half-long) low front sound as in British "bard" shortened (the terms *front*, *back*, *low*, and *high* refer to the position of the tongue); (2) words such as *bud*, *but*, *cut*, and *rung* are pronounced with a central vowel as in the unstressed final syllable of "sofa"; (3) before the fricative sounds *s*, *f*, and *θ* (the last of these is the *th* sound in "thin") the long low back vowel *a*, as in British "bath," is pronounced as a short front vowel *a*, as in British "bad"; (4) high back vowels following the alveolar sounds *t* and *d* and the nasal sound *n* in words such as *tulips*, *dew*, and *news* are pronounced without a glide as in British English; indeed, the words sound like the British "two lips," "do," and "nooze" in "snooze." (In several American dialects, however, these glides do occur).

The 24 consonant sounds comprise six stops (plosives): *p, b, t, d, k, g*; the fricatives *f, v*, (as in "thin"), [*eth*] (as in "then"), *s, z*, (as in "ship"), (as in "pleasure"), and *h*; two affricatives: *t* (as in "church") and *d* (as the *j* in "jam"); the nasals *m, n*, (the sound that occurs at the end of words such as "young"); the lateral *l*; the vibrant or retroflex *r*; and the semivowels *j* (often spelled *y*) and *w*. These remain fairly stable, but Inland Northern American differs from British English in two respects: (1) *r* following vowels is preserved in words such as "door," "flower," and "harmony," whereas it is lost in British; (2) *t* between vowels is voiced, so that "metal" and "matter" sound very much like British "medal" and "madder," although the pronunciation of this *t* is softer and less aspirated, or breathy, than the *d* of British English. Like Russian, English is a strongly stressed language. Four degrees of stress may be differentiated: primary, secondary, tertiary, and weak, which may be indicated, respectively, by acute ( ´ ), circumflex ( ˆ ), and grave ( ` ) accent marks and by the breve ( ˘ ). Thus, "Tèll mè the trùth" (the whole truth, and nothing but the truth) may be contrasted with "Tèll mé the trùth" (whatever you may tell other people); "bláck bîrd" (any bird black in colour) may be contrasted with "bláckbîrd" (that particular bird *Turdus merula*). The verbs "perít" and "recórd" (henceforth only primary stresses are marked) may be contrasted with their corresponding nouns "pérmit" and "récord." A feeling for antepenultimate (third syllable from the end) primary stress, revealed in such five-syllable words as equanímy, longitúdinal, notoriety, opportúny, parsimónious, pertinácny, and vegetárian, causes stress to shift when extra syllables are added, as in "hístórical," a derivative of "hístóry" and "theatricalíty," a derivative of "theátrical." Vowel qualities are also changed here and in such word groups as périod, períódical, periodícny; phótograph, photógraphy, photográphical. French stress may be sustained in many borrowed words; e.g., bizárre, crítique, duréss, hotél, prestíge, and techníque.

Pitch, or musical tone, determined by the rate of vibration of the vocal cords, may be level, falling, rising, or falling-rising. In counting "one," "two," "three," "four," one naturally gives level pitch to each of these cardinal numerals. But if a person says "I want two, not one," he naturally gives "two" falling pitch and "one" falling-rising. In the question "One?" rising pitch is used. Word tone is called pitch, and sentence tone is referred to as intonation. The end-of-sentence cadence is important for meaning, and it therefore varies least. Three main end-of-sentence intonations can be distinguished: falling, rising, and falling-rising. Falling intonation is used in completed statements, direct commands, and sometimes in general questions unanswerable by "yes" or "no"; e.g., "I have nothing to add." "Keep to the right." "Who told you that?" Rising intonation is frequently used in open-ended statements made with some reservation, in polite requests, and in particular questions answerable by "yes" or "no": "I have nothing more to say at the moment." "Let me know how you get on." "Are you sure?" The third type of end-of-sentence intonation, first falling and then rising pitch, is used in sentences that imply concessions or contrasts: "Some people do like them" (but others do not). "Don't say I didn't warn you" (because that is just what I'm now doing). Intonation is on the whole less singsong in American than in British English, and there is a narrower range of pitch. American speech may seem more monotonous but at the same time may sometimes be clearer and more readily intelligible. Everywhere English is spoken, regional dialects display distinctive patterns of intonation.

## Historical Background

Among highlights in the history of the English language, the following stand out most clearly: the settlement in Britain of Jutes, Saxons, and Angles in the 5th and 6th centuries; the arrival of St. Augustine in 597 and the subsequent conversion of England to Latin Christianity; the Viking invasions of the 9th century; the Norman Conquest of 1066; the Statute of Pleading in 1362 (this required that court proceedings be conducted in English); the setting up of Caxton's printing press at Westminster in 1476; the full flowering of the Renaissance in the 16th century; the publishing of the King James Bible in 1611; the completion of Johnson's *Dictionary* of 1755; and the expansion to North America and South Africa in the 17th century and to India, Australia, and New Zealand in the 18th.

## Vocabulary

The vocabulary of Modern English is approximately half Germanic (Old English and Scandinavian) and half Italic or Romance (French and Latin), with copious and increasing importations from Greek in science and technology and with considerable borrowings from Dutch, Low German, Italian, Spanish, German, Arabic, and many other languages. Names of basic concepts and things come from Old English or Anglo-Saxon: heaven and earth, love and hate, life and death, beginning and end, day and night, month and year, heat and cold, way and path, meadow and stream. Cardinal numerals come from Old English, as do all the ordinal numerals except "second" (Old English *other*, which still retains its older meaning in "every other day"). "Second" comes from Latin *secundus* "following," through French *second*, related to Latin *sequi* "to follow," as in English "sequence." From Old English come all the personal pronouns (except "they," "their," and "them," which are from Scandinavian), the auxiliary verbs (except the marginal "used," which is from French), most simple prepositions, and all conjunctions.

Numerous nouns would be identical whether they came from Old English or Scandinavian: father, mother, brother (but not sister); man, wife; ground, land, tree, grass; summer, winter; cliff, dale. Many verbs would also be identical, especially monosyllabic verbs--bring, come, get, hear, meet, see, set, sit, spin, stand, think. The same is true of the adjectives full and wise; the colour names gray, green, and white; the disjunctive possessives mine and thine (but not ours and yours); the terms north and west (but not south and east); and the prepositions over and under. Just a few English and Scandinavian doublets coexist in current speech: no and nay, yea and ay, from and fro, rear (*i.e.*, to bring up) and raise, shirt and skirt (both related to the adjective short), less and loose. From Scandinavian, "law" was borrowed early, whence "bylaw," meaning "village law," and "outlaw," meaning "man outside the law." "Husband" (*hus-bondi*) meant "householder," whether single or married, whereas "fellow" (*fe-lagi*) meant one who "lays fee" or shares property with another, and so "partner, shareholder." From Scandinavian come the common nouns axle (tree), band, birth, bloom, crook, dirt, egg, gait, gap, girth, knife, loan, race, rift, root, score, seat, skill, sky, snare, thrift, and window; the adjectives awkward, flat, happy, ill, loose, rotten, rugged, sly, tight, ugly, weak, and wrong; and many verbs, including call, cast, clasp, clip, crave, die, droop, drown, flit, gape, gasp, glitter, life, rake, rid, scare, scowl, skulk, snub, sprint, thrive, thrust, and want.

The debt of the English language to French is large. The terms president, representative, legislature, congress, constitution, and parliament are all French. So, too, are duke, marquis, viscount, and baron; but king, queen, lord, lady, earl, and knight are English. City, village, court, palace, manor, mansion, residence, and domicile are French; but town, borough, hall, house, bower, room, and home are English. Comparison between English and French synonyms shows that the former are more human and concrete, the latter more intellectual and abstract; *e.g.*, the terms freedom and liberty, friendship and amity, hatred and enmity, love and affection, likelihood and probability, truth and veracity, lying and mendacity. The superiority of French cooking is duly recognized by the adoption of such culinary terms as boil, broil, fry, grill, roast, souse, and toast. "Breakfast" is English, but "dinner" and "supper" are French. "Hunt" is English, but "chase," "quarry," "scent," and "track" are French. Craftsmen bear names of English origin: baker, builder, fisher (man), hedger, miller, shepherd, shoemaker, wainwright, and weaver, or webber. Names of skilled artisans, however, are French: carpenter, draper, haberdasher, joiner, mason, painter, plumber, and tailor. Many terms relating to dress and fashion, cuisine and viticulture, politics and diplomacy, drama and literature, art and ballet come from French.

In the spheres of science and technology many terms come from Classical Greek through French or directly from Greek. Pioneers in research and development now regard Greek as a kind of inexhaustible quarry from which they can draw linguistic material at will. By prefixing the Greek adverb *tele* "far away, distant" to the existing compound photography, "light writing," they create the precise term "telephotography" to denote the photographing of distant objects by means of a special lens. By inserting the prefix *micro-* "small" into this same compound, they make the new term "photomicrography," denoting the electronic photographing of bacteria and viruses. Such neo-Hellenic derivatives would probably have been unintelligible to Plato and Aristotle. Many Greek compounds and derivatives have Latin equivalents with slight or considerable differentiations in meaning.

At first sight it might appear that some of these equivalents, such as "metamorphosis" and "transformation," are sufficiently synonymous to make one or the other redundant. In fact, however, "metamorphosis" is more technical and therefore more restricted than "transformation." In mythology it signifies a magical shape changing; in nature it denotes a postembryonic development such as that of a tadpole into a frog, a cocoon into a silkworm, or a chrysalis into a butterfly. Transformation, on the other hand, means any kind of change from one state to another.

Ever since the 12th century, when merchants from the Netherlands made homes in East Anglia, Dutch words have infiltrated into Midland speech. For centuries a form of Low German was used by seafaring men in North Sea ports. Old nautical terms still in use include buoy, deck, dock, freebooter, hoist, leak, pump, skipper, and yacht. The Dutch in New Amsterdam (later New York) and adjacent settlements gave the words boss, cookie, dope, snoop, and waffle to American speech. The Dutch in Cape Province gave the terms apartheid, commandeer, commando, spoor, and trek to South African speech.

The contribution of High German has been on a different level. In the 18th and 19th centuries it lay in technicalities of geology and mineralogy and in abstractions relating to literature, philosophy, and psychology. In the 20th century this contribution has sometimes been indirect. "Unclear" and "meaningful" echoed German *unklar* and *bedeutungsvoll*, or *sinnvoll*. "Ring road" (a British term applied to roads encircling cities or parts of cities) translated *Ringstrasse*; "round trip," *Rundfahrt*; and "the turn of the century," *die Jahrhundertwende*. The terms "classless society," "inferiority complex," and "wishful thinking" echoed *die klassenlöse Gesellschaft*, *der Minderwertigkeitskomplex*, and *das Wunschenken*.

Along with the rest of the Western world, English has accepted Italian as the language of music. The names of voices, parts, performers, instruments, forms of composition, and technical directions are all Italian. Many of the latter--

allegro, andante, cantabile, crescendo, diminuendo, legato, maestoso, obbligato, pizzicato, staccato, and vibrato--are also used metaphorically. In architecture, the terms belvedere, corridor, cupola, grotto, pedestal, pergola, piazza, pilaster, and rotunda are accepted; in literature, burlesque, canto, extravaganza, stanza, and many more are used.

From Spanish, English has acquired the words armada, cannibal, cigar, galleon, guerrilla, matador, mosquito, quadron, tornado, and vanilla, some of these loanwords going back to the 16th century, when sea dogs encountered hidalgos on the high seas. Many names of animals and plants have entered English from indigenous languages through Spanish: "potato" through Spanish *patata* from Taino *batata*, and "tomato" through Spanish *tomate* from Nahuatl *tomatl*. Other words have entered from Latin America by way of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California; e.g., such words as canyon, cigar, estancia, lasso, mustang, pueblo, and rodeo. Some have gathered new connotations: bonanza, originally denoting "goodness," came through miners' slang to mean "spectacular windfall, prosperity"; mañana, "tomorrow," acquired an undertone of mysterious unpredictability.

From Arabic through European Spanish, through French from Spanish, through Latin, or occasionally through Greek, English has obtained the terms alchemy, alcohol, alembic, algebra, alkali, almanac, arsenal, assassin, attar, azimuth, cipher, elixir, mosque, nadir, naphtha, sugar, syrup, zenith, and zero. From Egyptian Arabic, English has recently borrowed the term loofah (also spelled luffa). From Hebrew, directly or by way of Vulgate Latin, come the terms amen, cherub, hallelujah, manna, messiah, pharisee, rabbi, sabbath, and seraph; jubilee, leviathan, and shibboleth; and, more recently, kosher, and kibbutz.

English has freely adopted and adapted words from many other languages, acquiring them sometimes directly and sometimes by devious routes. Each word has its own history. The following lists indicate the origins of a number of English words: Welsh--flannel, coracle, cromlech, penguin, eisteddfod; Cornish--gull, brill, dolmen; Gaelic and Irish--shamrock, brogue, leprechaun, ogham, Tory, galore, blarney, hooligan, clan, claymore, bog, plaid, slogan, sporrán, cairn, whisky, pibroch; Breton--menhir; Norwegian--ski, ombudsman; Finnish--sauna; Russian--kvass, ruble, tsar, verst, mammoth, ukase, astrakhan, vodka, samovar, tundra (from Sami), troika, pogrom, дума, soviet, bolshevik, intelligentsia (from Latin through Polish), borscht, balalaika, sputnik, soyuz, salyut, lunokhod; Polish--mazurka; Czech--robot; Hungarian--goulash, paprika; Portuguese--marmalade, flamingo, molasses, veranda, port (wine), dodo; Basque--bizarre; Turkish--janissary, turban, coffee, kiosk, caviar, pasha, odalisque, fez, bosh; Hindi--nabob, guru, sahib, maharajah, mahatma, pundit, punch (drink), juggernaut, cushy, jungle, thug, cheetah, shampoo, chit, dungaree, pukka, gymkhana, mantra, loot, pajamas, dinghy, polo; Persian--paradise, divan, purdah, lilac, bazaar, shah, caravan, chess, salamander, taffeta, shawl, khaki; Tamil--pariah, curry, catamaran, mulligatawny; Chinese--tea (Amoy), sampan; Japanese--shogun, kimono, mikado, tycoon, hara-kiri, gobang, judo, jujitsu, bushido, samurai, banzai, tsunami, satsuma, No (the dance drama), karate, Kabuki; Malay--ketchup, sago, bamboo, junk, amuck, orangutan, compound (fenced area), raffia; Polynesian--taboo, tattoo; Hawaiian--ukulele; African languages--chimpanzee, goober, mumbo jumbo, voodoo; Inuit--kayak, igloo, anorak; Yupik--mukluk; Algonquian--totem; Nahuatl--mescal; languages of the Caribbean--hammock, hurricane, tobacco, maize, iguana; Aboriginal Australian--kangaroo, corroboree, wallaby, wombat, boomerang, paramatta, budgerigar.

## Old English

The Jutes, Angles, and Saxons lived in Jutland, Schleswig, and Holstein, respectively, before settling in Britain. According to the Venerable Bede, the first historian of the English people, the first Jutes, Hengist and Horsa, landed at Ebbsfleet in the Isle of Thanet in 449; and the Jutes later settled in Kent, southern Hampshire, and the Isle of Wight. The Saxons occupied the rest of England south of the Thames, as well as modern Middlesex and Essex. The Angles eventually took the remainder of England as far north as the Firth of Forth, including the future Edinburgh and the Scottish Lowlands. In both Latin and Common Germanic the Angles' name was Angli, later mutated in Old English to Engle (nominative) and Engla (genitive). "Engla land" designated the home of all three tribes collectively, and both King Alfred (known as Alfred the Great) and Abbot Aelfric, author and grammarian, subsequently referred to their speech as Englisc. Nevertheless, all the evidence indicates that Jutes, Angles, and Saxons retained their distinctive dialects.

The River Humber was an important boundary, and the Anglian-speaking region developed two speech groups: to the north of the river, Northumbrian, and, to the south, Southumbrian, or Mercian. There were thus four dialects: Northumbrian, Mercian, West Saxon, and Kentish (see Figure 13). In the 8th century, Northumbrian led in literature and culture, but that leadership was destroyed by the Viking invaders, who sacked Lindisfarne, an island near the Northumbrian mainland, in 793. They landed in strength in 865. The first raiders were Danes, but they were later joined by Norwegians from Ireland and the Western Isles who settled in modern Cumberland, Westmorland, northwest Yorkshire, Lancashire, north Cheshire, and the Isle of Man. In the 9th century, as a result of the Norwegian invasions, cultural leadership passed from Northumbria to Wessex. During King Alfred's reign, in the last three decades of the 9th

century, Winchester became the chief centre of learning. There the Parker Chronicle (a manuscript of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle) was written; there the Latin works of the priest and historian Paulus Orosius, St. Augustine, St. Gregory, and the Venerable Bede were translated; and there the native poetry of Northumbria and Mercia was transcribed into the West Saxon dialect. This resulted in West Saxon's becoming "standard Old English"; and later, when Aelfric (c. 955-c. 1010) wrote his lucid and mature prose at Winchester, Cerne Abbas, and Eynsham, the hegemony of Wessex was strengthened.

In standard Old English, adjectives were inflected as well as nouns, pronouns, and verbs. Nouns were inflected for four cases (nominative, genitive, dative, and accusative) in singular and plural. Five nouns of first kinship--*faeder*, *mōdor*, *brothor*, *sweostor*, and *dohtor* ("father," "mother," "brother," "sister," and "daughter," respectively)--had their own set of inflections. There were 25 nouns such as *mon*, *men* ("man," "men") with mutated, or umlauted, stems. Adjectives had strong and weak declensions, the strong showing a mixture of noun and pronoun endings and the weak following the pattern of weak nouns. Personal, possessive, demonstrative, interrogative, indefinite, and relative pronouns had full inflections. The pronouns of the 1st and 2nd persons still had distinctive dual forms:

There were two demonstratives: *se*, *seo*, *thaet*, meaning "that," and *thes*, *theos*, *this*, meaning "this," but no articles, the definite article being expressed by use of the demonstrative for "that" or not expressed at all. Thus, "the good man" was *se gōda mon* or plain *gōd mon*. The function of the indefinite article was performed by the numeral *an* "one" in *an mon* "a man," by the adjective-pronoun *sum* in *sum mon* "a (certain) man," or not expressed, as in *thu eart gōd mon* "you are a good man."

Verbs had two tenses only (present-future and past), three moods (indicative, subjunctive, and imperative), two numbers (singular and plural), and three persons (1st, 2nd, and 3rd). There were two classes of verb stems. (A verb stem is that part of a verb to which inflectional changes--changes indicating tense, mood, number, etc.--are added.) One type of verb stem, called vocalic because an internal vowel shows variations, is exemplified by the verb for "sing": *singan*, *singth*, *sang*, *sungon*, *gesungen*. The word for "deem" is an example of the other, called consonantal: *dēman*, *dēmth*, *dēmdē*, *dēmdon*, *gedēmed*. Such verbs are called strong and weak, respectively.

All new verbs, whether derived from existing verbs or from nouns, belonged to the consonantal type. Some verbs of great frequency (antecedents of the modern words "be," "shall," "will," "do," "go," "can," "may," and so on) had their own peculiar patterns of inflections.

Grammatical gender persisted throughout the Old English period. Just as Germans now say *der Fuss*, *die Hand*, and *das Auge* (masculine, feminine, and neuter terms for "the foot," "the hand," and "the eye"), so, for these same structures, Aelfric said *se fot*, *seo hond*, and *thaet eage*, also masculine, feminine, and neuter. The three words for "woman," *wifmon*, *cwene*, and *wif*, were masculine, feminine, and neuter, respectively. *Hors* "horse," *sceap* "sheep," and *maegden* "maiden" were all neuter. *Eorthe* "earth" was feminine, but *lond* "land" was neuter. *Sunne* "sun" was feminine, but *mōna* "moon" was masculine. This simplification of grammatical gender resulted from the fact that the gender of Old English substantives was not always indicated by the ending but rather by the terminations of the adjectives and demonstrative pronouns used with the substantives. When these endings were lost, all outward marks of gender disappeared with them. Thus, the weakening of inflections and loss of gender occurred together. In the North, where inflections weakened earlier, the marks of gender likewise disappeared first. They survived in the South as late as the 14th century.

Because of the greater use of inflections in Old English, word order was freer than today. The sequence of subject, verb, and complement was normal, but when there were outer and inner complements the second was put in the dative case after *to*: *Se bīscop halgode Eadred tō cyninge* "The bishop consecrated Edred king." After an introductory adverb or adverbial phrase the verb generally took second place as in modern German: *Nū bydde ic an thing* "Now I ask [literally, "ask I"] one thing"; *Th ilcan geara gesette Aelfred cyning Lundenburg* "In that same year Alfred the king occupied London." Impersonal verbs had no subject expressed. Infinitives constructed with auxiliary verbs were placed at the ends of clauses or sentences: *Hie ne dorston forth bi thære ea siglan* "They dared not sail beyond that river" (*siglan* is the infinitive); *ic wolde thas lytlan boc awendan* "I wanted to translate this little book" (*awendan* is the infinitive). The verb usually came last in a dependent clause--e.g., *awritan wile in gif hwa thas boc awritan wile (geriht hē hie be thære bysene)* "If anyone wants to copy this book (let him correct his copy by the original)." Prepositions (or postpositions) frequently followed their objects. Negation was often repeated for emphasis.

## Middle English

One result of the Norman Conquest of 1066 was to place all four Old English dialects more or less on a level. West Saxon lost its supremacy and the centre of culture and learning gradually shifted from Winchester to London. The old Northumbrian dialect became divided into Scottish and Northern, although little is known of either of these divisions before the end of the 13th century (Figure 14). The old Mercian dialect was split into East and West Midland. West Saxon became slightly diminished in area and was more appropriately named the South Western dialect. The Kentish dialect was considerably extended and was called South Eastern accordingly. All five Middle English dialects (Northern, West Midland, East Midland, South Western, and South Eastern) went their own ways and developed their own characteristics. The so-called Katherine Group of writings (1180-1210), associated with Hereford, a town not far from the Welsh border, adhered most closely to native traditions, and there is something to be said for regarding this West Midland dialect, least disturbed by French and Scandinavian intrusions, as a kind of Standard English in the High Middle Ages.

Another outcome of the Norman Conquest was to change the writing of English from the clear and easily readable insular hand of Irish origin to the delicate Carolingian script then in use on the Continent. With the change in appearance came a change in spelling. Norman scribes wrote Old English *y* as *u*, as *ui*, *ū* as *ou* (*ow* when final). Thus, *mycel* ("much") appeared as *muchel*, *fr* ("fire") as *fuir*, *hus* ("house") as *hous*, and *hu* ("how") as *how*. For the sake of clarity (*i.e.*, legibility) *u* was often written *o* before and after *m*, *n*, *u*, *v*, and *w*; and *i* was sometimes written *y* before and after *m* and *n*. So *sunu* ("son") appeared as *sone* and *him* ("him") as *hym*. Old English *cw* was changed to *qu*; *hw* to *wh*, *qu*, or *quh*; *ċ* to *ch* or *tch*; *sc* to *sh*; *-cg-* to *-gg-*; and *-ht* to *ght*. So Old English *cwēn* appeared as *queen*; *hwaet* as *what*, *quat*, or *quhat*; *dīc* as *ditch*; *scīp* as *ship*; *secge* as *segge*; and *miht* as *might*.

For the first century after the Conquest, most loanwords came from Normandy and Picardy, but with the extension south to the Pyrenees of the Angevin empire of Henry II (reigned 1154-89), other dialects, especially Central French, or Francien, contributed to the speech of the aristocracy. As a result, Modern English acquired the forms *canal*, *catch*, *leal*, *real*, *reward*, *wage*, *warden*, and *warrant* from Norman French side by side with the corresponding forms *channel*, *chase*, *loyal*, *royal*, *regard*, *gage*, *guardian*, and *guarantee*, from Francien. King John lost Normandy in 1204. With the increasing power of the Capetian kings of Paris, Francien gradually predominated. Meanwhile, Latin stood intact as the language of learning. For three centuries, therefore, the literature of England was trilingual. *Ancrene Riwele*, for instance, a guide or rule (*riwele*) of rare quality for recluses or anchorites (*ancren*), was disseminated in all three languages.

The sounds of the native speech changed slowly. Even in late Old English short vowels had been lengthened before *ld*, *rd*, *mb*, and *nd*, and long vowels had been shortened before all other consonant groups and before double consonants. In early Middle English short vowels of whatever origin were lengthened in the open stressed syllables of disyllabic words. An open syllable is one ending in a vowel. Both syllables in Old English *nama* "name," *mete* "meat, food," *nosu* "nose," *wicu* "week," and *duru* "door" were short, and the first syllables, being stressed, were lengthened to *name*, *mete*, *nose*, *weke*, and *dore* in the 13th and 14th centuries. A similar change occurred in 4th-century Latin, in 13th-century German, and at different times in other languages. The popular notion has arisen that final mute *-e* in English makes a preceding vowel long; in fact, it is the lengthening of the vowel that has caused *e* to be lost in pronunciation. On the other hand, Old English long vowels were shortened in the first syllables of trisyllabic words, even when those syllables were open; *e.g.*, *haligdaeg* "holy day," *ærende* "message, errand," *cristendom* "Christianity," and *sutherne* "southern," became *holiday* (Northern *haliday*), *errende*, *christendom*, and *sutherne*. This principle still operates in current English. Compare, for example, trisyllabic derivatives such as the words *chastity*, *criminal*, *fabulous*, *gradual*, *gravity*, *linear*, *national*, *ominous*, *sanity*, and *tabulate* with the simple nouns and adjectives *chaste*, *crime*, *fable*, *grade*, *grave*, *line*, *nation*, *omen*, *sane*, and *table*.

There were significant variations in verb inflections in the Northern, Midland, and Southern dialects. The Northern infinitive was already one syllable (*sing* rather than the Old English *singan*), whereas the past participle *-en* inflection of Old English was strictly kept. These apparently contradictory features can be attributed entirely to Scandinavian, in which the final *-n* of the infinitive was lost early in *singa*, and the final *-n* of the past participle was doubled in *sunginn*. The Northern unmutated present participle in *-and* was also of Scandinavian origin. Old English mutated *-ende* (German *-end*) in the present participle had already become *-inde* in late West Saxon, and it was this Southern *-inde* that blended with the *-ing* suffix (German *-ung*) of nouns of action that had already become near-gerunds in such compound nouns as *athswering* "oath swearing" and *writingfether* "writing feather, pen." This blending of present participle and gerund was further helped by the fact that Anglo-Norman and French *-ant* was itself a coalescence of Latin present participles in *-antem*, *-entem*, and Latin gerunds in *-andum*, *-endum*. The Northern second person singular *singis* was inherited unchanged from Common Germanic. The final *t* sound in Midland *-est* and Southern *-st* was excrescent, comparable with the final *t* in modern "amidst" and "amongst" from older *amiddes* and *amonges*. The Northern third person singular *singis* had a quite different origin. Like the *singis* of the plural, it resulted almost casually from an inadvertent retraction of the tongue in enunciation from an interdental *-th* sound to postdental *-s*. Today the form "singeth"

survives as a poetic archaism. Shakespeare used both *-eth* and *-s* endings ("It [mercy] blesseth him that gives and him that takes," *The Merchant of Venice*). The Midland present plural inflection *-en* was taken from the subjunctive. The past participle prefix *y-* developed from the Old English perfective prefix *ge-*.

Chaucer, who was born and died in London, spoke a dialect that was basically East Midland. Compared with his contemporaries, he was remarkably modern in his use of language. He was in his early 20s when the Statute of Pleading (1362) was passed, by the terms of which all court proceedings were henceforth to be conducted in English, though "enrolled in Latin." Chaucer himself used four languages; he read Latin (Classical and Medieval) and spoke French and Italian on his travels. For his own literary work he deliberately chose English.

## The history of England from the Norman invasion encapsulates all the major trends of the times.

Politically, the Norman kings and their heirs are the primary locus in European history where feudalism is converted into a working model of a centralized monarchy. The history of England all throughout the Middle Ages is one, long, almost uninterrupted set of conflicts engendered by the attempt to convert feudalism into monarchy. On the one hand are attempts to consolidate the power of the monarch over the power of feudatories; on the other hand is the resistance to monarchical aggrandizement and the subsequent assertion of privileges by feudatories over the monarch. The high point of monarchical power was attained during the reign of Edward I (1272-1307); the low points of monarchical power were scattered all throughout medieval English history: the reigns of John, Edward II, and Richard II being the bleakest.

From a cultural standpoint, the history of England involved a gradual absorption into a larger, European culture. While Anglo-Saxons had been fairly insular and unique culturally and politically, medieval England came increasingly dominated by continental culture. By the time of Chaucer and Richard II in the late fourteenth century, when England emerges as a major cultural force in Europe, very few indigenous Anglo-Saxon cultural practices remained in the "high" culture of England. The German language of England, Anglo-Saxon, still remained in some of its most essential aspects, but for the most part, the language of England, Middle English, had more in common with continental languages, particularly French. This cultural transformation occurred from the top down, so to speak. The Normans brought with them Norman culture, institutions, and social practices, but did not largely impose these on the native Anglo-Saxon populations. Beginning in the 13th century, however, almost all educated people in England had learned Norman, French, and Latin cultural models—only a few eccentrics still attached themselves to Anglo-Saxon cultural practices.

### The Norman Kings

William and the Norman kings who followed him had as their principle objective the breaking of the power of the Anglo-Saxon earls and the importation of Norman feudalism. They had, however, to make one important modification to feudalism—the overlord would be the king rather than a duke. They followed the same model that had been developed in Normandy—the king owned the land under him either directly or indirectly. Land was **enfeoffed**, that is, granted as a "fief," to individual tenants who collected the revenues from this land. In exchange, the tenants-in-chief (called "barons") entered into certain obligations with the overlord—these included revenues and a certain amount of military forces. This system had a complicated set of "privileges": on the one hand, the tenants-in-chief enjoyed a certain autonomy in the administration of lands and its revenue—this included rights of inheritance, that is, a feudatory was granted to a family rather than to an individual. On the other hand, the monarch directly or indirectly owned the land so had a certain claim to the revenues, the land, its inheritability, and to the services and obligations of its tenants.

The challenge to the Norman kings was to convert this system into a working monarchy. In order to maintain centralized authority over the more or less independent tenants, William retained as monarch the right to collect taxes, coin money, and to oversee the administration of justice. But William did not have a wealth of professional administrators—since Anglo-Saxon England largely consisted of a series of independent earldoms, there were very few people capable of carrying out the centralized functions he needed. Power, then, slowly devolved to the barons he had created.

It fell to Henry I (1100-1135), William's successor, to create a professional class of administrators for the crown. The only real administrators that William had relied on were the individuals filling the Anglo-Saxon office of **sheriff** who served as the local representative of the king. Henry I, however, turned his court into an administrative bureaucracy by creating special offices. These court offices would each serve a limited and specialized set of functions so that the



office-holders would themselves become efficient administrators in that one area. Most significantly, one of these specialized offices was the **Exchequer**, which oversaw the acquisition and dispersal of revenues for the crown.

## Henry II

In the development of the English monarchy, the most dramatic events occurred during the reign of Henry II (1154-1189), the grandson of Henry I. The monarchy had fallen on troubled times, enduring a civil war and contrary claims to the throne. When Henry II came to the throne, he instituted a series of measures designed to consolidate power around the king. The most significant of these measures was the narrowing of privileges granted to the church and to the clergy. While William and Henry I had managed to gain privileges from the nobility, the church still remained relatively autonomous.

Henry's problem with the Roman church was that it existed outside of the legal system that the English monarchs were trying to impose across England. When a member of the clergy committed a crime, that criminal fell under the jurisdiction of the *church* rather than the king. The criminal would be tried in an ecclesiastical ("church") court using canon law of the Roman church, rather than tried in a manorial or state court using the king's laws. The ecclesiastical judicial system of the Roman church was by and large highly corrupt (as its remnants in the present day still are)—even the most heinous crimes, such as murder, resulted in minor penalties imposed by the church court.

This not only rankled the king, it threatened the social order and the peace that the king was trying to establish by centralizing the judicial system. Henry's biggest fight, then, was with the church. Henry tried to limit the church courts in 1164 by allowing the church courts to try a clerical criminal but demanding that the criminal be sentenced in a royal court. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Becket, refused to yield—he would later be assassinated by four of Henry's knights.

Despite his failure to bring the church under a centralized judiciary, Henry was one of the most successful kings in European medieval history to consolidate monarchical power and develop the institution of monarchical government. He greatly expanded the role of the judiciary in the life of the English. In particular, he charged the sheriff of each region to call before itinerant judges any local person that he pleased in order to question them before the judge. The sheriff would ask these people if they knew of any crimes that had occurred since the last visit of the judge. This practice would eventually evolve into the judicial practice we know as the **grand jury**. He also introduced the original form of jury trials. In Henry's time, jury trials were only applied to civil cases involving property. When someone made a complaint of dispossession, the sheriff was empowered to bring before the judge twelve men who were familiar with the case. These men would then tell the judge what they knew of the case and would give their opinion as to the truth of the complaint or the defense. This twelve man testimonial would eventually develop into the civil *and* criminal jury trial.

These were significant innovations in many ways. First, they equalized the law in a profound way. People with little power could make complaints against more powerful people and prevail—this made the judicial something that people supported and sought after. In addition, the use of the twelve men expanded participation in the judiciary and in government to more than just the monarch, his ministers, and the powerful barons. Government was now partly in the hands of common people—thus would begin a growing interest among more and more classes in the conduct of government. Finally, Henry's innovations created a more or less independent bureaucracy that, in the hands of a well-trained administrative staff, could run the central government no matter who was king.

And that's what happened when Henry II died. He was succeeded by his son, Richard I (1189-1199), who, because of his interest in the Crusades, spent all of six months in England during his ten year reign. Even in his absence, the government ran efficiently. In fact, it got even more efficient as the administrative bureaucracy was able to develop without the interference of the king.

## Magna Carta

It was during the reign of Richard's successor, John (1199-1214), that the steady development of monarchical authority was partly checked. As with his predecessors, John ruled not only England as a monarch, but he also ruled much of France as a vassal of the French king. This rankled the French kings all during the reigns of the early Norman kings. By 1204, the French king, Philip Augustus, retook for France the lands that John ruled in Normandy. In Philip Augustus, John faced one of the most capable military and administrative kings in French history—he was dealt defeat after defeat in his attempt to first defend and then regain his lands.

Fed up with his war in France, John's nobles resented the power of the king to raise money for what they felt was a losing war. In the famous **Magna Carta** of 1215, they forced the king to sign a charter that renounced much of his power. The Magna Carta was not really a document about rights, it was a document about limiting monarchical government and the power of the king. First and foremost, it revoked the right of the king to raise revenues independently—in order to raise revenues, the king first had to obtain permission from his vassals. The document also limited the power of the king's judges arbitrarily to try and sentence free men; all free men could only be tried and sentenced by their equals. Finally, it created a council of vassals that could approve or disapprove of the king's revenue raising; this council would eventually develop into the Parliament. The great experiment with monarchy in Europe was entering a new phase—the first involved the creation of monarchical power and the institutions to run it; the second phase involved the creation of institutions to check and limit the growing power of the monarch. Everything was in place now for the subsequent history of government in Europe.

## Edward I

The most powerful king in medieval English history was Edward I (1272-1307), an aggressive, warrior king that not only consolidated power in England but through wars of conquest became the first king of all of Britain, albeit briefly.

Of all the medieval monarchs in Europe, Edward was perhaps the most brilliant at consolidating power. The institution he invented to achieve this end was **Parliament**, or "Talking." The purpose of Parliament was to gather all the major vassals of the king in one place, explain to them the reasons for collecting taxes, get their approval, and then discuss methods of collection. While this may seem to be an expansion of the role of the barons in government, it was actually the opposite. The entire purpose of the development of Parliament was *efficiency*, the rapid generation of consensus among the nobility, none of whom really were in a position to challenge the king. Eventually, however, after the reign of Edward, the Parliament would develop as a powerful check on the monarch's power—this was not Edward's intention or practice.

Edward's Parliament included more than nobility—he had the genius to include knights and other commoners to represent local counties at the Parliament. These commoners probably had no role at all in the Parliament, but the practice was enormously effective as propaganda. Local commoners were not only presented with an awe-inspiring theater of power at the court, but they also were being given propaganda and reasons for taxation on themselves and the people they represented. Commoners would eventually become an integral part of Parliament and develop their own independence from the nobility in Parliament—suffice it to say here, though, that the inclusion of commoners was part of the trend of increasing participation in the monarchical and local government by more people begun by the earliest Norman kings.

Edward made the most determined assault on baronial power among all the English kings. He instituted a series of proceedings called **quo warranto** proceedings ("by what warrant")—these proceedings would systematically question by what warrant nobles had certain privileges and rights from the king. If there was no warrant for these privileges, they were revoked and granted to the monarch. The result was a massive consolidation of power in the king's hands. Among other innovations was Edward's practice of issuing **statutes**, which were pieces of public legislation arbitrarily imposed on the entire kingdom by the will of the king.

Edward needed an efficient system for raising revenues for his constant warfare. On the continent he fought against the French king for Gascony, a territory under his control that had been seized by the French king. It was a useless war fought from 1294-1303 that simply resulted in Gascony being returned to Edward as a vassal. His most significant wars, however, were against Wales and Scotland. Both of these Celtic countries were independent of England—Wales was a principality ruled by the Prince of Wales and Scotland was a monarchy. However, in both Wales and Scotland a substantial number of the nobility were Anglo-Norman rather than Welsh or Scottish. While they were nominally under the Prince of Wales or the Scottish king, most of them had closer cultural ties with England and the Normans. It was with their help that he conquered Wales and brought it under his control. It was a different set-up than the English feudal system—Wales was a system of more or less independent lordships that were vassals of the king.

Scotland, however, was a much more difficult matter. When the Scottish king, Alexander III, died in 1290 without an heir, two nobles stepped forward to claim the throne: John Balliol and Robert Bruce, both Anglo-Norman lords in Scotland. The Scots turned to Edward to resolve the dispute, which he agreed to do if the dispute were settled using English and if he was made regent of Scotland until a decision was made. So, without shedding any blood, Edward became the overlord of Scotland. When the English finally declared John Balliol king, many of the Scottish nobles preferred being under Edward. When Balliol, however, allied with the French, Edward invaded and conquered Scotland

in 1296. But Scotland was too hard to hold—two major rebellions, one led by William Wallace and the second by Robert Bruce, the grandson of the Bruce that claimed the throne, temporarily expelled Edward from Scotland.

## The 1300's

The history of the monarchy after Edward I involved the steady dissolution of monarchical power at the hands of restive nobility. England suffered many major shocks throughout this century: the Black Death, wars with France, and Peasant revolts. By 1400, England had developed its own unique system of government through checks on the monarch's power and the further development of judiciary practices.

Edward I was succeeded by his son, Edward II (1307-1330), who on account of his arbitrary government and his favoring of often corrupt councilors, inspired a major revolt by the nobility. The reign of Edward III (1330-1377) was largely occupied with fighting in France to regain possessions seized by the French king—these series of skirmishes, which lasted until 1453 were known as the **Hundred Years War**. The end result would be the permanent expulsion of English power from the continent.

Life changed dramatically after the advent of the Black Death in 1349, to say the least. For England and the rest of Europe, the Death meant a startling decrease in labor and a subsequent rise in the value of labor. In the early years, a substantial amount of wealth was redistributed from the nobility downwards—most importantly, the value of labor inspired people to uproot themselves and relocate. The social consequences would be tremendous and begin to produce a "commoner" culture of remarkable resiliency and diffusion all throughout England. This commoner culture would produce a body of literature and music as well as a sensibility that would eventually diffuse into court and higher culture. The first major English literary figure, Geoffrey Chaucer, would in part draw on models and sensibilities of this lower culture.

Most importantly, the Black Death changed the economy of England. Throughout the entire period of Norman rule the economy centered, entirely, on agriculture with some export of raw materials, such as wool. Agriculture was dominated by the landed nobility who collected rents from tenants lower on the hierarchy. The entire structure was built on the shoulders of the **villein** who received the smallest share of arable land. The villein was tied to the land that he farmed, which was often barely enough to provide for his family's survival. He paid a certain amount of his crop as rent but he also paid in labor. He was forced to work a certain amount of time on the lands of the nobility who collected all the revenues from these lands. This was a phenomenally lucrative system for the landholders but was a desperate and torturous existence for villein.

With the Death, however, landholders found themselves desperately short of villeins to work their lands. In addition, the shortage of labor induced many villeins to run away and look for more gainful employment on other lands as wage laborers or to seek work in the cities. Even though it was a serious crime to run away (the villeins were in effect slaves), the prospect of a more secure life was inducement enough. With the loss of villeins, the landholders had to resort to wage labor, which was considerably more expensive, particularly in the light of falling food prices because of lowered demand! The landholders solved the problem in two ways: the first was by converting their lands to rented lands. By 1500, almost no landholders were using their own lands but had rented them all out. The second and most innovative approach was to stop growing crops but instead use the land to graze sheep for wool—this practice was called "enclosure" since the land would be enclosed to keep the sheep in. Enclosure turned out to be an even more lucrative use of the land and all throughout the later fourteenth and fifteenth centuries massive amounts of land were converted from agriculture to sheep-raising.

The phenomenal increase in wool production made England one of the centers of European commerce. But the English soon turned from exporting raw wool to exporting finished cloth. Why, after all, collect money from exporting wool only to have to pay it out again for the finished cloth? By the end of the fifteenth century, England had become the major manufacturing commercial power of Europe primarily because of the growth of the cloth industry. The conversion of the English economy to a commercial and manufacturing economy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries contributed to the growth of a new commoner class, what we would call the middle class. These commoners sometimes attained incredible wealth not only through trade and manufacturing, but often as renters on agricultural land.

The reign of Richard II (1377-1399), who came to the throne as a boy, was marked by arbitrary use of power and extreme efforts of the nobility to check the power of the king. So troubled was the reign, that Richard was the first king to be deposed by a rebellion, that of Henry Bolingbroke, who usurped the throne to become Henry IV.

It was during the later years of Edward III and the reign of Richard II that England emerged as a potent cultural force in Europe. Some Anglo-Saxon practices still hung on, such as the writing of alliterative poetry, that is, poetry whose meter is marked by *alliteration* or the use of identical consonants to begin words. On the whole, however, England developed a distinct culture using French and classical models as well as a new, growing commoner culture. Combined with both of these was a new and innovative anti-clericalism that gained dramatic cultural force in the latter part of the fourteenth century.

The Roman church had never truly brought about ecclesiastical unity in Europe. In the early period, several different practices and theologies vied with one another, the most significant being the conflict between the Celtic and the continental churches. Moreover, the eastern European areas never fell under Roman control—a separate church, the church of Byzantium, exercised spiritual and political authority over these Christians.

The Roman church in the West was a powerful medium through which a common European culture was forged and was instrumental in bringing first Anglo-Saxon and then Anglo-Norman culture into the European mainstream. But the Roman church was also hopelessly corrupt. It was largely run according to the social models of Europe—the hierarchy of the church mirrored the hierarchy of society. In fact, the top of the church hierarchy was drawn almost entirely from European nobles. The church concentrated its energies on the top of the hierarchy and on the various monasteries, which for all practical purposes were the equivalent of noble estates and practiced the same kind of slave labor—the use of villeins to farm monastic lands—that the English manors used. Almost no resources were devoted to the village, the town, and the commoner. Clergy at this level were desperately poor and lived a hand-to-mouth existence selling prayers and other sacraments.

It was inevitable that the hierarchy and wealth of the church, its manifest meddling in commerce and politics, its cruel disdain for the lowest levels of society, and the added insult of the relative immunity of clergy from criminal prosecution, would all eventually produce strong reactions against the church and the clergy—this anti-clerical feeling during the Middle Ages reached its height in England.

The reaction to the church ranged from aggressive denunciations of the entire institution to stinging critiques of church clergy that still upheld the legitimacy of the church itself.

The most famous and important of the anti-clerical agitators was **John Wycliff** who originally began his career as a doctor of divinity at Oxford in the 1360's and speculated on such abstruse questions as the nature of universals. He soon, however, developed strong critiques of the church and eventually assumed in the late 1370's a revolutionary stance towards the church. He rejected all church hierarchy and declared that the Christian consisted of the people who had faith but did not consist of the church hierarchy (this would eventually become the "priesthood of all believers" in Martin Luther). He rejected transubstantiation as a legitimate doctrine (the idea that the bread and wine of the Eucharist actually change into the body and blood of Christ), arguing that there is no Scriptural authority for this. He also argued that the Bible should be translated into vernacular languages, that it does no good to read from the Bible in a language that most Christians can't understand. To this end, he produced the first English Bible. These and other heretical doctrines landed him in a world of trouble, but he was protected by powerful nobles who used them for their own political ends. His most revolutionary idea, however, lost him the protection of even the nobility. He argued that all human authority comes from God's grace alone. This doctrine of "authority through grace" allowed him to argue that no corrupt official or authority should be obeyed. If a priest, bishop, or pope were corrupt, parishioners were justified in opposing any authority exercised by that church official—the judgement of such corruption lay with the conscience of the believer. This was not only a radical challenge to the church, it also quickly became a radical challenge to secular authority as well.

Wycliff's radical ideas led to a distinct anti-clerical movement in England: **Lollardy**. Lollard ideas in part impelled the Peasant's Rebellion of 1381 and would surface in the remainder of the century. While Lollardy was effectively stamped out in the early 1400's, it re-emerged with a vengeance when Protestantism was introduced into England in the 1510's. Lollard ideas, however, did diffuse across the continent and many of the theological and social ideas of the Protestant Reformation are traceable back to the hapless Lollards.

The most important thing about Lollardy and the general anti-clericalism of the fourteenth century is that it founded a new culture deliberately resistant to the dominant, homogenizing culture of the church. This new anti-clerical culture led a number of theologians, writers, and poets in England to begin to speculate about the nature of society, government, economics and human institutions and to forge radically new ideas on all these fronts. Any speculation about the legitimacy of political power would have landed the writer in serious trouble; church government, however, was relatively open to criticism and it was here that the critical tradition in European political theory developed, and in

no place in Europe did it develop as strongly as it did in medieval England. The anti-clerical culture was not so much a theological or even a doctrinal culture—it was a moral and political culture in part forged out of the increasing role that all individuals were playing in English government. Anti-clerical culture manifested itself in religious works, such as *Piers Plowman* written by a desperately poor cleric named William Langland, in mystical literature such as *The Book of Margery Kempe*, and in an entire corpus of secular literature and practices.

No individual better represents this new cultural fusion of European, commoner, and anti-clerical culture than **Geoffrey Chaucer** (1343-1400). His earliest writings imported Italian and French models into English literature, but his greatest work was *The Canterbury Tales*, which fused a number of cultural forms and anti-clerical criticism in a series of stories narrated by a cross-section of English culture.

The emergence of Chaucer as a major literary figure points to another vital change in English culture in the fourteenth century: the emergence of **English** as an official and a literary language. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the language of government was primarily French in spoken language and Latin in written language. The literary language of early Norman England was Norman French—a number of the earliest masterpieces of English literature are in actuality French. In the fourteenth century, however, English became the spoken language of government and in part replaced Latin as the official written language. Literature in English began to thrive from the middle of the fourteenth century onwards and culminated in the career of Chaucer and Wycliff's translation of the Bible. By 1400, English had become the language of England.

This English, however, was substantially different from the English spoken before the Norman invasion. The English of the Anglo-Saxon period, called "Old English," was completely a Germanic language that had more in common with the Germanic languages spoken on the continent than it had with modern English. The Norman invasion, however, introduced a long period in which Norman French and Anglo-Saxon existed side-by-side. The result was a curious mix of the two languages, in fact, almost a lingua franca, that produced the English of the fourteenth century. This was an English that used many Germanic forms but was dominated by French words and a French world view.

## The Lancasters

When Henry Bolingbroke deposed Richard II, he declared himself king of England as Henry IV on a very tenuous claim to the throne. This was a radical departure in English history that would determine historical practices for the next hundred years and beyond. Because Henry had provided the precedent for deposing a king, it soon became evident that the monarchy could be claimed through any vague connection if the claimant had sufficient arms to enforce the claim. The history of the fifteenth century is one long, dismal history of the problems created by Henry's usurpation.

The problems began immediately. Henry spent most of his reign putting down a rebellion first by a Welsh nobleman, Owen Glyndwr, and then later by powerful English magnates.

His son, however, who reigned as Henry V (1413-1422), was determined to regain English rights of the French areas of Normandy and Gascon. To this end, he launched an invasion of France which soon gained him all the territory the English had lost in these areas. He was helped by two major accidents. The first was an all-out schism in French government between the Duke of Burgundy and son of the King, Charles VI. Both claimed the throne and Henry took advantage of this division. The second accident was the use of longbow archers against the French forces that were primarily cavalry and infantry. Because the longbow archers could fire from a distance *and* rearm themselves quickly after releasing a volley, the French forces fell quickly.

At the end of his conquests, Henry extorted two things from Charles VI: he was married to Charles' daughter Catherine and the French king ceded the throne upon his death to the child of Henry and Catherine. When Henry V died of an illness in 1322 at the age of 35, their nine-month old child, Henry VI, became the first and only king of both England and France.

The invasions of Henry and the steady loss of French territories under Henry VI comprise what historians call the **Hundred Years War**. The English held on to their possessions until 1429 when, under the inspired leadership of a teenage girl, Joan of Arc, the French rallied against the English and their Burgundian allies. When the Duke of Burgund realigned himself with the French, the tide of battle turned distinctively against the English. Henry V had the benefit of a politically divided France; the English now faced a rival, French claimant to the throne—the **Dauphin**, the son of Charles VI—backed by a unified France. By 1453, the English were permanently kicked out of France except for the town of Calais.

Henry VI was the youngest man to become king of England and reigned an immensely long time. His reign, however, was generally marked by his non-presence as a king since he despised warfare and had no interest in government. The government instead fell to his magnates and to his wife, Margaret of Anjou. This began a period of severe rivalries between magnates that would eventually erupt into the Wars of the Roses.

## The Wars of the Roses

The "Wars of the Roses" is somewhat of a misnomer. The name refers to the symbols used to represent the two major factions—the Yorks represented themselves with the symbol of the white rose and the Tudors represented themselves with a red rose. It wasn't until the end of the struggle, however, that the Tudors adopted the red rose to distinguish themselves from the Yorks. Nor were these really wars, but rather a series of small, albeit decisive, skirmishes between various magnates.

The issue, of course, owed its origins to Henry Bolingbroke's usurpation of the crown. There were several nobles and families who had better claims to the throne and Henry had introduced the dangerous precedent that the crown belonged to whoever could seize it.

The non-presence of Henry VI as a king was even more decisive. Since the government fell to a clique of nobles surrounding Margaret of Anjou, those nobles who felt left out were bitter and rebellious. The one having the greatest cause for bitterness was Richard, Duke of York. It was not just simply that Richard had a better claim to the throne; it was that Henry VI had proven himself useless as a king. When Henry VI went mad in 1453, Richard managed to get himself declared the Protector of the Realm—in executive functions, he was the equivalent of the king. He then surrounded the monarch's government with fellow Yorkists and allies and he arrested the major figures in Henry's court. After the king regained his sanity, the first major battle occurred between Richard and these rival court governors. This first battle, fought at Saint Albans, is traditionally reckoned as the start of the Wars of the Roses.

By 1460, however, Richard controlled the government and, in an incredibly audacious move, declared himself to be king of England since Henry was both unfit and was the descendant of a usurper. The nobility, however, backed off of this proposal and promised Richard the crown after the death of Henry. But Henry didn't die soon enough—when Richard died, the succession fell to his son, Edward IV.

Edward IV (1461-1483) did what Richard couldn't do: he deposed Henry and assumed the throne of England. He could never really consolidate his rule, however, and faced intense and aggressive restiveness from his brother, George, the Duke of Clarence and slightly less resistance from his other brother, Richard, the Duke of Gloucester. In 1471, Margaret of Anjou and Henry VI landed with an invasion force and temporarily retook the crown for a couple months. This was soon overcome by Edward and Henry died in prison, old, mad, and broken.

On the death of Edward in 1483, the succession fell to his son, Edward V. But Edward V was only twelve years old, so the Protectorate fell to his uncle, Richard, Duke of Gloucester. Richard, following the traditions set down by Henry IV, Richard, Duke of York, his father, and his brother Edward, seized the throne rapidly and efficiently. He imprisoned the two sons of Edward and may even have had them executed (it is more likely that Henry Tudor executed them). The throne was usurped yet again in less than a hundred years.

By all accounts, Richard III was an extremely effective administrator, militarily brilliant, and of immense physical courage. His assumption of the crown, however, was challenged immediately from several sides. His two year reign consisted entirely of fighting rebellions, including an early, indirect rebellion to put Henry Tudor on the throne. When this rebellion failed, Henry Tudor took matters into his own hands and directly confronted Richard. Henry had only the most tenuous claim to the throne and the Tudor monarchs would spend the next hundred years propagandizing that tenuous claim. The last fight of this rebellion, at Bosworth in 1485, resulted in the death of Richard. A new usurper, Henry Tudor took the throne as Henry VII just as Europe was entering the modern period.

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Medieval England by Richard Hooker*

# LITERARY PERIODS OF BRITISH AND AMERICAN LITERATURE - SUMMARY

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Periods in literature are named for rulers, historical events, intellectual or political or religious movements, or artistic styles. Most literary periods therefore have multiple names. What's worse, some of these names are debated. Is the later 17<sup>th</sup> Century the Baroque era? The term *baroque* is an intractable term derived from art criticism, though it may usefully be applicable to some writers as well. Is the early 17<sup>th</sup> Century the Shakespearean era? Is it the Mannerist era? How widely do we wish to apply the term Elizabethan period? Other questions arise. Does Romanticism begin with Wordsworth? With Blake? In addition, Romanticism has various dates according to the national literature we refer to. In the separate art forms -- music, painting, and even some literary genres -- the dates may vary yet more. Recent histories of literature and the latest *Norton Anthology of English Literature* offer the latest examples of terms applied to literary periods.

## Periods of British Literature

600-1200 Old English (Anglo-Saxon)		<i>Beowulf</i>	
1200-1500 Middle English		Geoffrey Chaucer	
1500-1660 The English Renaissance			
1500-1558	Tudor Period	Humanist Era	Thomas More, John Skelton
1558-1603	Elizabethan Period	High Renaissance	Edmund Spenser, Sir Philip Sidney, William Shakespeare
1603-1625	Jacobean Period	Mannerist Style (1590-1640) other styles: Metaphysical Poets; Devotional Poets	Shakespeare, John Donne, George Herbert, Emilia Lanier
1625-1649	Caroline Period		John Ford, John Milton
1649-1660	The Commonwealth & The Protectorate	Baroque Style, and later, Rococo Style	Milton, Andrew Marvell, Thomas Hobbes
1660-1700	The Restoration		John Dryden
1700-1800	The Eighteenth Century	The Enlightenment; Neoclassical Period;  The Augustan Age	Alexander Pope,  Jonathan Swift,  Samuel Johnson
1785-1830	Romanticism	The Age of Revolution	William Wordsworth, S.T. Coleridge, Jane Austen, the Brontës
1830-1901	Victorian Period	Early, Middle and Late Victorian	Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Robert Browning, Alfred, Lord Tennyson
1901-1960	Modern Period	The Edwardian Era (1901-1910); The Georgian Era (1910-1914)	G.M. Hopkins, H.G. Wells, James Joyce, D.H. Lawrence, T.S. Eliot
1960-	Postmodern and Contemporary Period		Ted Hughes, Doris Lessing, John Fowles, Don DeLillo, A.S. Byatt

The **Old English Period** or the **Anglo-Saxon Period** refers to the literature produced from the invasion of Celtic England by Germanic tribes in the first half of the fifth century to the conquest of England in 1066 by William the Conqueror. During the **Old English Period**, written literature began to develop from oral tradition, and in the eighth century poetry written in the vernacular Anglo Saxon or Old English appeared. One of the most well-known eighth century Old English pieces of literature is *Beowulf*, a great Germanic epic poem. Two poets of Old English Period who wrote on biblical and religious themes were Caedmon and Cynewulf.

The **Middle English Period** consists of the literature produced in the four and a half centuries between the Norman Conquest of 1066 and about 1500, when the standard literary language, derived from the dialect of the London area, became recognizable as "modern English."

Prior to the second half of the fourteenth century, vernacular literature consisted primarily of religious writings. The second half of the fourteenth century produced the first great age of secular literature. The most widely known of these writings are Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, the anonymous *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*.

While the English Renaissance began with the ascent of the House of Tudor to the English throne in 1485, the **English Literary Renaissance** began with English humanists such as Sir Thomas More and Sir Thomas Wyatt.

In addition, the **English Literary Renaissance** consists of four subsets: The **Elizabethan Age**, the **Jacobean Age**, the **Caroline Age**, and the **Commonwealth Period** (which is also known as the **Puritan Interregnum**).

The **Elizabethan Age** of English Literature coincides with the reign of Elizabeth I, 1558 - 1603. During this time, medieval tradition was blended with Renaissance optimism. Lyric poetry, prose, and drama were the major styles of literature that flowered during the Elizabethan Age. Some important writers of the Elizabethan Age include William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, Edmund Spenser, Sir Walter Raleigh, and Ben Jonson.

The **Jacobean Age** of English Literature coincides with the reign of James I, 1603 - 1625. During this time the literature became sophisticated, sombre, and conscious of social abuse and rivalry. The Jacobean Age produced rich prose and drama as well as The King James translation of the Bible. Shakespeare and Jonson wrote during the Jacobean Age, as well as John Donne, Francis Bacon, and Thomas Middleton.

The **Caroline Age** of English Literature coincides with the reign of Charles I, 1625 - 1649. The writers of this age wrote with refinement and elegance. This era produced a circle of poets known as the "Cavalier Poets" and the dramatists of this age were the last to write in the Elizabethan tradition.

The **Commonwealth Period**, also known as the **Puritan Interregnum**, of English Literature includes the literature produced during the time of Puritan leader Oliver Cromwell. This period produced the political writings of John Milton, Thomas Hobbes' political treatise *Leviathan*, and the prose of Andrew Marvell. In September of 1642, the Puritans closed theatres on moral and religious grounds. For the next eighteen years the theatres remained closed, accounting for the lack of drama produced during this time period.

The **Neoclassical Period** of English literature (1660 - 1785) was much influenced by contemporary French literature, which was in the midst of its greatest age. The literature of this time is known for its use of philosophy, reason, skepticism, wit, and refinement. The **Neoclassical Period** also marks the first great age of English literary criticism.

Much like the English Literary Renaissance, the **Neoclassical Period** can be divided into three subsets: the **Restoration**, the **Augustan Age**, and the **Age of Sensibility**.

The **Restoration**, 1660 - 1700, is marked by the restoration of the monarchy and the triumph of reason and tolerance over religious and political passion. The **Restoration** produced an abundance of prose and poetry and the distinctive comedy of manners known as *Restoration comedy*. It was during the **Restoration** that John Milton published *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*.

Other major writers of the era include John Dryden, John Wilmot 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Rochester, and John Locke.

The English **Augustan Age** derives its name from the brilliant literary period of Virgil and Ovid under the Roman emperor Augustus (27 B.C. - A.D. 14). In English literature, the **Augustan Age**, 1700 - 1745, refers to literature with the predominant characteristics of refinement, clarity, elegance, and balance of judgment. Well-known writers of the **Augustan Age** include Jonathan Swift, Alexander Pope, and Daniel Defoe. A significant contribution of this time period included the release of the first English novels by Defoe, and the "novel of character," *Pamela*, by Samuel Richardson, in 1740.

During the **Age of Sensibility**, literature reflected the worldview of *Enlightenment* and began to emphasize instinct and feeling, rather than judgment and restraint. A growing sympathy for the Middle Ages during the **Age of Sensibility** sparked



an interest in medieval ballads and folk literature. Another name for this period is the **Age of Johnson** because the dominant authors of this period were Samuel Johnson and his literary and intellectual circle. This period also produced some of the greatest early novels of the English language, including Richardson's *Clarissa* (1748) and Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749).

The **Romantic Period** of English literature began in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and lasted until approximately 1832. In general, Romantic literature can be characterized by its personal nature, its strong use of feeling, its abundant use of symbolism, and its exploration of nature and the supernatural. In addition, the writings of the Romantics were considered innovative based on their belief that literature should be spontaneous, imaginative, personal, and free. The **Romantic Period** produced a wealth of authors including Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Wordsworth, Jane Austen, and Lord Byron.

It was during the **Romantic Period** that Gothic literature was born. Traits of *Gothic literature* are dark and gloomy settings and characters and situations that are fantastic, grotesque, wild, savage, mysterious, and often melodramatic. Two of the most famous Gothic novelists are Anne Radcliffe and Mary Shelley.

The **Victorian Period** of English literature began with the accession of Queen Victoria to the throne in 1837, and lasted until her death in 1901. Because the **Victorian Period** of English literature spans over six decades, the year 1870 is often used to divide the era into "early Victorian" and "late Victorian." In general, Victorian literature deals with the issues and problems of the day. Some contemporary issues that the Victorians dealt with include the social, economic, religious, and intellectual issues and problems surrounding the Industrial Revolution, growing class tensions, the early feminist movement, pressures toward political and social reform, and the impact of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution on philosophy and religion. Some of the most recognized authors of the Victorian era include Alfred Lord Tennyson, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, her husband Robert, Matthew Arnold, Charles Dickens, Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, and Thomas Hardy.

Within the **Victorian Period**, two other literary movements, that of **The Pre-Raphaelites** (1848-1860) and the movement of **Aestheticism and Decadence** (1880-1900), gained prominence.

In 1848, a group of English artists, including Dante Gabriel Rossetti, formed the "Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood." It was the aim of this group to return painting to a style of truthfulness, simplicity, and religious devotion that had reigned prior to Raphael and the high Italian Renaissance. Rossetti and his literary circle, which included his sister Christina, incorporated these ideals into their literature, and the result was that of the literary **Pre-Raphaelites**.

The **Aestheticism and Decadence** movement of English literature grew out of the French movement of the same name. The authors of this movement encouraged experimentation and held the view that art is totally opposed "natural" norms of morality. This style of literature opposed the dominance of scientific thinking and defied the hostility of society to any art that was not useful or did not teach moral values. It was from the movement of **Aestheticism and Decadence** that the phrase *art for art's sake* emerged. A well-known author of the English **Aestheticism and Decadence** movement is Oscar Wilde.

The **Edwardian Period** is named for King Edward VII and spans the time from Queen Victoria's death (1901) to the beginning of World War I (1914). During this time, The British Empire was at its height and the wealthy lived lives of materialistic luxury. However, four fifths of the English population lived in squalor. The writings of the **Edwardian Period** reflect and comment on these social conditions. For example, writers such as George Bernard Shaw and H.G. Wells attacked social injustice and the selfishness of the upper classes. Other writers of the time include William Butler Yeats, Joseph Conrad, Rudyard Kipling, Henry James, and E.m. Forster.

The **Georgian Period** refers to the period of British Literature that is named for the reign of George V (1910-36). Many writers of the **Edwardian Period** continued to write during the **Georgian Period**. This era also produced a group of poets known as the *Georgian poets*. These writers, now regarded as minor poets, were published in four anthologies entitled *Georgian Poetry*, published by Edward Marsh between 1912 and 1922. Georgian poetry tends to focus on rural subject matter and is traditional in technique and form.

The **Modern Period** applies to British literature written since the beginning of World War I in 1914. The authors of the **Modern Period** have experimented with subject matter, form, and style and have produced achievements in all literary genres. Poets of the period include Yeats, T.S. Eliot, Dylan Thomas, and Seamus Heaney. Novelists include James Joyce, D.H. Lawrence, and Virginia Woolf. Dramatists include Noel Coward and Samuel Beckett..

Following World War II (1939-1945), the **Postmodern Period** of British Literature developed. *Postmodernism* blends literary genres and styles and attempts to break free of modernist forms. While the British literary scene at the turn of the

new millennium is crowded and varied, the authors still fall into the categories of *modernism* and *postmodernism*. However, with the passage of time the Modern era may be reorganized and expanded

## Literary Periods of American Literature

### 1607-1776 : Colonial Period

1765-1790: The Revolutionary Age

1775-1828: The Early National Period

1828-1865: The Romantic Period

(Also known as: The American Renaissance or The Age of Transcendentalism)

1865-1900: The Realistic Period

1900-1914: The Naturalistic Period

1914-1939: American Modernist Period

1920s: Jazz Age, Harlem Renaissance

1920s, 1930s: The "Lost Generation"

1939-present: The Contemporary Period

1950s: Beat Writers 1

1960s, 1970s: Counterculture

### Ethnic Literatures, including, but not limited to:

African-American Writers / Native American Writers / Asian-American Writers

The **Colonial Period** of American Literature spans the time between the founding of the first settlement at Jamestown to the outbreak of the Revolution. The writings of this time centered on religious, practical, or historical themes. The most influential writers of the **Colonial Period** include John Winthrop, Cotton Mather, Benjamin Franklin, and Anne Bradstreet.

During the **Revolutionary Age**, 1765-1790, some of the greatest documents of American history were authored. In 1776, Thomas Paine authored *Common Sense* and Thomas Jefferson wrote *The Declaration of Independence*. In 1781, *The Article of Confederation* were ratified. Between 1787 and 1788, Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay wrote *The Federalist Papers*. Finally, in 1787, *The Constitution of the United State* was drafted and in 1789 it was ratified.

The **Early National Period** of American Literature saw the beginnings of literature that could be truly identified as "American". The writers of this new American literature wrote in the English style, but the settings, themes, and characters were authentically American. In addition, poets of this time wrote poetry that was relatively independent of English precursors. Three of the most recognized writers of this time are Washington Irving, James Fennimore Cooper, and Edgar Allan Poe.

The period 1828-1865 in American Literature is commonly identified as the **Romantic Period in America**, but may also be referred to as the **American Renaissance** or the **Age of Transcendentalism**. The writers of this period produced works of originality and excellence that helped shape the ideas, ideals, and literary aims of many American writers. Writers of the **American Romantic Period** include Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Edgar Allan Poe, Herman Melville, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Emily Dickinson, and Walt Whitman.

Following the Civil War, American Literature entered into the **Realistic Period**. The major form of literature produced in this era was *realistic fiction*. Unlike romantic fiction, realistic fiction aims to represent life as it really is and make the reader believe that the characters actually might exist and the situations might actually happen. In order to have this effect on the reader, realistic fiction focuses on the ordinary and commonplace. The major writers of the **Realistic Period** include Mark Twain, Henry James, Bret Harte, and Kate Chopin.

The years 1900-1914 mark American Literature's **Naturalistic Period**. Naturalism claims to give an even more accurate depiction of life than realism. In accordance with a post-Darwinian thesis, naturalistic writers hold that the characters of their works are merely higher-order animals whose character and behavior is entirely based upon heredity and

environment. Naturalistic writings try to present subjects with scientific objectivity. These writings are often frank, crude, and tragic. Stephen Crane, Jack London, and Theodore Dreiser are the most studied American Naturalists.

Between 1914 and 1939, American Literature entered into a phase which is still referred to as "**The Beginnings of Modern Literature**". Like their British counterparts, the American Modernists experimented with subject matter, form, and style and produced achievements in all literary genres. Some well-known American Modernist Poets include Robert Frost, William Carlos Williams, Edna St. Vincent Millay, and e.e. Cummings. Included among American Modernist Prose Writers are Edith Wharton, Sinclair Lewis, and Willa Cather.

The **American Modernist Period** also produced many other writers that are considered to be writers of **Modernist Period Subclasses**. For example, F. Scott Fitzgerald is considered a writer of **The Jazz Age**, Langston Hughes, and W.E.B. DuBois writers of **The Harlem Renaissance**, and Gertrud Stein, T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and Ernest Hemingway writers of **The Lost Generation**.

The Great Depression marked the end of the **American Modernist Period**, and writers such as William Faulkner, John Steinbeck, and Eugene O'Neill dealt with the social and political issues of the time in their literary works.

1939 marked the beginning of the **Contemporary Period** of American Literature. This period includes an abundance of important American literary figures spanning from World War II into the New Millennium. These writers include, but are not limited to, Eudora Welty, John Updike, Kurt Vonnegut, Sylvia Plath, Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, Ralph Ellison, Gwendolyn Brooks, Zora Neal Hurston, Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, and Maya Angelou.

During the 1950s, a vigorous anti-establishment and anti-traditional literary movement emerged. The main writers of this movement, Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac, are called **Beat Writers**. Much writing of the 1960s and 1970s, referred to as **Counterculture Writing**, continued the literary ideals of the **Beat Movement**, but in a more extreme and fevered manner.

Currently, the contemporary American literary scene is crowded and varied. With the passage of time the Contemporary Period may be reorganized and/or expanded. In the future will writers such as Anne Rice, John Grisham, or Amy Tan be included in the canon of American Literature? We will just have to wait and see.

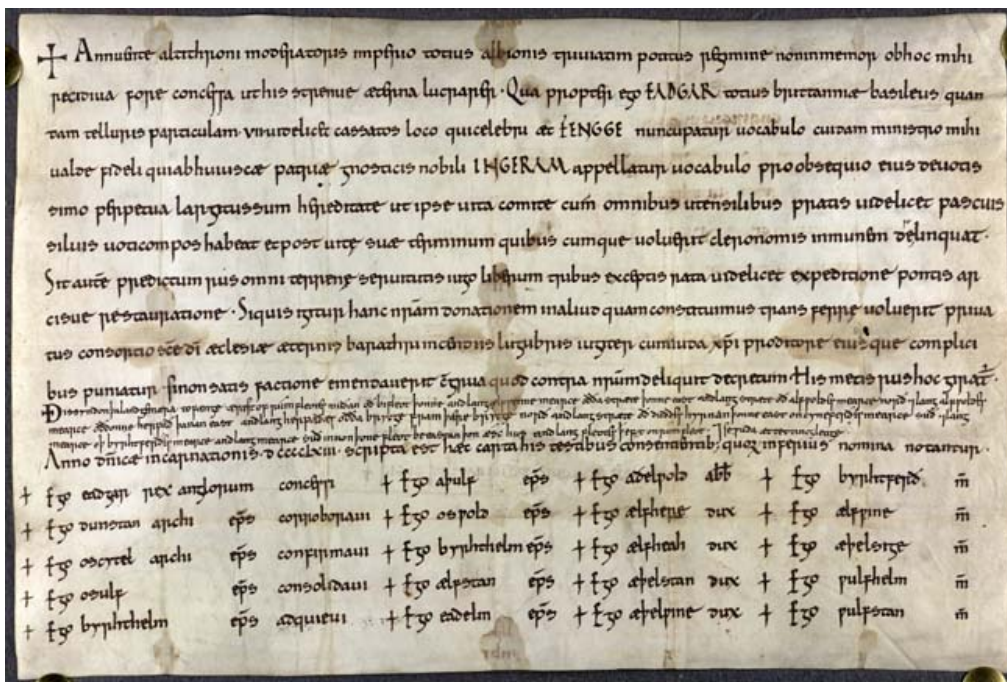
*A Glossary of Literary Terms, 6th ed., by M.H. Abrams and Longman Companion to English Literature by Christopher Gillie*

# INTRODUCTION TO BRITISH LITERATURE



**English literature**, literature written in English since c.1450 by the inhabitants of the British Isles; it was during the 15th century that the English language acquired much of its modern form. For the literature of previous linguistic periods, Anglo Saxon-literature, the literary writings in Old English, and Middle English Literature, literature of the medieval period, c.1100 to c.1500.

## Anglo Saxon-literature



## Poetry

There are two types of Old English poetry: the heroic, the sources of which are pre-Christian Germanic myth, history, and custom; and the Christian. Although nearly all Old English poetry is preserved in only four manuscripts—indicating that what has survived is not necessarily the best or most representative—much of it is of high literary quality. Moreover, Old English heroic poetry is the earliest extant in all of Germanic literature. It is thus the nearest we can come to the oral pagan literature of Germanic culture, and is also of inestimable value as a source of knowledge about many aspects of Germanic society. The 7th-century work known as Widsith, 7th-century Anglo-Saxon poem found in the Exeter Book (manuscript volume of Old English religious and secular poetry, of various dates of composition, compiled c.975 and given to Exeter Cathedral by Bishop Leofric (d. 1072).). It is an account of the wanderings of a Germanic minstrel and of the legends he relates. The poem gives an excellent description of minstrel life in the Germanic heroic age.

It is one of the earliest Old English poems, and thus is of particular historic and linguistic interest.

**Beowulf**<sup>1</sup>, a complete epic, is the oldest surviving Germanic epic as well as the longest and most important poem in Old English. It originated as a pagan saga transmitted orally from one generation to the next; court poets known as scopos were the bearers of tribal history and tradition. The version of *Beowulf* that is extant was composed by a Christian poet, probably early in the 8th cent. However, intermittent Christian themes found in the epic, although affecting in themselves, are not integrated into the essentially pagan tale. The epic celebrates the hero's fearless and bloody struggles against monsters and extols courage, honor, and loyalty as the chief virtues in a world of brutal force.

The elegiac theme, a strong undercurrent in *Beowulf*, is central to *Deor*, *The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer*, and other poems. In these works, a happy past is contrasted with a precarious and desolate present. The *Finnsburgh* fragment, *The Battle of Maldon*, and *The Battle of Brunanburh*, which are all based on historical episodes, mainly celebrate great heroism in the face of overwhelming odds. In this heroic poetry, all of which is anonymous, greatness is measured less by victory than by perfect loyalty and courage in extremity.

Much of the Old English Christian poetry is marked by the simple belief of a relatively unsophisticated Christianity; the names of two authors are known. Cædmon—whose story is charmingly told by the Venerable Bede, who also records a few lines of his poetry—is the earliest known English poet. Although the body of his work has been lost, the school of Cædmon is responsible for poetic narrative versions of biblical stories, the most dramatic of which is probably *Genesis B*.

Cynewulf, a later poet, signed the poems *Elene*, *Juliana*, and *The Fates of the Apostles*; no more is known of him. The finest poem of the school of Cynewulf is *The Dream of the Rood*, the first known example of the dream vision, a genre later popular in Middle English Literature. Other Old English poems include various riddles, charms (magic cures, pagan in origin), saints' lives, gnomic poetry, and other Christian and heroic verse.

The verse form for Old English poetry is an alliterative line of four stressed syllables and an unfixd number of unstressed syllables broken by a caesura and arranged in one of several patterns. Lines are conventionally end-stopped and unrhymed. The form lends itself to narrative; there is no lyric poetry in Old English. A stylistic feature in this heroic poetry is the kenning, a figurative phrase, often a metaphorical compound, used as a synonym for a simple noun, e.g., the repeated use of the phrases *whale-road* for *sea* and *twilight-spoiler* for *dragon*.

## Prose

Old English literary prose dates from the latter part of the Anglo-Saxon period. Prose was written in Latin before the reign of King Alfred (reigned 871–99), who worked to revitalize English culture after the devastating Danish invasions ended. As hardly anyone could read Latin, Alfred translated or had translated the most important Latin texts. He also encouraged writing in the vernacular. Didactic, devotional, and informative prose was written, and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, probably begun in Alfred's time as an historical record, continued for over three centuries. Two preeminent Old English prose writers were Ælfric<sup>2</sup>, Abbot of Eynsham, and his contemporary Wulfstan, d. 1023, English churchman, archbishop of York (1003–1023) and bishop of Worcester, whose Latin name was Lupus. He is buried at Ely. Homilies are attributed to

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1 **Beowulf** (bā'uwoolf), oldest English epic, probably composed in the early 8th cent. by an Anglian bard in the vicinity of Northumbria. It survives in only one manuscript, written c.A.D. 1000 by two scribes and preserved in the British Museum in the collection of Sir Robert Cotton. The materials for the poem are derived mainly from Scandinavian history, folk tale, and mythology. Its narrative consists of two parts: The first relates Beowulf's successful fights with the water monster Grendel and with Grendel's mother; the second narrates the hero's victory in his old age over a dragon and his subsequent death and funeral at the end of a long life of honor. These events take place entirely in Denmark and Sweden. The poem contains a remarkable fusion of pagan and Christian elements and provides a vivid picture of old Germanic life. It is written in a strongly accentual, alliterative verse. There have been some 65 translations of the work into modern English; one of the most accomplished is by the Irish poet Seamus Heaney (2000).

See *The Beowulf Poet: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by D. K. Fry (1968); studies by K. Sisam (1965), J. C. Pope (rev. ed. 1966), E. B. Irving (1968), R. Girvan and R. Bruce-Mitford (1971), K. S. Kiernan (1981), W. F. Bolston (1982), and J. D. Ogilvy and D. C. Baker (1986).

2 **Ælfric** c.955–1020, English writer and Benedictine monk. He was the greatest English scholar during the revival of learning fostered by the Benedictine monasteries in the second half of the 10th cent. His aim was to educate the laity as well as the clergy. He wrote in English a series of saints' lives and homilies—designed for use as sermons by the preachers who were generally unable to read Latin. Ælfric was also the author of a grammar, a glossary, and a colloquy, which were for many years the standard texts for Latin study in English monasteries. Among his other writings are the *Heptateuch*, a free English version of the first seven books of the Bible. Ælfric is considered the chief prose stylist of the period. His later writings were strongly influenced by the balance, alliteration, and rhythm of Latin prose.

him, but most of them are doubtful; from them as from those of Ælfric written for Wulfstan, many details of English law were derived. A homily on the millennium in English alliterative prose, styled *Lupi sermo ad Anglos* is usually ascribed to him. Their sermons (written in the late 10th or early 11th cent.) set a standard for homiletics.

A great deal of Latin prose and poetry was written during the Anglo-Saxon period. Of historic as well as literary interest, it provides an excellent record of the founding and early development of the church in England and reflects the introduction and early influence there of Latin-European culture.

## Beowulf

THOUGH IT IS OFTEN VIEWED both as the archetypal Anglo-Saxon literary work and as a cornerstone of modern literature, *Beowulf* has a peculiar history that complicates both its historical and its canonical position in English literature. By the time the story was composed by an unknown Anglo-Saxon poet around 700 A.D., much of its material had been in circulation in oral narrative for many years. The Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian peoples had invaded the island of Britain and settled there several hundred years earlier, bringing with them several closely related Germanic languages that would evolve into Old English. Elements of the *Beowulf* story—including its setting and characters—date back to the period before the migration. The action of the poem takes place around 500 A.D. Many of the characters in the poem—the Swedish and Danish royal family members, for example—correspond to actual historical figures. Originally pagan warriors, the Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian invaders experienced a large-scale conversion to Christianity at the end of the sixth century. Though still an old pagan story, *Beowulf* thus came to be told by a Christian poet. The *Beowulf* poet is often at pains to attribute Christian thoughts and motives to his characters, who frequently behave in distinctly un-Christian ways. The *Beowulf* that we read today is therefore probably quite unlike the *Beowulf* with which the first Anglo-Saxon audiences were familiar. The element of religious tension is quite common in Christian Anglo-Saxon writings (*The Dream of the Rood*, for example), but the combination of a pagan story with a Christian narrator is fairly unusual. The plot of the poem concerns Scandinavian culture, but much of the poem's narrative intervention reveals that the poet's culture was somewhat different from that of his ancestors and that of his characters as well.

The world *Beowulf* depicts and the heroic code of honor, which defines much of the story, is a relic of pre-Anglo-Saxon culture. The story is set in Scandinavia, before the migration. Though it is a traditional story—part of a Germanic oral tradition—the poem as we have it is thought to be the work of a single poet. It was composed in England (not in Scandinavia) and is historical in its perspective, recording the values and culture of a bygone era. Many of those values, including the heroic code, were still operative to some degree in when the poem was written. These values had evolved to some extent in the intervening centuries and were continuing to change. In the Scandinavian world of the story, tiny tribes of people rally around strong kings, who protect their people from danger—especially from confrontations with other tribes. The warrior culture that results from this early feudal arrangement is extremely important, both to the story and to our understanding of Saxon civilization. Strong kings demand bravery and loyalty from their warriors, whom they repay with treasures won in war. Mead-halls such as Heorot in *Beowulf* were places where warriors would gather in the presence of their lord to drink, boast, tell stories, and receive gifts. Although these mead-halls offered sanctuary, the early Middle Ages were a dangerous time, and the paranoid sense of foreboding and doom that runs throughout *Beowulf* evidences the constant fear of invasion that plagued Scandinavian society.

Only a single manuscript of *Beowulf* survived the Anglo-Saxon era. For many centuries, the manuscript was all but forgotten, and, in the 1700s, it was nearly destroyed in a fire. It was not until the nineteenth century that widespread interest in the document emerged among scholars and translators of Old English. For the first hundred years of *Beowulf*'s prominence, interest in the poem was primarily historical—the text was viewed as a source of information about the Anglo-Saxon era. It was not until 1936, when the Oxford scholar J.R.R. Tolkien (who later wrote *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, works heavily influenced by *Beowulf*) published a groundbreaking paper entitled “*Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics*” that the manuscript gained recognition as a serious work of art.

*Beowulf* is now widely taught and is often presented as the first important work of English literature, creating the impression that *Beowulf* is in some way the source of the English canon. But because it was not widely read until the 1800s and not widely regarded as an important artwork until the 1900s, *Beowulf* has had little direct impact on the development of English poetry. In fact, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Marlowe, Pope, Shelley, Keats, and most other important English writers before the 1930s had little or no knowledge of the epic. It was not until the mid-to-late twentieth century that *Beowulf* began to influence writers, and, since then, it has had a marked impact on the work of many important novelists and poets, including W.H. Auden, Geoffrey Hill, Ted Hughes, and Seamus Heaney, the 1995 recipient of the Nobel Prize in literature, who translated the epic

## Old English Poetry

*Beowulf* is often referred to as the first important work of literature in English, even though it was written in Old English, an ancient form of the language that slowly evolved into the English now spoken. Compared to modern English, Old English is heavily Germanic, with little influence from Latin or French. As English history developed, after the French Normans conquered the Anglo-Saxons in 1066, Old English was gradually broadened by offerings from those languages. Thus modern English is derived from a number of sources. As a result, its vocabulary is rich with synonyms. The word “kingly,” for instance, descends from the Anglo-Saxon word *cyning*, meaning “king,” while the synonym “royal” comes from a French word and the synonym “regal” from a Latin word.

Fortunately, most students encountering *Beowulf* read it in a form translated into modern English. Still, a familiarity with the rudiments of Anglo-Saxon poetry enables a deeper understanding of the *Beowulf* text. Old English poetry is highly formal, but its form is quite unlike anything in modern English. Each line of Old English poetry is divided into two halves, separated by a caesura, or pause, and is often represented by a gap on the page, as the following example demonstrates:  
*Setton him to heafdon hilde-randas. . . .*

Because Anglo-Saxon poetry existed in oral tradition long before it was written down, the verse form contains complicated rules for alliteration designed to help scopos, or poets, remember the many thousands of lines they were required to know by heart. Each of the two halves of an Anglo-Saxon line contains two stressed syllables, and an alliterative pattern *must* be carried over across the caesura. Any of the stressed syllables may alliterate *except* the last syllable; so the first and second syllables may alliterate with the third together, or the first and third may alliterate alone, or the second and third may alliterate alone. For instance:

*Lade ne letton. Leoht eastan com.*

*Lade, letton, leoht, and eastan* are the four stressed words.

In addition to these rules, Old English poetry often features a distinctive set of rhetorical devices. The most common of these is the *kenning*, used throughout *Beowulf*. A kenning is a short metaphorical description of a thing used in place of the thing’s name; thus a ship might be called a “sea-rider,” or a king a “ring-giver.” Some translations employ kennings almost as frequently as they appear in the original. Others moderate the use of kennings in deference to a modern sensibility. But the Old English version of the epic is full of them, and they are perhaps the most important rhetorical device present in Old English poetry.

## Plot Overview

KING HROTHGAR OF DENMARK, a descendant of the great king Shield Sheafson, enjoys a prosperous and successful reign. He builds a great mead-hall, called Heorot, where his warriors can gather to drink, receive gifts from their lord, and listen to stories sung by the scopos, or bards. But the jubilant noise from Heorot angers Grendel, a horrible demon who lives in the swamplands of Hrothgar’s kingdom. Grendel terrorizes the Danes every night, killing them and defeating their efforts to fight back. The Danes suffer many years of fear, danger, and death at the hands of Grendel. Eventually, however, a young Geatish warrior named Beowulf hears of Hrothgar’s plight. Inspired by the challenge Beowulf sails to Denmark with a small company of men determined to defeat Grendel.

Hrothgar, who had once done a great favor for Beowulf’s father Ecgtheow, accepts Beowulf’s offer to fight Grendel and holds a feast in the hero’s honor. During the feast, an envious Dane named Unferth taunts Beowulf and accuses him of being unworthy of his reputation. Beowulf responds with a boastful description of some of his past accomplishments. His confidence cheers the Danish warriors, and the feast lasts merrily into the night. At last, however, Grendel arrives. Beowulf fights him unarmed, proving himself stronger than the demon, who is terrified. As Grendel struggles to escape, Beowulf tears the monster’s arm off. Mortally wounded, Grendel slinks back into the swamp to die. The severed arm is hung high in the mead-hall as a trophy of victory.

Overjoyed, Hrothgar showers Beowulf with gifts and treasure at a feast in his honour. Songs are sung in praise of Beowulf, and the celebration lasts late into the night. But another threat is approaching. Grendel’s mother, a swamp-hag who lives in a desolate lake, comes to Heorot seeking revenge for her son’s death. She murders Aeschere, one of Hrothgar’s most trusted advisers, before slinking away. To avenge Aeschere’s death, the company travels to the murky swamp, where Beowulf dives into the water and fights Grendel’s mother in her underwater lair. He kills her with a sword forged for a giant, then, finding Grendel’s corpse, decapitates it and brings the head as a prize to Hrothgar. The Danish countryside is now purged of its treacherous monsters.

The Danes are again overjoyed, and Beowulf's fame spreads across the kingdom. Beowulf departs after a sorrowful goodbye to Hrothgar, who has treated him like a son. He returns to Geatland, where he and his men are reunited with their king and queen, Hygelac and Hygd, to whom Beowulf recounts his adventures in Denmark. Beowulf then hands over most of his treasure to Hygelac, who, in turn, rewards him.

In time, Hygelac is killed in a war against the Shylfings, and, after Hygelac's son dies, Beowulf ascends to the throne of the Geats. He rules wisely for fifty years, bringing prosperity to Geatland. When Beowulf is an old man, however, a thief disturbs a barrow, or mound, where a great dragon lies guarding a horde of treasure. Enraged, the dragon emerges from the barrow and begins unleashing fiery destruction upon the Geats. Sensing his own death approaching, Beowulf goes to fight the dragon. With the aid of Wiglaf, he succeeds in killing the beast, but at a heavy cost. The dragon bites Beowulf in the neck and its fiery venom kills him moments after their encounter. The Geats fear that their enemies will attack them now that Beowulf is dead. According to Beowulf's wishes, they burn their departed king's body on a huge funeral pyre and then bury him with a massive treasure in a barrow overlooking the sea.

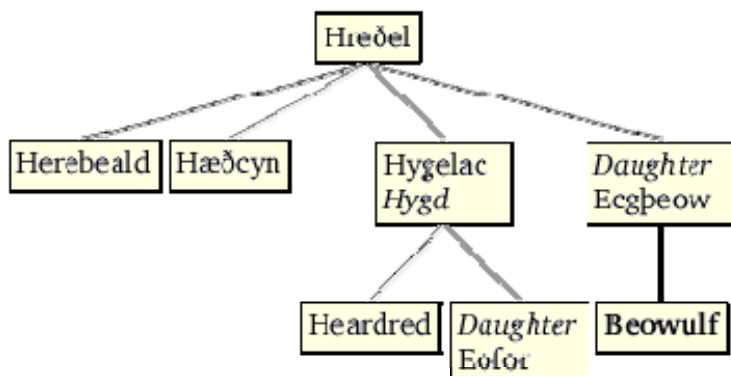
## Characters

### The Geats

The **Geats** were Beowulf's clan - a seafaring tribe residing in the south of Sweden. As the poem suggests, the Geats appear to have been conquered and disappeared into history. The seafaring Geats appear to be the invading 'Danes' of whom Gregory of Tours writes concerning an attack by Chlochilaicus (Hygelac) against the Franks in 520. Later they were connected to the Gautar people who were eventually subjugated by the Swedes in territory inland of Sweden.

Given this history, F.R. Klaeber speculates that **Beowulf** himself was born in about the year 495. He defeats Grendel and his mother to save Hrothgar's kingdom in 515. Following Hygelac's raid in 520, he eventually becomes king of the Geats when Heardred was killed in 533. Fifty years after that, the poem says that **Beowulf** is killed by the dragon, but few scholars are willing to commit to any specific date.

The Geats are referred to as the Geatas, Guð-Geatas (War-), the Sæ-Geatas (Sea-), and the Weder-Geatas (Weather-).



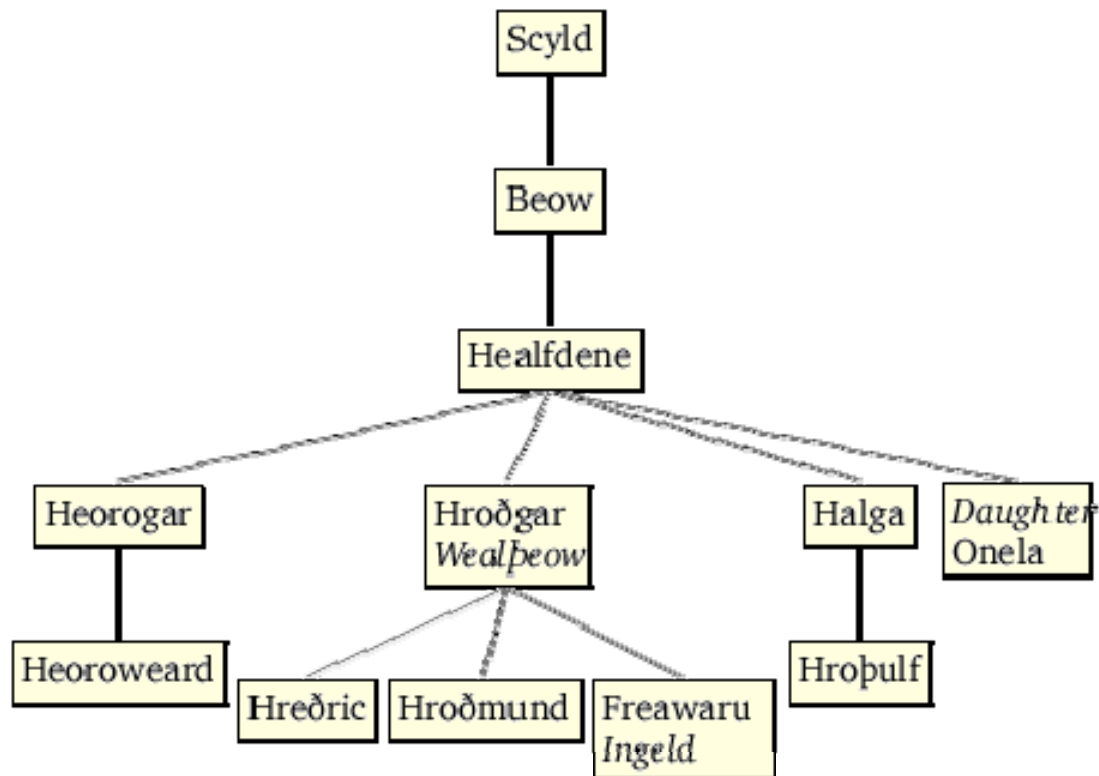
### The Danes

The **Danes** were residents of Denmark. Hrothgar's Heorot is likely to have been located on the island of Sjaelland near the present day city of Roskilde.

The Scylding line is known through Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon sources; the Anglo-Saxon king Cnut (1016-1042, a period coincident with the composition of the **Beowulf** manuscript) is known to have descended from this line. The poem Widsið, with its catalogue of Germanic kings, list Hrothgar and Hrothulf as co-rulers of the Danes at Heorot, and of the marriage arrangement with Ingeld of the Heaðo-Bards.

The Danes are referred to as the Dena, Beorht-Dena (Bright-), Gar-Dena (Spear-), Hring-Dena (Ring-, Corselet-), East-Dena, Norð-Dena (North-), Suð-Dena (South-), West-Dena, Scyldings (Sons of Scyld), Ar-Scyldingas (Honour-), Here-Scyldingas (Army-), Sige-Scyldingas (Victory-), þeod-Scyldingas (People-), and Ingwines (Ing's Friends).

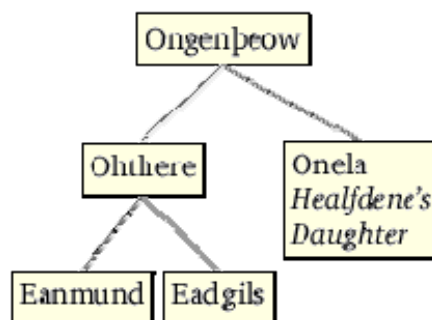




### The Swedes

The Swedes lived in Sweden north of the Vaner and Volter lakes, north of the Geats. Archaeology in Sweden reveals the grave mounds of Ongenþeow who was buried in 510-515, and his grandson Eadgils, buried in 575. These dates correspond with the events described in *Beowulf*.

Known as the Sweon (Swedes), the Scylfingas (Sons of Scylf), Guð-Scylfingas (War-), and Heaðo-Scylfingas (War-



**The Fight at Finnsburh** The fragment of the Finnsburh poem and the Finnsburh reference in *Beowulf* somewhat overlap. The song sung during the celebration at Heorot follows the events described in the poem. This overlap in narratives is one reason why these two works are studied together.

The original manuscript of the *Fight at Finnsburh* is now lost, but it is known to have existed on a single leaf in the Lambeth Palace Library, page 489. The text was published in a transcription made by George Hikes in 1705.

*The Fight at Finnsburh* is an example of a typical Germanic 'heroic lay' describing warriors' deeds in battle and the speeches of significant warriors during the battle. The poem resembles others of the same genre such as *The Battle of Maldon*, and is quite different from the epic form of *Beowulf*.

**Beowulf** is the only poem that associates the parties involved as Danes and Frisians.



**Grendel** was a monster, one of a giant race which survived the great flood, slain by **Beowulf**. It is told that his origins stretch back to Cain, who killed Abel. He is of particular cause of trouble to Hrothgar because of his disregard for law and custom: he refuses to negotiate a peace settlement or to accept tributes of gold.

There is reference to "*Grendel's Mere*", "*Grendel's Pit*" and "*Grendel's Peck*" in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. The references seem to collaborate the underground or water lair of the **Beowulf** epic, but it is unclear what the true origins of these names were.

**Grendel's mother** is supposedly a smaller creature than her son. She is a vengeful creature who illustrates the constant cycle of war in the poem, even when the enemy appears to be defeated.

As part of a mythical giant race, both Grendel and his mother appear impervious to normal swords, hence the difficulty the Danes must have had in trying to deal with them. **Beowulf** eventually finds a sword forged by the giants themselves in order to defeat them, but their blood runs hot enough to melt even that blade.

## Who wrote Beowulf?

The author did not sign and date the manuscript, and no records were kept of when the poem was written. Given the lack of information pointing to the origins of the poem, scholars must deduce the text's history by the artifact that exists. But why study the authorship of the poem? Colin Chase summarises the reasons for this quest in the prologue of the collection *The Dating of Beowulf*:

The date of **Beowulf**, debated for almost a century, is a small question with large consequences. Does the poem provide us with an accurate if idealized view of early Germanic Culture? Or is it rather a creature of nostalgia and imagination, born of the desire of a later age to create for itself a glorious past? If we cannot decide when, between the fifth and the eleventh centuries, the poem was composed, we cannot distinguish what elements in **Beowulf** belong properly to the history of material culture, to the history of myth and legend, to political history, or to the development of the English literary imagination.

The quickest and easiest assumption about the origins of the poem is that it was an oral poem that was eventually transcribed and has since been passed down in the form of the manuscript. Scholars have presumed to study the poem as if it were Classical, and find much difficulty in the non-continuous narrative and the unfamiliar form. Allen Frantzen, in *Writing the Unreadable Beowulf*, is uncomfortable with the way a tradition may be imposed by 'canonical' editions such as the *Norton Anthology*; he is also critical of the quest to find a single author of the 'pure' poem. Instead, he is looking for the gaps in the text that indicate to him that it had been constantly rewritten to suit the culture of that time. In effect, there may have been so many authors spanned the six centuries that the authorship remains in question; the rewriting of **Beowulf** continues in the postmodern period. Seamus Heaney's poetic translation is the latest.

**Paul F. Baum** finds a "literary vacuum without historical perspective" when the authorship and purpose of the poem remains in question. In *The Beowulf Poet* he suggests that a single author had combined two folk stories with some historical events as a backdrop and some Christian doctrine to create a new form of heroic epic, or as Tolkien suggests, an "heroic-elegaic" poem. Baum even goes so far as to hypothesize an eighth-century female author of the poem as explanation for their pronounced roles, and for the lack of gory fighting (compared with the Finnsburh Fragment). The brief historical digressions and Christian colouring suggest an audience familiar with those ideas and events in the late eighth century. With the difficult language and sometimes obscure references, his conclusion is that the poem may have been a collection of folk lore and history, but intended for a small audience.

It seems clear that the origin of **Beowulf** stems from a mix of Scandinavian, Germanic, and Anglian influences. What is consistently unclear is which of these audiences the poem was intended for. As a story of Danes, Geats, and Swedes, one

might suppose that the poem was of Scandinavian origin, finally written down in England, but there is no reference to the characters in Scandinavian lore.

Perhaps looking closely at the artifact that is **Beowulf** itself, the manuscript, can shed light on the authorship of the poem. Kevin S. Kiernan suggests an eleventh century origin, and that the single extant manuscript is, in fact, the first composition of the poem in his book *Beowulf and the Beowulf Manuscript* and summarized in his essay *The Eleventh-Century Origin of Beowulf and the Beowulf Manuscript*. Noting the efforts taken by the second scribe of the MS in proofreading and correcting the text of **Beowulf** and not the rest of the Nowell Codex, Kiernan begins to figure that the composition of the text is not a mere copy of some earlier manuscript, but the original. An abrupt shift from one scribe to the next on folio 174v suggests that two distinct poems may have been combined at the last minute.

What is most striking about the manuscript is the digression from the 20-line grid of the rest of the codex starting from folio 163 until the end of the poem. Kiernan speculates that the second scribe had completed his last two gatherings of pages before the first scribe, thus requiring him to fit more per folio than he had started with. Kiernan concludes that this is a result of two scribes trying to integrate two previously unrelated texts together. Leonard Boyle's article *Beowulf and the Nowell Codex*, argues that both scribes were working in concert while the **Beowulf** section of the Nowell Codex was some 36 lines of text unsynchronized with the manuscript they were copying; thus the discrepancies attempt to fix the foliation in terms of the whole codex.

Boyle also notes the alteration of fitt numbers could either be a mistake on the first scribe's part, or that a fitt had been deliberately omitted while copying. With fitt XXVIII missing on the manuscript, a later scribe had chosen to correct this by altering fitts XXVIII through XXVIII. Boyle also suggests that the fitts may have received their numbering for the first time on this manuscript. Kiernan takes this suggestion as further proof of the authorship being contemporary with the manuscript.

## The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial

The ship at Sutton Hoo under excavation:



In 1939, a seventh-century ship burial was excavated at Sutton Hoo near Woodbridge in Suffolk. Its significance to the study of **Beowulf** is the interesting mix of Christian and pagan practices involved in the burial that mirrors a similar mix in beliefs in the poem. Effectively, some of the artifacts breathe life into the events of **Beowulf** while the poem helps explain the contents of Sutton Hoo. Together, archaeology and literature paint a detailed picture of Anglo-Saxon culture.

## Politics and Warfare

**Warfare**, or the threat of warfare, is a regular part of Anglo-Saxon life. From the number of feuds and stories of clan fealty throughout **Beowulf**, this is clear. Other Anglo-Saxon texts, such as *The Battle of Maldon*, *Cynewulf and Cyneheard*, and *The Battle at Finnsburh* are essentially of the Germanic 'heroic lay' tradition commemorating the heroic efforts of individual warriors, their strategies and fates.

Pæt wæs god cyning!

What makes **Beowulf** significantly different from these other works is not the portrayal of warfare, but the exaltation of peace and peace-keeping through the rule of powerful kings.

**Beowulf** opens by demonstrating the power of those kings. Scyld Scefing, who was so strong to have taken many mead benches and was offered much tributary gold kept the peace because no other tribe dared face him. Sheer military might is a major peacekeeper in such troubled times.

Of the most prevalent virtues of kingship is the responsible distribution of weapons and treasure. The treasures bestowed upon Beowulf by Hroðgar following the defeat of Grendel an example of the proper distribution of treasure to a warrior who has proven himself worthy to a king (\*XV, \*XXVI).

Hroðgar's exemplary story of Heremod, the Danish king who failed to reward his retainers with gold and soon lost their loyalty, serves as an example to Beowulf on how not to become a bad king.

The loyalty of followers and the connexions between that loyalty, success in battle and in gold are intimate. While **Beowulf** expounds this relationship, it gives reason for the veritable treasure horde found at Sutton Hoo.

*Sinc eaðe mæg,  
gold on grunde gumcynnes gehwone  
oferhigan, hyde se ðe wylle.*



James Campbell observes these cycles of power in **Beowulf**. He sees how treasure must feed the tribe's capacity for war, and how war requires the supply and flow of treasure - victory breeds thirst for revenge, and feud brings upon feud. Looking at the intricate beauty of the treasures involved, he has few doubts that those ancient warriors would live and die for such treasures.

The source of the technology involved in creating the treasures of the Anglo-Saxons - clearly evidenced in the famous belt buckle at Sutton Hoo - is still unclear. Worn openly, they serve as a symbol of one warrior's worthiness to his tribe.

*Eoforlic scionon  
ofer hleorbergan gehroden golde,  
fah ond fyrheard ferhwearde heold  
gummod grimmon.*



The boar was a symbol of protection -- ferocity in battle -- for the Anglo-Saxons. **Beowulf** wears a shining helmet that is in the audiences' imagination not unlike the one found at Benty Grange, Derbys.

With textual descriptions matching arms, armour, and other artifacts so well, scholars who argue that the poem's composition is in the seventh century, about the time of the Sutton Hoo burial, have a strong case, considering this evidence.



*Oft seldan hwær æfter leodhryre  
lytle hwile bongar bugeð.*

Swords (particularly their hilts) are as intricately decorated by the Anglo-Saxons as their jewellery. As tools of war, they are the gifts that most symbolize the worthiness of a warrior to a clan.

The swords themselves have their own stories to tell. Some are given names such as 'Hrunting', Unferð's sword, or 'Nægling', **Beowulf**'s sword. They are often heirlooms passed down from father to son, from king to retainer, or captured in battle. The runes or decorations on the hilts may represent a

story, such as the sword of Eotens that **Beowulf** retrieves from Grendel's lair and appears to tell the story of his origins (\*XXVIII).

While swords may be a symbol of worthiness and power, they can also incite fury for revenge. Beowulf's prediction of disaster for the marriage between Freawaru and Ingeld is based on the importance of swords to the honour of individual warriors and their clan (\*XXXVIII-XXXX).

'Heald þu nu, hruse, nu hæleð ne moston, eorla æhte!'

The poem begins with the gilded Heorot -- a palace only possible through many years of peace of tribesman collecting treasures -- and ends with Beowulf's death in front of the dragon's barrow where a long dead tribe had buried their treasure. The poem describes a culture so deeply connected to its material goods that they bury it along with their dead. There is an understanding that with the gold goes a balance of power, and when a powerful (read rich) leader dies, to redistribute his gold irresponsibly would be an imbalance of power. The Geats' reburial of the gold in Beowulf's funeral mound indicates a kind of despair: the gold can do them no good without a king to distribute it.

## Christian Colouring in Beowulf

**F.A. Blackburn** summarises the possible sources for the Christian elements of the poem in his essay *The Cristian Colouring in the Beowulf*:

1. The poem was composed by a Christian, who had heard the stories and used them as the material of the work.
2. The poem was composed by a Christian, who used old lays as his material.
3. The poem was composed by a heathen, either from old stories or from old lays. At a later date it was revised by a Christian, to whom we owe the Christian allusions found in it.

Unfortunately, without records of those old stories or lays upon *Beowulf* may have been based, we cannot be sure which one of these is true.

Blackburn also classifies these Christian elements:

1. Passages containing biblical history or allusions to some scriptural narrative. These include references to Cain, Abel, and the flood.
2. Passages containing expressions in disapproval of heathen ideas or heathen worship. There is one of these in the introduction to the Danes near the beginning of the poem.
3. Passages containing references to doctrines distinctively Christian: references to heaven, hell, and the day of judgement. He finds ten cases.
4. Incidental allusions to the Christian God. He finds some 53 cases.

Looking closely at these elements, Blackburn speculates on how easily one can refigure them to be pagan by the replacement of a word or omission of a phrase, thus seeing how scribes may have done so in the past. Reversing the Christianizing process, he concludes that at some point, *Beowulf* may have been an entirely pagan text.

Others choose to examine how well the Christian elements fit together and form such an integral part of the poem. Unlike other poems, such as *The Wanderer* or *The Seafarer*, in which it appears to many editors that the Christian exhortations appear [to early critics] to have been appended to the otherwise pagan poems, *Beowulf* has Christian elements throughout the narrative.

Marie Padgett Hamilton, in her essay *The Religious Principle*, argues that the poem is consistent with Augustine's model of God's grace: that a society of the Righteous live together with one of the Reprobate on earth. This principle and the ways in which they are presented in the poem, Hamilton argues, would have been familiar to the English at that time. Beowulf's concern over his honour and *wyrd* -- his fate -- are concerns about Providence or Divine will. In *wyrd*, we can see the beginnings of a change in what was a pagan concept and its acceptance of a new Christianized meaning. On the other side, Grendel is equated to the race of Cain, and the dragon to be an incarnation of the devil. Again, these characterizations of the monstrous and evil were well known to the English.

What is clear about the religious colouring of *Beowulf* is that while it is clearly Christian, there is little Christian doctrine. References are only to the Old Testament narratives and concepts easily refigured from their pagan equivalents. It seems

that *Beowulf* tells of a period in the midst of religious change being neither entirely pagan, nor fully Christian [or to be an attempt to integrate Germanic history into an Old Testament time frame]. We can let the decision to you, after reading and analyzing this Epic.

## Middle English Literature



Picture taken from the site Luminarium

The Middle Ages is like no other period in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* in terms of the time span it covers. Caedmon's *Hymn*, the earliest English poem to survive as a text (NAEL 8, 1.25-27), belongs to the latter part of the seventh century. The morality play, *Everyman*, is dated "after 1485" and probably belongs to the early-sixteenth century. In addition, for the Middle Ages, there is no one central movement or event such as the English Reformation, the Civil War, or the Restoration around which to organize a historical approach to the period.

When did "English Literature" begin? Any answer to that question must be problematic, for the very concept of English literature is a construction of literary history, a concept that changed over time. There are no "English" characters in *Beowulf*, and English scholars and authors had no knowledge of the poem before it was discovered and edited in the nineteenth century. Although written in the language called "Anglo-Saxon," the poem was claimed by Danish and German scholars as their earliest national epic before it came to be thought of as an "Old English" poem. One of the results of the Norman Conquest was that the structure and vocabulary of the English language changed to such an extent that Chaucer, even if he had come across a manuscript of Old English poetry, would have experienced far more difficulty construing the language than with medieval Latin, French, or Italian. If a King Arthur had actually lived, he would have spoken a Celtic language possibly still intelligible to native speakers of Middle Welsh but not to Middle English speakers.

The literary culture of the Middle Ages was far more international than national and was divided more by lines of class and audience than by language. Latin was the language of the Church and of learning. After the eleventh century, French became the dominant language of secular European literary culture. Edward, the Prince of Wales, who took the king of France prisoner at the battle of Poitiers in 1356, had culturally more in common with his royal captive than with the common people of England. And the legendary King Arthur was an international figure. Stories about him and his knights originated in Celtic poems and tales and were adapted and greatly expanded in Latin chronicles and French romances even before Arthur became an English hero.

Chaucer was certainly familiar with poetry that had its roots in the Old English period. He read popular romances in Middle English, most of which derive from more sophisticated French and Italian sources. But when he began writing in the 1360s and 1370s, he turned directly to French and Italian models as well as to classical poets (especially Ovid). English poets in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries looked upon Chaucer and his contemporary John Gower as founders of *English* literature, as those who made English a language fit for cultivated readers. In the Renaissance, Chaucer was referred to as the "English Homer." Spenser called him the "well of English undefiled."

Nevertheless, Chaucer and his contemporaries Gower, William Langland, and the *Gawain* poet — all writing in the latter third of the fourteenth century — are heirs to classical and medieval cultures that had been evolving for many centuries.

*Cultures* is put in the plural deliberately, for there is a tendency, even on the part of medievalists, to think of the Middle Ages as a single culture epitomized by the Great Gothic cathedrals in which architecture, art, music, and liturgy seem to join in magnificent expressions of a unified faith — an approach one recent scholar has referred to as "cathedralism." Such a view overlooks the diversity of medieval cultures and the social, political, religious, economic, and technological changes that took place over this vastly long period.

The texts included here from "The Middle Ages" attempt to convey that diversity. They date from the sixth to the late-fifteenth century. Eight were originally in Old French, six in Latin, five in English, two in Old Saxon, two in Old Icelandic, and one each in Catalan, Hebrew, Greek, and Arabic.

"The Linguistic and Literary Contexts of *Beowulf*" demonstrates the kinship of the Anglo-Saxon poem with the versification and literature of other early branches of the Germanic language group. An Anglo-Saxon poet who was writing an epic based on the book of Genesis was able to insert into his work the episodes of the fall of the angels and the fall of man that he adapted with relatively minor changes from an Old Saxon poem thought to have been lost until a fragment from it was found late in the nineteenth century in the Vatican Library. Germanic mythology and legend preserved in Old Icelandic literature centuries later than *Beowulf* provide us with better insights into stories known to the poet than anything in ancient Greek and Roman epic poetry.

"Estates and Orders" samples ideas about medieval society and some of its members and institutions. Particular attention is given to religious orders and to the ascetic ideals that were supposed to rule the lives of men and women living in religious communities (such as Chaucer's Prioress, Monk, and Friar, who honor those rules more in the breach than in the observance) and anchorites (such as Julian of Norwich) living apart. *The Rule of Saint Benedict*, written for a sixth-century religious community, can serve the modern reader as a guidebook to the ideals and daily practices of monastic life. The mutual influence of those ideals and new aristocratic ideals of chivalry is evident in the selection from the *Ancrene Riwe* (Rule for anchoresses, NAEL 8, [1.157–159]) and *The Book of the Order of Chivalry*. Though medieval social theory has little to say about women, women were sometimes treated satirically as if they constituted their own estate and profession in rebellion against the divinely ordained rule of men. An outstanding instance is the "Old Woman" from the *Romance of the Rose*, whom Chaucer reinvented as the Wife of Bath. The tenth-century English Benedictine monk Aelfric gives one of the earliest formulations of the theory of three estates — clergy, nobles, and commoners — working harmoniously together. But the deep-seated resentment between the upper and lower estates flared up dramatically in the Uprising of 1381 and is revealed by the slogans of the rebels, which are cited here in selections from the chronicles of Henry Knighton and Thomas Walsingham, and by the attack of the poet John Gower on the rebels in his *Vox Clamantis*. In the late-medieval genre of estates satire, all three estates are portrayed as selfishly corrupting and disrupting a mythical social order believed to have prevailed in a past happier age.

The selections under "Arthur and Gawain" trace how French writers in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries transformed the Legendary Histories of Britain (NAEL 8, 1.117–128) into the narrative genre that we now call "romance." The works of Chrétien de Troyes focus on the adventures of individual knights of the Round Table and how those adventures impinge upon the cult of chivalry. Such adventures often take the form of a quest to achieve honor or what Sir Thomas Malory often refers to as "worship." But in romance the adventurous quest is often entangled, for better or for worse, with personal fulfillment of love for a lady — achieving her love, protecting her honor, and, in rare cases such as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, resisting a lady's advances. In the thirteenth century, clerics turned the sagas of Arthur and his knights — especially Sir Lancelot — into immensely long prose romances that disparaged worldly chivalry and the love of women and advocated spiritual chivalry and sexual purity. These were the "French books" that Malory, as his editor and printer William Caxton tells us, "abridged into English," and gave them the definitive form from which Arthurian literature has survived in poetry, prose, art, and film into modern times.

"The First Crusade," launched in 1096, was the first in a series of holy wars that profoundly affected the ideology and culture of Christian Europe. Preached by Pope Urban II, the aim of the crusade was to unite warring Christian factions in the common goal of liberating the Holy Land from its Moslem rulers. The chronicle of Robert the Monk is one of several versions of Urban's address. The Hebrew chronicle of Eliezer bar Nathan gives a moving account of attacks made by some of the crusaders on Jewish communities in the Rhineland — the beginnings of the persecution of European Jews in the later Middle Ages. In the biography of her father, the Byzantine emperor Alexius I, the princess Anna Comnena provides us with still another perspective of the leaders of the First Crusade whom she met on their passage through Constantinople en route to the Holy Land. The taking of Jerusalem by the crusaders came to be celebrated by European writers of history and epic poetry as one of the greatest heroic achievements of all times. The accounts by the Arab historian Ibn Al-Athir and by William of Tyre tell us what happened after the crusaders breached the walls of Jerusalem from complementary but very different points of view.

Near the beginning of Chaucer's General Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*, the narrator tells his audience that he will describe the "condicioun" of the pilgrims, their "degree" (social rank), "*whiche they were*," and also "*what array that they were inne*"; at the end he says that he has now told their "*estaat*" and "array" and apologizes if he has not arranged them in the "*degree . . . as that they sholde stonde*," i.e., their correct social order (NAEL 8, 1.219, lines 38–41; 235, line 718; 236, lines 745–47). This professed concern for putting people in their proper place is obviously of great interest to the poet and his audience. It should also be a matter of interest and amusement to modern readers, especially if they realize that the poet's ostensible concern for propriety is a mask he puts on. What is interesting about Chaucer's Prologue is not that it portrays an archaic and closed social order but that it reveals that order in the process of breaking down. Most of Chaucer's pilgrims are by no means content to stay in their proper places but are engaged in the pursuit of wealth, status, and respectability. The conflict between the old and the new, between tradition and ambition is evident not only in the General Prologue but throughout *The Canterbury Tales* in the individual pilgrims' prologues and tales.

Every society devises terminology meant to express social stratifications but also often used to disguise them. *Class*, the principal term in both popular and academic discourse about our society, is not very useful or accurate in analyzing medieval society or the ways in which that society thought about itself. Although there may be some justification in applying notions of *class*, especially *middle-class*, to Chaucer's world, that of the late fourteenth century, one needs to keep in mind that the Middle Ages cover the period of a millennium during which social structures and social theory were constantly changing. The main purpose of the following selections is to define more precisely such terms as *condition*, *degree*, *estate*, and *order*, a word that can signify both the (theoretically) harmonious arrangement of the cosmos and society and individual units of the general order, such as a religious order or an order of chivalry.



One of the main differences between the order of medieval and the order of modern society is the preeminent role played in the former by the Church and its many institutions. One-third of the Canterbury pilgrims either belong to the Church — the Prioress, the Second Nun (her chaplain), the Nun's Priest (one of three priests who are said to accompany her), the Monk, the Friar, the Clerk, and the Parson — or are laymen who make a corrupt living out of it — the Summoner and the Pardoner. The Church was in itself a complex social structure and inevitably constituted one of the divisions made in medieval social theory, which was written in Latin by churchmen. An obvious division is the bipartite one between the clergy and the laity — those belonging to the Church and those outside it. Another — one of several tripartite divisions — which stems from the Roman

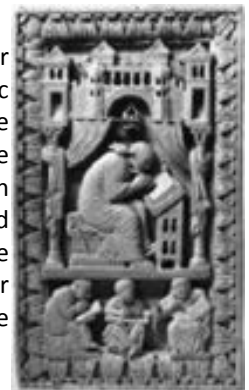
Church's doctrine of celibacy of the clergy, is based on sexual activity: virgins, widowers and widows, and married people. This is a classification that the Wife of Bath in her Prologue professes to accept while defending her right to remarry as often as she pleases (NAEL 8, 1.256–60).

Religious orders were so called because they were "ordered" or "regulated" by a *regula*, i.e., a "rule" (the latter noun comes into English from Old French *reule* via Latin *regula*), and a division was recognized between *regular* clergy, those subject to the rule of a monastic order, who lived in a religious community, and secular clergy, those subject to the bishop of a diocese, who lived in the world. Both regulars and seculars were ultimately subject to the pope. The oldest religious rule in this sense is the *Rule of Saint Benedict* devised in the sixth century by the founder of the Benedictine order, who has been called the "Father of Western Monasticism."



Over the course of the Middle Ages, a schema of three mutually dependent estates developed, one of the earliest articulations of which is that of the English Benedictine monk Aelfric. According to this theory, Christian society was comprised of those who pray (the clergy), those who fight (the nobility), and those who work (the labourers). The clergy see to it that the souls of all may be saved; the labourers see to it that the bodies of all may be fed and clothed; the nobility see to it that the other two estates may carry out their functions in peace and with justice.

In practice, such a schema does not begin to account for the varieties of religious, social, or professional experience during the Middle Ages. The *Rule of Saint Benedict* sets forth the basic principles and practices of monks and nuns and helps one to grasp the violations of the rule by the likes of Chaucer's fourteenth-century Monk. But the religious and social world kept changing. The Benedictine order itself changed as it grew more powerful and politically influential. In the twelfth century new orders appeared — the Cistercians and the orders of friars founded by St. Dominic and St. Francis. Also, in emulation of the early Christian desert fathers, both men and women often chose to live as hermits or recluses instead of joining religious communities. The *Ancrene Riwe* (Rule for Anchoresses) (NAEL 8, 1.157–59), written for three English sisters, contains elements of passionate devotional experience absent from the Benedictine rule.





In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the nobility developed a taste for romances of chivalry — many of them about *King Arthur* and the knights of the Round Table. The Round Table itself came to be thought of as an "order," in some respects like a religious order. Ramón Lull's *The Book of the Order of Chivalry*, one of the most popular works of the Middle Ages, lays out that concept in the form of a book of instruction presented like a rule by an older knight to a young squire who is about to be dubbed into the order of knighthood.

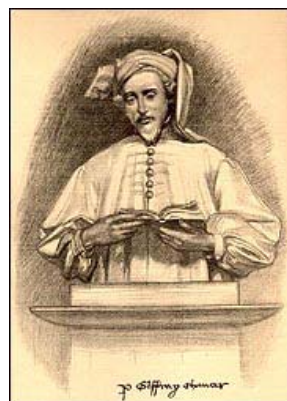
Nuns belonged to religious orders following a rule. But St. Benedict's *Rule*, Aelfric, Ramón Lull, and most discussions of estates and orders, except those, like *Ancrene Riwe*, addressed to women, are silent about woman's estate. Women worked beside their husbands in the fields, in the textile industry, and in shops; but there was a body of antifeminist literature that dealt with women as though they belonged to a separate order whose sole enterprise was sex, love, and marriage. In the *Romance of the Rose*, Jean de Meun, the second of its two authors, created a satiric character named *La vieille*, the Old Woman, who holds a long discourse on how to take advantage of men and succeed in that enterprise (in which, she confesses, she has failed). Her discourse is an important source for Chaucer's *Wife of Bath's Prologue*.



Although the three estates were supposed to work together for the common good, their actual history is one of constant friction and conflict. The murder of Thomas á Becket by four of Henry II's knights, for which the king was forced to do penance, is an example of an ongoing dispute between church and state about jurisdiction over the clergy. Mutual hatred of the lower and higher estates is seen in the bloody English *Uprising of 1381*, which is represented here by a series of rebel manifestos preserved in chronicles and an allegorical diatribe against the rebels in the *Vox Clamantis* of the poet *John Gower*. That work, as well as Gower's *Mirour de l'Omme*, illustrates the late-medieval genre of *estates satire* to which the General Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales* is, in some respects, related. In estates satires the idealism projected by St. Benedict, the author of *Ancrene Riwe*, and Ramón Lull has given way to a profound pessimism and even despair about the social order. The different estates now include — in addition to bishops, monks, barons, knights, and peasants — merchants, doctors, lawyers, and other more specialized professions whose activities provide an unrelieved, if occasionally colorful, catalogue of greed, fraud, and hypocrisy.

## Geoffrey Chaucer

Geoffrey Chaucer  
(c. 1343–1400)



Chaucer (the name is French and seems to have meant originally 'shoemaker') came into the world probably in 1338, the first important author who was born and lived in London, which with him becomes the center of English literature. About his life, as about those of many of our earlier writers, there remains only very fragmentary information, which in his case is largely pieced together from scattering entries of various kinds in such documents as court account books and public records of state matters and of lawsuits. His father, a wine merchant, may have helped supply the cellars of the king (Edward III) and so have been able to bring his son to royal notice; at any rate, while still in his teens Geoffrey became a page in the service of one of the king's daughters-in-law. In this position his duty would be partly to perform various humble work in the household, partly also to help amuse the leisure of the inmates, and it is easy to suppose that he soon won favor as a fluent story-teller. He early became acquainted with the seamy as well as the brilliant side of courtly life;

for in 1359 he was in the campaign in France and was taken prisoner. That he was already valued appears from the king's subscription of the equivalent of a thousand dollars of present-day money toward his ransom; and after his release he was transferred to the king's own service, where about 1368 he was promoted to the rank of esquire. He was probably already married to one of the queen's ladies-in-waiting. Chaucer was now thirty years of age, and his practical sagacity and knowledge of men had been recognized; for from this time on he held important public positions. He was often sent to the Continent--to France, Flanders, and Italy--on diplomatic missions; and for eleven years he was in charge of the London customs, where the uncongenial drudgery occupied almost all his time until through the intercession of the queen he was allowed to perform it by deputy. In 1386 he was a member of Parliament, knight of the shire for Kent; but in that year his fortune turned--he lost all his offices at the overthrow of the faction of his patron, Duke John of Gaunt (uncle of the young king, Richard II, who had succeeded his grandfather, Edward III, some years before). Chaucer's party and himself were soon restored to power, but although during the remaining dozen years of his life he received from the Court various temporary appointments and rewards, he appears often to have been poor and in need. When Duke Henry of Bolingbroke, son of John of Gaunt, deposed the king and himself assumed the throne as Henry IV, Chaucer's prosperity seemed assured, but he lived after this for less than a year, dying suddenly in 1400. He was buried in Westminster Abbey, the first of the men of letters to be laid in the nook which has since become the Poets' Corner.

Chaucer's poetry falls into three rather clearly marked periods. First is that of French influence, when, though writing in English, he drew inspiration from the rich French poetry of the period, which was produced partly in France, partly in England. Chaucer experimented with the numerous lyric forms which the French poets had brought to perfection; he also translated, in whole or in part, the most important of medieval French narrative poems, the thirteenth century 'Romance of the Rose' of Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meung, a very clever satirical allegory, in many thousand lines, of medieval love and medieval religion. This poem, with its Gallic brilliancy and audacity, long exercised over Chaucer's mind the same dominant influence which it possessed over most secular poets of the age. Chaucer's second period, that of Italian influence, dates from his first visit to Italy in 1372-3, where at Padua he may perhaps have met the fluent Italian poet Petrarch, and where at any rate the revelation of Italian life and literature must have aroused his intense enthusiasm. From this time, and especially after his other visit to Italy, five years later, he made much direct use of the works of Petrarch and Boccaccio and to a less degree of those of their greater predecessor, Dante, whose severe spirit was too unlike Chaucer's for his thorough appreciation. The longest and finest of Chaucer's poems of this period, 'Troilus and Criseyde' is based on a work of Boccaccio; here Chaucer details with compelling power the sentiment and tragedy of love, and the psychology of the heroine who had become for the Middle Ages a central figure in the tale of Troy. Chaucer's third period, covering his last fifteen years, is called his English period, because now at last his genius, mature and self-sufficient, worked in essential independence. First in time among his poems of these years stands 'The Legend of Good Women,' a series of romantic biographies of famous ladies of classical legend and history, whom it pleases Chaucer to designate as martyrs of love; but more important than the stories themselves is the Prolog, where he chats with delightful frankness about his own ideas and tastes.

The great work of the period, however, and the crowning achievement of Chaucer's life, is 'The Canterbury Tales.' Every one is familiar with the plan of the story (which may well have had some basis in fact): how Chaucer finds himself one April evening with thirty other men and women, all gathered at the Tabard Inn in Southwark (a suburb of London and just across the Thames from the city proper), ready to start next morning, as thousands of Englishmen did every year, on a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Thomas a Becket at Canterbury. The travelers readily accept the proposal of Harry Bailey, their jovial and domineering host, that he go with them as leader and that they enliven the journey with a story-telling contest (two stories from each pilgrim during each half of the journey) for the prize of a dinner at his inn on their return. Next morning, therefore, the Knight begins the series of tales and the others follow in order. This literary form--a collection of disconnected stories bound together in a fictitious framework--goes back almost to the beginning of literature itself; but Chaucer may well have been directly influenced by Boccaccio's famous book of prose tales, 'The Decameron' (Ten Days of Story-Telling). Between the two works, however, there is a striking contrast, which has often been pointed out. While the Italian author represents his gentlemen and ladies as selfishly fleeing from the misery of a frightful plague in Florence to a charming villa and a holiday of unreflecting pleasure, the gaiety of Chaucer's pilgrims rests on a basis of serious purpose, however conventional it may be.

Perhaps the easiest way to make clear the sources of Chaucer's power will be by means of a rather formal summary.

1. *His Personality.* Chaucer's personality stands out in his writings plainly and most delightfully. It must be borne in mind that, like some others of the greatest poets, he was not a poet merely, but also a man of practical affairs, in the eyes of his associates first and mainly a courtier, diplomat, and government official. His wide experience of men and things is manifest in the life-likeness and mature power of his poetry, and it accounts in part for the broad truth of all but his earliest work, which makes it essentially poetry not of an age but for all time. Something of conventional medievalism still clings to Chaucer in externals, as we shall see, but in alertness, independence of thought, and a certain directness of utterance, he speaks for universal humanity. His practical experience helps to

explain as well why, unlike most great poets, he does not belong primarily with the idealists. Fine feeling he did not lack; he loved external beauty--some of his most pleasing passages voice his enthusiasm for Nature; and down to the end of his life he never lost the zest for fanciful romance. His mind and eye were keen, besides, for moral qualities; he penetrated directly through all the pretenses of falsehood and hypocrisy; while how thoroughly he understood and respected honest worth appears in the picture of the Poor Parson in the Prolog to 'The Canterbury Tales.' Himself quiet and self-contained, moreover, Chaucer was genial and sympathetic toward all mankind. But all this does not declare him a positive idealist, and in fact, rather, he was willing to accept the world as he found it--he had no reformer's dream of 'shattering it to bits and remoulding it nearer to the heart's desire.' His moral nature, indeed, was easy-going; he was the appropriate poet of the Court circle, with very much of the better courtier's point of view. At the day's tasks he worked long and faithfully, but he also loved comfort, and he had nothing of the martyr's instinct. To him human life was a vast procession, of boundless interest, to be observed keenly and reproduced for the reader's enjoyment in works of objective literary art. The countless tragedies of life he noted with kindly pity, but he felt no impulse to dash himself against the existing barriers of the world in the effort to assure a better future for the coming generations. In a word, Chaucer is an artist of broad artistic vision to whom art is its own excuse for being. And when everything is said few readers would have it otherwise with him; for in his art he has accomplished what no one else in his place could have done, and he has left besides the picture of himself, very real and human across the gulf of half a thousand years. Religion, we should add, was for him, as for so many men of the world, a somewhat secondary and formal thing. In his early works there is much conventional piety, no doubt sincere so far as it goes; and he always took a strong intellectual interest in the problems of medieval theology; but he became steadily and quietly independent in his philosophic outlook and indeed rather skeptical of all definite dogmas. Even in his art Chaucer's lack of the highest will-power produced one rather conspicuous formal weakness; of his numerous long poems he really finished scarcely one. For this, however, it is perhaps sufficient excuse that he could write only in intervals hardly snatched from business and sleep. In 'The Canterbury Tales' indeed, the plan is almost impossibly ambitious; the more than twenty stories actually finished, with their eighteen thousand lines, are only a fifth part of the intended number.

Even so, several of them do not really belong to the series; composed in stanza forms, they are selected from his earlier poems and here pressed into service, and on the average they are less excellent than those which he wrote for their present places (in the rimed pentameter couplet that he adopted from the French).

2. *His Humor.* In nothing are Chaucer's personality and his poetry more pleasing than in the rich humor which pervades them through and through. Sometimes, as in his treatment of the popular medieval beast-epic material in the Nun's Priest's Tale of the Fox and the Cock, the humor takes the form of boisterous farce; but much more often it is of the finer intellectual sort, the sort which a careless reader may not catch, but which touches with perfect sureness and charming lightness on all the incongruities of life, always, too, in kindly spirit. No foible is too trifling for Chaucer's quiet observation; while if he does not choose to denounce the hypocrisy of the Pardoner and the worldliness of the Monk, he has made their weaknesses sources of amusement (and indeed object-lessons as well) for all the coming generations.
3. *He is one of the greatest of all narrative poets.* Chaucer is an exquisite lyric poet, but only a few of his lyrics have come down to us, and his fame must always rest largely on his narratives. Here, first, he possesses unflinching fluency. It was with rapidity, evidently with ease, and with masterful certainty, that he poured out his long series of vivid and delightful tales. It is true that in his early, imitative, work he shares the medieval faults of wordiness, digression, and abstract symbolism; and, like most medieval writers, he chose rather to reshape material from the great contemporary store than to invent stories of his own. But these are really very minor matters. He has great variety, also, of narrative forms: elaborate allegories; love stories of many kinds; romances, both religious and secular; tales of chivalrous exploit, like that related by the Knight; humorous extravaganzas; and jocose renderings of coarse popular material--something, at least, in virtually every medieval type.
4. *The thorough knowledge and sure portrayal of men and women which, belong to his mature work extend through, many various types of character.* It is a commonplace to say that the Prolog to 'The Canterbury Tales' presents in its twenty portraits virtually every contemporary English class except the very lowest, made to live forever in the finest series of character sketches preserved anywhere in literature; and in his other work the same power appears in only less conspicuous degree.
5. *His poetry is also essentially and thoroughly dramatic,* dealing very vividly with life in genuine and varied action. To be sure, Chaucer possesses all the medieval love for logical reasoning, and he takes a keen delight in psychological analysis; but when he introduces these things (except for the tendency to medieval diffuseness) they are true to the situation and really serve to enhance the suspense. There is much interest in the question often raised whether, if he had lived in an age like the Elizabethan, when the drama was the dominant literary form, he too would have been a dramatist.

6. *As a descriptive poet (of things as well as persons) he displays equal skill.* Whatever his scenes or objects, he sees them with perfect clearness and brings them in full life-likeness before the reader's eyes, sometimes even with the minuteness of a nineteenth century novelist. And no one understands more thoroughly the art of conveying the general impression with perfect sureness, with a foreground where a few characteristic details stand out in picturesque and telling clearness.
7. *Chaucer is an unerring master of poetic form.* His stanza combinations reproduce all the well-proportioned grace of his French models, and to the pentameter riming couplet of his later work he gives the perfect ease and metrical variety which match the fluent thought. In all his poetry there is probably not a single faulty line. And yet within a hundred years after his death, such was the irony of circumstances, English pronunciation had so greatly altered that his meter was held to be rude and barbarous, and not until the nineteenth century were its principles again fully understood. His language, we should add, is modern, according to the technical classification, and is really as much like the form of our own day as like that of a century before his time; but it is still only *early* modern English, and a little definitely directed study is necessary for any present-day reader before its beauty can be adequately recognized.

The main principles for the pronunciation of Chaucer's language, so far as it differs from ours, are these: Every letter should be sounded, especially the final *e* (except when it is to be suppressed before another vowel). A large proportion of the rimes are therefore feminine. The following vowel sounds should be observed:

- Stressed *a* like modern *a* in *father*.
- Stressed *e* and *ee* like *e* in *fete* or *ea* in *breath*.
- Stressed *i* as in *machine*.
- *oo* like *o* in *open*.
- *u* commonly as in *push* or like *oo* in *spoon*.
- *y* like *i* in *machine* or *pin* according as it is stressed or not.
- *ai*, *ay*, *ei*, and *ey* like *ay* in *day*.
- *au* commonly like *ou* in *pound*.
- *ou* like *oo* in *spoon*.
- *-ye* (final) is a diphthong.
- *g* (not in *ng* and not initial) before *e* or *i* is like *j*.

Lowell has named in a suggestive summary the chief quality of each of the great English poets, with Chaucer standing first in order: 'Actual life is represented by Chaucer; imaginative life by Spenser; ideal life by Shakespeare; interior life by Milton; conventional life by Pope.' We might add: the life of spiritual mysticism and simplicity by Wordsworth; the completely balanced life by Tennyson; and the life of moral issues and dramatic moments by Robert Browning.

## John Gower

The three other chief writers contemporary with Chaucer contrast strikingly both with him and with each other. Least important is John Gower (pronounced either Go-er or Gow-er), a wealthy landowner whose tomb, with his effigy, may still be seen in St. Savior's, Southwark, the church of a priory to whose rebuilding he contributed and where he spent his latter days. Gower was a confirmed conservative, and time has left him stranded far in the rear of the forces that move and live. Unlike Chaucer's, the bulk of his voluminous poems reflect the past and scarcely hint of the future. The earlier and larger part of them are written in French and Latin, and in 'Vox Clamantis' (The Voice of One Crying in the Wilderness) he exhausts the vocabulary of exaggerated bitterness in denouncing the common people for the insurrection in which they threatened the privileges and authority of his own class. Later on, perhaps through Chaucer's example, he turned to English, and in 'Confessio Amantis' (A Lover's Confession) produced a series of renderings of traditional stories parallel in general nature to 'The Canterbury Tales.' He is generally a smooth and fluent versifier, but his fluency is his undoing; he wraps up his material in too great a mass of verbiage.

### The vision concerning piers the plowman.

The active moral impulse which Chaucer and Gower lacked, and a consequent direct confronting of the evils of the age, appear vigorously in the group of poems written during the last forty years of the century and known from the title in some of the manuscripts as 'The Vision of William Concerning Piers the Plowman.' From the sixteenth century, at least, until very lately this work, the various versions of which differ greatly, has been supposed to be the single poem of a single author, repeatedly enlarged and revised by him; and ingenious inference has constructed for this supposed author a brief but picturesque biography under the name of William Langland. Recent investigation, however, has made it seem at least

probable that the work grew, to its final form through additions by several successive writers who have not left their names and whose points of view were not altogether identical.

Like the slightly earlier poet of 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,' the authors belonged to the region of the Northwest Midland, near the Malvern Hills, and like him, they wrote in the Anglo-Saxon verse form, alliterative, unrimed, and in this case without stanza divisions. Their language, too, the regular dialect of this region, differs very greatly, as we have already implied, from that of Chaucer, with much less infusion from the French; to the modern reader, except in translation, it seems uncouth and unintelligible. But the poem, though in its final state prolix and structurally formless, exhibits great power not only of moral conviction and emotion, but also of expression--vivid, often homely, but not seldom eloquent.

The 'first passus' begins with the sleeping author's vision of 'a field full of folk' (the world), bounded on one side by a cliff with the tower of Truth, and on the other by a deep vale wherein frowns the dungeon of Wrong. Society in all its various classes and occupations is very dramatically presented in the brief description of the 'field of folk,' with incisive passing satire of the sins and vices of each class. 'Gluttonous wasters' are there, lazy beggars, lying pilgrims, corrupt friars and pardoners, venal lawyers, and, with a lively touch of realistic humour, cooks and their 'knives' crying, 'Hot pies!' But a sane balance is preserved--there are also worthy people, faithful laborers, honest merchants, and sincere priests and monks. Soon the allegory deepens. Holy Church, appearing, instructs the author about Truth and the religion which consists in loving God and giving help to the poor. A long portrayal of the evil done by Lady Meed (love of money and worldly rewards) prepares for the appearance of the hero, the sturdy plowman Piers, who later on is even identified in a hazy way with Christ himself. Through Piers and his search for Truth is developed the great central teaching of the poem, the Gospel of Work--the doctrine, namely, that society is to be saved by honest labor, or in general by the faithful service of every class in its own sphere. The Seven Deadly Sins and their fatal fruits are emphasized, and in the later forms of the poem the corruptions of wealth and the Church are indignantly denounced, with earnest pleading for the religion of practical social love to all mankind.

In its own age the influence of 'Piers the Plowman' was very great. Despite its intended impartiality, it was inevitably adopted as a partisan document by the poor and oppressed, and together with the revolutionary songs of John Ball it became a powerful incentive to the Peasant's Insurrection. Piers himself became and continued an ideal for men who longed for a less selfish and brutal world, and a century and a half later the poem was still cherished by the Protestants for its exposure of the vices of the Church. Its medieval form and setting remove it hopelessly beyond the horizon of general readers of the present time, yet it furnishes the most detailed remaining picture of the actual social and economic conditions of its age, and as a great landmark in the progress of moral and social thought it can never lose its significance.

## **The Wiclifite Bible**

A product of the same general forces which inspired 'Piers the Plowman' is the earliest in the great succession of the modern English versions of the Bible, the one connected with the name of John Wiclif, himself the first important English precursor of the Reformation. Wiclif was born about 1320, a Yorkshireman of very vigorous intellect as well as will, but in all his nature and instincts a direct representative of the common people. During the greater part of his life he was connected with Oxford University, as student, teacher (and therefore priest), and college head. Early known as one of the ablest English thinkers and philosophers, he was already opposing certain doctrines and practices of the Church when he was led to become a chief spokesman for King Edward and the nation in their refusal to pay the tribute which King John, a century and a half before, had promised to the Papacy and which was now actually demanded. As the controversies proceeded, Wiclif was brought at last to formulate the principle, later to be basal in the whole Protestant movement, that the final source of religious authority is not the Church, but the Bible. One by one he was led to attack also other fundamental doctrines and institutions of the Church--transubstantiation, the temporal possessions of the Church, the Papacy, and at last, for their corruption, the four orders of friars. In the outcome the Church proved too strong for even Wiclif, and Oxford, against its will, was compelled to abandon him; yet he could be driven no farther than to his parish of Lutterworth, where he died undisturbed in 1384.

His connection with literature was an unforeseen but natural outgrowth of his activities. Some years before his death, with characteristic energy and zeal, he had begun to spread his doctrines by sending out 'poor priests' and laymen who, practicing the self-denying life of the friars of earlier days, founded the Lollard sect. [Footnote: The name, given by their enemies, perhaps means 'tares.'] It was inevitable not only that he and his associates should compose many tracts and sermons for the furtherance of their views, but, considering their attitude toward the Bible, that they should wish to put it into the hands of all the people in a form which they would be able to understand, that is in their own vernacular English. Hence sprang the Wiclifite translation. The usual supposition that from the outset, before the time of Wiclif, the Church had prohibited translations of the Bible from the Latin into the common tongues is a mistake; that policy was a direct result of Wiclif's work. In England from Anglo-Saxon times, as must be clear from what has here already been said, partial

English translations, literal or free, in prose or verse, had been in circulation among the few persons who could read and wished to have them. But Wiclif proposed to popularize the entire book, in order to make the conscience of every man the final authority in every question of belief and religious practice, and this the Church would not allow. It is altogether probable that Wiclif personally directed the translation which has ever since borne his name; but no record of the facts has come down to us, and there is no proof that he himself was the actual author of any part of it--that work may all have been done by others. The basis of the translation was necessarily the Latin 'Vulgate' (Common) version, made nine hundred years before from the original Hebrew and Greek by St. Jerome, which still remains to-day, as in Wiclif's time, the official version of the Roman church. The first Wiclifite translation was hasty and rather rough, and it was soon revised and bettered by a certain John Purvey, one of the 'Lollard' priests.

Wiclif and the men associated with him, however, were always reformers first and writers only to that end. Their religious tracts are formless and crude in style, and even their final version of the Bible aims chiefly at fidelity of rendering. In general it is not elegant, the more so because the authors usually follow the Latin idioms and sentence divisions instead of reshaping them into the native English style. Their text, again, is often interrupted by the insertion of brief phrases explanatory of unusual words. The vocabulary, adapted to the unlearned readers, is more largely Saxon than in our later versions, and the older inflected forms appear oftener than in Chaucer; so that it is only through our knowledge of the later versions that we to-day can read the work without frequent stumbling. Nevertheless this version has served as the starting point for almost all those that have come after it in English, as even a hasty reader of this one must be conscious; and no reader can fail to admire in it the sturdy Saxon vigor which has helped to make our own version one of the great masterpieces of English literature.



The Romaunt of the Rose, c.1440  
Glasgow MS Hunter 409, 57v-58r

The most direct example of Chaucer's French studies is his translation of *Le Roman de la rose*, a poem written in some 4000 lines by Guillaume Lorris about 1237 and extended to over 22,000 by Jean Clopinel, better known as Jean de Meun, forty years later. We know from Chaucer himself that he translated this poem, and the extant English fragment of 7698 lines was generally assigned to him from 1532, when it was first printed, till its authorship was challenged in the early years of the Chaucer Society. The ground of this challenge was its wide divergence from Chaucer's practice in his undoubtedly genuine works as to certain niceties of rhyme, notable as to not rhyming words ending in -y with others ending -ye. It was subsequently discovered, however, that the whole fragment was divisible linguistically into three portions, of which the first and second end respectively at lines 1705 and 5810, and that in the first of these three sections the variations from Chaucer's accepted practice are insignificant. Lines 1-1705 have therefore been provisionally accepted as Chaucer's, and the other two fragments as the work of unknown translators (James I of Scotland has been suggested as one of them), which somehow came to be pieced together. If, however, the difficulties in the way of this theory are less than those which confront any other, they are

still considerable, and the question can hardly be treated as closed.

While our knowledge of Chaucer's *Romaunt of the Rose* is in this unsatisfactory state, another translation of his from the French, the *Book of the Lyon* (alluded to in the "Retraction" found, in some manuscripts, at the end of the *Canterbury Tales*), which must certainly have been taken from Guillaume Machault's *Le Dit du lion*, has perished altogether. The strength of French influence on Chaucer's early work may, however, be amply illustrated from the first of his poems with which we are on sure ground, the *Book of the Duchesse*, or, as it is alternatively called, the *Deth of Blaunche*. Here not only are individual passages closely imitated from Machault and Froissart, but the dream, the May morning, and the whole machinery of the poem are taken over from contemporary French conventions. But even at this stage Chaucer could prove his right to borrow by the skill with which he makes his materials serve his own purpose, and some of the lines in the *Deth of Blaunche* are among the most tender and charming he ever wrote.

Chaucer's *A.B.C.*, a poem in honour of the Blessed Virgin, of which the stanzas begin with the successive letters of the alphabet, is another early example of French influence. It is taken from the *Pelerinage de la vie humaine*, written by Guillaume de Deguillaume about 1330. The occurrence of some magnificent lines in Chaucer's version, combined with evidence that he did not yet possess the skill to translate at all literally as soon as rhymes had to be considered, accounts for this poem having been dated sometimes earlier than the *Book of the Duchesse*, and sometimes several years later. With it is usually moved up and down, though it should surely be placed in the 'seventies, the *Compleynt to Pity*, a fine poem which yet, from its slight obscurity and absence of Chaucer's usual ease, may very well some day prove to be a translation from the French.

While Chaucer thus sought to reproduce both the matter and the style of French poetry in England, he found other materials in popular Latin books. Among his lost works are renderings of "Origenes upon the Maudeleyne," and of Pope

Innocent III on "The Wreced Engendring of Mankinde" (*De miseria conditionis humanae*). He must have begun his attempts at straightforward narrative with the *Lyf of Seynt Cecyle* (the weakest of all his works, *the second Nun's Tale* in the Canterbury series) from the *Legenda Aurea* of Jacobus de Voragine, and the story of the patience of Grisilde, taken from Petrarch's Latin version of a tale by Boccaccio. In both of these he condenses a little, but ventures on very few changes, though he lets his readers see his impatience with his originals.

In his story of Constance (afterwards ascribed to the Man of Law), taken from the Anglo-Norman chronicle of Nicholas Trivet, written about 1334, we find him struggling to put some substance into another weak tale, but still without the courage to remedy its radical faults, though here, as with Grisilde, he does as much for his heroine as the conventional exaltation of one virtue at a time permitted. It is possible that other tales which now stand in the Canterbury series were written originally at this period. What is certain is that at some time in the 'seventies three or four Italian poems passed into Chaucer's possession, and that he set to work busily to make use of them. One of the most interesting of the poems reclaimed for him by Professor Skeat is a fragmentary "Compleynt," part of which is written in terza rima. While he thus experimented with the metre of the *Divina Commedia*, he made his first attempt to use the material provided by Boccaccio's *Teseide* in another fragment of great interest, that of *Quene Anelida and Fals Arcyte*. More than a third of this is taken up with another, and quite successful, metrical experiment in Anelida's "compleynt," but in the introduction of Anelida herself Chaucer made the first of his three unsuccessful efforts to construct a plot for an important poem out of his own head, and the fragment which begins so well breaks off abruptly at line 357.

For a time the *Teseide* seems to have been laid aside, and it was perhaps at this moment, in despondency at his failure, that Chaucer wrote his most important prose work, the translation of the *De Consolatione Philosophiae* of Boethius. Reminiscences of this helped to enrich many of his subsequent poems, and inspired five of his shorter pieces (*The Former Age, Fortune, Truth, Gentillesse* and *Lak of Stedfastnesse*), but the translation itself was only a partial success. To borrow his own phrase, his "Englysh was insufficient" to reproduce such difficult Latin. The translation is often barely intelligible without the original, and it is only here and there that it flows with any ease or rhythm.

If Chaucer felt this himself he must have been speedily consoled by achieving in *Troilus and Criseyde* his greatest artistic triumph. Warned by his failure in *Anelida and Arcyte*, he was content this time to take his plot unaltered from the *Filostrato*, and to follow Boccaccio step by step through the poem. But he did not follow him as a mere translator. He had done his duty manfully for the saints "of other holinesse" in *Cecyle, Grisilde* and *Constance*, whom he was forbidden by the rules of the game to clothe with complete flesh and blood. In this great love-story there were no such restrictions, and the characters which Boccaccio's treatment left thin and conventional became in Chaucer's hands convincingly human. No other English poem is so instinct with the glory and tragedy of youth, and in the details of the story Chaucer's gifts of vivid colouring, of humour and pity, are all at their highest.

An unfortunate theory that the reference in the *Legende of Good Women* to "al the love of Palamon and Arcyte" is to a hypothetical poem in seven-line stanzas on this theme, which Chaucer is imagined, when he came to plan the *Canterbury Tales*, to have suppressed in favour of a new version in heroic couplets, has obscured the close connexion in temper and power between what we know as the "Knight's Tale" and the *Troilus*. The poem may have been more or less extensively revised before, with admirable fitness, it was assigned to the Knight, but that its main composition can be separated by several years from that of *Troilus* is aesthetically incredible. Chaucer's art here again is at its highest. He takes the plot of Boccaccio's *Teseide*, but only as much of it as he wants, and what he takes he heightens and humanizes with the same skill which he had shown in transforming the *Filostrato*. Of the individual characters Theseus himself, the arbiter of the plot, is most notably developed; Emilie and her two lovers receive just as much individuality as they will bear without disturbing the atmosphere of romance. The whole story is pulled together and made more rapid and effective. A comparison of almost any scene as told by the two poets suffices to show Chaucer's immense superiority. At some subsequent period the "Squire's Tale" of Cambuscan, the fair Canacee and the Horse of Brass, was gallantly begun in something of the same key, but Chaucer took for it more materials than he could use, and for lack of the help of a leader like Boccaccio he was obliged to leave the story, in Milton's phrase, "half-told," though the fragment written certainly takes us very much less than half-way.

Meanwhile, in connexion (as is reasonably believed) with the betrothal or marriage of Anne of Bohemia to Richard II (i.e. about 1381-1382), Chaucer had brought to a successful completion the *Parlement of Foules*, a charming sketch of 699 lines, in which the other birds, on Saint Valentine's day, counsel the "Formel Egle" on her choice of a mate. His success here, as in the case of the *Deth of Blaunche the Duchesse*, was due to the absence of any need for a climax; and though the materials which he borrowed were mainly Latin (with some help from passages of the *Teseide* not fully needed for Palamon and Arcyte) his method of handling them would have been quite approved by his friends among the French poets. A more ambitious venture, the *Hous of Fame*, in which Chaucer imagines himself borne aloft by an eagle to Fame's temple, describes what he sees and hears there, and then breaks off in apparent inability to get home, shows a curious mixture of the poetic ideals of the *Roman de la rose* and reminiscences of the *Divina Commedia*. As the *Hous of Fame* is

most often remembered and quoted for the personal touches and humour of Chaucer's conversation with the eagle, so the most-quoted passages in the Prologue to the *Legende of Good Women* are those in which Chaucer professes his affection for the daisy, and the attack on his loyalty by Cupid and its defence by Alceste. Recent discoveries have shown, however, that (besides obligations to Machault) some of the touches about the daisy and the controversy between the partisans of the Flower and of the Leaf are snatches from poems by his friends Froissart and Deschamps, which Chaucer takes up and returns to them with pretty compliments, and that he was indebted to Froissart for some of the framework of his poem.<sup>2</sup> Both of the two versions of the Prologue to the *Legende* are charming, and some of the tales, notably that of Cleopatra, rank with Chaucer's best work. When, however, he had written eight and part of the ninth he tired of his scheme, which was planned to celebrate nineteen of Cupid's faithful "saints," with Alcestis as their queen. With his usual hopefulness he had overlooked the risk of monotony, which obviously weighed heavily on him ere he broke off, and the loss of the other ten stories is less to be regretted than that of the celebration of Alceste, and a possible epilogue which might have exceeded in charm the Prologue itself.

Chaucer's failure to complete the scheme of the *Legende of Good Women* may have been partly due to the attractions of the *Canterbury Tales*, which were probably taken up in immediate succession to it. His guardianship of two Kentish wards, his justiceship of the peace, his representing the county in the parliament of 1386, his commissionership of the river-bank between Greenwich and Woolwich, all make it easy to understand his dramatic use of the merry crowds he saw on the Canterbury road, without supposing him to have had recourse to Boccaccio's *Decamerone*, a book which there is no proof of his having seen. The pilgrims whom he imagines to have assembled at the Tabard Inn in Southwark, where Harry Bailey was host, are said to have numbered "wel nyne and twenty in a company," and the Prologue gives full-length sketches of a Knight, a Squire (his son), and their Yeoman; of a Prioress, Monk, Friar, Oxford Clerk, and Parson, with two disreputable hangers-on of the church, a Summoner and Pardoner; of a Serjeant-at-Law and a Doctor of Physic, and of a Franklin, or country gentleman, Merchant, Shipman, Miller, Cook, Manciple, Reeve, Ploughman (the Parson's brother) and the ever-famous Wife of Bath. Five London burgesses are described in a group, and a Nun and Priest<sup>3</sup> are mentioned as in attendance on the Prioress. Each of these, with Chaucer himself making the twenty-ninth, was pledged to tell two tales, but including one second attempt and a tale told by the Yeoman of a Canon, who overtakes the pilgrims on the road, we have only twenty finished stories, two unfinished and two interrupted ones. As in the case of the *Legende of Good Women*, our loss is not so much that of the additional stories as of the completed framework. The wonderful character sketches of the Prologue are carried yet farther by the Talks on the Road which link the different tales, and two of these Talks, in which the Wife of Bath and the Pardoner respectively edify the company, have the importance of separate Tales, but between the Tales that have come down to us there are seven links missing,<sup>4</sup> and it was left to a later and weaker hand to narrate, in the "Tale of Beryn," the adventures of the pilgrims at Canterbury.

The reference to the *Lyf of Seynt Cecyle* in the Prologue to the *Legende of Good Women* gives external proof that Chaucer included earlier work in the scheme of the *Canterbury Tales*, and mention has been made of other stories which are indisputably early. In the absence of any such metrical tests as have proved useful in the case of Shakespeare, the dates at which several of the Tales were composed remain doubtful, while in the case of at least two, the Clerk's tale of Grisilde and the Monk's tragedies, there is evidence of early work being revised and supplemented. It is fortunately impossible to separate the prologue to the charmingly told story of "yonge Hugh of Lincoln" from the tale itself, and, with the "quod sche" in the second line as proof that Chaucer was here writing specially for his Prioress, we are forbidden to limit the new stories to any one metre or tone. There can be no doubt, however, that what may be called the Tales of the Churls (Miller, Reeve, Summoner, Friar, &c.), and the conversational outpourings of the Pardoner and Wife of Bath, form, with the immortal Prologue, the most important and distinctive additions to the older work. In these, and in the Pardoner's story of Death and the Three Revellers, and the Nun's Priest's masterly handling of the fable of the Cock and Fox, both of them free from the grossness which marks the others, Chaucer takes stories which could have been told in a short page of prose and elaborates them with all the skill in narration which he had sedulously cultivated. The conjugal reminiscences of the Wife of Bath and the *Reeve's Tale* with its abominable climax (lightened a little by Aley's farewell, lines 316-319) are among the great things in Chaucer, as surely as *Troilus*, and Palamon and Arcyte and the Prologue. They help notably to give him the width of range which may certainly be claimed for him.

In or soon after 1391 Chaucer wrote in prose for an eleven-year-old reader, whom he addresses as "Litel Lowis my son," a treatise on the use of the Astrolabe, its short prologue being the prettiest specimen of his prose. The wearisome tale of "Melibee and his wyf Prudence," which was perhaps as much admired in English as it had been in Latin and French, may have been translated at any time. The sermon on Penitence, used as the *Parson's Tale*, was probably the work of his old age. "Envoys" to his friends Scogan and Bukton, a translation of some balades by Sir Otes de Granson, and the *Compleynt to his Purs* complete the record of his minor poetry. We have his own statement that in his youth he had written many Balades, Roundels and Virelayes in honour of Love, and the two songs embedded respectively in the *Parlement of Foules* and the Prologue to the *Legende of Good Women* are charming and musical. His extant shorter poems, however, whether early or late, offer no excuse for claiming high rank for him as a lyricist. He had very little sheer singing power, and though there are fine lines in his short poems, witness the famous "Flee fro the prees and dwell with soothfastnesse," they lack



the sustained concentration of great work. From the drama, again, Chaucer was cut off, and it is idle to argue from the innumerable dramatic touches in his poems and his gift of characterization as to what he might have done had he lived two centuries later. His own age delighted in stories, and he gave it the stories it demanded, invested with a humanity, a grace and strength which place him among the world's greatest narrative poets, and which bring the England of his own day, with all the colour and warmth of life, wonderfully near to all his readers.

The part played by Chaucer in the development of the English language has often been overrated. He neither corrupted it, as used to be said, by introducing French words which it would otherwise have avoided, nor bore any such part in fixing it as was afterwards played by the translators of the Bible. When he was growing up, educated society in England was still bilingual, and the changes in vocabulary and pronunciation which took place during his life were the natural results of a society, which had been bilingual with a bias towards French, giving an exclusive preference to English. The practical identity of Chaucer's language with that of Gower shows that both merely used the best English of their day with the care and slightly conservative tendency which befitted poets. Chaucer's service to the English language lies in his decisive success having made it impossible for any later English poet to attain fame, as Gower had done, by writing alternatively in Latin and French. The claim which should be made for him is that, at least as regards poetry, he proved that English was "sufficient."

Chaucer borrowed both his stanza forms and his "decasyllabic" couplets (mostly with an extra syllable at the end of the line) from Guillaume Machault, and his music, like that of his French master and his successors, depends very largely on assigning to every syllable its full value, and more especially on the due pronunciation of the final -e. The slower movement of change in Scotland allowed time for Chaucer to exercise a potent influence on Scottish poetry, but in England this final -e, to which most of the earlier grammatical forms by Chaucer's time had been reduced, itself fell rapidly into disuse during the 15th century, and a serious barrier was thus raised to the appreciation of the artistic value of his verse. His disciples, Hoccleve and Lydgate, who at first had caught some echoes of his rhythms, gradually yielded to the change in pronunciation, so that there was no living tradition to hand down his secret, while successive copyists reduced his text to a state in which it was only by accident that lines could be scanned correctly. For fully three centuries his reputation was sustained solely by his narrative power, his warmest panegyrists betraying no consciousness that they were praising one of the greatest technical masters of poetry. Even when thus maimed, however, his works found readers and lovers in every generation, and every improvement in his text has set his fame on a surer basis.

By this time the paraphrasers were already at work, Dryden rewriting the tales of the Knight, the Nun's Priest and the Wife of Bath, and Pope the Merchant's. In 1737 (reprinted in 1740) the Prologue and *Knight's Tale* were edited (anonymously) by Thomas Morell "from the most authentic manuscripts," and here, though by dint of much violence and with many mistakes, Chaucer's lines were for the first time in print given in a form in which they could be scanned. This promise of better things (Morell still thought it necessary to accompany his text with the paraphrases by Betterton and Dryden) was fulfilled by a fine edition of the *Canterbury Tales* (1775-1778), in which Thomas Tyrwitt's scholarly instincts produced a comparatively good text from second-rate manuscripts and accompanied it with valuable illustrative notes. The next edition of any importance was that edited by Thomas Wright for the Percy Society in 1848-1851, based on the erratic but valuable British Museum manuscript Harley 7334, containing readings which must be either Chaucer's second thoughts or the emendations of a brilliantly clever scribe. In 1866 Richard Morris re-edited this text in a more scholarly manner for the Aldine edition of the British Poets, and in the following year produced for the Clarendon Press Series a school edition of the Prologue and Tales of the Knight and Nun's Priest, edited with the fulness and care previously bestowed only on Greek and Latin classics.

A supplementary volume of the Oxford edition, entitled *Chaucerian and other Pieces*, issued by Professor Skeat in 1897, contains the prose and verse which his early publishers and editors, from Pynson and Thynne onwards, included among his *Works* by way of illustration, but which had gradually come to be regarded as forming part of his text. The reasons for their rejection are fully stated by Professor Skeat in the work named and also in *The Chaucer Canon* (1900). Many of these pieces have now been traced to other authors, and their exclusion has helped to clear not only Chaucer's text but also his biography, which used (as in the "Life" published by William Godwin in two quarto volumes in 1803) to be encumbered with inferences from works now known not to be Chaucer's, notably the *Testament of Love* written by Thomas Usk. All information about Chaucer's life available in 1900 will be found summarized by Mr R. E. G. Kirk in *Life-Records of Chaucer*, part iv., published by the Chaucer Society in that year.

1 The positions of the House of Fame and Palamon and Arcyte are still matters of controversy.

2 The French influences on this Prologue, its connexion with the Flower and the Leaf controversy, and the priority of what had previously been reckoned as the second or "B" form of the Prologue over the "A," were demonstrated in papers by Prof. Kittredge on "Chaucer and some of his Friends" in *Modern Philology*, vol. i. (Chicago, 1903), and by Mr J. L. Lowes on

"The Prologue to the Legend of Good Women" in *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, vol. xis., December, 1904.

3 The Talks on the Road show clearly that only one Priest in attendance on the Prioress, and two tales to each narrator, were originally contemplated, but the "Prestes titre" in line 164 of the Prologue, and the bald couplet (line 793 sq.) explaining that each pilgrim was to tell two tales each way, were probably both alterations made by Chaucer in moments of amazing hopefulness. The journey was reckoned a 31 days' ride, and eight or nine tales a day would surely have been a sufficient allowance.

4 The absence of these links necessitates the division of the *Canterbury Tales* into nine groups, to which, for purposes of quotation, the letters A to I have been assigned, the line numeration of the *Tales* in each group being continuous.

Pollard, A. W. "Geoffrey Chaucer."  
*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th Ed., vol. VI.

## Geoffrey Chaucer's Canterbury Tales



Chaucer is presumed to have studied law in the Inner Temple (an Inn of Court) at about this time, although definite proof is lacking. It is recorded that he became a member of the British royal family court of Edward III as a valet, yeoman, or esquire on 20 June 1367, a position which could entail any number of jobs. He travelled abroad many times, at least some of them in his role as a valet. In 1368, he may have attended the wedding of Lionel of Antwerp to Violante, daughter of Galeazzo II Visconti, in Milan. Two other literary stars of the era who were in attendance were Jean Froissart and Petrarch. Around this time Chaucer is believed to have written "The Book of the Duchess" in honor of Blanche of Lancaster, the late wife of John of Gaunt who died in 1369.

Chaucer travelled to Picardy the next year as part of the military expedition, and visited Genoa and Florence in 1373. It is on this Italy trip that it is speculated he came into contact with Middle Ages Italian poetry, the forms and stories of which he would use later. One other trip he took in 1377 seems shrouded in mystery, with records of the time conflicting in details. Later documents suggest it was a mission, along with Jean Froissart, to arrange a marriage between the future Richard II of England and a French princess, thereby ending the Hundred Years War. If this was the purpose of their trip, they seem to have been unsuccessful, as no wedding occurred.

In 1378, Richard II sent Chaucer as an envoy/secret dispatch to the Visconti and to Sir John Hawkwood, English Man-at Arms/Soldier for Hire, in Milan. It is on the person of John Hawkwood that Chaucer based his Knight's Character. The Knight, based on his description/dress and appearance, looks exactly like a soldier for hire/mercenary would have looked in the fourteenth century.

A possible indication that his career as a writer was appreciated came when Edward III of England granted Chaucer "a gallon of wine daily for the rest of his life" for some unspecified task. This was an unusual grant, but given on a day of celebration, St. George's Day, 1374, when artistic endeavours were traditionally rewarded, it is assumed to have been another early poetic work. It is not known which, if any, of Chaucer's extant works prompted the reward but the suggestion of poet to a king places him as a precursor to later poets laureate. Chaucer continued to collect the liquid stipend until Richard II came to power, after which it was converted to a monetary grant on 18 April, 1378.

Chaucer obtained the very substantial job of Comptroller of the Customs for the port of London, which Chaucer began on 8 June 1374. He must have been suited for the role as he continued in it for twelve years, a long time in such a post at that

period. His life goes undocumented for much of the next ten years but it is believed that he wrote (or began) most of his famous works during this time period. He was mentioned in law papers of 4 May 1380, involved in the "raptus" of Cecilia Champaigne. What "raptus" means, rape or possibly kidnapping, is unclear, but the incident seems to have been resolved quickly and did not leave a stain on Chaucer's reputation. It is not known if Chaucer was in the city of London at the time of the Peasants' Revolt (the Tower of London was stormed in 1381).

While still working as comptroller, Chaucer appears to have moved to Kent, being appointed as one of the commissioners of peace for Kent, at a time when French invasion was a possibility. He is thought to have started work on "The Canterbury Tales" in the early 1380s (the Pilgrims' Way used by his fictional characters on their way to Canterbury Cathedral passes through Kent). He also became a Member of Parliament for Kent in 1386. There is no further reference after this date to Philippa, Chaucer's wife, and she is presumed to have died in 1387. He survived the political upheavals caused by the Lords Appellants despite the fact that Chaucer knew well some of the men executed over the affair.

On 12 July 1389, Chaucer was appointed the Clerk of the Works, a sort of Construction foreman organizing most of the king's building projects. No major works were begun during his tenure, but he did conduct repairs on Westminster Palace, St. George's Chapel, Windsor, continue building the wharf at the Tower of London, and build the stands for a tournament held in 1390. It may have been a difficult job but it paid well: two shillings a day, over three times his salary as a comptroller. In September 1390, records say that he was robbed, and possibly injured, while conducting the business and it was shortly after, on 17 June 1391, that he stopped working in this capacity. Almost immediately, on 22 June, he began as deputy forester in the royal forest of North Petherton, Somerset. This was no sinecure, with maintenance an important part of the job, although there were many opportunities to derive profit. It is believed that Chaucer stopped work on the Canterbury Tales sometime towards the end of this decade.

Soon after the overthrow of his patron Richard II of England in 1399, Chaucer vanished from the historical record. He is believed to have died of unknown causes on 25 October, 1400, but there is no firm evidence for this date, as it comes from the engraving on his tomb, which was built more than one-hundred years after Chaucer's death. There is some fanciful speculation - most recently in Terry Jones' book "Who Murdered Chaucer? A Medieval Mystery"-that he was murdered by enemies of Richard II or even on the orders of his successor Henry IV of England. There is however no solid evidence to support this claim.

The new king (Henry IV) did renew the grants assigned to Chaucer by Richard, but in "The Complaint of Chaucer to his Purse"; Chaucer hints that the grants might not have been paid. The last mention of Chaucer in the historical record is on 5 June 1400, when some monies owing to him were paid. Chaucer was buried in Westminster Abbey in London, as was his right owing to the jobs he had performed and the new house he had leased nearby on 24 December 1399. In 1556 his remains were transferred to a more ornate tomb, making Chaucer the first writer interred in the area now known as Poets' Corner.

## Chaucer's Canterbury Tales

*The Canterbury Tales* contrasts with other literature of the period in the naturalism of its narrative, the variety of stories the pilgrims tell and the varied characters who are engaged in the pilgrimage. Many of the stories narrated by the pilgrims seem to fit their individual characters and social standing, although some of the stories seem ill-fitting to their narrators, perhaps as a result of the incomplete state of the work. Chaucer drew on real life for his cast of pilgrims: the innkeeper shares the name of a contemporary keeper of an inn in Southwark, and real-life identities for the Wife of Bath, the Merchant, the Man of Law and the Student have been suggested. The many jobs Chaucer held in medieval society—page, soldier, messenger, valet, bureaucrat, foreman and administrator—probably exposed him to many of the types of people he depicted in the *Tales*. He was able to shape their speech and satirize their manners in what was to become popular literature among people of the same types.

Chaucer's works are sometimes grouped into, first a French period, then an Italian period and finally an English period, with Chaucer being influenced by those countries' literatures in turn. Certainly *Troilus and Criseyde* is a middle period work with its reliance on the forms of Italian poetry, little known in England at the time, but to which Chaucer was probably exposed during his frequent trips abroad on court business. In addition, its use of a classical antiquity classical subject and its elaborate, courtly language sets it apart as one of his most complete and well-formed works. In *Troilus and Criseyde* Chaucer draws heavily on his source, Boccaccio, and on the late Latin philosopher Boethius. However, it is *The Canterbury Tales*, wherein he focuses on English subjects, with bawdy jokes and respected figures often being undercut with humour that has cemented his reputation.

## Chaucer's Linguistic



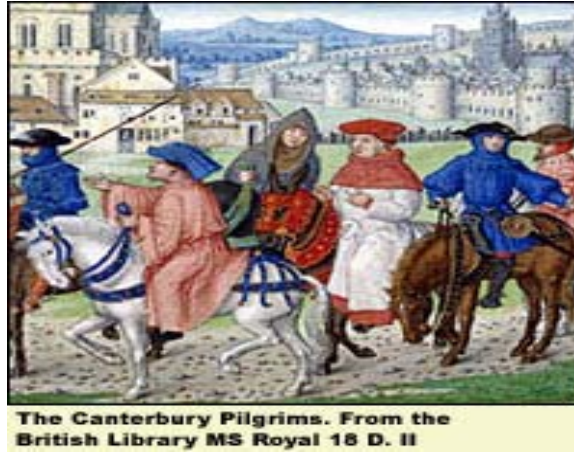
Chaucer wrote in continental accentual-syllabic metre, a style which had developed since around the twelfth century as an alternative to the alliterative Anglo-Saxon. Chaucer is known for metrical innovation, inventing the rhyme, and he was one of the first English poets to use the five-stress line, the iambic pentameter, in his work, with only a few anonymous short works using it before him. The arrangement of these five-stress lines into rhyming couplets, first seen in his Legend of Good Women in much of his later work and became one of the standard poetic forms in English. His early influence as a satirist is also important, with the common humorous device, the funny accent of a regional, apparently making its first appearance in *The Reeve's Tale*.

The poetry of Chaucer, along with other writers of the era, is credited with helping to standardize the London Dialect of the Middle English a combination of the Kentish and Midlands dialects. This is probably overstated; the influence of the court, chancery and bureaucracy—of which Chaucer was a part—remains a more probable influence on the development of Standard English, Modern English is somewhat distanced from the language of Chaucer's poems owing to the effect of the Great Vowel Shift some time after his death. This change in the pronunciation of English, still not fully understood, makes the reading of Chaucer difficult for the modern audience, though it is thought by some that the modern Scottish accent is closely related to the sound of Middle English. The status of the final *-e* in Chaucer's verse is uncertain: it seems likely that during the period of Chaucer's writing the final *-e* was dropping out of colloquial English and that its use was somewhat irregular. Chaucer's versification suggests that the final *-e* is sometimes to be vocalised, and sometimes to be silent; however, this remains a point on which there is disagreement. When it is vocalised, most scholars pronounce it as a schwa. Apart from the irregular spelling, much of the vocabulary is recognisable to the modern reader. Chaucer is also recorded in the Oxford Dictionary as the first author to use many common English words in his writings. These words were probably frequently used in the language at the time but Chaucer, with his ear for common speech, is the earliest manuscript source. *Acceptable, alkali, altercation, amble, angrily, annex, annoyance, approaching, arbitration, armless, army, arrogant, arsenic, arc, artillery* and *aspect* are just some of those from the first letter of the alphabet.

## Literary

Chaucer's early popularity is attested by the many poets who imitated his works. John Lydgate was one of earliest imitators who wrote a continuation to the *Tales*. Later a group of poets including Gavin Douglas, William Dunbar and Robert Henryson were known as the Scottish Chaucerians for their indebtedness to his style. Many of the manuscripts of Chaucer's works contain material from these admiring poets and the later romantic era poets' appreciation of Chaucer was coloured by their not knowing which of the works were genuine. 17th and 18th century writers, such as John Dryden, admired Chaucer for his stories, but not for his rhythm and rhyme, as few critics could then read Middle English and the text had been butchered by printers, leaving a somewhat unadvisable mess. It was not until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century that the official Chaucerian canon, accepted today, was decided upon; largely as a result of Walter William Skeat's work. One hundred and fifty years after his death, *The Canterbury Tales* was selected by William Caxton to be one of the first books to be printed in England.

## Chaucer's English



Although Chaucer's language is much closer to modern English than the text of Beowulf, it differs enough that most publications modernise (and sometimes bowdlerise) his idiom. Following is a sample from the prologue of the "Summoner's Tale" that compares Chaucer's text to a modern translation:

<i>Line</i>	<i>Original</i>	<i>Translation</i>
	This frere bosteth that he knoweth helle, And God it woot, that it is litel wonder; Freres and feendes been but lyte asonder. For, pardee, ye han ofte tyme herd telle How that a frere ravysched was to helle In spirit ones by a visioun; And as an angel ladde hym up and doun, To shewen hym the peynes that the were, In al the place saugh he nat a frere; Of oother folk he saugh ynowe in wo. Unto this angel spak the frere tho: Now, sire, quod he, han freres swich a grace That noon of hem shal come to this place? Yis, quod this aungel, many a millioun! And unto sathanas he ladde hym doun. --And now hath sathanas,--seith he,--a tayl Brodder than of a carryk is the sayl. Hold up thy tayl, thou sathanas!--quod he; --shewe forth thyn ers, and lat the frere se Where is the nest of freres in this place!-- And er that half a furlong wey of space, Right so as bees out swarmen from an hyve, Out of the develes ers ther gonne dryve Twenty thousand freres on a route, And thurghout helle swarmed al aboute, And comen agayn as faste as they may gon, And in his ers they crepten everychon. He clapte his tayl agayn and lay ful stille.	This friar boasts that he knows hell, And God knows that it is little wonder; Friars and fiends are seldom far apart. For, by God, you have oftentimes heard tell How a ravished friar went to hell In spirit, once by a vision; And as an angel led him up and down, To show him the pains that were there, In the whole place he saw not one friar; He saw enough of other folk in woe. To the angel spoke the friar thus: "Now sir," said he, "Are friars in such good grace That none of them come to this place?" "Yes," answered the angel, "many a million!" And the angel led him down to Satan. He said, "And Satan has a tail, Broader than a large ship's sail. Hold up your tail, Satan!" he ordered. "Show your arse, and let the friar see Where the nest of friars is in this place!" And before half a furlong of space, Just as bees swarm from a hive, Out of the devil's arse there drove Twenty thousand friars on a route, And they swarmed all over hell, And came again as fast as they had gone, And every one crept back into his arse. He clapped his tail again and lay very still.

## The general prologue



*Here bygynneth the Book of the Tales of Caunterbury (with the translation)*

1 Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote  
    When April with its sweet-smelling showers  
2 The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,  
    Has pierced the drought of March to the root,  
3 And bathed every veyne in swich licour  
    And bathed every vein (of the plants) in such liquid  
4 Of which vertu engendred is the flour;  
    By which power the flower is created;  
5 Whan Zephirus eek with his sweete breath  
    When the West Wind also with its sweet breath,  
6 Inspired hath in every holt and heeth  
    In every wood and field has breathed life into  
7 The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne  
    The tender new leaves, and the young sun  
8 Hath in the Ram his half cours yronne,  
    Has run half its course in Aries,  
9 And smale foweles maken melodye,  
    And small fowls make melody,  
10 That slepen al the nyght with open ye  
    Those that sleep all the night with open eyes  
11 (So priketh hem Nature in hir corages),  
    (So Nature incites them in their hearts),  
12 Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages,  
    Then folk long to go on pilgrimages,  
13 And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes,  
    And professional pilgrims to seek foreign shores,  
14 To ferne halwes, kowthe in sondry londes;  
    To distant shrines, known in various lands;  
15 And specially from every shires ende  
    And specially from every shire's end  
16 Of Engelond to Caunterbury they wende,  
    Of England to Canterbury they travel,  
17 The hooly blisful martir for to seke,  
    To seek the holy blessed martyr,  
18 That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke.  
    Who helped them when they were sick.  
19 Bifil that in that seson on a day,  
    It happened that in that season on one day,  
20 In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay  
    In Southwark at the Tabard Inn as I lay  
21 Redy to wenden on my pilgrymage  
    Ready to go on my pilgrimage  
22 To Caunterbury with ful devout corage,  
    To Canterbury with a very devout spirit,  
23 At nyght was come into that hostelrye  
    At night had come into that hostelry  
24 Wel nyne and twenty in a compaignye  
    Well nine and twenty in a company  
25 Of sondry folk, by aventure yfalle  
    Of various sorts of people, by chance fallen  
26 In felaweshipe, and pilgrimes were they alle,  
    In fellowship, and they were all pilgrims,  
27 That toward Caunterbury wolden ryde.  
    Who intended to ride toward Canterbury.  
28 The chambres and the stables weren wyde,  
    The bedrooms and the stables were spacious,  
29 And wel we weren esed atte beste.  
    And we were well accommodated in the best way.  
30 And shortly, whan the sonne was to reste,  
    And in brief, when the sun was (gone) to rest,  
31 So hadde I spoken with hem everichon  
    I had so spoken with everyone of them  
32 That I was of hir felaweshipe anon,  
    That I was of their fellowship straightway,  
33 And made forward erly for to ryse,  
    And made agreement to rise early,  
34 To take oure wey ther as I yow devyse.  
    To take our way where I (will) tell you.  
35 But nathelees, whil I have tyme and space,  
    But nonetheless, while I have time and opportunity,  
36 Er that I ferther in this tale pace,  
    Before I proceed further in this tale,  
37 Me thynketh it acordaunt to resoun  
    It seems to me in accord with reason  
38 To telle yow al the condicioun  
    To tell you all the circumstances  
39 Of ech of hem, so as it semed me,  
    Of each of them, as it seemed to me,  
40 And whiche they weren, and of what degree,  
    And who they were, and of what social rank,  
41 And eek in what array that they were inne;  
    And also what clothing that they were in;  
42 And at a knyght than wol I first bigynne.  
    And at a knight then will I first begin.  
43 A KNYGHT ther was, and that a worthy man,  
    A KNIGHT there was, and that (one was) a worthy  
44 man,  
    That fro the tyme that he first bigan  
    Who from the time that he first began  
45 To riden out, he loved chivalrie,  
    To ride out, he loved chivalry,  
46 Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisie.  
    Fidelity and good reputation, generosity and  
47 courtesy.  
    Ful worthy was he in his lordes werre,  
    He was very worthy in his lord's war,  
48 And therto hadde he riden, no man ferre,  
    And therto had he ridden, no man farther,  
49 As wel in cristendom as in hethenesse,  
    As well in Christendom as in heathen lands,  
50 And evere honoured for his worthynesse;  
    And (was) ever honored for his worthiness;  
51 At Alisaundre he was whan it was wonne.  
    He was at Alexandria when it was won.  
52 Ful ofte tyme he hadde the bord bigonne  
    He had sat very many times in the place of honor,  
53 Aboven alle nacions in Pruce;  
    Above (knights of) all nations in Prussia;

54 In Lettow hadde he reysed and in Ruce,  
He had campaigned in Lithuania and in Russia,  
55 No Cristen man so ofte of his degree.  
No Christian man of his rank so often.  
56 In Gernade at the seege eek hadde he be  
Also he had been in Grenada at the siege  
57 Of Algezir, and riden in Belmarye.  
Of Algeciras, and had ridden in Morocco.  
58 At Lyeys was he and at Satalye,  
He was at Ayash and at Atalia,  
59 Whan they were wonne, and in the Grete See  
When they were won, and in the Mediterranean  
60 At many a noble armee hadde he be.  
He had been at many a noble expedition.  
61 At mortal batailles hadde he been fiftene,  
He had been at fifteen mortal battles,  
62 And foughten for oure feith at Tramysse  
And fought for our faith at Tlemcen  
63 In lystes thries, and ay slayn his foo.  
Three times in formal duels, and each time slain his  
foe.  
64 This ilke worthy knyght hadde been also  
This same worthy knight had also been  
65 Somtyme with the lord of Palatye  
At one time with the lord of Balat  
66 Agayn another hethen in Turkye;  
Against another heathen in Turkey;  
67 And evermoore he hadde a sovereyn prys.  
And evermore he had an outstanding reputation  
68 And though that he were worthy, he was wys,  
And although he was brave, he was prudent,  
69 And of his port as meeke as is a mayde.  
And of his deportment as meek as is a maid.  
70 He nevere yet no vileynye ne sayde  
He never yet said any rude word  
71 In al his lyf unto no maner wight.  
In all his life unto any sort of person.  
72 He was a verray, parfit gentil knyght.  
He was a truly perfect, noble knight.  
73 But for to tellen yow of his array,  
But to tell you of his clothing,  
74 His hors were goode, but he was nat gay.  
His horses were good, but he was not gaily dressed.  
75 Of fustian he wered a gypon  
He wore a tunic of coarse cloth  
76 Al bismotered with his habergeon,  
All stained (with rust) by his coat of mail,  
77 For he was late ycome from his viage,  
For he was recently come (back) from his expedition,  
78 And wente for to doon his pilgrymage.  
And went to do his pilgrimage.  
  
79 With hym ther was his sone, a yong SQUIER,  
With him there was his son, a young SQUIRE,  
80 A lovyere and a lusty bacheler,  
A lover and a lively bachelor,  
81 With lokkes crulle as they were leyd in presse.  
With locks curled as if they had been laid in a curler.  
82 Of twenty yeer of age he was, I gesse.  
He was twenty years of age, I guess.  
83 Of his stature he was of evene lengthe,  
Of his stature he was of moderate height,  
84 And wonderly delyvere, and of greet strengthe.  
And wonderfully agile, and of great strength.  
85 And he hadde been somtyme in chyvachie  
And he had been for a time on a cavalry expedition  
86 In Flaundes, in Artoys, and Pycardie,  
In Flanders, in Artois, and Picardy,  
87 And born hym weel, as of so litel space,  
And conducted himself well, for so little a space of  
time,  
88 In hope to stonden in his lady grace.  
In hope to stand in his lady's good graces.  
89 Embrouded was he, as it were a meede  
He was embroidered, as if it were a mead  
90 Al ful of fresshe floures, whyte and reede.  
All full of fresh flowers, white and red.  
91 Syngynge he was, or floytynge, al the day;  
Singing he was, or fluting, all the day;  
92 He was as fressh as is the month of May.  
He was as fresh as is the month of May.  
93 Short was his gowne, with sleeves longe and wyde.  
His gown was short, with long and wide sleeves.  
94 Wel koude he sitte on hors and faire ryde.  
He well knew how to sit on horse and handsomely  
ride.  
95 He koude songes make and wel endite,  
He knew how to make songs and well compose (the  
words),  
96 Juste and eek daunce, and weel purtreye and write.  
Joust and also dance, and well draw and write.  
97 So hote he lovede that by nyghtertale  
He loved so passionately that at nighttime  
98 He sleep namoore than dooth a nyghtyngale.  
He slept no more than does a nightingale.  
99 Curteis he was, lowely, and servysable,  
Courteous he was, humble, and willing to serve,  
100 And carf biforn his fader at the table.  
And carved before his father at the table.  
  
101 A YEMAN hadde he and servantz namo  
He (the Knight) had A YEOMAN and no more servants  
102 At that tyme, for hym liste ride so,  
At that time, for it pleased him so to travel,  
103 And he was clad in cote and hood of grene.  
And he (the yeoman) was clad in coat and hood of  
green.  
104 A sheef of pecok arwes, bright and kene,  
A sheaf of peacock arrows, bright and keen,  
105 Under his belt he bar ful thriftily  
He carried under his belt very properly  
106 (Wel koude he dresse his takel yemanly;  
(He well knew how to care for his equipment as a  
yeoman should;  
107 His arwes drouped noght with fetheres lowe),  
His arrows did not fall short because of drooping  
feathers),  
108 And in his hand he baar a myghty bowe.  
And in his hand he carried a mighty bow.  
109 A not heed hadde he, with a broun visage.  
He had a close-cropped head, with a brown face.  
110 Of wodecraft wel koude he al the usage.  
He well knew all the practice of woodcraft.  
111 Upon his arm he baar a gay bracer,  
He wore an elegant archer's wrist-guard upon his  
arm,  
112 And by his syde a sword and a bokeler,  
And by his side a sword and a small shield,  
113 And on that oother syde a gay daggere  
And on that other side an elegant dagger  
114 Harneised wel and sharp as point of spere;  
Well ornamented and sharp as the point of a spear;  
115 A Cristopher on his brest of silver sheene.  
A Christopher-medal of bright silver on his breast.

116 An horn he bar, the bawdryk was of grene;  
 He carried a horn, the shoulder strap was green;  
 117 A forster was he, soothly, as I gesse.  
 He was a forester, truly, as I guess.

118 Ther was also a Nonne, a PRIORESSE,  
 There was also a Nun, a PRIORESS,  
 119 That of hir smylyng was ful symple and coy;  
 Who was very simple and modest in her smiling;  
 120 Hire gretteste ooth was but by Seinte Loy;  
 Her greatest oath was but by Saint Loy;  
 121 And she was cleped madame Eglentyne.  
 And she was called Madam Eglantine.  
 122 Ful weel she soong the service dyvyne,  
 She sang the divine service very well,  
 123 Entuned in hir nose ful semely;  
 Intoned in her nose in a very polite manner;  
 124 And Frenssh she spak ful faire and fetisly,  
 And she spoke French very well and elegantly,  
 125 After the scole of Stratford atte Bowe,  
 In the manner of Stratford at the Bow,  
 126 For Frenssh of Parys was to hire unknowe.  
 For French of Paris was to her unknown.  
 127 At mete wel ytaught was she with alle;  
 At meals she was well taught indeed;  
 128 She leet no morsel from hir lippes falle,  
 She let no morsel fall from her lips,  
 129 Ne wette hir fyngres in hir sauce depe;  
 Nor wet her fingers deep in her sauce;  
 130 Wel koude she carie a morsel and wel kepe  
 She well knew how to carry a morsel (to her mouth)  
 and take good care

131 That no drope ne fille upon hire brest.  
 That no drop fell upon her breast.  
 132 In curteisie was set ful muchel hir lest.  
 Her greatest pleasure was in good manners.  
 133 Hir over-lippe wyped she so clene  
 She wiped her upper lip so clean  
 134 That in hir coppe ther was no ferthyng sene  
 That in her cup there was seen no tiny bit  
 135 Of grece, whan she dronken hadde hir draughte.  
 Of grease, when she had drunk her drink.  
 136 Ful semely after hir mete she raughte.  
 She reached for her food in a very seemly manner.  
 137 And sikerly she was of greet desport,  
 And surely she was of excellent deportment,  
 138 And ful plesaunt, and amyable of port,  
 And very pleasant, and amiable in demeanor,  
 139 And peyned hire to countrefete cheere  
 And she took pains to imitate the manners  
 140 Of court, and to been estatlich of manere,  
 Of court, and to be dignified in behavior,  
 141 And to ben holden digne of reverence.  
 And to be considered worthy of reverence.  
 142 But for to speken of hire conscience,  
 But to speak of her moral sense,  
 143 She was so charitable and so pitous  
 She was so charitable and so compassionate  
 144 She wolde wepe, if that she saugh a mous  
 She would weep, if she saw a mouse  
 145 Kaught in a trappe, if it were deed or bledde.  
 Caught in a trap, if it were dead or bled.  
 146 Of smale houndes hadde she that she fedde  
 She had some small hounds that she fed  
 147 With rosted flessch, or milk and wastel-breed.  
 With roasted meat, or milk and fine white bread.  
 148 But soore wepte she if oon of hem were deed,

149 But sorely she wept if one of them were dead,  
 Or if men smoot it with a yerde smerte;  
 Or if someone smote it smartly with a stick;  
 150 And al was conscience and tendre herte.  
 And all was feeling and tender heart.  
 151 Ful semyly hir wympul pynched was,  
 Her wimple was pleated in a very seemly manner,  
 152 Hir nose tretys, hir eyen greye as glas,  
 Her nose well formed, her eyes gray as glass,  
 153 Hir mouth ful smal, and therto softe and reed.  
 Her mouth very small, and moreover soft and red.  
 154 But sikerly she hadde a fair forheed;  
 But surely she had a fair forehead;  
 155 It was almoost a spanne brood, I trowe;  
 It was almost nine inches broad, I believe;  
 156 For, hardily, she was nat undergrowe.  
 For, certainly, she was not undergrown.  
 157 Ful fetys was hir cloke, as I was war.  
 Her cloak was very well made, as I was aware.  
 158 Of smal coral aboute hire arm she bar  
 About her arm she bore of small coral  
 159 A peire of bedes, gauded al with grene,  
 A set of beads, adorned with large green beads,  
 160 And theron heng a brooch of gold ful sheene,  
 And thereon hung a brooch of very bright gold,  
 161 On which ther was first write a crowned A,  
 On which there was first written an A with a crown,  
 162 And after Amor vincit omnia.  
 And after "Love conquers all."

163 Another NONNE with hire hadde she,  
 She had another NUN with her,  
 164 That was hir chapeleyne, and preestes thre.  
 Who was her secretary, and three priests.

165 A MONK ther was, a fair for the maistrie,  
 There was a MONK, an extremely fine one,  
 166 An outridere, that lovede venerie,  
 An outrider (a monk with business outside the  
 monastery), who loved hunting,  
 167 A manly man, to been an abbot able.  
 A virile man, qualified to be an abbot.  
 168 Ful many a deyntee hors hadde he in stable,  
 He had very many fine horses in his stable,  
 169 And whan he rood, men myghte his brydel heere  
 And when he rode, one could hear his bridle  
 170 Gynglen in a whistlyng wynd als cleere  
 Jingle in a whistling wind as clear  
 171 And eek as loude as dooth the chapel belle  
 And also as loud as doth the chapel belle  
 172 Ther as this lord was kepere of the celle.  
 Where this lord was prior of the subordinate  
 monastery.

173 The reule of Seint Maure or of Seint Beneit --  
 The rule of Saint Maurus or of Saint Benedict --  
 174 By cause that it was old and somdel streit  
 Because it was old and somewhat strict  
 175 This ilke Monk leet olde thynges pace,  
 This same Monk let old things pass away,  
 176 And heeld after the newe world the space.  
 And followed the broader customs of modern times.  
 177 He yaf nat of that text a pulled hen,  
 He gave not a plucked hen for that text  
 178 That seith that hunters ben nat hooly men,  
 That says that hunters are not holy men,  
 179 Ne that a monk, whan he is recchelees,  
 Nor that a monk, when he is heedless of rules,



180 Is likned til a fissh that is waterlees --  
 Is like a fish that is out of water --  
 181 This is to seyn, a monk out of his cloystre.  
 This is to say, a monk out of his cloister.  
 182 But thilke text heeld he nat worth an oystre;  
 But he considered that same text not worth an  
 oyster;  
 183 And I seyde his opinion was good.  
 And I said his opinion was good.  
 184 What sholde he studie and make hymselfen wood,  
 Why should he study and make himself crazy,  
 185 Upon a book in cloystre alwey to poure,  
 Always to pore upon a book in the cloister,  
 186 Or swynken with his handes, and labour, e,  
 Or work with his hands, and labor,  
 187 As Austyn bit? How shal the world be served?  
 As Augustine commands? How shall the world be  
 served?  
 188 Lat Austyn have his swynk to hym reserved!  
 Let Augustine have his work reserved to him!  
 189 Therefore he was a prikasour aright:  
 Therefore he was indeed a vigorous horseman:  
 190 Grehoundes he hadde as swift as fowel in flight;  
 He had greyhounds as swift as fowl in flight;  
 191 Of prikyng and of huntynge for the hare  
 Of tracking and of hunting for the hare  
 192 Was al his lust, for no cost wolde he spare.  
 Was all his pleasure, by no means would he refrain  
 from it.  
 193 I seigh his sleeves purfild at the hond  
 I saw his sleeves lined at the hand  
 194 With grys, and that the fyneste of a lond;  
 With squirrel fur, and that the finest in the land;  
 195 And for to festne his hood under his chyn,  
 And to fasten his hood under his chin,  
 196 He hadde of gold ywroght a ful curious pyn;  
 He had a very skillfully made pin of gold;  
 197 A love-knotte in the gretter ende ther was.  
 There was an elaborate knot in the larger end.  
 198 His heed was balled, that shoon as any glas,  
 His head was bald, which shone like any glass,  
 199 And eek his face, as he hadde been enoynt.  
 And his face did too, as if he had been rubbed with  
 oil.  
 200 He was a lord ful fat and in good poynt;  
 He was a very plump lord and in good condition;  
 201 His eyen stepe, and rollynge in his heed,  
 His eyes were prominent, and rolling in his head,  
 202 That stemed as a forneys of a leed;  
 Which gleamed like a furnace under a cauldron;  
 203 His bootes souple, his hors in greet estaat.  
 His boots supple, his horse in excellent condition.  
 204 Now certainly he was a fair prelaat;  
 Now certainly he was a handsome ecclesiastical  
 dignitary;  
 205 He was nat pale as a forpynd goost.  
 He was not pale as a tormented spirit.  
 206 A fat swan loved he best of any roost.  
 A fat swan loved he best of any roast.  
 207 His palfrey was as broun as is a berye.  
 His saddle horse was as brown as is a berry.  
 208 A FRERE ther was, a wantowne and a merye,  
 There was a FRIAR, a pleasure-loving and merry one,  
 209 A lymytour, a ful solempne man.  
 A limiter (with an assigned territory), a very solemn  
 man.

210 In alle the ordres foure is noon that kan  
 In all the four orders of friars is no one that knows  
 211 So muchel of daliaunce and fair langage.  
 So much of sociability and elegant speech.  
 212 He hadde maad ful many a mariage  
 He had made very many a marriage  
 213 Of yonge wommen at his owene cost.  
 Of young women at his own cost.  
 214 Unto his ordre he was a noble post.  
 He was a noble supporter of his order.  
 215 Ful wel biloved and famulier was he  
 Very well beloved and familiar was he  
 216 With frankeleyns over al in his contree,  
 With landowners every where in his country,  
 217 And eek with worthy wommen of the toun;  
 And also with worthy women of the town;  
 218 For he hadde power of confessioun,  
 For he had power of confession,  
 219 As seyde hymself, moore than a curat,  
 As he said himself, more than a parish priest,  
 220 For of his ordre he was licenciati.  
 For he was licensed by his order.  
 221 Ful swetely herde he confessioun,  
 He heard confession very sweetly,  
 222 And plesaunt was his absolucioun:  
 And his absolution was pleasant:  
 223 He was an esy man to yeve penaunce,  
 He was a lenient man in giving penance,  
 224 Ther as he wiste to have a good pitaunce.  
 Where he knew he would have a good gift.  
 225 For unto a povre ordre for to yive  
 For to give to a poor order (of friars)  
 226 Is signe that a man is wel yshryve;  
 Is a sign that a man is well confessed;  
 227 For if he yaf, he dorste make avaunt,  
 For if he gave, he (the friar) dared to assert,  
 228 He wiste that a man was repentaunt;  
 He knew that a man was repentant;  
 229 For many a man so hard is of his herte,  
 For many a man is so hard in his heart,  
 230 He may nat wepe, although hym soore smerte.  
 He can not weep, although he painfully suffers.  
 231 Therefore in stede of wepyng and preyes  
 Therefore instead of weeping and prayers  
 232 Men moote yeve silver to the povre freres.  
 Men may give silver to the poor friars.  
 233 His typet was ay farsed ful of knyves  
 His hood was always stuffed full of knives  
 234 And pynnes, for to yeven faire wyves.  
 And pins, to give to fair wives.  
 235 And certainly he hadde a murye note:  
 And certainly he had a merry voice:  
 236 Wel koude he syng and pleyen on a rote;  
 He well knew how to sing and play on a rote (string  
 instrument);  
 237 Of yeddynges he baar outrely the pris.  
 He absolutely took the prize for reciting ballads.  
 238 His nekke whit was as the flour-de-lys;  
 His neck was white as a lily flower;  
 239 Therto he strong was as a champioun.  
 Furthermore he was strong as a champion fighter.  
 240 He knew the tavernes wel in every toun  
 He knew the taverns well in every town  
 241 And everich hostiler and tappestere  
 And every innkeeper and barmaid  
 242 Bet than a lazar or a beggestere,  
 Better than a leper or a beggar-woman,

- 243 For unto swich a worthy man as he  
For unto such a worthy man as he
- 244 Acorded nat, as by his facultee,  
It was not suitable, in view of his official position,
- 245 To have with sike lazars aqueyntaunce.  
To have acquaintance with sick lepers.
- 246 It is nat honest; it may nat avaunce,  
It is not respectable; it can not be profitable,
- 247 For to deelen with no swich poraille,  
To deal with any such poor people,
- 248 But al with riche and selleres of vitaille.  
But all with rich people and sellers of victuals.
- 249 And over al, ther as profit sholde arise,  
And every where, where profit should arise,
- 250 Curteis he was and lowely of servyse;  
He was courteous and graciously humble;
- 251 Ther nas no man nowher so vertuous.  
There was no man anywhere so capable (of such  
work).
- 252 He was the beste beggere in his hous;  
He was the best beggar in his house;
- 252a [And yaf a certeyn ferme for the graunt;  
[And he gave a certain fee for his grant (of begging  
rights);
- 252a Noon of his bretheren cam ther in his haunt;]  
None of his brethren came there in his territory;]
- 253 For thogh a wydwe hadde noght a sho,  
For though a widow had not a shoe,
- 254 So plesaunt was his "In principio,"  
So pleasant was his "In the beginning,"
- 255 Yet wolde he have a ferthyng, er he wente.  
Yet he would have a farthing, before he went away.
- 256 His purchas was wel bettre than his rente.  
His total profit was much more than his proper  
income.
- 257 And rage he koude, as it were right a whelp.  
And he knew how to frolic, as if he were indeed a  
pup.
- 258 In love-dayes ther koude he muchel help,  
He knew how to be much help on days for resolving  
disputes,
- 259 For ther he was nat lyk a cloysterer  
For there he was not like a cloistered monk
- 260 With a thredbare cope, as is a povre scoler,  
With a threadbare cope, like a poor scholar,
- 261 But he was lyk a maister or a pope.  
But he was like a master of arts or a pope.
- 262 Of double worstede was his semycope,  
Of wide (expensive) cloth was his short cloak,
- 263 That rounded as a belle out of the presse.  
Which was round as a bell fresh from the  
clothespress.
- 264 Somwhat he lipped, for his wantownesse,  
Somewhat he lisped, for his affectation,
- 265 To make his Englissh sweete upon his tonge;  
To make his English sweet upon his tongue;
- 266 And in his harpyng, whan that he hadde songe,  
And in his harping, when he had sung,
- 267 His eyen twynkled in his heed aryght  
His eyes twinkled in his head exactly
- 268 As doon the sterres in the frosty nyght.  
As do the stars in the frosty night.
- 269 This worthy lymytour was cleped Huberd.  
This worthy friar was called Huberd.
- 270 A MERCHANT was ther with a forked berd,  
There was a MERCHANT with a forked beard,
- 271 In mottelee, and hye on horse he sat;  
Wearing parti-colored cloth, and proudly he sat on  
his horse;
- 272 Upon his heed a Flaundryssh bever hat,  
Upon his head (he wore a) Flemish beaver hat,
- 273 His bootes clasped faire and fetisly.  
His boots were buckled handsomely and elegantly.
- 274 His resons he spak ful solempnely,  
His opinions he spoke very solemnly,
- 275 Sownynge alwey th' encrees of his wynnyng.  
Concerning always the increase of his profits.
- 276 He wolde the see were kept for any thyng  
He wanted the sea to be guarded at all costs
- 277 Bitwixe Middelburgh and Orewelle.  
Between Middelburgh (Holland) and Orwell  
(England).
- 278 Wel koude he in eschaunge sheeldes selle.  
He well knew how to deal in foreign currencies.
- 279 This worthy man ful wel his wit bisette:  
This worthy man employed his wit very well:
- 280 Ther wiste no wight that he was in dette,  
There was no one who knew that he was in debt,
- 281 So estatly was he of his governaunce  
He was so dignified in managing his affairs
- 282 With his bargaynes and with his chevyssaunce.  
With his buying and selling and with his financial  
deals.
- 283 For sothe he was a worthy man with alle,  
Truly, he was a worthy man indeed,
- 284 But, sooth to seyn, I noot how men hym calle.  
But, to say the truth, I do not know what men call  
him.
- 285 A CLERK ther was of Oxenford also,  
There was also a CLERK (scholar) from Oxford,
- 286 That unto logyk hadde longe ygo.  
Who long before had begun the study of logic.
- 287 As leene was his hors as is a rake,  
His horse was as lean as is a rake,
- 288 And he nas nat right fat, I undertake,  
And he was not very fat, I affirm,
- 289 But looked holwe, and therto sobrelly.  
But looked emaciated, and moreover abstemious.
- 290 Ful thredbare was his overeste courtely,  
His short overcoat was very threadbare,
- 291 For he hadde geten hym yet no benefice,  
For he had not yet obtained an ecclesiastical living,
- 292 Ne was so worldly for to have office.  
Nor was he worldly enough to take secular  
employment.
- 293 For hym was levere have at his beddes heed  
For he would rather have at the head of his bed
- 294 Twenty bookes, clad in blak or reed,  
Twenty books, bound in black or red,
- 295 Of Aristotle and his philosophie  
Of Aristotle and his philosophy
- 296 Than robes riche, or fithele, or gay sautrie.  
Than rich robes, or a fiddle, or an elegant psaltery.
- 297 But al be that he was a philosophre,  
But even though he was a philosopher,
- 298 Yet hadde he but litel gold in cofre;  
Nevertheless he had but little gold in his strongbox;
- 299 But al that he myghte of his freendes hente,  
But all that he could get from his friends,
- 300 On bookes and on lernynge he it spente,  
He spent on books and on learning,
- 301 And bisily gan for the soules preye

And diligently did pray for the souls  
 302 Of hem that yaf hym wherwith to scoleye.  
 Of those who gave him the wherewithal to attend the  
 schools.  
 303 Of studie took he moost cure and moost heede.  
 He took most care and paid most heed to study.  
 304 Noght o word spak he moore than was neede,  
 He spoke not one word more than was needed,  
 305 And that was seyde in forme and reverence,  
 And that was said with due formality and respect,  
 306 And short and quyk and ful of hy sentence;  
 And short and lively and full of elevated content;  
 307 Sownynge in moral vertu was his speche,  
 His speech was consonant with moral virtue,  
 308 And gladly wolde he lerne and gladly teche.  
 And gladly would he learn and gladly teach.

309 A SERGEANT OF THE LAWE, war and wys,  
 A SERGEANT OF THE LAW (high-ranking attorney),  
 prudent and wise,  
 310 That often hadde been at the Parvys,  
 Who often had been at the Porch of St. Paul's (where  
 lawyers gather)  
 311 Ther was also, ful riche of excellence.  
 Was also there, very rich in superior qualities.  
 312 Discreet he was and of greet reverence --  
 He was judicious and of great dignity --  
 313 He semed swich, his wordes weren so wise.  
 He seemed such, his words were so wise.  
 314 Justice he was ful often in assise,  
 He was very often a judge in the court of assizes,  
 315 By patente and by pleyn commissioun.  
 By royal appointment and with full jurisdiction.  
 316 For his science and for his heigh renoun,  
 For his knowledge and for his excellent reputation,  
 317 Of fees and robes hadde he many oon.  
 He had many grants of yearly income.  
 318 So greet a purchasour was nowher noon:  
 There was nowhere so great a land-buyer:  
 319 Al was fee symple to hym in effect;  
 In fact, all was unrestricted possession to him;  
 320 His purchasyng myghte nat been infect.  
 His purchasing could not be invalidated.  
 321 Nowher so bisy a man as he ther nas,  
 There was nowhere so busy a man as he,  
 322 And yet he semed bisier than he was.  
 And yet he seemed busier than he was.  
 323 In termes hadde he caas and doomes alle  
 He had in Year Books all the cases and decisions  
 324 That from the tyme of kyng William were falle.  
 That from the time of king William have occurred.  
 325 Therto he koude endite and make a thyng,  
 Furthermore, he knew how to compose and draw up  
 a legal document,  
 326 Ther koude no wight pynche at his writyng;  
 So that no one could find a flaw in his writing;  
 327 And every statut koude he pleyn by rote.  
 And he knew every statute completely by heart.  
 328 He rood but hoonly in a medlee cote,  
 He rode but simply in a parti-colored coat,  
 329 Girt with a ceint of silk, with barres smale;  
 Girded with a belt of silk, with small stripes;  
 330 Of his array telle I no lenger tale.  
 I tell no longer tale of his clothing.

331 A FRANKLEYN was in his compaignye.  
 A FRANKLIN was in his company.

332 Whit was his berd as is the dayesy;e;  
 His beard was white as a daisy;  
 333 Of his complexioun he was sangwyn.  
 As to his temperament, he was dominated by the  
 humor blood.  
 334 Wel loved he by the morwe a sop in wyn;  
 He well loved a bit of bread dipped in wine in the  
 morning;  
 335 To lyven in delit was evere his wone,  
 His custom was always to live in delight,  
 336 For he was Epicurus owene sone,  
 For he was Epicurus' own son,  
 337 That heeld opinioun that pleyn delit  
 Who held the opinion that pure pleasure  
 338 Was verray felicitee parfit.  
 Was truly perfect happiness.  
 339 An housholdere, and that a greet, was he;  
 He was a householder, and a great one at that;  
 340 Seint Julian he was in his contree.  
 He was Saint Julian (patron of hospitality) in his  
 country.  
 341 His breed, his ale, was always after oon;  
 His bread, his ale, was always of the same (good)  
 quality;  
 342 A bettre envyned man was nowher noon.  
 Nowhere was there any man better stocked with  
 wine.  
 343 Withoute bake mete was nevere his hous,  
 His house was never without baked pies  
 344 Of fissh and flessh, and that so plentevous  
 Of fish and meat, and that so plentiful  
 345 It snewed in his hous of mete and drynke;  
 That in his house it snowed with food and drink;  
 346 Of alle deyntees that men koude thynke,  
 Of all the dainties that men could imagine,  
 347 After the sondry sesons of the yeer,  
 In accord with the various seasons of the year,  
 348 So chaunged he his mete and his soper.  
 So he varied his midday meal and his supper.  
 349 Ful many a fat partrich hadde he in muwe,  
 He had very many fat partridges in pens,  
 350 And many a breem and many a luce in stuwe.  
 And many a bream and many a pike in his fish pond.  
 351 Wo was his cook but if his sauce were  
 Woe was his cook unless his sauce was  
 352 Poynaunt and sharp, and redy al his geere.  
 Hotly spiced and sharp, and ready all his cooking  
 equipment.  
 353 His table dormant in his halle alway  
 In his hall his dining table always  
 354 Stood redy covered al the longe day.  
 Stood covered (with table cloth) and ready all the  
 long day.  
 355 At session thar was he lord and sire;  
 He presided as lord and sire at court sessions;  
 356 Ful ofte tyme he was knyght of the shire.  
 He was a member of parliament many times.  
 357 An anlaas and a gipser al of silk  
 A dagger and a purse all of silk  
 358 Heeng at his girdel, whit as morne milk.  
 Hung at his belt, white as morning milk.  
 359 A shirreve hadde he been, and a contour.  
 He had been a sheriff, and an auditor of taxes.  
 360 Was nowher swich a worthy vavasour.  
 There was nowhere such a worthy landowner.

- 361 AN HABERDASSHERE and a CARPENTER,  
A HABERDASHER and a CARPENTER,  
362 A WEBBE, a DYERE, and a TAPYCER --  
A WEAVER, a DYER, and a TAPESTRY-MAKER --  
363 And they were clothed alle in o lyveree  
And they were all clothed in one livery  
364 Of a solempe and a greet fraternitee.  
Of a solemn and a great parish guild.  
365 Ful fressh and newe hir geere apiked was;  
Their equipment was adorned all freshly and new;  
366 Hir knyves were chaped noght with bras  
Their knives were not mounted with brass  
367 But al with silver, wroght ful clene and weel,  
But entirely with silver, wrought very neatly and well,  
368 Hire girdles and hir pouches everydeel.  
Their belts and their purses every bit.  
369 Wel semed ech of hem a fair burgeys  
Each of them well seemed a solid citizen  
370 To sitten in a yeldehalle on a deys.  
To sit on a dais in a city hall.  
371 Everich, for the wisdom that he kan,  
Every one of them, for the wisdom that he knows,  
372 Was shaply for to been an alderman.  
Was suitable to be an alderman.  
373 For catel hadde they ynogh and rente,  
For they had enough possessions and income,  
374 And eek hir wywes wolde it wel assente;  
And also their wives would well assent to it;  
375 And elles certeyn were they to blame.  
And otherwise certainly they would be to blame.  
376 It is ful fair to been ycleped "madame,"  
It is very fine to be called "my lady,"  
377 And goon to vigilies al bifore,  
And go to feasts on holiday eves heading the  
procession,  
378 And have a mantel roialliche ybore.  
And have a gown with a train royally carried.
- 379 A COOK they hadde with hem for the nones  
A COOK they had with them for the occasion  
380 To boille the chiknes with the marybones,  
To boil the chickens with the marrow bones,  
381 And poudre-marchant tart and galyngale.  
And tart poudre-marchant and galingale (spices).  
382 Wel koude he knowe a draughte of Londoun ale.  
He well knew how to judge a draft of London ale.  
383 He koude rooste, and sethe, and broille, and frye,  
He knew how to roast, and boil, and broil, and fry,  
384 Maken mortreux, and wel bake a pye.  
Make stews, and well bake a pie.  
385 But greet harm was it, as it thoughte me,  
But it was a great harm, as it seemed to me,  
386 That on his shyne a mormal hadde he.  
That he had an open sore on his shin.  
387 For blankmanger, that made he with the beste.  
As for white pudding, he made that of the best  
quality.
- 388 A SHIPMAN was ther, wonyng fer by weste;  
A SHIPMAN was there, dwelling far in the west;  
389 For aught I woot, he was of Dertemouthe.  
For all I know, he was from Dartmouth.  
390 He rood upon a rouncy, as he kouthe,  
He rode upon a cart horse, insofar as he knew how,  
391 In a gowne of faldyng to the knee.  
In a gown of woolen cloth (that reached) to the knee.  
392 A daggere hangyng on a laas hadde he
- He had a dagger hanging on a cord  
393 Aboute his nekke, under his arm adoun.  
About his neck, down under his arm.  
394 The hoot somer hadde maad his hewe al broun;  
The hot summer had made his hue all brown;  
395 And certainly he was a good felawe.  
And certainly he was a boon companion.  
396 Ful many a draughte of wyn had he ydrawe  
He had drawn very many a draft of wine  
397 Fro Burdeux-ward, whil that the chapman sleep.  
While coming from Bordeaux, while the merchant  
slept.  
398 Of nyce conscience took he no keep.  
He had no concern for a scrupulous conscience.  
399 If that he faught and hadde the hyer hond,  
If he fought and had the upper hand,  
400 By water he sente hem hoom to every lond.  
He sent them home by water to every land (they  
walked the plank).  
401 But of his craft to rekene wel his tydes,  
But of his skill to reckon well his tides,  
402 His stremes, and his daungers hym bisides,  
His currents, and his perils near at hand,  
403 His herberwe, and his moone, his lodemenage,  
His harbors, and positions of his moon, his  
navigation,  
404 Ther nas noon swich from Hulle to Cartage.  
There was none other such from Hull to Cartagena  
(Spain).  
405 Hardy he was and wys to undertake;  
He was bold and prudent in his undertakings;  
406 With many a tempest hadde his berd been shake.  
His beard had been shaken by many a tempest.  
407 He knew alle the havenes, as they were,  
He knew all the harbors, how they were,  
408 Fro Gootlond to the cape of Fynystere,  
From Gotland to the Cape of Finisterre,  
409 And every cryke in Britaigne and in Spayne.  
And every inlet in Brittany and in Spain.  
410 His barge ycleped was the Maudelayne.  
His ship was called the Maudelayne.  
411 With us ther was a DOCTOUR OF PHISIK;  
With us there was a DOCTOR OF MEDICINE  
412 In al this world ne was ther noon hym lik,  
In all this world there was no one like him,  
413 To speke of phisik and of surgerye,  
To speak of medicine and of surgery,  
414 For he was grounded in astronomye.  
For he was instructed in astronomy.  
415 He kepte his pacient a ful greet deel  
He took care of his patient very many times  
416 In houres by his magyk natureel.  
In (astronomically suitable) hours by (use of) his  
natural science.  
417 Wel koude he fortunen the ascendent  
He well knew how to calculate the planetary position  
418 Of his ymages for his pacient.  
Of his astronomical talismans for his patient.  
419 He knew the cause of everich maladye,  
He knew the cause of every malady,  
420 Were it of hoot, or coold, or moyste, or drye,  
Were it of hot, or cold, or moist, or dry elements,  
421 And where they engendred, and of what humour.  
And where they were engendered, and by what  
bodily fluid.  
422 He was a verray, parfit praktisour:

He was a truly, perfect practitioner:  
 423 The cause yknowe, and of his harm the roote,  
 The cause known, and the source of his (patient's)  
 harm,  
 424 Anon he yaf the sike man his boote.  
 Straightway he gave the sick man his remedy.  
 425 Ful redy hadde he his apothecaries  
 He had his apothecaries all ready  
 426 To sende hym drogges and his letuaries,  
 To send him drugs and his electuaries,  
 427 For ech of hem made oother for to wynne --  
 For each of them made the other to profit --  
 428 Hir frendshipe nas nat newe to bigynne.  
 Their friendship was not recently begun.  
 429 Wel knew he the olde Esculapius,  
 He well knew the old Aesculapius,  
 430 And Deyscorides, and eek Rufus,  
 And Dioscorides, and also Rufus,  
 431 Olde Ypocras, Haly, and Galyen,  
 Old Hippocrates, Haly, and Galen,  
 432 Serapion, Razis, and Avycen,  
 Serapion, Rhazes, and Avicenna,  
 433 Averrois, Damascien, and Constantyn,  
 Averroes, John the Damascan, and Constantine,  
 434 Bernard, and Gatesden, and Gilbertyn.  
 Bernard, and Gaddesden, and Gilbertus.  
 435 Of his diete mesurable was he,  
 He was moderate in his diet,  
 436 For it was of no superfluitee,  
 For it was of no excess,  
 437 But of greet norissyng and digestible.  
 But greatly nourishing and digestible.  
 438 His studie was but litel on the Bible.  
 His study was but little on the Bible.  
 439 In sangwyn and in pers he clad was al,  
 He was clad all in red and in blue,  
 440 Lyned with taffata and with sendal.  
 Lined with taffeta and with silk.  
 441 And yet he was but esy of dispence;  
 And yet he was moderate in spending;  
 442 He kepte that he wan in pestilence.  
 He kept what he earned in (times of) plague.  
 443 For gold in phisik is a cordial,  
 Since in medicine gold is a restorative for the heart,  
 444 Therefore he lovede gold in special.  
 Therefore he loved gold in particular.

445 A good WIF was ther OF biside BATHE,  
 There was a good WIFE OF beside BATH,  
 446 But she was somdel deef, and that was scathe.  
 But she was somewhat deaf, and that was a pity.  
 447 Of clooth-makyng she hadde swich an haunt  
 She had such a skill in cloth-making  
 448 She passed hem of Ypres and of Gaunt.  
 She surpassed them of Ypres and of Ghent.  
 449 In al the parisshe wif ne was ther noon  
 In all the parish there was no wife  
 450 That to the offryng bfore hire sholde goon;  
 Who should go to the Offering before her;  
 451 And if ther dide, certeyn so wrooth was she  
 And if there did, certainly she was so angry  
 452 That she was out of alle charitee.  
 That she was out of all charity (love for her neighbor).  
 453 Hir coverchiefs ful fyne weren of ground;  
 Her kerchiefs were very fine in texture;  
 454 I dorste swere they weyeden ten pound  
 I dare swear they weighed ten pound

455 That on a Sunday weren upon hir heed.  
 That on a Sunday were upon her head.  
 456 Hir hosen weren of fyn scarlet reed,  
 Her stockings were of fine scarlet red,  
 457 Ful streite yteyd, and shoes ful moyste and newe.  
 Very closely laced, and shoes very supple and new.  
 458 Bould was hir face, and fair, and reed of hewe.  
 Bold was her face, and fair, and red of hue.  
 459 She was a worthy womman al hir lyve:  
 She was a worthy woman all her life:  
 460 Housbondes at chirche dore she hadde fyve,  
 She had (married) five husbands at the church door,  
 461 Withouten oother compaignye in youthe --  
 Not counting other company in youth --  
 462 But thereof nedeth nat to speke as nowthe.  
 But there is no need to speak of that right now.  
 463 And thries hadde she been at Jerusalem;  
 And she had been three times at Jerusalem;  
 464 She hadde passed many a straunge strem;  
 She had passed many a foreign sea;  
 465 At Rome she hadde been, and at Boloigne,  
 She had been at Rome, and at Boulogne,  
 466 In Galice at Seint-Jame, and at Coloigne.  
 In Galicia at Saint-James (of Compostella), and at  
 Cologne.  
 467 She koude muchel of wandrynge by the weye.  
 She knew much about wandering by the way.  
 468 Gat-tothed was she, soothly for to seye.  
 She had teeth widely set apart, truly to say.  
 469 Upon an amblere esily she sat,  
 She sat easily upon a pacing horse,  
 470 Ywympled wel, and on hir heed an hat  
 Wearing a large wimple, and on her head a hat  
 471 As brood as is a bokeler or a targe;  
 As broad as a buckler or a shield;  
 472 A foot-mantel aboute hir hipes large,  
 An overskirt about her large hips,  
 473 And on hir feet a paire of spores sharpe.  
 And on her feet a pair of sharp spurs.  
 474 In felawshipe wel koude she laughe and carpe.  
 In fellowship she well knew how to laugh and chatter.  
 475 Of remedies of love she knew per chaunce,  
 She knew, as it happened, about remedies for love  
 476 For she koude of that art the olde daunce.  
 For she knew the old dance (tricks of the trade) of  
 that art.

477 A good man was ther of religioun,  
 A good man was there of religion,  
 478 And was a povre PERSOUN OF A TOUN,  
 And (he) was a poor PARSON OF A TOWN,  
 479 But riche he was of hooly thoght and werk.  
 But he was rich in holy thought and work.  
 480 He was also a lerned man, a clerk,  
 He was also a learned man, a scholar,  
 481 That Cristes gospel trewely wolde preche;  
 Who would preach Christ's gospel truly;  
 482 His parisspens devoutly wolde he teche.  
 He would devoutly teach his parishioners.  
 483 Benygne he was, and wonder diligent,  
 He was gracious, and wonderfully diligent,  
 484 And in adversitee ful pacient,  
 And in adversity ful patient,  
 485 And swich he was ypreved ofte sithes.  
 And such he was proven many times.  
 486 Ful looth were hym to cursen for his tithes,  
 He was very reluctant to excommunicate for

(nonpayment of) his tithes,  
487 But rather wolde he yeven, out of doute,  
But rather would he give, there is no doubt,  
488 Unto his povre parissshens aboute  
Unto his poor parishioners about  
489 Of his offryng and eek of his substaunce.  
Some of his offering (received at mass) and also some  
of his income.  
490 He koude in litel thyng have suffisaunce.  
He knew how to have sufficiency in few possessions.  
491 Wyd was his parisshe, and houses fer asonder,  
His parish was wide, and houses far apart,  
492 But he ne left nat, for reyn ne thonder,  
But he did not omit, for rain nor thunder,  
493 In siknesse nor in meschief to visite  
In sickness or in trouble to visit  
494 The ferreste in his parisshe, muche and lite,  
Those living farthest away in his parish, high-ranking  
and low,  
495 Upon his feet, and in his hand a staf.  
Going by foot, and in his hand a staff.  
496 This noble ensample to his sheep he yaf,  
He gave this noble example to his sheep,  
497 That first he wroghte, and afterward he taughte.  
That first he wrought, and afterward he taught.  
498 Out of the gospel he tho wordes caughte,  
He took those words out of the gospel,  
499 And this figure he added eek therto,  
And this metaphor he added also to that,  
500 That if gold ruste, what shal iren do?  
That if gold rust, what must iron do?  
501 For if a preest be foul, on whom we truste,  
For if a priest, on whom we trust, should be foul  
502 No wonder is a lewed man to ruste;  
It is no wonder for a layman to go bad;  
503 And shame it is, if a prest take keep,  
And it is a shame, if a priest is concerned:  
504 A shiten shepherde and a clene sheep.  
A shit-stained shepherd and a clean sheep.  
505 Wel oghte a preest ensample for to yive,  
Well ought a priest to give an example,  
506 By his clenness, how that his sheep sholde lyve.  
By his purity, how his sheep should live.  
507 He sette nat his benefice to hyre  
He did not rent out his benefice (ecclesiastical living)  
508 And leet his sheep encombred in the myre  
And leave his sheep encumbered in the mire  
509 And ran to Londoun unto Seinte Poules  
And run to London unto Saint Paul's  
510 To seken hym a chaunterie for soules,  
To seek an appointment as a chantry priest (praying  
for a patron)  
511 Or with a bretherhed to been withholde;  
Or to be hired (as a chaplain) by a guild;  
512 But dwelte at hoom, and kepte wel his folde,  
But dwelt at home, and kept well his sheep fold  
(parish),  
513 So that the wolf ne made it nat myscarie;  
So that the wolf did not make it go wrong;  
514 He was a shepherde and noght a mercenarie.  
He was a shepherd and not a hireling.  
515 And though he hooly were and vertuous,  
And though he was holy and virtuous,  
516 He was to synful men nat despitous,  
He was not scornful to sinful men,  
517 Ne of his speche daungerous ne digne,  
Nor domineering nor haughty in his speech,  
518 But in his techyng discreet and benygne.  
But in his teaching courteous and kind.  
519 To drawn folk to hevене by fairnesse,  
To draw folk to heaven by gentleness,  
520 By good ensample, this was his bisynesse.  
By good example, this was his business.  
521 But it were any persone obstinat,  
Unless it were an obstinate person,  
522 What so he were, of heigh or lough estat,  
Whoever he was, of high or low rank,  
523 Hym wolde he snybben sharply for the nonys.  
He would rebuke him sharply at that time.  
524 A bettre preest I trowe that nowher noon ys.  
I believe that nowhere is there a better priest.  
525 He waited after no pompe and reverence,  
He expected no pomp and ceremony,  
526 Ne maked him a spiced conscience,  
Nor made himself an overly fastidious conscience,  
527 But Cristes loore and his apostles twelve  
But Christ's teaching and His twelve apostles  
528 He taughte; but first he folwed it hymselfe.  
He taught; but first he followed it himself.  
529 With hym ther was a PLOWMAN, was his brother,  
With him there was a PLOWMAN, who was his  
brother,  
530 That hadde ylad of dong ful many a fother;  
Who had hauled very many a cartload of dung;  
531 A trewe swynkere and a good was he,  
He was a true and good worker,  
532 Lyvyng in pees and parfit charitee.  
Living in peace and perfect love.  
533 God loved he best with al his hoole herte  
He loved God best with all his whole heart  
534 At alle tymes, thogh him gamed or smerte,  
At all times, whether it pleased or pained him,  
535 And thanne his neighebor right as hymselfe.  
And then (he loved) his neighbor exactly as himself.  
536 He wolde thresshe, and therto dyke and delve,  
He would thresh, and moreover make ditches and  
dig,  
537 For Cristes sake, for every povre wight,  
For Christ's sake, for every poor person,  
538 Withouten hire, if it lay in his myght.  
Without payment, if it lay in his power.  
539 His tithes payde he ful faire and wel,  
He paid his tithes completely and well,  
540 Bothe of his propre swynk and his catel.  
Both of his own labor and of his possessions.  
541 In a tabard he rood upon a mere.  
He rode in a tabard (sleeveless jacket) upon a mare.  
542 Ther was also a REVE, and a MILLERE,  
There was also a REEVE, and a MILLER,  
543 A SOMNOUR, and a PARDONER also,  
A SUMMONER, and a PARDONER also,  
544 A MAUNCIPLE, and myself -- ther were namo.  
A MANCIPLE, and myself -- there were no more.  
545 The MILLERE was a stout carl for the nones;  
The MILLER was a stout fellow indeed;  
546 Ful byg he was of brawn, and eek of bones.  
He was very strong of muscle, and also of bones.  
547 That proved wel, for over al ther he cam,  
That was well proven, for wherever he came,  
548 At wrastlyng he wolde have alwey the ram.

At wrestling he would always take the the prize.  
 549 He was short-sholdred, brood, a thikke knarre;  
 He was stoutly built, broad, a large-framed fellow;  
 550 Ther was no dore that he nolde heve of harre,  
 There was no door that he would not heave off its  
 hinges,  
 551 Or breke it at a rennyng with his heed.  
 Or break it by running at it with his head.  
 552 His berd as any sowe or fox was reed,  
 His beard was red as any sow or fox,  
 553 And therto brood, as though it were a spade.  
 And moreover broad, as though it were a spade.  
 554 Upon the cop right of his nose he hade  
 Upon the exact top of his nose he had  
 555 A werte, and theron stood a toft of herys,  
 A wart, and thereon stood a tuft of hairs,  
 556 Reed as the brustles of a sowes erys;  
 Red as the bristles of a sow's ears;  
 557 His nosethirles blake were and wyde.  
 His nostrils were black and wide.  
 558 A swerd and a bokeler bar he by his syde.  
 He wore a sword and a buckler by his side.  
 559 His mouth as greet was as a greet forneys.  
 His mouth was as large as a large furnace.  
 560 He was a janglere and a goliardeys,  
 He was a loudmouth and a buffoon,  
 561 And that was moost of synne and harlotries.  
 And that was mostly of sin and deeds of harlotry.  
 562 Wel koude he stelen corn and tollen thries;  
 He well knew how to steal corn and take payment  
 three times;  
 563 And yet he hadde a thombe of gold, pardee.  
 And yet he had a thumb of gold, indeed.  
 564 A whit cote and a blew hood wered he.  
 He wore a white coat and a blue hood.  
 565 A baggepipe wel koude he blowe and sowne,  
 He well knew how to blow and play a bag-pipe,  
 566 And therwithal he broghte us out of towne.  
 And with that he brought us out of town.  
  
 567 A gentil MAUNCIPLE was ther of a temple,  
 There was a fine MANCIPIE of a temple (law school),  
 568 Of which achatours myghte take exemple  
 Of whom buyers of provisions might take example  
 569 For to be wise in byynge of vitaille;  
 For how to be wise in buying of victuals;  
 570 For wheither that he payde or took by taille,  
 For whether he paid (cash) or took (goods) on credit,  
 571 Algate he wayted so in his achaat  
 Always he watched so (carefully for his opportunity)  
 in his purchases  
 572 That he was ay biforn and in good staat.  
 That he was always ahead and in good state.  
 573 Now is nat that of God a ful fair grace  
 Now is not that a very fair grace of God  
 574 That swich a lewed mannes wit shal pace  
 That such an unlearned man's wit shall surpass  
 575 The wisdom of an heep of lerned men?  
 The wisdom of a heap of learned men?  
 576 Of maistres hadde he mo than thries ten,  
 He had more than three times ten masters,  
 577 That weren of lawe expert and curious,  
 Who were expert and skillful in law,  
 578 Of which ther were a duszeyne in that hous  
 Of whom there were a dozen in that house  
 579 Worthy to been stywardes of rente and lond  
 Worthy to be stewards of rent and land

580 Of any lord that is in Engelond,  
 Of any lord that is in England,  
 581 To make hym lyve by his propre good  
 To make him live by his own wealth  
 582 In honour detteeles (but if he were wood),  
 In honor and debtless (unless he were crazy),  
 583 Or lyve as scarsly as hym list desire;  
 Or live as economically as it pleased him to desire;  
 584 And able for to helpen al a shire  
 And (they would be) able to help all a shire  
 585 In any caas that myghte falle or happe.  
 In any emergency that might occur or happen.  
 586 And yet this Manciple sette hir aller cappe.  
 And yet this Manciple fooled them all.  
  
 587 The REVE was a sclendre colerik man.  
 The REEVE was a slender choleric man.  
 588 His berd was shave as ny as ever he kan;  
 His beard was shaved as close as ever he can;  
 589 His heer was by his erys ful round yshorn;  
 His hair was closely cropped by his ears;  
 590 His top was dokked lyk a preest biforn.  
 The top of his head in front was cut short like a  
 priest's.  
 591 Ful longe were his legges and ful lene,  
 His legs were very long and very lean,  
 592 Ylyk a staf; ther was no calf ysene.  
 Like a stick; there was no calf to be seen.  
 593 Wel koude he kepe a gerner and a bynne;  
 He well knew how to keep a granary and a storage  
 bin;  
 594 Ther was noon auditour koude on him wynne.  
 There was no auditor who could earn anything (by  
 catching him).  
 595 Wel wiste he by the droghte and by the reyn  
 He well knew by the drought and by the rain  
 596 The yeldyng of his seed and of his greyn.  
 (What would be) the yield of his seed and of his grain.  
 597 His lordes sheep, his neet, his dayerye,  
 His lord's sheep, his cattle, his herd of dairy cows,  
 598 His swyn, his hors, his stoor, and his pultrye  
 His swine, his horses, his livestock, and his poultry  
 599 Was hoolly in this Reves governynge,  
 Was wholly in this Reeve's control,  
 600 And by his covenant yaf the rekenynge,  
 And in accord with his contract he gave the  
 reckoning,  
 601 Syn that his lord was twenty yeer of age.  
 Since his lord was twenty years of age.  
 602 Ther koude no man brynge hym in arrerage.  
 There was no man who could find him in arrears.  
 603 Ther nas baillif, ne hierde, nor oother hyne,  
 There was no farm manager, nor herdsman, nor  
 other servant,  
 604 That he ne knew his sleighte and his covyne;  
 Whose trickery and treachery he did not know;  
 605 They were adrad of hym as of the deeth.  
 They were afraid of him as of the plague.  
 606 His wonyng was ful faire upon an heeth;  
 His dwelling was very nicely situated upon an heath;  
 607 With grene trees yshadwed was his place.  
 His place was shaded by green trees.  
 608 He koude bettre than his lord purchase.  
 He could buy property better than his lord could.  
 609 Ful riche he was astored pryvely.  
 He was secretly very richly provided.  
 610 His lord wel koude he plesen subtilly,

He well knew how to please his lord subtly,  
 611 To yeve and lene hym of his owene good,  
 By giving and lending him some of his lord's own  
 possessions,  
 612 And have a thank, and yet a cote and hood.  
 And have thanks, and also a coat and hood (as a  
 reward).  
 613 In youthe he hadde lerned a good myster:  
 In youth he had learned a good craft:  
 614 He was a wel good wrighte, a carpenter.  
 He was a very good craftsman, a carpenter.  
 615 This Reve sat upon a ful good stot  
 This Reeve sat upon a very good horse  
 616 That was al pomely grey and highte Scot.  
 That was all dapple gray and was called Scot.  
 617 A long surcote of pers upon he hade,  
 He had on a long outer coat of dark blue,  
 618 And by his syde he baar a rusty blade.  
 And by his side he wore a rusty sword.  
 619 Of Northfolk was this Reve of which I telle,  
 Of Northfolk was this Reeve of whom I tell,  
 620 Biside a toun men clepen Baldeswelle.  
 Near to a town men call Bawdeswelle.  
 621 Tukked he was as is a frere aboute,  
 He had his coat hitched up and belted, like a friar,  
 622 And evere he rood the hyndreste of oure route.  
 And ever he rode as the last of our company.  
  
 623 A SOMONOUR was ther with us in that place,  
 There was a SUMMONER with us in that place,  
 624 That hadde a fyr-reed cherubynnes face,  
 Who had a fire-red cherubim's face,  
 625 For saucefleem he was, with eyen narwe.  
 For it was pimpled and discolored, with swollen  
 eyelids.  
 626 As hoot he was and lecherous as a sparwe,  
 He was as hot and lecherous as a sparrow,  
 627 With scalled browes blake and piled berd.  
 With black, scabby brows and a beard with hair fallen  
 out.  
 628 Of his visage children were aferd.  
 Children were afraid of his face.  
 629 Ther nas quyk-silver, lytarge, ne brymstoon,  
 There was no mercury, lead monoxide, nor sulphur,  
 630 Boras, ceruce, ne oille of tartre noon,  
 Borax, white lead, nor any oil of tarter,  
 631 Ne oynement that wolde clense and byte,  
 Nor ointment that would cleanse and burn,  
 632 That hym myghte helpen of his whelkes white,  
 That could cure him of his white pustules,  
 633 Nor of the knobbes sittynge on his chekes.  
 Nor of the knobs sitting on his cheeks.  
 634 Wel loved he garleek, oynons, and eek lekes,  
 He well loved garlic, onions, and also leeks,  
 635 And for to drynken strong wyn, reed as blood;  
 And to drink strong wine, red as blood;  
 636 Thanne wolde he speke and crie as he were wood.  
 Then he would speak and cry out as if he were crazy.  
 637 And whan that he wel dronken hadde the wyn,  
 And when he had drunk deeply of the wine,  
 638 Thanne wolde he speke no word but Latyn.  
 Then he would speak no word but Latin.  
 639 A fewe termes hadde he, two or thre,  
 He had a few legal terms, two or three,  
 640 That he had lerned out of som decree --  
 That he had learned out of some text of ecclesiastical  
 law --

641 No wonder is, he herde it al the day;  
 That is no wonder, he heard it all the day;  
 642 And eek ye knowen wel how that a jay  
 And also you know well how a jay  
 643 Kan clepen "Watte" as wel as kan the pope.  
 Can call out "Walter" as well as the pope can.  
 644 But whoso koude in oother thyng hym grope,  
 But whoever knew how to examine him in other  
 matters,  
 645 Thanne hadde he spent al his philosophie;  
 (Would find that) he had used up all his learning;  
 646 Ay "Questio quid iuris" wolde he crie.  
 Always "The question is, what point of the law  
 applies?" he would cry.  
 647 He was a gentil harlot and a kynde;  
 He was a fine rascal and a kind one;  
 648 A bettre felawe sholde men noght fynde.  
 One could not find a better fellow.  
 649 He wolde suffre for a quart of wyn  
 For a quart of wine he would allow  
 650 A good felawe to have his concubyn  
 A good fellow to have his concubine  
 651 A twelf month, and excuse hym atte fulle;  
 For twelve months, and excuse him completely;  
 652 Ful prively a fynch eek koude he pulle.  
 Secretly he also knew how to pull off a clever trick.  
 653 And if he foond owher a good felawe,  
 And if he found anywhere a good fellow,  
 654 He wolde techen him to have noon awe  
 He would teach him to have no awe  
 655 In swich caas of the ercedekenes curs,  
 Of the archdeacon's curse (of excommunication) in  
 such a case,  
 656 But if a mannes soule were in his purs;  
 Unless a man's soul were in his purse;  
 657 For in his purs he sholde ypunysshed be.  
 For in his purse he would be punished.  
 658 "Purs is the ercedekenes helle," seyde he.  
 "Purse is the archdeacon's hell," he said.  
 659 But wel I woot he lyed right in dede;  
 But well I know he lied right certainly;  
 660 Of cursyng oghte ech gilty man him drede,  
 Each guilty man ought to be afraid of  
 excommunication,  
 661 For curs wol slee right as assoillyng savith,  
 For excommunication will slay just as forgiveness  
 saves,  
 662 And also war hym of a Significavit.  
 And let him also beware of a Significavit (order for  
 imprisonment).  
 663 In daunger hadde he at his owene gise  
 In his control he had as he pleased  
 664 The yonge girles of the diocise,  
 The young people of the diocese,  
 665 And knew hir conseil, and was al hir reed.  
 And knew their secrets, and was the adviser of them  
 all.  
 666 A gerland hadde he set upon his heed,  
 He had set a garland upon his heed,  
 667 As greet as it were for an ale-stake.  
 As large as if it were for the sign of a tavern  
 668 A bokeleer hadde he maad hym of a cake.  
 He had made himself a shield of a cake.  
  
 669 With hym ther rood a gentil PARDONER  
 With him there rode a fine PARDONER  
 670 Of Rouncivale, his freend and his compeer,



Of Rouncivale, his friend and his companion,  
 671 That streight was comen fro the court of Rome.  
 Who had come straight from the court of Rome.  
 672 Ful loude he soong "Com hider, love, to me!"  
 Very loud he sang "Come hither, love, to me!"  
 673 This Somonour bar to hym a stif burdoun;  
 This Summoner harmonized with him in a strong  
 bass;  
 674 Was nevere trompe of half so greet a soun.  
 There was never a trumpet of half so great a sound.  
 675 This Pardoner hadde heer as yelow as wex,  
 This Pardoner had hair as yellow as wax,  
 676 But smothe it heeng as dooth a strike of flex;  
 But smooth it hung as does a clump of flax;  
 677 By ounces henge his lokkes that he hadde,  
 By small strands hung such locks as he had,  
 678 And therwith he his shuldres overspradde;  
 And he spread them over his shoulders;  
 679 But thynne it lay, by colpons oon and oon.  
 But thin it lay, by strands one by one.  
 680 But hood, for jolitee, wered he noon,  
 But to make an attractive appearance, he wore no  
 hood,  
 681 For it was trussed up in his walet.  
 For it was trussed up in his knapsack.  
 682 Hym thoughte he rood al of the newe jet;  
 It seemed to him that he rode in the very latest style;  
 683 Dischevelee, save his cappe, he rood al bare.  
 With hair unbound, save for his cap, he rode all bare-  
 headed.  
 684 Swiche glarynge eyen hadde he as an hare.  
 He had glaring eyes such as has a hare.  
 685 A vernycle hadde he sowed upon his cappe.  
 He had sewn a Veronica upon his cap.  
 686 His walet, biforn hym in his lappe,  
 Before him in his lap, (he had) his knapsack,  
 687 Bretful of pardoun comen from Rome al hoot.  
 Brimful of pardons come all fresh from Rome.  
 688 A voys he hadde as smal as hath a goot.  
 He had a voice as small as a goat has.  
 689 No berd hadde he, ne nevere sholde have;  
 He had no beard, nor never would have;  
 690 As smothe it was as it were late shave.  
 It (his face) was as smooth as if it were recently  
 shaven.  
 691 I trowe he were a geldyng or a mare.  
 I believe he was a eunuch or a homosexual.  
 692 But of his craft, fro Berwyk into Ware  
 But as to his craft, from Berwick to Ware  
 693 Ne was ther swich another pardoner.  
 There was no other pardoner like him.  
 694 For in his male he hadde a pilwe-beer,  
 For in his pouch he had a pillow-case,  
 695 Which that he seyde was Oure Lady veyl;  
 Which he said was Our Lady's veil;  
 696 He seyde he hadde a gobet of the seyl  
 He said he had a piece of the sail  
 697 That Seint Peter hadde, whan that he wente  
 That Saint Peter had, when he went  
 698 Upon the see, til Jhesu Crist hym hente.  
 Upon the sea, until Jesus Christ took him.  
 699 He hadde a croys of latoun ful of stones,  
 He had a cross of latten (brass-like alloy) covered  
 with stones,  
 700 And in a glas he hadde pigges bones.  
 And in a glass container he had pigs' bones.  
 701 But with thise relikes, whan that he fond

But with these relics, when he found  
 702 A povre person dwellynge upon lond,  
 A poor parson dwelling in the countryside,  
 703 Upon a day he gat hym moore moneye  
 In one day he got himself more money  
 704 Than that the person gat in monthes tweye;  
 Than the parson got in two months;  
 705 And thus, with feyned flaterye and japes,  
 And thus, with feigned flattery and tricks,  
 706 He made the person and the peple his apes.  
 He made fools of the parson and the people.  
 707 But trewely to tellen atte laste,  
 But truly to tell at the last,  
 708 He was in chirche a noble ecclesiaste.  
 He was in church a noble ecclesiast.  
 709 Wel koude he rede a lessoun or a storie,  
 He well knew how to read a lesson or a story,  
 710 But alderbest he song an offertorie;  
 But best of all he sang an Offertory;  
 711 For wel he wiste, whan that song was songe,  
 For he knew well, when that song was sung,  
 712 He moste preche and wel affile his tonge  
 He must preach and well smooth his speech  
 713 To wynne silver, as he ful wel koude;  
 To win silver, as he very well knew how;  
 714 Therefore he song the murierly and loude.  
 Therefore he sang the more merrily and loud.  
 715 Now have I toold you soothly, in a clause,  
 Now have I told you truly, briefly,  
 716 Th' estaat, th' array, the nombre, and eek the cause  
 The rank, the dress, the number, and also the cause  
 717 Why that assembled was this compaignye  
 Why this company was assembled  
 718 In Southwerk at this gentil hostelrye  
 In Southwark at this fine hostelry  
 719 That highte the Tabard, faste by the Belle.  
 That is called the Tabard, close by the Bell.  
 720 But now is tyme to yow for to telle  
 But now it is time to tell to you  
 721 How that we baren us that ilke nyght,  
 How we conducted ourselves that same night,  
 722 Whan we were in that hostelrie alyght;  
 When we had arrived in that hostelry;  
 723 And after wol I telle of our viage  
 And after that I will tell of our journey  
 724 And al the remenaunt of oure pilgrimage.  
 And all the rest of our pilgrimage.  
 725 But first I pray yow, of youre curteisye,  
 But first I pray yow, of your courtesy,  
 726 That ye n' arette it nat my vileynye,  
 That you do not attribute it to my rudeness,  
 727 Thogh that I pleylny speke in this mateere,  
 Though I speak plainly in this matter,  
 728 To telle yow hir wordes and hir cheere,  
 To tell you their words and their behavior,  
 729 Ne thogh I speke hir wordes proprely.  
 Nor though I speak their words accurately.  
 730 For this ye knowen al so wel as I:  
 For this you know as well as I:  
 731 Whoso shal telle a tale after a man,  
 Whoever must repeat a story after someone,  
 732 He moot reherce as ny as evere he kan  
 He must repeat as closely as ever he knows how  
 733 Everich a word, if it be in his charge,  
 Every single word, if it be in his power,  
 734 Al speke he never so rudeliche and large,

Although he may speak ever so rudely and freely,  
 735 Or ellis he moot telle his tale untrewe,  
 Or else he must tell his tale inaccurately,  
 736 Or feyne thyng, or fynde wordes newe.  
 Or make up things, or find new words.  
 737 He may nat spare, althogh he were his brother;  
 He may not refrain from (telling the truth), although  
 he were his brother;  
 738 He moot as wel seye o word as another.  
 He must as well say one word as another.  
 739 Crist spak hymself ful brode in hooly writ,  
 Christ himself spoke very plainly in holy writ,  
 740 And wel ye woot no vileynye is it.  
 And you know well it is no rudeness.  
 741 Eek Plato seith, whoso kan hym rede,  
 Also Plato says, whosoever knows how to read him,  
 742 The wordes moote be cosyng to the dede.  
 The words must be closely related to the deed.  
 743 Also I prey yow to foryeve it me,  
 Also I pray you to forgive it to me,  
 744 Al have I nat set folk in hir degree  
 Although I have not set folk in order of their rank  
 745 Heere in this tale, as that they sholde stonde.  
 Here in this tale, as they should stand.  
 746 My wit is short, ye may wel understonde.  
 My wit is short, you can well understand.

747 Greet chiere made oure Hoost us everichon,  
 Our Host made great hospitality to everyone of us,  
 748 And to the soper sette he us anon.  
 And to the supper he set us straightway.  
 749 He served us with vitaille at the beste;  
 He served us with victuals of the best sort;  
 750 Strong was the wyn, and wel to drynke us leste.  
 The wine was strong, and it well pleased us to drink.  
 751 A semely man OURE HOOSTE was withalle  
 OUR HOST was an impressive man indeed  
 752 For to been a marchal in an halle.  
 (Qualified) to be a master of ceremonies in a hall.  
 753 A large man he was with eyen stepe --  
 He was a large man with prominent eyes --  
 754 A fairer burgeys was ther noon in Chepe --  
 There was no better business man in Cheapside --  
 755 Boold of his speche, and wys, and wel ytaught,  
 Bold of his speech, and wise, and well mannered,  
 756 And of manhod hym lakkede right naught.  
 And he lacked nothing at all of the qualities proper to  
 a man.  
 757 Eek therto he was right a myrie man;  
 Also moreover he was a right merry man;  
 758 And after soper pleyen he bigan,  
 And after supper he began to be merry,  
 759 And spak of myrthe amonges othere thynges,  
 And spoke of mirth among other things,  
 760 Whan that we hadde maad oure rekenynges,  
 When we had paid our bills,  
 761 And seyde thus: "Now, lordynges, trewely,  
 And said thus: "Now, gentlemen, truly,  
 762 Ye been to me right welcome, hertely;  
 You are right heartily welcome to me;  
 763 For by my trouthe, if that I shal nat lye,  
 For by my word, if I shall not lie (I must say),  
 764 I saugh nat this yeer so myrie a compaignye  
 I saw not this year so merry a company  
 765 Atones in this herberwe as is now.  
 At one time in this lodging as is (here) now.  
 766 Fayn wolde I doon yow myrthe, wiste I how.

I would gladly make you happy, if I knew how.  
 767 And of a myrthe I am right now bythoght,  
 And I have just now thought of an amusement,  
 768 To doon yow ese, and it shal coste noght.  
 To give you pleasure, and it shall cost nothing.

769 "Ye goon to Caunterbury -- God yow speede,  
 "You go to Canterbury -- God give you success,  
 770 The blisful martir quite yow youre meede!  
 May the blessed martyr give you your reward!  
 771 And wel I woot, as ye goon by the weye,  
 And well I know, as you go by the way,  
 772 Ye shapen yow to talen and to pleye;  
 You intend to tell tales and to amuse yourselves;  
 773 For trewely, confort ne myrthe is noon  
 For truly, it is no comfort nor mirth  
 774 To ride by the weye doumb as a stoon;  
 To ride by the way dumb as a stone;  
 775 And therfore wol I maken yow disport,  
 And therefore I will make a game for you,  
 776 As I seyde erst, and doon yow som confort.  
 As I said before, and provide you some pleasure.  
 777 And if yow liketh alle by oon assent  
 And if pleases you all unanimously  
 778 For to stonden at my juggement,  
 To be subject to my judgment,  
 779 And for to werken as I shal yow seye,  
 And to do as I shall tell you,  
 780 Tomorwe, whan ye riden by the weye,  
 Tomorrow, when you ride by the way,  
 781 Now, by my fader soule that is deed,  
 Now, by the soul of my father who is dead,  
 782 But ye be myrie, I wol yeve yow myn heed!  
 Unless you be merry, I will give you my head!  
 783 Hoold up youre hondes, withouten moore speche."  
 Hold up your hands, without more speech."

784 Oure conseil was nat longe for to seche.  
 Our decision was not long to seek out.  
 785 Us thoughte it was noght worth to make it wys,  
 It seemed to us it was not worthwhile to deliberate  
 on it,  
 786 And graunted hym withouten moore avys,  
 And (we) granted his request without more  
 discussion,  
 787 And bad him seye his voidit as hym leste.  
 And asked him to say his decision as it pleased him.  
 788 "Lordynges," quod he, "now herkneth for the beste;  
 "Gentlemen," said he, "now listen for the best course  
 of action;  
 789 But taak it nought, I prey yow, in desdeyn.  
 But, I pray you, do not take it in disdain (scorn it).  
 790 This is the poynt, to speken short and pleyen,  
 This is the point, to speak briefly and clearly,  
 791 That ech of yow, to shorte with oure weye,  
 That each of you, to make our way seem short by  
 this means,  
 792 In this viage shal telle tales tweye  
 Must tell two tales in this journey  
 793 To Caunterbury-ward, I mene it so,  
 On the way to Canterbury, that is what I mean,  
 794 And homward he shal tellen othere two,  
 And on the homeward trip he shall tell two others,  
 795 Of aventures that whilom han bifalle.  
 About adventures that in old times have happened.  
 796 And which of yow that bereth hym best of alle --  
 And whoever of you who does best of all --

797 That is to seyn, that telleth in this caas  
That is to say, who tells in this case

798 Tales of best sentence and moost solaas --  
Tales of best moral meaning and most pleasure --

799 Shal have a soper at oure aller cost  
Shall have a supper at the cost of us all

800 Heere in this place, sittynge by this post,  
Here in this place, sitting by this post,

801 Whan that we come agayn fro Caunterbury.  
When we come back from Canterbury.

802 And for to make yow the moore mury,  
And to make you the more merry,

803 I wol myselven goodly with yow ryde,  
I will myself gladly ride with you,

804 Right at myn owene cost, and be youre gyde;  
Entirely at my own cost, and be your guide;

805 And whoso wole my juggement withseye  
And whosoever will not accept my judgment

806 Shal paye al that we spenden by the weye.  
Shall pay all that we spend by the way.

807 And if ye vouche sauf that it be so,  
And if you grant that it be so,

808 Tel me anon, withouten wordes mo,  
Tell me straightway, without more words,

809 And I wol erly shape me therfore."  
And I will get ready early for this."

810 This thyng was graunted, and oure othes swore  
This thing was granted, and our oaths sworn

811 With ful glad herte, and preyden hym also  
With very glad hearts, and (we) prayed him also

812 That he wolde vouche sauf for to do so,  
That he would consent to do so,

813 And that he wolde been oure governour,  
And that he would be our governor,

814 And of oure tales juge and reportour,  
And judge and score keeper of our tales,

815 And sette a soper at a certeyn pris,  
And set a supper at a certain price,

816 And we wol reuled been at his devys  
And we will be ruled as he wishes

817 In heigh and lough; and thus by oon assent  
In every respect; and thus unanimously

818 We been acorded to his juggement.  
We are accorded to his judgment.

819 And therupon the wyn was fet anon;  
And thereupon the wine was fetched immediately;

820 We dronken, and to reste wente echon,  
We drank, and each one went to rest,

821 Withouten any lenger taryynge.  
Without any longer tarrying.

822 Amorwe, whan that day bigan to sprynge,  
In the morning, when day began to spring,

823 Up roos oure Hoost, and was oure aller cok,  
Our Host arose, and was the rooster of us all  
(awakened us).

824 And gadrede us togidre alle in a flok,  
And gathered us together all in a flock,

825 And forth we riden a litel moore than paas  
And forth we rode at little more than a walk

826 Unto the Wateryng of Seint Thomas;  
Unto the Watering of Saint Thomas;

827 And there oure Hoost bigan his hors areste  
And there our Host stopped his horse

828 And seyde, "Lordynges, herkneth, if yow leste.  
And said, "Gentlemen, listen, if you please.

829 Ye woot youre foreward, and I it yow recorde.  
You know your agreement, and I remind you of it.

830 If even-song and morwe-song accorde,  
If what you said last night agrees with what you say  
this morning,

831 Lat se now who shal telle the firste tale.  
Let's see now who shall tell the first tale.

832 As evere mote I drynke wyn or ale,  
As ever I may drink wine or ale,

833 Whoso be rebel to my juggement  
Whosoever may be rebel to my judgment

834 Shal paye for al that by the wey is spent.  
Shall pay for all that is spent by the way.

835 Now draweth cut, er that we ferrer twynne;  
Now draw straws, before we depart further (from  
London);

836 He which that hath the shorteste shal bigynne.  
He who has the shortest shall begin.

837 Sire Knyght," quod he, "my mayster and my lord,  
Sir Knight," said he, "my master and my lord,

838 Now draweth cut, for that is myn accord.  
Now draw a straw, for that is my decision.

839 Cometh neer," quod he, "my lady Prioress.  
Come nearer," he said, "my lady Prioress.

840 And ye, sire Clerk, lat be youre shamefastnesse,  
And you, sir Clerk, let be your modesty,

841 Ne studieth noght; ley hond to, every man!"  
And study not; lay hand to (draw a straw), every  
man!"

842 Anon to drawen every wight bigan,  
Every person began straightway to draw,

843 And shortly for to tellen as it was,  
And shortly to tell as it was,

844 Were it by aventure, or sort, or cas,  
Were it by chance, or destiny, or luck,

845 The sothe is this: the cut fil to the Knyght,  
The truth is this: the draw fell to the Knight,

846 Of which ful blithe and glad was every wyght,  
For which everyone was very happy and glad,

847 And telle he moste his tale, as was resoun,  
And he must tell his tale, as was reasonable,

848 By foreward and by composicioun,  
By our previous promise and by formal agreement,

849 As ye han herd; what nedeth wordes mo?  
As you have heard; what more words are needed?

850 And whan this goode man saugh that it was so,  
And when this good man saw that it was so,

851 As he that wys was and obedient  
Like one who was wise and obedient

852 To kepe his foreward by his free assent,  
To keep his agreement by his free assent,

853 He seyde, "Syn I shal bigynne the game,  
He said, "Since I must begin the game,

854 What, welcome be the cut, a Goddes name!  
What! Welcome be the draw, in God's name!

855 Now lat us ryde, and herkneth what I seye."  
Now let us ride, and listen to what I say."

856 And with that word we ryden forth oure weye,  
And with that word we rode forth on our way,

857 And he bigan with right a myrie cheere  
And he began with a truly merry demeanor

858 His tale anon, and seyde as ye may heere.  
To tell his tale straightway, and said as you may hear.



## The Wife of Bath's Tale



*[Alisoun, the Wife of Bath, has been married five times and is ready for another husband: Christ never specified how many times a woman should marry. Virginity is fine but wives are not condemned; the Apostle said that my husband would be my debtor, and I have power over his body. Three of my husbands were good and two bad. The first three were old and rich and I picked them clean. One of my old husbands, emboldened with drink, would come home and preach against women; but I got the better of him. My fourth husband was young and he had a mistress. I pretended to be unfaithful and made him burn in his own grease. I already had my eye on young Jankin, pall-bearer for my fourth, and he became my fifth and favorite husband. He beat me. Once when he was reading aloud from his Book of Wicked Wives, I tore a page from his book, and he knocked me down (so hard I am still deaf from it). I pretended to be dying, and when he leaned over to ask forgiveness, I knocked him into the fireplace. We made up, and he gave me full sovereignty in marriage; thereafter I was kind and faithful, and we lived in bliss.]*

### The Prologe of the Wyves Tale of Bathe (with the translation)

- |    |  |    |   |
|----|--|----|---|
| 1  | <b>"Experience, though noon auctoritee</b><br>"Experience, though no written authority                           | 16 | <b>Spak in reprevve of the Samaritan:</b><br>Spoke in reproof of the Samaritan:                         |
| 2  | <b>Were in this world, is right ynogh for me</b><br>Were in this world, is good enough for me                    | 17 | <b>`Thou hast yhad fyve housbondes,' quod he,</b><br>'Thou hast had five husbands,' he said,            |
| 3  | <b>To speke of wo that is in mariage;</b><br>To speak of the woe that is in marriage;                            | 18 | <b>`And that ilke man that now hath thee</b><br>'And that same man that now has thee                    |
| 4  | <b>For, lordynges, sith I twelve yeer was of age,</b><br>For, gentlemen, since I was twelve years of age,        | 19 | <b>Is noght thyn housbonde,' thus seyde he certeyn.</b><br>Is not thy husband,' thus he said certainly. |
| 5  | <b>Thonked be God that is eterne on lyve,</b><br>Thanked be God who is eternally alive,                          | 20 | <b>What that he mente therby, I kan nat seyn;</b><br>What he meant by this, I can not say;              |
| 6  | <b>Housbondes at chirche dore I have had fyve --</b><br>I have had five husbands at the church door --           | 21 | <b>But that I axe, why that the fifthe man</b><br>But I ask, why the fifth man                          |
| 7  | <b>If I so ofte myghte have ywedded bee --</b><br>If I so often might have been wedded --                        | 22 | <b>Was noon housbonde to the Samaritan?</b><br>Was no husband to the Samaritan?                         |
| 8  | <b>And alle were worthy men in hir degree.</b><br>And all were worthy men in their way.                          | 23 | <b>How manye myghte she have in mariage?</b><br>How many might she have in marriage?                    |
| 9  | <b>But me was toold, certeyn, nat longe agoon is,</b><br>But to me it was told, certainly, it is not long ago,   | 24 | <b>Yet herde I nevere tellen in myn age</b><br>I never yet heard tell in my lifetime                    |
| 10 | <b>That sith that Crist ne wente nevere but onis</b><br>That since Christ went never but once                    | 25 | <b>Upon this nombre diffinicioun.</b><br>A definition of this number.                                   |
| 11 | <b>To weddyng, in the Cane of Galilee,</b><br>To a wedding, in the Cana of Galilee,                              | 26 | <b>Men may devyne and glosen, up and doun,</b><br>Men may conjecture and interpret in every way,        |
| 12 | <b>That by the same ensample taughte he me</b><br>That by that same example he taught me                         | 27 | <b>But wel I woot, expres, withoute lye,</b><br>But well I know, expressly, without lie,                |
| 13 | <b>That I ne sholde wedded be but ones.</b><br>That I should be wedded but once.                                 | 28 | <b>God bad us for to wexe and multiplie;</b><br>God commanded us to grow fruitful and multiply;         |
| 14 | <b>Herkne eek, lo, which a sharp word for the nones,</b><br>Listen also, lo, what a sharp word for this purpose, | 29 | <b>That gentil text kan I wel understonde.</b><br>That gentle text I can well understand.               |
| 15 | <b>Biside a welle, Jhesus, God and man,</b><br>Beside a well, Jesus, God and man,                                | 30 | <b>Eek wel I woot, he seyde myn housbonde</b><br>Also I know well, he said my husband                   |

- 31 **Sholde lete fader and mooder and take to me.**  
Should leave father and mother and take to me.
- 32 **But of no nombre mencion made he,**  
But he made no mention of number,
- 33 **Of bigamye, or of octogamye;**  
Of marrying two, or of marrying eight;
- 34 **Why sholde men thanne speke of it vileynye?**  
Why should men then speak evil of it?
- 35 **Lo, heere the wise kyng, daun Salomon;**  
Lo, (consider) here the wise king, dan Salomon;
- 36 **I trowe he hadde wyves mo than oon.**  
I believe he had wives more than one.
- 37 **As wolde God it leueful were unto me**  
As would God it were lawful unto me
- 38 **To be refreshed half so ofte as he!**  
To be refreshed half so often as he!
- 39 **Which yifte of God hadde he for alle his wyvys!**  
What a gift of God he had because of all his wives!
- 40 **No man hath swich that in this world alyve is.**  
No man that in this world is alive has such (a gift).
- 41 **God woot, this noble kyng, as to my wit,**  
God knows, this noble king, according to my  
judgment,
- 42 **The firste nyght had many a myrie fit**  
The first night had many a merry fit
- 43 **With ech of hem, so wel was hym on lyve.**  
With each of them, so well things went for him in his  
lifetime.
- 44 **Yblessed be God that I have wedded fyve!**  
Blessed be God that I have wedded five!
- 44a **[Of whiche I have pyked out the beste,**  
[Of which I have picked out the best,
- 44b **Bothe of here nether purs and of here cheste.**  
Both of their lower purse (scrotum) and of their  
strongbox.
- 44c **Diverse scoles maken parfyt clerkes,**  
Differing schools make perfect clerks,
- 44d **And diverse practyk in many sondry werkes**  
And differing practice in many various works
- 44e **Maketh the werkman parfyt sekirly;**  
Makes the workman truly perfect;
- 44f **Of fyve husbondes scolei yng am I.]**  
Of five husbands' schooling am I.]
- 45 **Welcome the sixte, whan that evere he shal.**  
Welcome the sixth, whenever he shall appear.
- 46 **For sothe, I wol nat kepe me chaast in al.**  
For truly, I will not keep myself chaste in everything.
- 47 **Whan myn housbonde is fro the world ygon,**  
When my husband is gone from the world,
- 48 **Som Cristen man shal wedde me anon,**  
Some Christian man shall wed me straightway,
- 49 **For thanne th' apostle seith that I am free**  
For then the apostle says that I am free
- 50 **To wedde, a Goddes half, where it liketh me.**  
To wed, by God's side (I swear), wherever it pleases  
me.
- 51 **He seith that to be wedded is no synne;**  
He says that to be wedded is no sin;
- 52 **Bet is to be wedded than to brynne.**  
It is better to be wedded than to burn.
- 53 **What rekketh me, thogh folk seye vileynye**  
What do I care, though folk speak evil
- 54 **Of shrewed Lameth and his bigamye?**  
Of cursed Lamech and his bigamy?
- 55 **I woot wel Abraham was an hooly man,**  
I know well Abraham was a holy man,
- 56 **And Jacob eek, as ferforth as I kan;**  
And Jacob also, insofar as I know;
- 57 **And ech of hem hadde wyves mo than two,**  
And each of them had more than two wives,
- 58 **And many another holy man also.**  
And many another holy man also.
- 59 **Wher can ye seye, in any manere age,**  
Where can you find, in any historical period,
- 60 **That hye God defended mariage**  
That high God forbad marriage
- 61 **By expres word? I pray yow, telleth me.**  
By express word? I pray you, tell me.
- 62 **Or where comanded he virginitee?**  
Or where commanded he virginity?
- 63 **I woot as wel as ye, it is no drede,**  
I know as well as you, it is no doubt,
- 64 **Th' apostel, whan he speketh of maydenhede,**  
The apostle, when he speaks of maidenhood,
- 65 **He seyde that precept therof hadde he noon.**  
He said that he had no precept concerning it.
- 66 **Men may conseille a womman to been oon,**  
Men may advise a woman to be one,
- 67 **But conseillyng is no comandement.**  
But advice is no commandment.
- 68 **He putte it in oure owene juggement;**  
He left it to our own judgment;
- 69 **For hadde God comanded maydenhede,**  
For had God commanded maidenhood,
- 70 **Thanne hadde he dampned weddyng with the dede.**  
Then had he damned marriage along with the act (of  
procreation).
- 71 **And certes, if ther were no seed ysowe,**  
And certainly, if there were no seed sown,
- 72 **Virginitee, thanne wherof sholde it growe?**  
Then from what should virginity grow?
- 73 **Poul dorste nat comanden, atte leeste,**  
In any case, Paul dared not command
- 74 **A thyng of which his maister yaf noon heeste.**  
A thing of which his master gave no command.
- 75 **The dart is set up for virginitee;**  
The prize is set up for virginity;
- 76 **Cacche whoso may, who renneth best lat see.**  
Catch it whoever can, let's see who runs best.
- 77 **But this word is nat taken of every wight,**  
But this word does not apply to every person,
- 78 **But ther as God lust gyve it of his myght.**  
But where God desires to give it by his power.
- 79 **I woot wel that th' apostel was a mayde;**  
I know well that the apostle was a virgin;
- 80 **But nathelees, thogh that he wroot and sayde**  
But nonetheless, though he wrote and said
- 81 **He wolde that every wight were swich as he,**  
He would that every person were such as he,
- 82 **Al nys but conseil to virginitee.**  
All is nothing but advice to (adopt) virginity.
- 83 **And for to been a wyf he yaf me leve**  
And he gave me leave to be a wife
- 84 **Of indulgence; so nys it no repreve**  
By explicit permission; so it is not blameful
- 85 **To wedde me, if that my make dye,**  
To wed me, if my mate should die,
- 86 **Withouten excepcion of bigamye.**  
Without objection on the grounds of bigamy.
- 87 **Al were it good no womman for to touche --**  
Although it would be good to touch no woman --
- 88 **He mente as in his bed or in his couche,**

He meant in his bed or in his couch,  
 89 **For peril is bothe fyr and tow t' assemble;**  
 For it is perilous to assemble both fire and flax;  
 90 **Ye knowe what this ensample may resemble.**  
 You know what this example may apply to.  
 91 **This is al and som: he heeld virginitee**  
 This is the sum of it: he held virginity  
 92 **Moore parfit than weddyng in freletee.**  
 More perfect than wedding in weakness.  
 93 **Freletee clepe I, but if that he and she**  
 Weakness I call it, unless he and she  
 94 **Wolde leden al hir lyf in chastitee.**  
 Would lead all their life in chastity.  
 95 **I graunte it wel; I have noon envie,**  
 I grant it well; I have no envy,  
 96 **Thogh maydenhede preferre bigamye.**  
 Though maidenhood may have precedence over a  
 second marriage.  
 97 **It liketh hem to be clene, body and goost;**  
 It pleases them to be clean, body and spirit;  
 98 **Of myn estaat I nyl nat make no boost,**  
 Of my state I will make no boast,  
 99 **For wel ye knowe, a lord in his household,**  
 For well you know, a lord in his household,  
 100 **He nath nat every vessel al of gold;**  
 He has not every utensil all of gold;  
 101 **Somme been of tree, and doon hir lord servyse.**  
 Some are of wood, and do their lord service.  
 102 **God clepeth folk to hym in sondry wyse,**  
 God calls folk to him in various ways,  
 103 **And everich hath of God a propre yifte --**  
 And each one has of God an individual gift --  
 104 **Som this, som that, as hym liketh shifte.**  
 Some this, some that, as it pleases Him to provide.  
 105 **Virginitee is greet perfeccion,**  
 Virginity is great perfection,  
 106 **And continence eek with devocion,**  
 And continence also with devotion,  
 107 **But Crist, that of perfeccion is welle,**  
 But Christ, who is the source of perfection,  
 108 **Bad nat every wight he sholde go selle**  
 Did not command that every one should go sell  
 109 **Al that he hadde, and gyve it to the poore,**  
 All that he had, and give it to the poor,  
 110 **And in swich wise folwe hym and his foore.**  
 And in such wise follow him and his footsteps.  
 111 **He spak to hem that wolde lyve parfitly;**  
 He spoke to those who would live perfectly;  
 112 **And lordynges, by youre leve, that am nat I.**  
 And gentlemen, by your leave, I am not that.  
 113 **I wol bistowe the flour of al myn age**  
 I will bestow the flower of all my age  
 114 **In the actes and in fruyt of mariage.**  
 In the acts and in fruit of marriage.  
 115 **Telle me also, to what conclusion**  
 Tell me also, to what purpose  
 116 **Were membres maad of generacion,**  
 Were members of generation made,  
 117 **And of so parfit wys a [wright] ywroght?**  
 And by so perfectly wise a Workman wrought?  
 118 **Trusteth right wel, they were nat maad for noght.**  
 Trust right well, they were not made for nothing.  
 119 **Glose whoso wole, and seye bothe up and down**

Interpret whoever will, and say both up and down  
 120 **That they were maked for purgacioun**  
 That they were made for purgation  
 121 **Of uryne, and oure bothe thynges smale**  
 Of urine, and both our small things  
 122 **Were eek to knowe a femele from a male,**  
 Were also to know a female from a male,  
 123 **And for noon oother cause -- say ye no?**  
 And for no other cause -- do you say no?  
 124 **The experience woot wel it is noght so.**  
 The experience knows well it is not so.  
 125 **So that the clerkes be nat with me wrothe,**  
 Provided that the clerks be not angry with me,  
 126 **I sey this: that they maked ben for bothe;**  
 I say this: that they are made for both;  
 127 **That is to seye, for office and for ese**  
 That is to say, for urination and for ease  
 128 **Of engendrure, ther we nat God displese.**  
 Of procreation, in which we do not displease God.  
 129 **Why sholde men elles in hir bookes sette**  
 Why else should men set in their books  
 130 **That man shal yelde to his wyf hire dette?**  
 That man shall pay to his wife her debt?  
 131 **Now wherwith sholde he make his paiement,**  
 Now with what should he make his payment,  
 132 **If he ne used his sely instrument?**  
 If he did not use his blessed instrument?  
 133 **Thanne were they maad upon a creature**  
 Then were they made upon a creature  
 134 **To purge uryne, and eek for engendrure.**  
 To purge urine, and also for procreation.  
 135 **But I seye noght that every wight is holde,**  
 But I say not that every person is required,  
 136 **That hath swich harneys as I to yow tolde,**  
 That has such equipment as I to you told,  
 137 **To goon and usen hem in engendrure.**  
 To go and use them in procreation.  
 138 **Thanne sholde men take of chastitee no cure.**  
 Then should men have no regard for chastity.  
 139 **Crist was a mayde and shapen as a man,**  
 Christ was a virgin and shaped like a man,  
 140 **And many a seint, sith that the world bigan;**  
 And many a saint, since the world began;  
 141 **Yet lyved they evere in parfit chastitee.**  
 Yet lived they ever in perfect chastity.  
 142 **I nyl envye no virginitee.**  
 I will envy no virginity.  
 143 **Lat hem be breed of pured whete-seed,**  
 Let them be bread of pure wheat-seed,  
 144 **And lat us wyves hoten barley-breed;**  
 And let us wives be called barley-bread;  
 145 **And yet with barley-breed, Mark telle kan,**  
 And yet with barley-bread, Mark can tell it,  
 146 **Oure Lord Jhesu refreshed many a man.**  
 Our Lord Jesus refreshed many a man.  
 147 **In swich estaat as God hath cleped us**  
 In such estate as God has called us  
 148 **I wol persevere; I nam nat precius.**  
 I will persevere; I am not fussy.  
 149 **In wyfhod I wol use myn instrument**  
 In wifehood I will use my instrument  
 150 **As frely as my Makere hath it sent.**  
 As freely as my Maker has it sent.  
 151 **If I be daungerous, God yeve me sorwe!**  
 If I be niggardly, God give me sorrow!  
 152 **Myn housbonde shal it have bothe eve and morwe,**

- My husband shall have it both evenings and mornings,  
153 **Whan that hym list come forth and paye his dette.**  
When it pleases him to come forth and pay his debt.
- 154 **An housbonde I wol have -- I wol nat lette --**  
A husband I will have -- I will not desist --
- 155 **Which shal be bothe my dettour and my thral,**  
Who shall be both my debtor and my slave,
- 156 **And have his tribulacion withal**  
And have his suffering also
- 157 **Upon his flessch, whil that I am his wyf.**  
Upon his flesh, while I am his wife.
- 158 **I have the power durynge al my lyf**  
I have the power during all my life
- 159 **Upon his propre body, and noght he.**  
Over his own body, and not he.
- 160 **Right thus the Apostel tolde it unto me,**  
Right thus the Apostle told it unto me,
- 161 **And bad oure housbondes for to love us weel.**  
And commanded our husbands to love us well.
- 162 **Al this sentence me liketh every deel" --**  
All this sentence pleases me every bit" --
- 163 **Up stirte the Pardoner, and that anon;**  
Up sprang the Pardoner, and that at once;
- 164 **"Now, dame," quod he, "by God and by Seint John!**  
"Now, madam," he said, "by God and by Saint John!
- 165 **Ye been a noble prechour in this cas.**  
You are a noble preacher in this case.
- 166 **I was aboute to wedde a wyf; alas!**  
I was about to wed a wife; alas!
- 167 **What sholde I bye it on my flessch so deere?**  
Why should I pay for it so dearly on my flesh?
- 168 **Yet hadde I levere wedde no wyf to-yeere!"**  
Yet would I rather wed no wife this year!"
- 169 **"Abyde!" quod she, "my tale is nat bigonne.**  
"Wait!" she said, "my tale is not begun.
- 170 **Nay, thou shalt drynken of another tonne,**  
Nay, thou shalt drink from another barrel,
- 171 **Er that I go, shal savoure wors than ale.**  
Before I go, which shall taste worse than ale.
- 172 **And whan that I have toold thee forth my tale**  
And when I have told thee forth my tale
- 173 **Of tribulacion in mariage,**  
Of suffering in marriage,
- 174 **Of which I am expert in al myn age --**  
Of which I am expert in all my life --
- 175 **This is to seyn, myself have been the whippe --**  
This is to say, myself have been the whip --
- 176 **Than maystow chese whether thou wolt sippe**  
Than may thou choose whether thou will sip
- 177 **Of thilke tonne that I shal abroche.**  
Of that same barrel that I shall open.
- 178 **Be war of it, er thou to ny approche;**  
Beware of it, before thou too near approach;
- 179 **For I shal telle ensamples mo than ten.**  
For I shall tell examples more than ten.
- 180 **`Whoso that nyl be war by othere men,**  
`Whoever will not be warned by (the examples of)  
other men,
- 181 **By hym shul othere men corrected be.'**  
Shall be an example by which other men shall be  
corrected.'
- 182 **The same wordes writeth Ptholomee;**  
The same words writes Ptholomy;
- 183 **Rede in his Almageste, and take it there."**  
Read in his Almagest, and take it there."
- 184 **"Dame, I wolde praye yow, if youre wyl it were,"**  
"Madam, I would pray you, if it were your will,"
- 185 **Seyde this Pardoner, "as ye bigan,**  
Said this Pardoner, "as you began,
- 186 **Telle forth youre tale, spareth for no man,**  
Tell forth your tale, refrain for no man,
- 187 **And teche us yonge men of youre praktike."**  
And teach us young men of your practice."
- 188 **"Gladly," quod she, "sith it may yow like;**  
"Gladly," she said, "since it may please you;
- 189 **But yet I praye to al this compaignye,**  
But yet I pray to all this company,
- 190 **If that I speke after my fantasye,**  
If I speak according to my fancy,
- 191 **As taketh not agrief of that I seye,**  
Do not be annoyed by what I say,
- 192 **For myn entente nys but for to pleye.**  
For my intention is only to amuse.
- 193 **Now, sire, now wol I telle forth my tale.**  
Now, sir, now will I tell forth my tale.
- 194 **As evere moote I drynken wyn or ale,**  
As ever may I drink wine or ale,
- 195 **I shal seye sooth; tho housbondes that I hadde,**  
I shall speak the truth; those husbands that I had,
- 196 **As thre of hem were goode, and two were badde.**  
Three of them were good, and two were bad.
- 197 **The thre were goode men, and riche, and olde;**  
The three were good men, and rich, and old;
- 198 **Unnethe myghte they the statut holde**  
Hardly might they the statute hold (pay the debt)
- 199 **In which that they were bounden unto me.**  
In which they were bound unto me.
- 200 **Ye woot wel what I meene of this, pardee!**  
You know well what I mean of this, by God!
- 201 **As help me God, I laughe whan I thinke**  
So help me God, I laugh when I think
- 202 **How pitously a-nyght I made hem swynke!**  
How pitifully at night I made them work!
- 203 **And, by my fey, I tolde of it no stoor.**  
And, by my faith, I set no store by it.
- 204 **They had me yeven hir lond and hir tresoor;**  
They had given me their land and their treasure;
- 205 **Me neded nat do lenger diligence**  
I needed not work hard any longer
- 206 **To wynne hir love, or doon hem reverence.**  
To win their love, or do them reverence.
- 207 **They loved me so wel, by God above,**  
They loved me so well, by God above,
- 208 **That I ne tolde no deyntee of hir love!**  
That I reckoned little of their love!
- 209 **A wys womman wol bisye hire evere in oon**  
A wise woman will be constantly busy
- 210 **To gete hire love, ye, ther as she hath noon.**  
To get their love, yes, when she has none.
- 211 **But sith I hadde hem hoolly in myn hond,**  
But since I had them wholly in my hand,
- 212 **And sith they hadde me yeven al hir lond,**  
And since they had me given all their land,
- 213 **What sholde I taken keep hem for to plesse,**  
Why should I take care to please them,
- 214 **But it were for my profit and myn ese?**  
Unless it were for my profit and my pleasure?
- 215 **I sette hem so a-werke, by my fey,**  
I set them so to work, by my faith,
- 216 **That many a nyght they songen 'Weilawey!'**



- That many a night they sang `Woe is me!'
- 217 **The bacon was nat fet for hem, I trowe,**  
The bacon was not fetched for them, I believe,
- 218 **That som men han in Essex at Dunmowe.**  
That some men have in Essex at Dunmowe.
- 219 **I governed hem so wel, after my lawe,**  
I governed them so well, according to my law,
- 220 **That ech of hem ful blisful was and fawe**  
That each of them was very blissful and eager
- 221 **To brynge me gaye thynges fro the fayre.**  
To bring me gay things from the fair.
- 222 **They were ful glad whan I spak to hem faire,**  
They were very glad when I spoke to them pleasantly,
- 223 **For, God it woot, I chidde hem spitously.**  
For, God knows it, I cruelly scolded them.
- 224 **Now herkneth hou I baar me proprely,**  
Now listen how well I conducted myself,
- 225 **Ye wise wyves, that kan understonde.**  
You wise wives, that can understand.
- 226 **Thus shulde ye speke and bere hem wrong on honde,**  
Thus should you speak and accuse them wrongfully,
- 227 **For half so boldely kan ther no man**  
For half so boldly can there no man
- 228 **Swere and lyen, as a womman kan.**  
Swear and lie, as a woman can.
- 229 **I sey nat this by wyves that been wyse,**  
I do not say this concerning wives that are wise,
- 230 **But if it be whan they hem mysavyse.**  
Unless it be when they are ill advised.
- 231 **A wys wyf, if that she kan hir good,**  
A wise wife, if she knows what is good for her,
- 232 **Shal beren hym on honde the cow is wood,**  
Shall deceive him by swearing the bird is crazy,
- 233 **And take witness of hir owene mayde,**  
And prove it by taking witness of her own maid
- 234 **Of hir assent. But herkneth how I sayde:**  
Who is in league with her. But listen how I spoke:
- 235 **`Sire olde kaynard, is this thyn array?**  
`Sir old doddering fool, is this thy doing?
- 236 **Why is my neighebores wyf so gay?**  
Why is my neighbor's wife so gay?
- 237 **She is honoured overal ther she gooth;**  
She is honored everywhere she goes;
- 238 **I sitte at hoom; I have no thrifty clooth.**  
I sit at home; I have no decent clothing.
- 239 **What dostow at my neighebores hous?**  
What dost thou at my neighbor's house?
- 240 **Is she so fair? Artow so amorous?**  
Is she so fair? Art thou so amorous?
- 241 **What rowne ye with oure mayde? Benedicite!**  
What do you whisper with our maid? Bless me!
- 242 **Sire olde lecchour, lat thy japes be!**  
Sir old lecher, let thy tricks be!
- 243 **And if I have a gossib or a freend,**  
And if I have a close friend or an acquaintance,
- 244 **Withouten gilt, thou chidest as a feend,**  
Innocently, thou scold like a fiend,
- 245 **If that I walke or pleye unto his hous!**  
If I walk or go unto his house to amuse myself!
- 246 **Thou comest hoom as dronken as a mous,**  
Thou comest home as drunk as a mouse,
- 247 **And prechest on thy bench, with yvel preef!**  
And preach on thy bench, bad luck to you!
- 248 **Thou seist to me it is a greet meschief**  
Thou sayest to me it is a great misfortune
- 249 **To wedde a povre womman, for costage;**  
To wed a poor woman, because of expense;
- 250 **And if that she be riche, of heigh parage,**  
And if she be rich, of high birth,
- 251 **Thanne seistow that it is a tormentrie**  
Then thou sayest that it is a torment
- 252 **To soffre hire pride and hire malencolie.**  
To put up with her pride and her angry moods.
- 253 **And if that she be fair, thou verray knave,**  
And if she be fair, thou utter knave,
- 254 **Thou seyst that every holour wol hire have;**  
Thou sayest that every lecher wants to have her;
- 255 **She may no while in chastitee abyde,**  
She can not remain chaste for any length of time,
- 256 **That is assailed upon ech a syde.**  
Who is assailed on every side.
- 257 **Thou seyst som folk desiren us for richesse,**  
Thou sayest some folk desire us for riches,
- 258 **Somme for oure shap, and somme for oure fairnessse,**  
Some for our shape, and some for our fairness,
- 259 **And som for she kan outhir synge or daunce,**  
And one because she can either sing or dance,
- 260 **And som for gentillesse and daliaunce;**  
And some because of noble descent and flirtatious
- talk;
- 261 **Som for hir handes and hir armes smale;**  
Some because of their hands and their slender arms;
- 262 **Thus goth al to the devel, by thy tale.**  
Thus goes all to the devil, according to you.
- 263 **Thou seyst men may nat kepe a castel wal,**  
Thou sayest men may not defend a castle wall,
- 264 **It may so longe assailed been overal.**  
It may so long be assailed on all sides.
- 265 **And if that she be foul, thou seist that she**  
And if she be ugly, thou sayest that she
- 266 **Coveiteth every man that she may se,**  
Covets every man that she may see,
- 267 **For as a spanyel she wol on hym lepe,**  
For like a spaniel she will on him leap,
- 268 **Til that she fynde som man hire to chepe.**  
Until she find some man to buy (take) her.
- 269 **Ne noon so grey goos gooth ther in the lake**  
Nor does any goose go there in the lake, no matter
- how drab,
- 270 **As, seistow, wol been withoute make.**  
That, thou sayest, will be without a mate.
- 271 **And seyst it is an hard thyng for to welde**  
And thou sayest it is a hard thing to control
- 272 **A thyng that no man wole, his thanks, helde.**  
A thing that no man will, willingly, hold.
- 273 **Thus seistow, lorel, whan thow goost to bedde,**  
Thus sayest thou, scoundrel, when thou goest to bed,
- 274 **And that no wys man nedeth for to wedde,**  
And that no wise man needs to wed,
- 275 **Ne no man that entendeth unto hevене.**  
Nor any man that hopes (to go) to heaven.
- 276 **With wilde thonder-dynt and firy levene**  
With wild thunder-bolt and fiery lightning
- 277 **Moote thy welked nekke be tobroke!**  
May thy wrinkled neck be broken in pieces!
- 278 **Thow seyst that droppying houses, and eek smoke,**  
Thou sayest that leaky houses, and also smoke,
- 279 **And chidyng wyves maken men to fle**

And scolding wives make men to flee  
280 **Out of hir owene houses; a, benedicitee!**  
Out of their own houses; ah, bless me!  
281 **What eyleth swich an old man for to chide?**  
What ails such an old man to chide like that?

282 **Thow seyst we wyves woloure vices hide**  
Thou sayest we wives will hide our vices  
283 **Til we be fast, and thanne we wol hem shewe --**  
Until we be securely tied (in marriage), and then we  
will them show --  
284 **Wel may that be a proverbe of a shrewe!**  
Well may that be a proverb of a scoundrel!

285 **Thou seist that oxen, asses, hors, and houndes,**  
Thou sayest that oxen, asses, horses, and hounds,  
286 **They been assayed at diverse stoundes;**  
They are tried out a number of times;  
287 **Bacyns, lavours, er that men hem bye,**  
Basins, wash bowls, before men them buy,  
288 **Spoons and stooles, and al swich housbondrye,**  
Spoons and stools, and all such household items,  
289 **And so been pottes, clothes, and array;**  
And so are pots, clothes, and adornments;  
290 **But folk of wyves maken noon assay,**  
But folk of wives make no trial,  
291 **Til they be wedded -- olde dotard shrewe! --**  
Until they are wedded -- old doddering scoundrel! --  
292 **And thanne, seistow, we woloure vices shewe.**  
And then, sayest thou, we will show our vices.

293 **Thou seist also that it displeth me**  
Thou sayest also that it displeases me  
294 **But if that thou wolt preyse my beautee,**  
Unless thou will praise my beauty,  
295 **And but thou poure alwey upon my face,**  
And unless thou peer always upon my face,  
296 **And clepe me "faire dame" in every place.**  
And call me "dear lady" in every place.  
297 **And but thou make a feeste on thilke day**  
And unless thou make a feast on that same day  
298 **That I was born, and make me fressh and gay;**  
That I was born, and make me happy and gay;  
299 **And but thou do to my norice honour,**  
And unless thou do honor to my nurse,  
300 **And to my chamberere withinne my bour,**  
And to my chambermaid within my bedchamber,  
301 **And to my fadres folk and his allyes --**  
And to my father's folk and his allies --  
302 **Thus seistow, olde barel-ful of lyes!**  
Thus sayest thou, old barrelful of lies!

303 **And yet of our apprentice Janekyn,**  
And yet of our apprentice Janekin,  
304 **For his crise heer, shynynge as gold so fyn,**  
Because of his curly hair, shining like gold so fine,  
305 **And for he squiereth me bothe up and down,**  
And because he familiarly attends me everywhere,  
306 **Yet hastow caught a fals suspicioun.**  
Yet hast thou caught a false suspicion.  
307 **I wol hym nocht, thogh thou were deed tomorwe!**  
I do not want him, though thou were dead tomorrow!

308 **But tel me this: why hydestow, with sorwe,**  
But tell me this: why hidest thou, bad luck to you,  
309 **The keyes of thy cheste away fro me?**

The keys of thy strongbox away from me?  
310 **It is my good as wel as thyn, pardee!**  
It is my property as well as thine, by God!  
311 **What, wenestow make an ydiot of our dame?**  
What, think thou to make a fool of the lady of the  
house?  
312 **Now by that lord that called is Seint Jame,**  
Now by that lord that is called Saint James,  
313 **Thou shalt nat bothe, thogh that thou were wood,**  
Thou shalt not both, though thou were crazy with  
anger,  
314 **Be maister of my body and of my good;**  
Be master of my body and of my property;  
315 **That oon thou shalt forgo, maugree thyne yen.**  
One of them thou must give up, despite anything you  
can do.  
316 **What helpith it of me to enquere or spyen?**  
What helps it to inquire about me or spy?  
317 **I trowe thou woldest loke me in thy chiste!**  
I believe thou would lock me in thy strongbox!  
318 **Thou sholdest seye, "Wyf, go wher thee liste;**  
Thou should say, "Wife, go where you please;  
319 **Taak youre disport; I wol nat leve no talys.**  
Enjoy yourself; I will not believe any gossip.  
320 **I knowe yow for a trewe wyf, dame Alys."**  
I know you for a true wife, dame Alys."  
321 **We love no man that taketh kep or charge**  
We love no man who takes notice or concern about  
322 **Wher that we goon; we wol ben at our large.**  
Where we go; we will be free (to do as we wish).

323 **Of alle men yblessed moot he be,**  
Of all men blessed may he be,  
324 **The wise astrologien, Daun Ptholome,**  
The wise astrologer, Dan Ptolemy,  
325 **That seith this proverbe in his Almageste:**  
Who says this proverb in his Almagest:  
326 **"Of alle men his wysdom is the hyeste**  
"Of all men his wisdom is the highest  
327 **That rekketh nevere who hath the world in honde."**  
Who never cares who has the world in his control."  
328 **By this proverbe thou shalt understonde,**  
By this proverb thou shalt understand,  
329 **Have thou ynogh, what thar thee recche or care**  
If thou have enough, why should thou take note or  
care  
330 **How myrily that othere folkes fare?**  
How merrily other folks fare?  
331 **For, certeyn, olde dotard, by youre leve,**  
For, certainly, old senile fool, by your leave,  
332 **Ye shul have queynte right ynogh at eve.**  
You shall have pudendum right enough at eve.  
333 **He is to greet a nygard that wolde werne**  
He is too great a miser that would refuse  
334 **A man to lighte a candle at his lanterne;**  
A man to light a candle at his lantern;  
335 **He shal have never the lasse light, pardee.**  
He shall have never the less light, by God.  
336 **Have thou ynogh, thee thar nat pleyne thee.**  
If thou have enough, thou need not complain.

337 **Thou seyst also, that if we make us gay**  
Thou sayest also, that if we make ourselves gay  
338 **With clothyng, and with precious array,**  
With clothing, and with precious adornments,  
339 **That it is peril of our chastitee;**  
That it is dangerous to our chastity;

340 **And yet -- with sorwe! -- thou most enforce thee,**  
And yet -- bad luck to thee! -- thou must reinforce thy  
argument,

341 **And seye thise wordes in the Apostles name:**  
And say these words in the Apostle's name:

342 **"In habit maad with chastitee and shame**  
"In clothing made with chastity and shame

343 **Ye wommen shul apparaille yow," quod he,**  
You women shall apparel yourselves," he said,

344 **"And noght in tressed heer and gay perree,**  
"And not in carefully arranged hair and gay precious  
stones,

345 **As perles, ne with gold, ne clothes riche."**  
Such as pearls, nor with gold, nor rich cloth."

346 **After thy text, ne after thy rubriche,**  
In accordance with thy text, nor in accord with thy  
interpretation,

347 **I wol nat wirche as muchel as a gnat.**  
I will not do as much as a gnat.

348 **Thou seydest this, that I was lyk a cat;**  
Thou said this, that I was like a cat;

349 **For whoso wolde senge a cattes skyn,**  
For if anyone would singe a cat's skin,

350 **Thanne wolde the cat wel dwellen in his in;**  
Then would the cat well stay in his dwelling;

351 **And if the cattes skyn be slyk and gay,**  
And if the cat's skin be sleek and gay,

352 **She wol nat dwelle in house half a day,**  
She will not stay in house half a day,

353 **But forth she wole, er any day be dawed,**  
But forth she will (go), before any day be dawned,

354 **To shewe hir skyn and goon a-caterwawed.**  
To show her skin and go yowling like a cat in heat.

355 **This is to seye, if I be gay, sire shrewe,**  
This is to say, if I be well dressed, sir scoundrel,

356 **I wol renne out my borel for to shewe.**  
I will run out to show my poor clothes.

357 **Sire olde fool, what helpeth thee to spyen?**  
Sir old fool, what help is it for thee to spy?

358 **Thogh thou preye Argus with his hundred yen**  
Though thou pray Argus with his hundred eyes

359 **To be my warde-cors, as he kan best,**  
To be my bodyguard, as he best knows how,

360 **In feith, he shal nat kepe me but me lest;**  
In faith, he shall not keep me but as I please;

361 **Yet koude I make his berd, so moot I thee!**  
Yet could I deceive him, as I may prosper!

362 **Thou seydest eek that ther been thynges thre,**  
Thou said also that there are three things,

363 **The whiche thynges troublen al this erthe,**  
The which things trouble all this earth,

364 **And that no wight may endure the ferthe.**  
And that no one can endure the fourth.

365 **O leeve sire shrewe, Jhesu shorte thy lyf!**  
O dear sir scoundrel, Jesus shorten thy life!

366 **Yet prechestow and seyst an hateful wyf**  
Yet thou prechest and sayest a hateful wife

367 **Yrekened is for oon of thise meschances.**  
Is reckoned as one of these misfortunes.

368 **Been ther none othere maner resemblances**  
Are there no other sorts of comparisons

369 **That ye may likne youre parables to,**  
That you can use in your sayings,

370 **But if a sely wyf be oon of tho?**  
Without a poor wife's being one of them?

371 **Thou liknest eek wommenes love to helle,**  
Thou also compare women's love to hell,

372 **To bareyne lond, ther water may nat dwelle.**  
To barren land, where water may not remain.

373 **Thou liknest it also to wilde fyr;**  
Thou compare it also to Greek (inextinguishable) fire;

374 **The moore it brenneth, the moore it hath desir**  
The more it burns, the more it has desire

375 **To consume every thyng that brent wole be.**  
To consume every thing that will be burned.

376 **Thou seyest, right as wormes shende a tree,**  
Thou sayest, just as worms destroy a tree,

377 **Right so a wyf destroyeth hire housbonde;**  
Right so a wife destroys her husband;

378 **This knowe they that been to wyves bonde.'**  
This know they who are bound to wives.'

379 **Lordynges, right thus, as ye have understonde,**  
Gentlemen, right thus, as you have heard,

380 **Baar I stifly myne olde housbondes on honde**  
I firmly swore to my old husbands

381 **That thus they seyden in hir dronkenesse;**  
That thus they said in their drunkenness;

382 **And al was fals, but that I took witnessse**  
And all was false, but I took witness

383 **On Janekyn, and on my nece also.**  
On Janekin, and on my niece also.

384 **O Lord! The peyne I dide hem and the wo,**  
O Lord! The pain I did them and the woe,

385 **Ful giltelees, by Goddes sweete pyne!**  
Entirely guiltless (they were), by God's sweet pain!

386 **For as an hors I koude byte and whyne.**  
For like a horse I could bite and whinny.

387 **I koude pleyne, and yit was in the gilt,**  
I could complain, and yet was in the wrong,

388 **Or elles often tyme hadde I been spilt.**  
Or else many times had I been ruined.

389 **Whoso that first to mille comth, first grynt;**  
Whoever first comes to the mill, first grinds;

390 **I pleynd first, so was oure werre ystynt.**  
I complained first, so was our war ended.

391 **They were ful glade to excuse hem blyve**  
They were very glad to excuse themselves quickly

392 **Of thyng of which they nevere agilte hir lyve.**  
Of things of which they were never guilty in their  
lives.

393 **Of wenches wolde I beren hem on honde,**  
Of wenchess would I falsely accuse them,

394 **Whan that for syk unnethes myghte they stonde.**  
When for sickness they could hardly stand.

395 **Yet tikled I his herte, for that he**  
Yet I tickled his heart, for he

396 **Wende that I hadde of hym so greet chiertee!**  
Believed that I had of him so great affection!

397 **I swoor that al my walkynge out by nyghte**  
I swore that all my walking out by night

398 **Was for t' espye wenches that he dighte;**  
Was to spy out wenchess with whom he had  
intercourse;

399 **Under that colour hadde I many a myrthe.**  
Under that pretense I had many a mirth.

400 **For al swich wit is yeven us in oure byrthe;**

- For all such wit is given us in our birth;  
401 **Deceite, wepyng, spynnyng God hath yive**  
Deceit, weeping, spinning God has given  
402 **To wommen kyndely, whil that they may lyve.**  
To women naturally, while they may live.  
403 **And thus of o thyng I avaunte me:**  
And thus of one thing I boast:  
404 **Atte ende I hadde the better in ech degree,**  
At the end I had the better in every way,  
405 **By sleighte, or force, or by som maner thyng,**  
By trickery, or force, or by some such thing,  
406 **As by continueel murmur or grucchyng.**  
As by continual grumbling or grouching.  
407 **Namely abedde hadden they meschaunce:**  
Especially in bed they had misfortune:  
408 **Ther wolde I chide and do hem no plesaunce;**  
There would I scold and do them no pleasure;  
409 **I wolde no lenger in the bed abyde,**  
I would no longer in the bed abide,  
410 **If that I felte his arm over my syde,**  
If I felt his arm over my side,  
411 **Til he had maad his raunson unto me;**  
Until he had paid his penalty to me;  
412 **Thanne wolde I suffre hym do his nycetee.**  
Then would I allow him to do his foolishness.  
413 **And therefore every man this tale I telle,**  
And therefore this tale I tell to every man,  
414 **Wynne whoso may, for al is for to selle;**  
Anyone can profit, for everything is for sale;  
415 **With empty hand men may none haukes lure.**  
One can lure no hawks with an empty hand.  
416 **For wynnynng wolde I al his lust endure,**  
For profit I would endure all his lust,  
417 **And make me a feyned appetit;**  
And make me a feigned appetite;  
418 **And yet in bacon hadde I nevere delit.**  
And yet in bacon (old meat) I never had delight.  
419 **That made me that evere I wolde hem chide,**  
That made me so that I would always scold them,  
420 **For thogh the pope hadde seten hem biside,**  
For though the pope had sat beside them,  
421 **I wolde nat spare hem at hir owene bord,**  
I would not spare them at their own table,  
422 **For, by my trouthe, I quitte hem word for word.**  
For, by my troth, I paid them back word for word.  
423 **As helpe me verray God omnipotent,**  
As help me true God omnipotent,  
424 **Though I right now sholde make my testament,**  
Though I right now should make my will,  
425 **I ne owe hem nat a word that it nys quit.**  
I owe them not one word that has not been avenged.  
426 **I broghte it so aboute by my wit**  
I brought it so about by my wit  
427 **That they moste yeve it up, as for the beste,**  
That they had to give it up, as the best they could do,  
428 **Or elles hadde we nevere been in reste;**  
Or else had we never been at peace;  
429 **For thogh he looked as a wood leon,**  
For though he looked like a furious lion,  
430 **Yet sholde he faille of his conclusion.**  
Yet should he fail to attain his goal.  
431 **Thanne wolde I seye, `Goode lief, taak keep**  
Then I would say, `Sweetheart, see  
432 **How mekely looketh Wilkyn, oure sheep!**  
How meekly looks Willy, our sheep!  
433 **Com neer, my spouse, lat me ba thy cheke!**
- Come near, my spouse, let me kiss thy cheek!  
434 **Ye sholde been al pacient and meke,**  
You should be all patient and meek,  
435 **And han a sweete spiced conscience,**  
And have a sweet tender disposition,  
436 **Sith ye so preche of Jobes pacience.**  
Since you so preach of Job's patience.  
437 **Suffreth alwey, syn ye so wel kan preche;**  
Suffer always, since you so well can preach;  
438 **And but ye do, certein we shal yow teche**  
And unless you do, certainly we shall teach you  
439 **That it is fair to have a wyf in pees.**  
That it is fair to have a wife in peace.  
440 **Oon of us two moste bowen, doutelees,**  
One of us two must bow, doubtless,  
441 **And sith a man is moore resonable**  
And since a man is more reasonable  
442 **Than womman is, ye moste been suffrable.**  
Than a woman is, you must be able to bear suffering.  
443 **What eyleth yow to grucche thus and groan?**  
What ails you to grouch thus and groan?  
444 **Is it for ye wolde have my queynte allone?**  
Is it because you want to have my pudendum all to  
yourself?  
445 **Wy, taak it al! Lo, have it every deel!**  
Why, take it all! Lo, have it every bit!  
446 **Peter! I shrewe yow, but ye love it weel;**  
By Saint Peter! I would curse you, if you did not love it  
well;  
447 **For if I wolde selle my bele chose,**  
For if I would sell my `pretty thing,'  
448 **I koude walke as fressh as is a rose;**  
I could walk as fresh (newly clothed) as is a rose;  
449 **But I wol kepe it for youre owene tooth.**  
But I will keep it for your own pleasure.  
450 **Ye be to blame, by God! I sey yow sooth.'**  
You are to blame, by God! I tell you the truth.'
- 451 **Swiche manere wordes hadde we on honde.**  
Such sorts of words we had in hand.  
452 **Now wol I speken of my fourthe housbonde.**  
Now will I speak of my fourth husband.  
453 **My fourthe housbonde was a revelour --**  
My fourth husband was a reveller --  
454 **This is to seyn, he hadde a paramour --**  
This is to say, he had a mistress --  
455 **And I was yong and ful of ragerye,**  
And I was young and full of playfulness,  
456 **Stibourn and strong, and joly as a pye.**  
Stubborn and strong, and jolly as a magpie.  
457 **How koude I daunce to an harpe smale,**  
How well I could dance to a small harp,  
458 **And synge, ywis, as any nyghtyngale,**  
And sing, indeed, like any nightingale,  
459 **Whan I had dronke a draughte of sweete wyn!**  
When I had drunk a draft of sweet wine!  
460 **Metellius, the foule cherl, the swyn,**  
Metellius, the foul churl, the swine,  
461 **That with a staf birafte his wyf hir lyf,**  
Who with a staff deprived his wife of her life,  
462 **For she drank wyn, thogh I hadde been his wyf,**  
Because she drank wine, if I had been his wife,  
463 **He sholde nat han daunted me fro drynke!**  
He should not have frightened me away from drink!  
464 **And after wyn on Venus moste I thynke,**  
And after wine on Venus must I think,

- 465 **For al so siker as cold engendreth hayl,**  
For as surely as cold engenders hail,
- 466 **A likerous mouth moste han a likerous tayl.**  
A gluttonous mouth must have a lecherous tail.
- 467 **In wommen vinolent is no defence --**  
In drunken women there is no defense --
- 468 **This knowen lecchours by experience.**  
This lechers know by experience.
- 469 **But -- Lord Crist! -- whan that it remembreth me**  
But -- Lord Christ! -- when I remember
- 470 **Upon my yowthe, and on my jolitee,**  
My youth, and my gaiety,
- 471 **It tikleth me aboute myn herte roote.**  
It tickles me to the bottom of my heart.
- 472 **Unto this day it dooth myn herte boote**  
Unto this day it does my heart good
- 473 **That I have had my world as in my tyme.**  
That I have had my world in my time.
- 474 **But age, allas, that al wole envenyme,**  
But age, alas, that all will poison,
- 475 **Hath me biraft my beautee and my pith.**  
Has deprived me of my beauty and my vigor.
- 476 **Lat go. Farewel! The devel go therwith!**  
Let it go. Farewell! The devil go with it!
- 477 **The flour is goon; ther is namoore to telle;**  
The flour is gone; there is no more to tell;
- 478 **The bren, as I best kan, now moste I selle;**  
The bran, as I best can, now I must sell;
- 479 **But yet to be right myrie wol I fonde.**  
But yet I will try to be right merry.
- 480 **Now wol I tellen of my fourthe housbonde.**  
Now will I tell of my fourth husband.
- 481 **I seye, I hadde in herte greet despit**  
I say, I had in heart great anger
- 482 **That he of any oother had delit.**  
That he had delight in any other.
- 483 **But he was quit, by God and by Seint Joce!**  
But he was paid back, by God and by Saint Joce!
- 484 **I made hym of the same wode a croce;**  
I made him a cross of the same wood;
- 485 **Nat of my body, in no foul manere,**  
Not of my body, in no foul manner,
- 486 **But certainly, I made folk swich cheere**  
But certainly, I treated folk in such a way
- 487 **That in his owene grece I made hym frye**  
That I made him fry in his own grease
- 488 **For angre, and for verray jealousye.**  
For anger, and for pure jealousy.
- 489 **By God, in erthe I was his purgatorie,**  
By God, in earth I was his purgatory,
- 490 **For which I hope his soule be in glorie.**  
For which I hope his soul may be in glory.
- 491 **For, God it woot, he sat ful ofte and song,**  
For, God knows it, he sat very often and cried out in  
pain,
- 492 **Whan that his shoo ful bitterly hym wrong.**  
When his shoe very bitterly pinched him.
- 493 **Ther was no wight, save God and he, that wiste,**  
There was no person who knew it, save God and he,
- 494 **In many wise, how soore I hym twiste.**  
In many a way, how painfully I tortured him.
- 495 **He deyde whan I cam fro Jerusalem,**  
He died when I came from Jerusalem,
- 496 **And lith ygrave under the roode beam,**  
And lies buried under the rood beam,
- 497 **Al is his tombe noght so curyus**  
Although his tomb is not so elaborate
- 498 **As was the sepulcre of hym Daryus,**  
As was the sepulcher of that Darius,
- 499 **Which that Appelles wroghte subtilly;**  
Which Appelles wrought skillfully;
- 500 **It nys but wast to burye hym preciously.**  
It is nothing but waste to bury him expensively.
- 501 **Lat hym fare wel; God yeve his soule reste!**  
Let him fare well; God give his soul rest!
- 502 **He is now in his grave and in his cheste.**  
He is now in his grave and in his casket.
- 503 **Now of my fifthe housbonde wol I telle.**  
Now of my fifth husband I will tell.
- 504 **God lete his soule nevere come in helle!**  
God let his soul never come in hell!
- 505 **And yet was he to me the mooste shrew;**  
And yet he was to me the greatest scoundrel;
- 506 **That feele I on my ribbes al by rewe,**  
That feel I on my ribs one after another,
- 507 **And evere shal unto myn endyng day.**  
And ever shall unto my final day.
- 508 **But in oure bed he was so fressh and gay,**  
But in our bed he was so lively and gay,
- 509 **And therwithal so wel koude he me glose,**  
And moreover he so well could deceive me,
- 510 **Whan that he wolde han my bele chose;**  
When he would have my `pretty thing`;
- 511 **That thogh he hadde me bete on every bon,**  
That though he had beat me on every bone,
- 512 **He koude wynne agayn my love anon.**  
He could win back my love straightway.
- 513 **I trowe I loved hym best, for that he**  
I believe I loved him best, because he
- 514 **Was of his love daungerous to me.**  
Was of his love standoffish to me.
- 515 **We wommen han, if that I shal nat lye,**  
We women have, if I shall not lie,
- 516 **In this matere a queynte fantasye:**  
In this matter a curious fantasy:
- 517 **Wayte what thyng we may nat lightly have,**  
Note that whatever thing we may not easily have,
- 518 **Therafter wol we crie al day and crave.**  
We will cry all day and crave for it.
- 519 **Forbode us thyng, and that desiren we;**  
Forbid us a thing, and we desire it;
- 520 **Preesse on us faste, and thanne wol we fle.**  
Press on us fast, and then will we flee.
- 521 **With daunger oute we al oure chaffare;**  
With niggardliness we spread out all our merchandise;
- 522 **Greet prees at market maketh deere ware,**  
A great crowd at the market makes wares expensive,
- 523 **And to greet cheep is holde at litel prys:**  
And too great a supply makes them of little value:
- 524 **This knoweth every womman that is wys.**  
Every woman that is wise knows this.
- 525 **My fifthe housbonde -- God his soule blesse! --**  
My fifth husband -- God bless his soul! --
- 526 **Which that I took for love, and no richesse,**  
Whom I took for love, and no riches,
- 527 **He som tyme was a clerk of Oxenford,**  
He was formerly a clerk of Oxford,
- 528 **And hadde left scole, and wente at hom to bord**  
And had left school, and came home to board
- 529 **With my gossib, dwellynge in oure toun;**

With my close friend, dwelling in our town;  
 530 **God have hir soule! Hir name was Alisoun.**  
 God have her soul! Her name was Alisoun.  
 531 **She knew myn herte, and eek my privetee,**  
 She knew my heart, and also my secrets,  
 532 **Bet than oure parisshe preest, so moot I thee!**  
 Better than our parish priest, as I may prosper!  
 533 **To hire biwreyed I my conseil al.**  
 To her I revealed all my secrets.  
 534 **For hadde myn housbonde pissed on a wal,**  
 For had my husband pissed on a wall,  
 535 **Or doon a thyng that sholde han cost his lyf,**  
 Or done a thing that should have cost his life,  
 536 **To hire, and to another worthy wyf,**  
 To her, and to another worthy wife,  
 537 **And to my nece, which that I loved weel,**  
 And to my niece, whom I loved well,  
 538 **I wolde han toold his conseil every deel.**  
 I would have told every one of his secrets.  
 539 **And so I dide ful often, God it woot,**  
 And so I did very often, God knows it,  
 540 **That made his face often reed and hoot**  
 That made his face often red and hot  
 541 **For verray shame, and blamed hymself for he**  
 For true shame, and blamed himself because he  
 542 **Had toold to me so greet a pryvetee.**  
 Had told to me so great a secret.  
  
 543 **And so bifel that ones in a Lente --**  
 And so it happened that once in a Springtime --  
 544 **So often tymes I to my gossyb wente,**  
 Since frequently I went to visit my close friend,  
 545 **For evere yet I loved to be gay,**  
 For I always loved to be gay,  
 546 **And for to walke in March, Averil, and May,**  
 And to walk in March, April, and May,  
 547 **Fro hous to hous, to heere sondry talys --**  
 From house to house, to hear various bits of gossip --  
 548 **That Jankyn clerk, and my gossyb dame Alys,**  
 That Jankin the clerk, and my close friend dame Alys,  
 549 **And I myself, into the feeldes wente.**  
 And I myself, into the fields went.  
 550 **Myn housbonde was at Londoun al that Lente;**  
 My husband was at London all that Spring;  
 551 **I hadde the bettre leysur for to pleye,**  
 I had the better opportunity to amuse myself,  
 552 **And for to se, and eek for to be seye**  
 And to see, and also to be seen  
 553 **Of lusty folk. What wiste I wher my grace**  
 By amorous folk. What did I know about where my  
 good fortune  
 554 **Was shapen for to be, or in what place?**  
 Was destined to be, or in what place?  
 555 **Therefore I made my visitaciouns**  
 Therefore I made my visitations  
 556 **To vigilies and to processions,**  
 To religious feasts and to processions,  
 557 **To prechyng eek, and to thisse pilgrimages,**  
 To preaching also, and to these pilgrimages,  
 558 **To pleyes of myracles, and to mariages,**  
 To plays about miracles, and to marriages,  
 559 **And wered upon my gaye scarlet gytes.**  
 And wore my gay scarlet robes.  
 560 **These wormes, ne these motthes, ne these mytes,**  
 These worms, nor these moths, nor these mites,  
 561 **Upon my peril, frete hem never a deel;**  
 Upon my peril (I swear), chewed on them never a bit;

562 **And wostow why? For they were used weel.**  
 And know thou why? Because they were well used.  
  
 563 **Now wol I tellen forth what happed me.**  
 Now will I tell forth what happened to me.  
 564 **I seye that in the feeldes walked we,**  
 I say that in the fields we walked,  
 565 **Til trewely we hadde swich daliance,**  
 Until truly we had such flirtation,  
 566 **This clerk and I, that of my purveiance**  
 This clerk and I, that for my provision for the future  
 567 **I spak to hym and seyde hym how that he,**  
 I spoke to him and said to him how he,  
 568 **If I were wydwe, sholde wedde me.**  
 If I were a widow, should wed me.  
 569 **For certainly -- I sey for no bobance --**  
 For certainly -- I say this for no boast --  
 570 **Yet was I nevere withouten purveiance**  
 I was never yet without providing beforehand  
 571 **Of mariage, n' of othere thynges eek.**  
 For marriage, nor for other things also.  
 572 **I holde a mouses herte nat worth a leek**  
 I hold a mouse's heart not worth a leek  
 573 **That hath but oon hole for to sterte to,**  
 That has but one hole to flee to,  
 574 **And if that faille, thanne is al ydo.**  
 If that should fail, then all is lost.  
  
 575 **I bar hym on honde he hadde enchanted me --**  
 I falsely swore that he had enchanted me --  
 576 **My dame taughte me that soutiltee --**  
 My mother taught me that trick --  
 577 **And eek I seyde I mette of hym al nyght,**  
 And also I said I dreamed of him all night,  
 578 **He wolde han slayn me as I lay upright,**  
 He would have slain me as I lay on my back,  
 579 **And al my bed was ful of verray blood;**  
 And all my bed was full of real blood;  
 580 **`But yet I hope that ye shal do me good,**  
 `But yet I hope that you shall do me good,  
 581 **For blood bitokeneth gold, as me was taught.'**  
 For blood symbolizes gold, as I was taught.'  
 582 **And al was fals; I dremed of it right naught,**  
 And all was false; I dreamed of it not at all,  
 583 **But as I folwed ay my dames loore,**  
 But I followed always my mother's teaching,  
 584 **As wel of this as of othere thynges moore.**  
 As well in this as in other things more.  
  
 585 **But now, sire, lat me se what I shal seyn.**  
 But now, sir, let me see what I shall say.  
 586 **A ha! By God, I have my tale ageyn.**  
 A ha! By God, I have my tale again.  
  
 587 **Whan that my fourthe housbonde was on beere,**  
 When my fourth husband was on the funeral bier,  
 588 **I weep algate, and made sory cheere,**  
 I wept continuously, and acted sorry,  
 589 **As wyves mooten, for it is usage,**  
 As wives must do, for it is the custom,  
 590 **And with my coverchief covered my visage,**  
 And with my kerchief covered my face,  
 591 **But for that I was purveyed of a make,**  
 But because I was provided with a mate,  
 592 **I wepte but smal, and that I undertake.**  
 I wept but little, and that I affirm.

593 **To chirche was myn housbonde born a-morwe**  
 To church was my husband carried in the morning  
 594 **With neighebores, that for hym maden sorwe;**  
 By neighbors, who for him made sorrow;  
 595 **And Jankyn, oure clerk, was oon of tho.**  
 And Jankin, our clerk, was one of those.  
 596 **As help me God, whan that I saugh hym go**  
 As help me God, when I saw him go  
 597 **After the beere, me thoughte he hadde a paire**  
 After the bier, I thought he had a pair  
 598 **Of legges and of feet so clene and faire**  
 Of legs and of feet so neat and fair  
 599 **That al myn herte I yaf unto his hoold.**  
 That all my heart I gave unto his keeping.  
 600 **He was, I trowe, twenty wynter oold,**  
 He was, I believe, twenty years old,  
 601 **And I was fourty, if I shal seye sooth;**  
 And I was forty, if I shall tell the truth;  
 602 **But yet I hadde alwey a coltes tooth.**  
 But yet I had always a colt's tooth.  
 603 **Gat-tothed I was, and that bicam me weel;**  
 With teeth set wide apart I was, and that became me  
 well;  
 604 **I hadde the prente of seinte Venus seel.**  
 I had the print of Saint Venus's seal.  
 605 **As help me God, I was a lusty oon,**  
 As help me God, I was a lusty one,  
 606 **And faire, and riche, and yong, and wel bigon,**  
 And fair, and rich, and young, and well fixed,  
 607 **And trewely, as myne housbondes tolde me,**  
 And truly, as my husbands told me,  
 608 **I hadde the beste quoniam myghte be.**  
 I had the best pudendum that might be.  
 609 **For certes, I am al Venerien**  
 For certainly, I am all influenced by Venus  
 610 **In feelynge, and myn herte is Marcien.**  
 In feeling, and my heart is influenced by Mars.  
 611 **Venus me yaf my lust, my likerousnesse,**  
 Venus me gave my lust, my amorousness,  
 612 **And Mars yaf me my sturdy hardynesse;**  
 And Mars gave me my sturdy boldness;  
 613 **Myn ascendent was Taur, and Mars therinne.**  
 My ascendant was Taurus, and Mars was therein.  
 614 **Allas, alas! That evere love was synne!**  
 Alas, alas! That ever love was sin!  
 615 **I folwed ay myn inclinacioun**  
 I followed always my inclination  
 616 **By vertu of my constellacioun;**  
 By virtue of the state of the heavens at my birth;  
 617 **That made me I koude nocht withdrawe**  
 That made me that I could not withdraw  
 618 **My chambre of Venus from a good felawe.**  
 My chamber of Venus from a good fellow.  
 619 **Yet have I Martes mark upon my face,**  
 Yet have I Mars' mark upon my face,  
 620 **And also in another privee place.**  
 And also in another private place.  
 621 **For God so wys be my savacioun,**  
 For as God may be my salvation,  
 622 **I ne loved nevere by no discrecioun,**  
 I never loved in moderation,  
 623 **But evere folwede myn appetit,**  
 But always followed my appetite,  
 624 **Al were he short, or long, or blak, or whit;**  
 Whether he were short, or tall, or black-haired, or  
 blond;  
 625 **I took no kep, so that he liked me,**

I took no notice, provided that he pleased me,  
 626 **How poore he was, ne eek of what degree.**  
 How poor he was, nor also of what rank.  
 627 **What sholde I seye but, at the monthes ende,**  
 What should I say but, at the month's end,  
 628 **This joly clerk, Jankyn, that was so hende,**  
 This jolly clerk, Jankin, that was so courteous,  
 629 **Hath wedded me with greet solempnytee,**  
 Has wedded me with great solemnity,  
 630 **And to hym yaf I al the lond and fee**  
 And to him I gave all the land and property  
 631 **That evere was me yeven therbifoore.**  
 That ever was given to me before then.  
 632 **But afterward repented me ful soore;**  
 But afterward I repented very bitterly;  
 633 **He nolde suffre nothyng of my list.**  
 He would not allow me anything of my desires.  
 634 **By God, he smoot me ones on the lyst,**  
 By God, he hit me once on the ear,  
 635 **For that I rente out of his book a leef,**  
 Because I tore a leaf out of his book,  
 636 **That of the strook myn ere wax al deaf.**  
 So that of the stroke my ear became all deaf.  
 637 **Stibourn I was as is a leonesse,**  
 I was as stubborn as is a lioness,  
 638 **And of my tonge a verray jangleresse,**  
 And of my tongue a true chatterbox,  
 639 **And walke I wolde, as I had doon biforn,**  
 And I would walk, as I had done before,  
 640 **From hous to hous, although he had it sworn;**  
 From house to house, although he had sworn the  
 contrary;  
 641 **For which he often tymes wolde preche,**  
 For which he often times would preach,  
 642 **And me of olde Romayn geestes teche;**  
 And teach me of old Roman stories;  
 643 **How he Symplicius Gallus lefte his wyf,**  
 How he, Simplicius Gallus, left his wife,  
 644 **And hire forsook for terme of al his lyf,**  
 And forsook her for rest of all his life,  
 645 **Noght but for open-heveded he hir say**  
 Because of nothing but because he saw her bare-  
 headed  
 646 **Lookynge out at his dore upon a day.**  
 Looking out at his door one day.  
 647 **Another Romayn tolde he me by name,**  
 Another Roman he told me by name,  
 648 **That, for his wyf was at a someres game**  
 Who, because his wife was at a midsummer revel  
 649 **Withouten his wityng, he forsook hire eke.**  
 Without his knowledge, he forsook her also.  
 650 **And thanne wolde he upon his Bible seke**  
 And then he would seek in his Bible  
 651 **That ilke proverbe of Ecclesiaste**  
 That same proverb of Ecclesiasticus  
 652 **Where he comandeth and forbedeth faste**  
 Where he commands and strictly forbids that  
 653 **Man shal nat suffre his wyf go roule aboute.**  
 Man should suffer his wife go wander about.  
 654 **Thanne wolde he seye right thus, withouten doute:**  
 Then would he say right thus, without doubt:  
 655 **`Whoso that buyldeth his hous al of salwes,**  
 `Whoever builds his house all of willow twigs,

- 656 **And priketh his blynde hors over the falwes,**  
And spurs his blind horse over the open fields,
- 657 **And suffreth his wyf to go seken halwes,**  
And suffers his wife to go on pilgrimages,
- 658 **Is worthy to been hanged on the galwes!**  
Is worthy to be hanged on the gallows!
- 659 **But al for noght, I sette noght an hawe**  
But all for nothing, I gave not a hawthorn berry
- 660 **Of his proverbes n' of his olde sawe,**  
For his proverbs nor for his old sayings,
- 661 **Ne I wolde nat of hym corrected be.**  
Nor would I be corrected by him.
- 662 **I hate hym that my vices telleth me,**  
I hate him who tells me my vices,
- 663 **And so doo mo, God woot, of us than I.**  
And so do more of us, God knows, than I.
- 664 **This made hym with me wood al outrely;**  
This made him all utterly furious with me;
- 665 **I nolde noght forbere hym in no cas.**  
I would not put up with him in any way.
- 666 **Now wol I seye yow sooth, by Seint Thomas,**  
Now will I tell you the truth, by Saint Thomas,
- 667 **Why that I rente out of his book a leef,**  
Why I tore a leaf out of his book,
- 668 **For which he smoot me so that I was deef.**  
For which he hit me so hard that I was deaf.
- 669 **He hadde a book that gladly, nyght and day,**  
He had a book that regularly, night and day,
- 670 **For his desport he wolde rede alway;**  
For his amusement he would always read;
- 671 **He cleped it Valerie and Theofraste,**  
He called it Valerie and Theofrastus,
- 672 **At which book he lough alway ful faste.**  
At which book he always heartily laughed.
- 673 **And eek ther was somtyme a clerk at Rome,**  
And also there was once a clerk at Rome,
- 674 **A cardinal, that highte Seint Jerome,**  
A cardinal, who is called Saint Jerome,
- 675 **That made a book agayn Jovinian;**  
That made a book against Jovinian;
- 676 **In which book eek ther was Tertulan,**  
In which book also there was Tertullian,
- 677 **Crisippus, Trotula, and Helowys,**  
Crisippus, Trotula, and Heloise,
- 678 **That was abbesse nat fer fro Parys,**  
Who was abbess not far from Paris,
- 679 **And eek the Parables of Salomon,**  
And also the Parables of Salomon,
- 680 **Ovides Art, and bookes many on,**  
Ovid's Art, and many other books,
- 681 **And alle these were bounden in o volume.**  
And all these were bound in one volume.
- 682 **And every nyght and day was his custome,**  
And every night and day was his custom,
- 683 **Whan he hadde leysur and vacacioun**  
When he had leisure and spare time
- 684 **From oother worldly occupacioun,**  
From other worldly occupations,
- 685 **To reden on this book of wikked wyves.**  
To read in this book of wicked wives.
- 686 **He knew of hem mo legendes and lyves**  
He knew of them more legends and lives
- 687 **Than been of goode wyves in the Bible.**  
Than are of good women in the Bible.
- 688 **For trusteth wel, it is an impossible**
- For trust well, it is an impossibility
- 689 **That any clerk wol speke good of wyves,**  
That any clerk will speak good of women,
- 690 **But if it be of hooly seintes lyves,**  
Unless it be of holy saints' lives,
- 691 **Ne of noon oother womman never the mo.**  
Nor of any other woman in any way.
- 692 **Who peyntede the leon, tel me who?**  
Who painted the lion, tell me who?
- 693 **By God, if women hadde writen stories,**  
By God, if women had written stories,
- 694 **As clerkes han withinne hire oratories,**  
As clerks have within their studies,
- 695 **They wolde han writen of men moore wikkednesse**  
They would have written of men more wickedness
- 696 **Than al the mark of Adam may redresse.**  
Than all the male sex could set right.
- 697 **The children of Mercurie and of Venus**  
The children of Mercury (clerks) and of Venus (lovers)
- 698 **Been in hir wirkyng ful contrarius;**  
Are directly contrary in their actions;
- 699 **Mercurie loveth wysdam and science,**  
Mercury loves wisdom and knowledge,
- 700 **And Venus loveth ryot and dispence.**  
And Venus loves riot and extravagant expenditures.
- 701 **And, for hire diverse disposicioun,**  
And, because of their diverse dispositions,
- 702 **Ech falleth in otheres exaltacioun.**  
Each falls in the other's most powerful astronomical
- sign.
- 703 **And thus, God woot, Mercurie is desolat**  
And thus, God knows, Mercury is powerless
- 704 **In Pisces, wher Venus is exaltat,**  
In Pisces (the Fish), where Venus is exalted,
- 705 **And Venus falleth ther Mercurie is reysed.**  
And Venus falls where Mercury is raised.
- 706 **Therefore no womman of no clerk is preysed.**  
Therefore no woman is praised by any clerk.
- 707 **The clerk, whan he is oold, and may noght do**  
The clerk, when he is old, and can not do
- 708 **Of Venus werkes worth his olde sho,**  
Any of Venus's works worth his old shoe,
- 709 **Thanne sit he doun, and writ in his dotage**  
Then he sits down, and writes in his dotage
- 710 **That women kan nat kepe hir mariage!**  
That women can not keep their marriage!
- 711 **But now to purpos, why I tolde thee**  
But now to the point, why I told thee
- 712 **That I was beten for a book, pardee!**  
That I was beaten for a book, by God!
- 713 **Upon a nyght Jankyn, that was oure sire,**  
Upon a night Jankin, that was master of our house,
- 714 **Redde on his book, as he sat by the fire,**  
Read on his book, as he sat by the fire,
- 715 **Of Eva first, that for hir wikkednesse**  
Of Eve first, how for her wickedness
- 716 **Was al mankynde broght to wretchednesse,**  
All mankind was brought to wretchedness,
- 717 **For which that Jhesu Crist hymself was slayn,**  
For which Jesus Christ himself was slain,
- 718 **That boghte us with his herte blood agayn.**  
Who bought us back with his heart's blood.
- 719 **Lo, heere expres of womman may ye fynde**  
Lo, here clearly of woman you may find
- 720 **That womman was the los of al mankynde.**  
That woman was the cause of the loss of all mankind.



- 721 **Tho redde he me how Sampson loste his heres:**  
Then he read me how Sampson lost his hair:
- 722 **Slepyng, his lemman kitte it with hir sheres;**  
Sleeping, his lover cut it with her shears;
- 723 **Thurgh which treson loste he bothe his yen.**  
Through which treason he lost both his eyes.
- 724 **Tho redde he me, if that I shal nat lyen,**  
Then he read to me, if I shall not lie,
- 725 **Of Hercules and of his Dianyre,**  
Of Hercules and of his Dianyre,
- 726 **That caused hym to sette hymself afyre.**  
Who caused him to set himself on fire.
- 727 **No thyng forgat he the care and the wo**  
He forgot not a bit of the care and the woe
- 728 **That Socrates hadde with his wyves two,**  
That Socrates had with his two wives,
- 729 **How Xantippa caste pisse upon his heed.**  
How Xantippa caste piss upon his head.
- 730 **This sely man sat stille as he were deed;**  
This poor man sat still as if he were dead;
- 731 **He wiped his heed, namoore dorste he seyn,**  
He wiped his head, no more dared he say,
- 732 **But `Er that thonder stynte, comth a reyn!**  
But `Before thunder stops, there comes a rain!
- 733 **Of Phasipha, that was the queene of Crete,**  
Of Phasipha, that was the queen of Crete,
- 734 **For shrewednesse, hym thoughte the tale swete;**  
For sheer malignancy, he thought the tale sweet;
- 735 **Fy! Spek namoore -- it is a grisly thyng --**  
Fie! Speak no more -- it is a grisly thing --
- 736 **Of hire horrible lust and hir likyng.**  
Of her horrible lust and her pleasure.
- 737 **Of Clitermystra, for hire lecherye,**  
Of Clitermystra, for her lechery,
- 738 **That falsly made hire housbonde for to dye,**  
That falsely made her husband to die,
- 739 **He redde it with ful good devocioun.**  
He read it with very good devotion.
- 740 **He tolde me eek for what occasioun**  
He told me also for what occasion
- 741 **Amphiorax at Thebes loste his lyf.**  
Amphiorax at Thebes lost his life.
- 742 **Myn housbonde hadde a legende of his wyf,**  
My husband had a legend of his wife,
- 743 **Eriphilem, that for an ouche of gold**  
Eriphilem, that for a brooch of gold
- 744 **Hath prively unto the Grekes told**  
Has secretly unto the Greeks told
- 745 **Wher that hir housbonde hidde hym in a place,**  
Where her husband hid him in a place,
- 746 **For which he hadde at Thebes sory grace.**  
For which he had at Thebes a sad fate.
- 747 **Of Lyvia tolde he me, and of Lucye:**  
Of Livia told he me, and of Lucie:
- 748 **They bothe made hir housbondes for to dye,**  
They both made their husbands to die,
- 749 **That oon for love, that oother was for hate.**  
That one for love, that other was for hate.
- 750 **Lyvia hir housbonde, on an even late,**  
Livia her husband, on a late evening,
- 751 **Empoysoned hath, for that she was his fo;**  
Has poisoned, because she was his foe;
- 752 **Lucia, likerous, loved hire housbonde so**  
Lucia, lecherous, loved her husband so much
- 753 **That, for he sholde alwey upon hire thynke,**  
That, so that he should always think upon her,
- 754 **She yaf hym swich a manere love-drynke**  
She gave him such a sort of love-drink
- 755 **That he was deed er it were by the morwe;**  
That he was dead before it was morning;
- 756 **And thus algates housbondes han sorwe.**  
And thus always husbands have sorrow.
- 757 **Thanne tolde he me how oon Latumyus**  
Then he told me how one Latumius
- 758 **Compleyned unto his felawe Arrius**  
Complained unto his fellow Arrius
- 759 **That in his gardyn growed swich a tree**  
That in his garden grew such a tree
- 760 **On which he seyde how that his wyves thre**  
On which he said how his three wives
- 761 **Hanged hemself for herte despitus.**  
Hanged themselves for the malice of their hearts
- 762 **`O leeve brother,' quod this Arrius,**  
`O dear brother,' this Arrius said,
- 763 **`Yif me a plante of thilke blissed tree,**  
`Give me a shoot of that same blessed tree,
- 764 **And in my gardyn planted shal it bee.'**  
And in my garden shall it be planted.'
- 765 **Of latter date, of wyves hath he red**  
Of latter date, of wives has he read
- 766 **That somme han slayn hir housbondes in hir bed,**  
That some have slain their husbands in their bed,
- 767 **And lete hir lecchour dighte hire al the nyght,**  
And let her lecher copulate with her all the night,
- 768 **Whan that the corps lay in the floor upright.**  
When the corpse lay in the floor flat on its back.
- 769 **And somme han dryve nayles in hir brayn,**  
And some have driven nails in their brains,
- 770 **Whil that they slepte, and thus they had hem slayn.**  
While they slept, and thus they had them slain.
- 771 **Somme han hem yeve poysoun in hire drynke.**  
Some have given them poison in their drink.
- 772 **He spak moore harm than herte may bithynke,**  
He spoke more harm than heart may imagine,
- 773 **And therwithal he knew of mo proverbes**  
And concerning this he knew of more proverbes
- 774 **Than in this world ther growen gras or herbes.**  
Than in this world there grow grass or herbs.
- 775 **`Bet is,' quod he, `thyn habitacioun**  
`Better is,' he said, `thy habitation
- 776 **Be with a leon or a foul dragoun,**  
Be with a lion or a foul dragon,
- 777 **Than with a womman usynge for to chyde.**  
Than with a woman accustomed to scold.
- 778 **Bet is,' quod he, `hye in the roof abyde,**  
Better is,' he said, `to stay high in the roof,
- 779 **Than with an angry wyf doun in the hous;**  
Than with an angry wife down in the house;
- 780 **They been so wikked and contrarious,**  
They are so wicked and contrary,
- 781 **They haten that hir housbondes loven ay.'**  
They always hate what their husbands love.'
- 782 **He seyde, `A womman cast hir shame away,**  
He said, `A woman casts their shame away,
- 783 **Whan she cast of hir smok'; and forthermo,**  
When she casts off her undergarment'; and

furthermore,  
784 **`A fair womman, but she be chaast also,**  
`A fair woman, unless she is also chaste,  
785 **Is lyk a gold ryng in a sowes nose.'**  
Is like a gold ring in a sow's nose.'  
786 **Who wolde wene, or who wolde suppose,**  
Who would believe, or who would suppose,  
787 **The wo that in myn herte was, and pyne?**  
The woe that in my heart was, and pain?

788 **And whan I saugh he wolde nevere fyne**  
And when I saw he would never cease  
789 **To reden on this cursed book al nyght,**  
Reading on this cursed book all night,  
790 **Al sodeynly thre leves have I plyght**  
All suddenly have I plucked three leaves  
791 **Out of his book, right as he radde, and eke**  
Out of his book, right as he read, and also  
792 **I with my fest so took hym on the cheke**  
I with my fist so hit him on the cheek  
793 **That in oure fyr he fil bakward adoun.**  
That in our fire he fell down backwards.  
794 **And he up stirte as dooth a wood leoun,**  
And he leaped up as does a furious lion,  
795 **And with his fest he smoot me on the heed**  
And with his fist he hit me on the head  
796 **That in the floor I lay as I were deed.**  
That on the floor I lay as if I were dead.  
797 **And whan he saugh how stille that I lay,**  
And when he saw how still I lay,  
798 **He was agast and wolde han fled his way,**  
He was frightened and would have fled on his way,  
799 **Til atte laste out of my swogh I breyde.**  
Until at the last out of my swoon I awoke.  
800 **`O! hastow slayn me, false thief?' I seyde,**  
`O! hast thou slain me, false thief?' I said,  
801 **`And for my land thus hastow mordred me?**  
`And for my land thus hast thou murdered me?  
802 **Er I be deed, yet wol I kisse thee.'**  
Before I am dead, yet will I kiss thee.'

803 **And neer he cam, and kneled faire adoun,**  
And near he came, and kneeled gently down,  
804 **And seyde, `Deere suster Alisoun,**  
And said, `Dear sister Alisoun,  
805 **As help me God, I shal thee nevere smyte!**  
So help me God, I shall never (again) smite thee!  
806 **That I have doon, it is thyself to wyte.**  
What I have done, it is thyself to blame (you drove me  
to it).  
807 **Foryeve it me, and that I thee biseke!**  
Forgive it me, and that I beseech thee!  
808 **And yet eftsoones I hitte hym on the cheke,**  
And yet immediately I hit him on the cheek,  
809 **And seyde, `Theef, thus muchel am I wreke;**  
And said, `Thief, thus much am I avenged;  
810 **Now wol I dye, I may no lenger speke.'**  
Now will I die, I may no longer speak.'  
811 **But atte laste, with muchel care and wo,**  
But at the last, with much care and woe,  
812 **We fille acorded by us selven two.**  
We made an agreement between our two selves.  
813 **He yaf me al the bridel in myn hond,**  
He gave me all the control in my hand,  
814 **To han the governance of hous and lond,**  
To have the governance of house and land,  
815 **And of his tonge, and of his hond also;**

And of his tongue, and of his hand also;  
816 **And made hym brenne his book anon right tho.**  
And made him burn his book immediately right then.  
817 **And whan that I hadde gotten unto me,**  
And when I had gotten unto me,  
818 **By maistrie, al the soveraynetee,**  
By mastery, all the sovereignty,  
819 **And that he seyde, `Myn owene trewe wyf,**  
And that he said, `My own true wife,  
820 **Do as thee lust the terme of al thy lyf;**  
Do as you please the rest of all thy life;  
821 **Keep thyn honour, and keep eek myn estaat' --**  
Guard thy honor, and guard also my reputation' --  
822 **After that day we hadden never debaat.**  
After that day we never had an argument.  
823 **God helpe me so, I was to hym as kynde**  
As God may help me, I was to him as kind  
824 **As any wyf from Denmark unto Ynde,**  
As any wife from Denmark unto India,  
825 **And also trewe, and so was he to me.**  
And also true, and so was he to me.  
826 **I prey to God, that sit in magestee,**  
I pray to God, who sits in majesty,  
827 **So blesse his soule for his mercy deere.**  
So bless his soul for his mercy dear.  
828 **Now wol I seye my tale, if ye wol heere."**  
Now will I say my tale, if you will hear."

*Beholde the wordes bitwene the  
Somonour and the Frere*

829 **The Frere lough, whan he hadde herd al this;**  
The Friar laughed, when he had heard all this;  
830 **"Now dame," quod he, "so have I joye or blis,**  
"Now dame," he said, "as I may have joy or bliss,  
831 **This is a long preamble of a tale!"**  
This is a long preamble of a tale!"  
832 **And whan the Somonour herde the Frere gale,**  
And when the Summoner heard the Friar cry out,  
833 **"Lo," quod the Somonour, "Goddess armes two!**  
"Lo," said the Summoner, "By God's two arms!  
834 **A frere wol entremette hym everemo.**  
A friar will always intrude himself (in others' affairs).  
835 **Lo, goode men, a flye and eek a frere**  
Lo, good men, a fly and also a friar  
836 **Wol falle in every dyssh and eek mateere.**  
Will fall in every dish and also every discussion.  
837 **What spekestow of preambulacioun?**  
What speakest thou of perambulation?  
838 **What! amble, or trotte, or pees, or go sit down!**  
What! amble, or trot, or keep still, or go sit down!  
839 **Thou lettest oure disport in this manere."**  
Thou spoil our fun in this manner."  
840 **"Ye, woltow so, sire Somonour?" quod the Frere;**  
"Yes, wilt thou have it thus, sir Summoner?" said the  
Friar;  
841 **"Now, by my feith I shal, er that I go,**  
"Now, by my faith I shall, before I go,  
842 **Telle of a somonour swich a tale or two**  
Tell of a summoner such a tale or two  
843 **That alle the folk shal laughen in this place."**  
That all the folk shall laugh in this place."  
844 **"Now elles, Frere, I bishrewe thy face,"**  
"Now otherwise, Friar, I curse thy face,"

845 **Quod this Somonour, "and I bishrewe me,**  
Said this Summoner, "and I curse myself,  
846 **But if I telle tales two or thre**  
Unless I tell tales two or three  
847 **Of freres er I come to Sidyngborne**  
Of friars before I come to Siitingbourne  
848 **That I shal make thyn herte for to morne,**  
That I shall make thy heart to mourn,  
849 **For wel I woot thy pacience is gon."**  
For well I know thy patience is gone."

850 **Oure Hooste cride "Pees! And that anon!"**  
Our Host cried "Peace! And that right now!"  
851 **And seyde, "Lat the womman telle hire tale.**  
And said, "Let the woman tell her tale.  
852 **Ye fare as folk that dronken ben of ale.**  
You act like folk that are drunk on ale.  
853 **Do, dame, telle forth youre tale, and that is best."**  
Do, dame, tell forth your tale, and that is best."

854 **"Al redy, sire," quod she, "right as yow lest,**  
"All ready, sir," she said, "right as you please,  
855 **If I have licence of this worthy Frere."**  
If I have permission of this worthy Friar."

856 **"Yis, dame," quod he, "tel forth, and I wol heere."**  
"Yes, dame," he said, "tell forth, and I will hear."

*Heere endeth the Wyf of Bathe hir Prologe*

#### The Wife of Bath's Tale

*Heere bigynneth the Tale of the Wyf of Bathe*

857 **In th' olde dayes of the Kyng Arthour,**  
In the old days of King Arthur,  
858 **Of which that Britons speken greet honour,**  
Of whom Britons speak great honor,  
859 **Al was this land fulfild of fayerye.**  
This land was all filled full of supernatural creatures.  
860 **The elf-queene, with hir joly compaignye,**  
The elf-queen, with her jolly company,  
861 **Daunced ful ofte in many a grene mede.**  
Danced very often in many a green mead.  
862 **This was the olde opinion, as I rede;**  
This was the old belief, as I read;  
863 **I speke of manye hundred yeres ago.**  
I speak of many hundred years ago.  
864 **But now kan no man se none elves mo,**  
But now no man can see any more elves,  
865 **For now the grete charitee and prayeres**  
For now the great charity and prayers  
866 **Of lymytours and othere hooly freres,**  
Of licensed beggars and other holy friars,  
867 **That serchen every lond and every stream,**  
That overrun every land and every stream,  
868 **As thikke as motes in the sonne-beem,**  
As thick as specks of dust in the sun-beam,  
869 **Blessynge halles, chambres, kichenes, boures,**  
Blessing halls, chambers, kitchens, bedrooms,  
870 **Citees, burghes, castels, hye toures,**  
Cities, towns, castles, high towers,  
871 **Thropes, bernes, shipnes, dayeryes --**  
Villages, barns, stables, dairies --  
872 **This maketh that ther ben no fayeryes.**  
This makes it that there are no fairies.

873 **For ther as wont to walken was an elf**  
For where an elf was accustomed to walk  
874 **Ther walketh now the lymytour hymself**  
There walks now the licensed begging friar himself  
875 **In undermeles and in morwenynges,**  
In late mornings and in early mornings,  
876 **And seyth his matyns and his hooly thynges**  
And says his morning prayers and his holy things  
877 **As he gooth in his lymytacioun.**  
As he goes in his assigned district.  
878 **Wommen may go sauflly up and down.**  
Women may go safely up and down.  
879 **In every bussh or under every tree**  
In every bush or under every tree  
880 **Ther is noon oother incubus but he,**  
There is no other evil spirit but he,  
881 **And he ne wol doon hem but dishonour.**  
And he will not do them any harm except dishonor.

882 **And so bifel that this kyng Arthour**  
And so it happened that this king Arthur  
883 **Hadde in his hous a lusty bachelor,**  
Had in his house a lusty bachelor,  
884 **That on a day cam ridyng fro ryver,**  
That on one day came riding from hawking,  
885 **And happed that, allone as he was born,**  
And it happened that, alone as he was born,  
886 **He saugh a mayde walkyng hym biforn,**  
He saw a maiden walking before him,  
887 **Of which mayde anon, maugree hir heed,**  
Of which maiden straightway, despite all she could  
do,  
888 **By verray force, he rafte hire maydenhed;**  
By utter force, he took away her maidenhead;  
889 **For which oppressioun was swich clamour**  
For which wrong was such clamour  
890 **And swich pursute unto the kyng Arthour**  
And such demand for justice unto king Arthur  
891 **That dampned was this knyght for to be deed,**  
That this knight was condemned to be dead,  
892 **By cours of lawe, and sholde han lost his heed --**  
By course of law, and should have lost his head --  
893 **Paraventure swich was the statut tho --**  
Perhaps such was the statute then --  
894 **But that the queene and other ladyes mo**  
Except that the queen and other ladies as well  
895 **So longe preyeden the kyng of grace**  
So long prayed the king for grace  
896 **Til he his lyf hym graunted in the place,**  
Until he granted him his life right there,  
897 **And yaf hym to the queene, al at hir wille,**  
And gave him to the queen, all at her will,  
898 **To chese wheither she wolde hym save or spille.**  
To choose whether she would him save or put to  
death.  
899 **The queene thanketh the kyng with al hir myght,**  
The queen thanks the king with all her might,  
900 **And after this thus spak she to the knyght,**  
And after this she spoke thus to the knight,  
901 **Whan that she saugh hir tyme, upon a day:**  
When she saw her time, upon a day:  
902 **"Thou standest yet," quod she, "in swich array**  
"Thou standest yet," she said, "in such condition,  
903 **That of thy lyf yet hastow no suretee.**  
That of thy life yet thou hast no assurance  
904 **I grante thee lyf, if thou kanst tellen me**

- I grant thee life, if thou canst tell me  
905 **What thyng is it that wommen moost desiren.**  
What thing it is that women most desire.
- 906 **Be war, and keep thy nekke-boon from iren!**  
Beware, and keep thy neck-bone from iron (axe)!
- 907 **And if thou kanst nat tellen it anon,**  
And if thou canst not tell it right now,
- 908 **Yet wol I yeve thee leve for to gon**  
Yet I will give thee leave to go
- 909 **A twelf-month and a day, to seche and leere**  
A twelvemonth and a day, to seek to learn
- 910 **An answeere suffisant in this mateere;**  
A satisfactory answer in this matter;
- 911 **And suretee wol I han, er that thou pace,**  
And I will have, before thou go, a pledge
- 912 **Thy body for to yelden in this place."**  
To surrender thy body in this place."
- 913 **Wo was this knyght, and sorwefully he siketh;**  
Woe was this knight, and sorrowfully he sighs;
- 914 **But what! He may nat do al as hym liketh.**  
But what! He can not do all as he pleases.
- 915 **And at the laste he chees hym for to wende**  
And at the last he chose to leave
- 916 **And come agayn, right at the yeres ende,**  
And come again, exactly at the year's end,
- 917 **With swich answeere as God wolde hym purveye;**  
With such answer as God would provide him;
- 918 **And taketh his leve, and wendeth forth his weye.**  
And takes his leave, and goes forth on his way.
- 919 **He seketh every hous and every place**  
He seeks every house and every place
- 920 **Where as he hopeth for to fynde grace**  
Where he hopes to have the luck
- 921 **To lerne what thyng wommen loven moost,**  
To learn what thing women love most,
- 922 **But he ne koude arryven in no coost**  
But he could not arrive in any region
- 923 **Wher as he myghte fynde in this mateere**  
Where he might find in this matter
- 924 **Two creatures accordynge in-feere.**  
Two creatures agreeing together.
- 925 **Somme seyde wommen loven best richesse,**  
Some said women love riches best,
- 926 **Somme seyde honour, somme seyde jolynesse,**  
Some said honor, some said gaiety,
- 927 **Somme riche array, somme seyden lust abedde,**  
Some rich clothing, some said lust in bed,
- 928 **And oftetyme to be wydwe and wedde.**  
And frequently to be widow and wedded.
- 929 **Somme seyde that oure hertes been moost esed**  
Some said that our hearts are most eased
- 930 **Whan that we been yflatered and yplesed.**  
When we are flattered and pleased.
- 931 **He gooth ful ny the sothe, I wol nat lye.**  
He goes very near the truth, I will not lie.
- 932 **A man shal wynne us best with flaterye,**  
A man shall win us best with flattery,
- 933 **And with attendance and with bisynesse**  
And with attentions and with solicitude
- 934 **Been we ylymed, bothe moore and lesse.**  
We are caught, every one of us.
- 935 **And somme seyen that we loven best**  
And some say that we love best
- 936 **For to be free and do right as us lest,**  
To be free and do just as we please,
- 937 **And that no man repreve us of oure vice,**  
And that no man reprove us for our vices,
- 938 **But seye that we be wise and no thyng nyce.**  
But say that we are wise and not at all silly.
- 939 **For trewely ther is noon of us alle,**  
For truly there is not one of us all,
- 940 **If any wight wol clawe us on the galle,**  
If any one will scratch us on the sore spot,
- 941 **That we nel kike, for he seith us sooth.**  
That we will not kick back, because he tells us the  
truth.
- 942 **Assay, and he shal fynde it that so dooth;**  
Try it, and whoever so does shall find it true;
- 943 **For, be we never so vicious withinne,**  
For, be we never so vicious within,
- 944 **We wol been holden wise and clene of synne.**  
We want to be considered wise and clean of sin.
- 945 **And somme seyn that greet delit han we**  
And some say that we have great delight
- 946 **For to been holden stable, and eek secree,**  
To be considered steadfast, and also (able to keep a)  
secret,
- 947 **And in o purpos stedefastly to dwelle,**  
And in one purpose steadfastly to remain,
- 948 **And nat biwreye thyng that men us telle.**  
And not reveal things that men tell us.
- 949 **But that tale is nat worth a rake-stele.**  
But that tale is not worth a rake handle.
- 950 **Pardee, we wommen konne no thyng hele;**  
By God, we women can hide nothing;
- 951 **Witnesse on Myda -- wol ye heere the tale?**  
Witness on Midas -- will you hear the tale?
- 952 **Ovyde, amonges othere thynges smale,**  
Ovid, among other small matters,
- 953 **Seyde Myda hadde, under his longe heres,**  
Said Midas had, under his long hair,
- 954 **Growynge upon his heed two asses eres,**  
Two ass's ears, growing upon his head,
- 955 **The whiche vice he hydde as he best myghte**  
The which vice he hid as he best could
- 956 **Ful subtilly from every mannes sighte,**  
Very skillfully from every man's sight,
- 957 **That, save his wyf, ther wiste of it namo.**  
That, except for his wife, there knew of it no others.
- 958 **He loved hire moost, and trusted hire also;**  
He loved her most, and trusted her also;
- 959 **He preyede hire that to no creature**  
He prayed her that to no creature
- 960 **She sholde tellen of his disfigure.**  
She should tell of his disfigurement.
- 961 **She swoor him, "Nay"; for al this world to wynne,**  
She swore him, "Nay"; for all this world to win,
- 962 **She nolde do that vileynye or synne,**  
She would not do that dishonor or sin,
- 963 **To make hir housbonde han so foul a name.**  
To make her husband have so foul a reputation.
- 964 **She nolde nat telle it for hir owene shame.**  
She would not tell it for her own shame.
- 965 **But nathelees, hir thoughte that she dyde**  
But nonetheless, she thought that she would die
- 966 **That she so longe sholde a conseil hyde;**

If she should hide a secret so long;  
 967 **Hir thoughte it swal so soore aboute hir herte**  
 She thought it swelled so sore about her heart  
 968 **That nedely som word hire moste asterte;**  
 That necessarily some word must escape her;  
 969 **And sith she dorste telle it to no man,**  
 And since she dared tell it to no man,  
 970 **Doun to a mareys faste by she ran --**  
 She ran down to a marsh close by --  
 971 **Til she cam there hir herte was afyre --**  
 Until she came there her heart was afire --  
 972 **And as a bitore bombleth in the myre,**  
 And as a bittern bumbles in the mire,  
 973 **She leyde hir mouth unto the water doun:**  
 She laid her mouth down unto the water:  
 974 **"Biwreye me nat, thou water, with thy soun,"**  
 "Betray me not, thou water, with thy sound,"  
 975 **Quod she; "to thee I telle it and namo;**  
 She said; "to thee I tell it and no others;  
 976 **Myn housbonde hath longe asses erys two!**  
 My husband has two long asses ears!  
 977 **Now is myn herte al hool; now is it oute.**  
 Now is my heart all whole; now is it out.  
 978 **I myghte no lenger kepe it, out of doute."**  
 I could no longer keep it, without doubt."  
 979 **Heere may ye se, thogh we a tyme abyde,**  
 Here you may see, though we a time abide,  
 980 **Yet out it moot; we kan no conseil hyde.**  
 Yet out it must come; we can hide no secret.  
 981 **The remenant of the tale if ye wol heere,**  
 The remnant of the tale if you will hear,  
 982 **Redeth Ovyde, and ther ye may it leere.**  
 Read Ovid, and there you may learn it.  
 983 **This knyght, of which my tale is specially,**  
 This knight, of whom my tale is in particular,  
 984 **Whan that he saugh he myghte nat come therby --**  
 When he saw he might not come to that --  
 985 **This is to seye, what wommen love moost --**  
 This is to say, what women love most --  
 986 **Withinne his brest ful sorweful was the goost.**  
 Within his breast very sorrowful was the spirit.  
 987 **But hoom he gooth; he myghte nat sojourne;**  
 But home he goes; he could not linger;  
 988 **The day was come that homward moste he tourne.**  
 The day was come that homeward he must turn.  
 989 **And in his way it happed hym to ryde,**  
 And in his way he happened to ride,  
 990 **In al this care, under a forest syde,**  
 In all this care, near a forest side,  
 991 **Wher as he saugh upon a daunce go**  
 Where he saw upon a dance go  
 992 **Of ladyes foure and twenty, and yet mo;**  
 Ladies four and twenty, and yet more;  
 993 **Toward the whiche daunce he drow ful yerne,**  
 Toward the which dance he drew very eagerly,  
 994 **In hope that som wysdom sholde he lerne.**  
 In hope that he should learn some wisdom.  
 995 **But certainly, er he cam fully there,**  
 But certainly, before he came fully there,  
 996 **Vanysshed was this daunce, he nyste where.**  
 Vanished was this dance, he knew not where.  
 997 **No creature saugh he that bar lyf,**  
 He saw no creature that bore life,  
 998 **Save on the grene he saugh sittyng a wyf --**  
 Save on the green he saw sitting a woman --  
 999 **A fouler wight ther may no man devyse.**

There can no man imagine an uglier creature.  
 1000 **Agayn the knyght this olde wyf gan ryse,**  
 At the knight's coming this old wife did rise,  
 1001 **And seyde, "Sire knyght, heer forth ne lith no wey.**  
 And said, "Sir knight, there lies no road out of here.  
 1002 **Tel me what that ye seken, by youre fey!**  
 Tell me what you seek, by your faith!  
 1003 **Paraventure it may the bettre be;**  
 Perhaps it may be the better;  
 1004 **Thise olde folk kan muchel thyng," quod she.**  
 These old folk know many things," she said.  
 1005 **"My leeve mooder," quod this knyght, "certeyn**  
 "My dear mother," said this knight, "certainly  
 1006 **I nam but deed but if that I kan seyn**  
 I am as good as dead unless I can say  
 1007 **What thyng it is that wommen moost desire.**  
 What thing it is that women most desire.  
 1008 **Koude ye me wisse, I wolde wel quite youre hire."**  
 If you could teach me, I would well repay you."  
 1009 **"Plight me thy trouthe heere in myn hand," quod**  
**she,**  
 "Pledge me thy word here in my hand," she said,  
 1010 **"The nexte thyng that I requere thee,**  
 "The next thing that I require of thee,  
 1011 **Thou shalt it do, if it lye in thy myght,**  
 Thou shalt do it, if it lies in thy power,  
 1012 **And I wol telle it yow er it be nyght."**  
 And I will tell it to you before it is night."  
 1013 **"Have heer my trouthe," quod the knyght, "I**  
**grante."**  
 "Have here my pledged word," said the knight, "I  
 agree."  
 1014 **"Thanne," quod she, "I dar me wel avante**  
 "Then," she said, "I dare me well boast  
 1015 **Thy lyf is sauf, for I wol stonde therby;**  
 Thy life is safe, for I will stand thereby;  
 1016 **Upon my lyf, the queene wol seye as I.**  
 Upon my life, the queen will say as I.  
 1017 **Lat se which is the proudeste of hem alle**  
 Let's see which is the proudest of them all  
 1018 **That wereth on a coverchief or a calle**  
 That wears a kerchief or a hairnet  
 1019 **That dar seye nay of that I shal thee teche.**  
 That dares say 'nay' of what I shall teach thee.  
 1020 **Lat us go forth withouten lenger speche."**  
 Let us go forth without longer speech."  
 1021 **Tho rowned she a pistel in his ere,**  
 Then she whispered a message in his ear,  
 1022 **And bad hym to be glad and have no fere.**  
 And commanded him to be glad and have no fear.  
 1023 **Whan they be comen to the court, this knyght**  
 When they are come to the court, this knight  
 1024 **Seyde he had holde his day, as he hadde hight,**  
 Said he had held his day, as he had promised,  
 1025 **And redy was his answe, as he sayde.**  
 And his answer was ready, as he said.  
 1026 **Ful many a noble wyf, and many a mayde,**  
 Very many a noble wife, and many a maid,  
 1027 **And many a wydwe, for that they been wise,**  
 And many a widow, because they are wise,  
 1028 **The queene hirsself sittyng as a justise,**  
 The queen herself sitting as a justice,  
 1029 **Assembled been, his answe for to heere;**

- Are assembled, to hear his answer;  
1030 **And afterward this knyght was bode appeere.**  
And afterward this knight was commanded to  
appear.
- 1031 **To every wight comanded was silence,**  
Silence was commanded to every person,  
1032 **And that the knyght sholde telle in audience**  
And that the knight should tell in open court  
1033 **What thyng that worldly women loven best.**  
What thing (it is) that worldly women love best.  
1034 **This knyght ne stood nat stille as doth a best,**  
This knight stood not silent as does a beast,  
1035 **But to his questioun anon answerde**  
But to his question straightway answered  
1036 **With manly voys, that al the court it herde:**  
With manly voice, so that all the court heard it:
- 1037 **"My lige lady, generally," quod he,**  
"My liege lady, without exception," he said,  
1038 **"Wommen desiren to have sovereynetee**  
"Women desire to have sovereignty  
1039 **As wel over hir housbond as hir love,**  
As well over her husband as her love,  
1040 **And for to been in maistrie hym above.**  
And to be in mastery above him.  
1041 **This is youre mooste desir, thogh ye me kille.**  
This is your greatest desire, though you kill me.  
1042 **Dooth as yow list; I am heer at youre wille."**  
Do as you please; I am here subject to your will."  
1043 **In al the court ne was ther wyf, ne mayde,**  
In all the court there was not wife, nor maid,  
1044 **Ne wydwe that contraried that he sayde,**  
Nor widow that denied what he said,  
1045 **But seyden he was worthy han his lyf.**  
But said that he was worthy to have his life.  
1046 **And with that word up stirte the olde wyf,**  
And with that word up sprang the old woman,  
1047 **Which that the knyght saugh sittyng on the grene:**  
Whom the knight saw sitting on the green:  
1048 **"Mercy," quod she, "my sovereyn lady queene!**  
"Mercy," she said, "my sovereign lady queen!  
1049 **Er that youre court departe, do me right.**  
Before your court departs, do me justice.  
1050 **I taughte this answeere unto the knyght;**  
I taught this answer to the knight;  
1051 **For which he plighte me his trouthe there,**  
For which he pledged me his word there,  
1052 **The firste thyng that I wolde hym requere**  
The first thing that I would ask of him  
1053 **He wolde it do, if it lay in his myghte.**  
He would do, if it lay in his power.  
1054 **Bifore the court thanne preye I thee, sir knyght,"**  
Before the court then I pray thee, sir knight,"  
1055 **Quod she, "that thou me take unto thy wyf,**  
Said she, "that thou take me as thy wife,  
1056 **For wel thou woost that I have kept thy lyf.**  
For well thou know that I have saved thy life.  
1057 **If I seye fals, sey nay, upon thy fey!"**  
If I say false, say 'nay', upon thy faith!"
- 1058 **This knyght answerde, "Allas and weylawey!**  
This knight answered, "Alas and woe is me!  
1059 **I woot right wel that swich was my biheste.**  
I know right well that such was my promise.  
1060 **For Goddes love, as chees a newe requeste!**
- For God's love, choose a new request!  
1061 **Taak al my good and lat my body go."**  
Take all my goods and let my body go."
- 1062 **"Nay, thanne," quod she, "I shrewe us bothe two!**  
"Nay, then," she said, "I curse both of us two!  
1063 **For thogh that I be foul, and oold, and poore**  
For though I am ugly, and old, and poor  
1064 **I nolde for al the metal, ne for oore**  
I would not for all the metal, nor for ore  
1065 **That under erthe is grave or lith above,**  
That under earth is buried or lies above,  
1066 **But if thy wyf I were, and eek thy love."**  
Have anything except that I were thy wife, and also  
thy love."
- 1067 **"My love?" quod he, "nay, my dampnacioun!**  
"My love?" he said, "nay, my damnation!  
1068 **Allas, that any of my nacioun**  
Alas, that any of my family  
1069 **Sholde evere so foule disparaged be!"**  
Should ever be so foully degraded!"  
1070 **But al for noght; the ende is this, that he**  
But all for naught; the end is this, that he  
1071 **Constreynd was; he nedes moste hire wedde,**  
Constrained was; he must by necessity wed her,  
1072 **And taketh his olde wyf, and gooth to bedde.**  
And takes his old wife, and goes to bed.
- 1073 **Now wolden som men seye, paraventure,**  
Now would some men say, perhaps,  
1074 **That for my negligence I do no cure**  
That because of my negligence I make no effort  
1075 **To tellen yow the joye and al th' array**  
To tell you the joy and all the rich display  
1076 **That at the feeste was that ilke day.**  
That was at the (wedding) feast that same day.  
1077 **To which thyng shortly answeren I shal:**  
To which thing shortly I shall answer:  
1078 **I seye ther nas no joye ne feeste at al;**  
I say there was no joy nor feast at all;  
1079 **Ther nas but hevynesse and muche sorwe.**  
There was nothing but heaviness and much sorrow.  
1080 **For prively he wedded hire on morwe,**  
For he wedded her in private in the morning,  
1081 **And al day after hidde hym as an owle,**  
And all day after hid himself like an owl,  
1082 **So wo was hym, his wyf looked so foule.**  
So woeful was he, his wife looked so ugly.
- 1083 **Greet was the wo the knyght hadde in his thoght,**  
Great was the woe the knight had in his thought,  
1084 **Whan he was with his wyf abedde ybrought;**  
When he was brought to bed with his wife;  
1085 **He walweth and he turneth to and fro.**  
He wallows and he turns to and fro.  
1086 **His olde wyf lay smylyng everemo,**  
His old wife lay smiling evermore,  
1087 **And seyde, "O deere housbonde, benedicitee!**  
And said, "O dear husband, bless me!  
1088 **Fareth every knyght thus with his wyf as ye?**  
Does every knight behave thus with his wife as you  
do?  
1089 **Is this the lawe of kyng Arthures hous?**  
Is this the law of king Arthur's house?  
1090 **Is every knyght of his so dangerous?**

- Is every knight of his so aloof?  
1091 **I am youre owene love and youre wyf;**  
I am your own love and your wife;
- 1092 **I am she which that saved hath youre lyf,**  
I am she who has saved your life,
- 1093 **And, certes, yet ne dide I yow nevere unright;**  
And, certainly, I did you never wrong yet;
- 1094 **Why fare ye thus with me this firste nyght?**  
Why behave you thus with me this first night?
- 1095 **Ye faren lyk a man had lost his wit.**  
You act like a man who had lost his wit.
- 1096 **What is my gilt? For Goddes love, tel it,**  
What is my offense? For God's love, tell it,
- 1097 **And it shal been amended, if I may."**  
And it shall be amended, if I can."
- 1098 **"Amended?" quod this knyght, "Allas, nay, nay!**  
"Amended?" said this knight, "Alas, nay, nay!
- 1099 **It wol nat been amended nevere mo.**  
It will not be amended ever more.
- 1100 **Thou art so loothly, and so oold also,**  
Thou art so loathsome, and so old also,
- 1101 **And thereto comen of so lough a kynde,**  
And moreover descended from such low born  
lineage,
- 1102 **That litel wonder is thogh I walwe and wynde.**  
That little wonder is though I toss and twist about.
- 1103 **So wolde God myn herte wolde breste!"**  
So would God my heart would burst!"
- 1104 **"Is this," quod she, "the cause of youre unreste?"**  
"Is this," she said, "the cause of your distress?"
- 1105 **"Ye, certainly," quod he, "no wonder is."**  
"Yes, certainly," he said, "it is no wonder."
- 1106 **"Now, sire," quod she, "I koude amende al this,**  
"Now, sir," she said, "I could amend all this,
- 1107 **If that me liste, er it were dayes thre,**  
If I pleased, before three days were past,
- 1108 **So wel ye myghte bere yow unto me.**  
Providing that you might behave well towards me.
- 1109 **"But, for ye speken of swich gentillesse**  
"But, since you speak of such nobility
- 1110 **As is descended out of old richesse,**  
As is descended out of old riches,
- 1111 **That therefore sholden ye be gentil men,**  
That therefore you should be noble men,
- 1112 **Swich arrogance is nat worth an hen.**  
Such arrogance is not worth a hen.
- 1113 **Looke who that is moost vertuous alway,**  
Look who is most virtuous always,
- 1114 **Pryvee and apert, and moost entendeth ay**  
In private and public, and most intends ever
- 1115 **To do the gentil dedes that he kan;**  
To do the noble deeds that he can;
- 1116 **Taak hym for the grettest gentil man.**  
Take him for the greatest noble man.
- 1117 **Crist wole we clayme of hym oure gentillesse,**  
Christ wants us to claim our nobility from him,
- 1118 **Nat of oure eldres for hire old richesse.**  
Not from our ancestors for their old riches.
- 1119 **For thogh they yeve us al hir heritage,**  
For though they give us all their heritage,
- 1120 **For which we clayme to been of heigh parage,**  
For which we claim to be of noble lineage,
- 1121 **Yet may they nat biquethe for no thyng**  
Yet they can not bequeath by any means
- 1122 **To noon of us hir vertuous lvyng,**  
To any of us their virtuous living,
- 1123 **That made hem gentil men ycalled be,**  
That made them be called noble men,
- 1124 **And bad us folwen hem in swich degree.**  
And commanded us to follow them in such matters.
- 1125 **"Wel kan the wise poete of Florence,**  
"Well can the wise poet of Florence,
- 1126 **That highte Dant, speken in this sentence.**  
Who is called Dante, speak on this matter.
- 1127 **Lo, in swich maner rym is Dantes tale:**  
Lo, in such sort of rime is Dante's speech:
- 1128 **`Ful selde up riseth by his branches smale**  
`Very seldom grows up from its small branches
- 1129 **Prowesse of man, for God, of his goodnesse,**  
Nobility of man, for God, of his goodness,
- 1130 **Wole that of hym we clayme oure gentillesse';**  
Wants us to claim our nobility from him';
- 1131 **For of oure eldres may we no thyng clayme**  
For from our ancestors we can claim no thing
- 1132 **But temporel thyng, that man may hurte and**  
**mayme.**  
Except temporal things, that may hurt and injure a  
man.
- 1133 **"Eek every wight woot this as wel as I,**  
"Also every person knows this as well as I,
- 1134 **If gentillesse were planted natureelly**  
If nobility were planted naturally
- 1135 **Unto a certeyn lynage down the lyne,**  
Unto a certain lineage down the line,
- 1136 **Pryvee and apert thanne wolde they nevere fyne**  
Then in private and in public they would never cease
- 1137 **To doon of gentillesse the faire office;**  
To do the just duties of nobility;
- 1138 **They myghte do no vileynye or vice.**  
They could do no dishonor or vice.
- 1139 **"Taak fyr and ber it in the derkeste hous**  
"Take fire and bear it in the darkest house
- 1140 **Bitwix this and the mount of Kaukasous,**  
Between this and the mount of Caucasus,
- 1141 **And lat men shette the dores and go thenne;**  
And let men shut the doors and go away;
- 1142 **Yet wole the fyr as faire lye and brenne**  
Yet will the fire as brightly blaze and burn
- 1143 **As twenty thousand men myghte it biholde;**  
As if twenty thousand men might it behold;
- 1144 **His office natureel ay wol it holde,**  
Its natural function it will always hold,
- 1145 **Up peril of my lyf, til that it dye.**  
On peril of my life (I say), until it dies.
- 1146 **"Heere may ye se wel how that genterye**  
"Here may you see well that nobility
- 1147 **Is nat annexed to possessioun,**  
Is not joined with possession,
- 1148 **Sith folk ne doon hir operacioun**  
Since folk not do behave as they should
- 1149 **Alwey, as dooth the fyr, lo, in his kynde.**  
Always, as does the fire, lo, in its nature.
- 1150 **For, God it woot, men may wel often fynde**

For, God knows it, men may well often find  
1151 **A lordes sone do shame and vileynye;**  
A lord's son doing shame and dishonor;  
1152 **And he that wole han pris of his gentrye,**  
And he who will have praise for his noble birth,  
1153 **For he was boren of a gentil hous**  
Because he was born of a noble house  
1154 **And hadde his eldres noble and vertuous,**  
And had his noble and virtuous ancestors,  
1155 **And nel hymselfen do no gentil dedis**  
And will not himself do any noble deeds  
1156 **Ne folwen his gentil auncestre that deed is,**  
Nor follow his noble ancestry that is dead,  
1157 **He nys nat gentil, be he duc or erl,**  
He is not noble, be he duke or earl,  
1158 **For vileyns synful dedes make a cherl.**  
For churlish sinful deeds make a churl.  
1159 **For gentillesse nys but renomee**  
For nobility is nothing but renown  
1160 **Of thyne auncestres, for hire heigh bountee,**  
Of thy ancestors, for their great goodness,  
1161 **Which is a strange thyng to thy persone.**  
Which is a thing not naturally part of thy person.  
1162 **Thy gentillesse cometh fro God allone.**  
Thy nobility comes from God alone.  
1163 **Thanne comth oure verray gentillesse of grace;**  
Then our true nobility comes from grace ;  
1164 **It was no thyng biquethe us with oure place.**  
It was not at all bequeathed to us with our social  
rank.  
1165 **"Thenketh hou noble, as seith Valerius,**  
"Think how noble, as says Valerius,  
1166 **Was thilke Tullius Hostillius,**  
Was that same Tullius Hostillius,  
1167 **That out of poverte roos to heigh noblesse.**  
That out of poverty rose to high nobility.  
1168 **Reedeth Senek, and redeth eek Boece;**  
Read Seneca, and read also Boethius;  
1169 **Ther shul ye seen expres that it no drede is**  
There shall you see clearly that it is no doubt  
1170 **That he is gentil that dooth gentil dedis.**  
That he is noble who does noble deeds.  
1171 **And therefore, leeve housbonde, I thus conclude:**  
And therefore, dear husband, I thus conclude:  
1172 **Al were it that myne auncestres were rude,**  
Although it is so that my ancestors were rude,  
1173 **Yet may the hye God, and so hope I,**  
Yet may the high God, and so hope I,  
1174 **Grante me grace to lyven vertuously.**  
Grant me grace to live virtuously.  
1175 **Thanne am I gentil, whan that I bigynne**  
Then am I noble, when I begin  
1176 **To lyven vertuously and weyve synne.**  
To live virtuously and abandon sin.  
1177 **"And ther as ye of poverte me repreeve,**  
"And whereas you reprove me for poverty,  
1178 **The hye God, on whom that we bileeve,**  
The high God, on whom we believe,  
1179 **In wilful poverte chees to lyve his lyf.**  
In voluntary poverty chose to live his life.  
1180 **And certes every man, mayden, or wyf**  
And certainly every man, maiden, or woman  
1181 **May understonde that Jhesus, hevene kyng,**  
Can understand that Jesus, heaven's king,  
1182 **Ne wolde nat chese a vicious lvyng.**

Would not choose a vicious form of living.  
1183 **Glad poverte is an honest thyng, certeyn;**  
Glad poverty is an honest thing, certain;  
1184 **This wole Senec and othere clerkes seyn.**  
This will Seneca and other clerks say.  
1185 **Whoso that halt hym payd of his poverte,**  
Whoever considers himself satisfied with his  
poverty,  
1186 **I holde hym riche, al hadde he nat a sherte.**  
I consider him rich, although he had not a shirt.  
1187 **He that coveiteth is a povre wight,**  
He who covets is a poor person,  
1188 **For he wolde han that is nat in his myght;**  
For he would have that which is not in his power;  
1189 **But he that nocht hath, ne coveiteth have,**  
But he who has nothing, nor covets to have  
anything,  
1190 **Is riche, although ye holde hym but a knave.**  
Is rich, although you consider him but a knave.  
1191 **Verray poverte, it syngeth proprely;**  
True poverty, it rightly sings;  
1192 **Juvenal seith of poverte myrily:**  
Juvenal says of poverty merrily:  
1193 **`The povre man, whan he goth by the weye,**  
`The poor man, when he goes along the roadway,  
1194 **Bifore the theves he may synge and pleye.'**  
Before the thieves he may sing and play.'  
1195 **Poverte is hateful good and, as I gesse,**  
Poverty is a hateful good and, as I guess,  
1196 **A ful greet bryngere out of bisynesse;**  
A very great remover of cares;  
1197 **A greet amendere eek of sapience**  
A great amender also of wisdom  
1198 **To hym that taketh it in pacience.**  
To him that takes it in patience.  
1199 **Poverte is this, although it seme alenge:**  
Poverty is this, although it may seem miserable:  
1200 **Possessioun that no wight wol chalenge.**  
A possession that no one will challenge.  
1201 **Poverte ful ofte, whan a man is lowe,**  
Poverty very often, when a man is low,  
1202 **Maketh his God and eek hymself to knowe.**  
Makes him know his God and also himself.  
1203 **Poverte a spectacle is, as thynketh me,**  
Poverty is an eye glass, as it seems to me,  
1204 **Thurgh which he may his verray freendes see.**  
Through which one may see his true friends.  
1205 **And therefore, sire, syn that I nocht yow greve,**  
And therefore, sir, since I do not injure you,  
1206 **Of my poverte namoore ye me repreve.**  
You (should) no longer reprove me for my poverty.  
1207 **"Now, sire, of elde ye repreve me;**  
"Now, sir, of old age you reprove me;  
1208 **And certes, sire, thogh noon auctoritee**  
And certainly, sir, though no authority  
1209 **Were in no book, ye gentils of honour**  
Were in any book, you gentlefolk of honor  
1210 **Seyn that men sholde an oold wight doon favour**  
Say that men should be courteous to an old person  
1211 **And clepe hym fader, for youre gentillesse;**  
And call him father, because of your nobility;  
1212 **And auctours shal I fynden, as I gesse.**  
And authors shall I find, as I guess.  
1213 **"Now ther ye seye that I am foul and old,**  
"Now where you say that I am ugly and old,



- 1214 **Than drede you noght to been a cokewold;**  
Than do not fear to be a cuckold;
- 1215 **For filthe and eelde, also moot I thee,**  
For filth and old age, as I may prosper,
- 1216 **Been grete wardeyns upon chastitee.**  
Are great guardians of chastity.
- 1217 **But nathelees, syn I knowe youre delit,**  
But nonetheless, since I know your delight,
- 1218 **I shal fulfille youre worldly appetit.**  
I shall fulfill your worldly appetite.
- 1219 **"Chese now," quod she, "oon of thise thynges**  
**tweye:**  
"Choose now," she said, "one of these two things:
- 1220 **To han me foul and old til that I deye,**  
To have me ugly and old until I die,
- 1221 **And be to yow a trewe, humble wyf,**  
And be to you a true, humble wife,
- 1222 **And nevere yow displese in al my lyf,**  
And never displease you in all my life,
- 1223 **Or elles ye wol han me yong and fair,**  
Or else you will have me young and fair,
- 1224 **And take youre aventure of the repair**  
And take your chances of the crowd
- 1225 **That shal be to youre hous by cause of me,**  
That shall be at your house because of me,
- 1226 **Or in som oother place, may wel be.**  
Or in some other place, as it may well be.
- 1227 **Now chese yourselven, wheither that yow liketh."**  
Now choose yourself, whichever you please."
- 1228 **This knyght avyseth hym and sore siketh,**  
This knight deliberates and painfully sighs,
- 1229 **But atte laste he seyde in this manere:**  
But at the last he said in this manner:
- 1230 **"My lady and my love, and wyf so deere,**  
"My lady and my love, and wife so dear,
- 1231 **I put me in youre wise governance;**  
I put me in your wise governance;
- 1232 **Cheseth youreself which may be moost plesance**  
Choose yourself which may be most pleasure
- 1233 **And moost honour to yow and me also.**  
And most honor to you and me also.
- 1234 **I do no fors the wheither of the two,**  
I do not care which of the two,
- 1235 **For as yow liketh, it suffiseth me."**  
For as it pleases you, is enough for me."
- 1236 **"Thanne have I gete of yow maistrie," quod she,**  
"Then have I gotten mastery of you," she said,
- 1237 **"Syn I may chese and governe as me lest?"**  
"Since I may choose and govern as I please?"
- 1238 **"Ye, certes, wyf," quod he, "I holde it best."**  
"Yes, certainly, wife," he said, "I consider it best."
- 1239 **"Kys me," quod she, "we be no lenger wrothe,**  
"Kiss me," she said, "we are no longer angry,
- 1240 **For, by my trouthe, I wol be to yow bothe --**  
For, by my troth, I will be to you both --
- 1241 **This is to seyn, ye, bothe fair and good.**  
This is to say, yes, both fair and good.
- 1242 **I prey to God that I moote sterven wood,**  
I pray to God that I may die insane
- 1243 **But I to yow be also good and trewe**  
Unless I to you be as good and true
- 1244 **As evere was wyf, syn that the world was newe.**  
As ever was wife, since the world was new.
- 1245 **And but I be to-morn as fair to seene**  
And unless I am tomorrow morning as fair to be seen
- 1246 **As any lady, emperice, or queene,**  
As any lady, empress, or queen,
- 1247 **That is bitwixe the est and eke the west,**  
That is between the east and also the west,
- 1248 **Dooth with my lyf and deth right as yow lest.**  
Do with my life and death right as you please.
- 1249 **Cast up the curtyn, looke how that it is."**  
Cast up the curtain, look how it is."
- 1250 **And whan the knyght saugh verrailly al this,**  
And when the knight saw truly all this,
- 1251 **That she so fair was, and so yong therto,**  
That she so was beautiful, and so young moreover,
- 1252 **For joye he hente hire in his armes two.**  
For joy he clasped her in his two arms.
- 1253 **His herte bathed in a bath of blisse.**  
His heart bathed in a bath of bliss.
- 1254 **A thousand tyme a-rewe he gan hire kisse,**  
A thousand time in a row he did her kiss,
- 1255 **And she obeyed hym in every thyng**  
And she obeyed him in every thing
- 1256 **That myghte doon hym plesance or likyng.**  
That might do him pleasure or enjoyment.
- 1257 **And thus they lyve unto hir lyves ende**  
And thus they live unto their lives' end
- 1258 **In parfit joye; and Jhesu Crist us sende**  
In perfect joy; and Jesus Christ us send
- 1259 **Housbondes meeke, yonge, and fressh abedde,**  
Husbands meek, young, and vigorous in bed,
- 1260 **And grace t' overbyde hem that we wedde;**  
And grace to outlive them whom we wed;
- 1261 **And eek I praye Jhesu shorte hir lyves**  
And also I pray Jesus shorten their lives
- 1262 **That noght wol be governed by hir wyves;**  
That will not be governed by their wives;
- 1263 **And olde and angry nygardes of dispence,**  
And old and angry misers in spending,
- 1264 **God sende hem soone verray pestilence!**  
God send them soon the very pestilence!

*Heere endeth the Wyves Tale of Bathe*

## Comments

## The wife of Bath's Prologue

Her prologue gives insight into the role of women in the Late Middle Ages and is probably of interest to Chaucer himself, for the character is one of his most developed ones, with her prologue twice as long as her tale. He also goes so far as to describe two sets of clothing for her in his General Prologue. She holds her own among the bickering pilgrims, and evidence in the manuscripts suggests that although she was first assigned a different, plainer tale—perhaps the one told by the Shipman—she received her present tale as her significance increased. She calls herself both Alyson and Alys in the prologue, but to confuse matters these are also the names of her 'gossib' (a close friend or gossip), whom she mentions several times, as well as many female characters throughout *The Canterbury Tales*.

The Wife of Bath believes herself an expert on the relations between men and women, having had five husbands herself, beginning with her first at age 12. She provides a long history and defends her many marriages with selected quotations from Biblical and other sources, glossed to support her views. She also expands on the status of sex, claiming that virginity is not necessary to be a good and virtuous person, and asks the rhetorical question of what genitals are for, if not for procreation. Many of her comments are counter-arguments to those put forth by St. Jerome, mainly in his work "Against Jovinianus".

She is both direct and opinionated, particularly about the futility of men attempting to gain sovereignty or domination over women, and her opinions prepare the reader for her tale, often mislabeled a breton lai, about the role of sovereignty in marriage.

The tale is often regarded as the first of the so-called "marriage group" of tales, which includes the Clerk's, the Merchant's and the Franklin's tales. But some scholars contest this grouping, first proposed by Chaucer scholar George Lyman Kittredge, not least because the later tales of Melibee and the Nun's Priest also discuss this theme. A separation between tales that deal with moral issues and ones that deal with magical issues, as the Wife of Bath's does, is favoured by some scholars.

At the start of her prologue, the Wife of Bath argues that experience and homegrown wisdom are better guides in life than texts, scripture, and tradition. She posits that her experience makes her eminently suited to tell a tale of women and their true desire, and her tale can be seen as a refutation of the way women have been "glossed" by earlier male writers. Chaucer may have intended to both poke fun at the Wife of Bath's incomplete understanding of the sources she uses and to show her spunk and native intelligence. Since the tale isn't very supportive of a switch in gender roles, given the subservient nature of the old woman at the end, it is unclear whether Chaucer was supportive of strong independent female personalities.

## The Wife of Bath's tale

Her tale begins with an allusion to the absence of fairies in modern day and their prevalence in King Arthur's time. She then starts in on her tale though she interrupts and is interrupted several times throughout the telling, creating several digressions. A knight in King Arthur's court rapes a woman in a corn field. By law, his punishment is death, but the queen intercedes on his behalf, and the king turns the knight over to her for judgement. The queen punishes the knight by sending him out on a quest to find out what women really want "more than anything else," giving him a year and a day to discover it and having his word that he will return. If he fails to satisfy the queen with his answer, he forfeits his life. He searches, but every woman he finds says something different, from riches to flattery.

On his way back to the queen after failing to find the truth, he sees four and twenty ladies dancing. They disappear suddenly, leaving behind an old hag whom he asks for help. She says she'll tell him the answer that will save him if he promises to grant her request at a time she chooses. He agrees and they go back to the court where the queen pardons him after he explains that what women want most is "to have the sovereignty as well upon their husband as their love, and to have mastery their man above." The old woman cries out to him before the court that she saved him and that her reward will be that he takes her as his wife and loves her. He protests, but to no avail, and the marriage takes place the next day.

The old woman and the knight converse about the knight's happiness in their marriage bed and discuss that he is unhappy because she is ugly and low-born. She discourses upon the origins of gentility, as told by Jesus and Dante, and reflects on the origins of poverty. She says he can choose between her being ugly and faithful or beautiful and unfaithful. He gives the choice to her to become whatever would bring the most honour and happiness to them both and she, pleased with her mastery of her husband, becomes fair and faithful to live with him happily until the end of their days.

*We wommen han, if that I shal nat lye,  
In this matere a queynte fantasye:  
Wayte what thyng we may nat lightly have,  
Therafter wol we crie al day and crave.  
Forbede us thyng, and that desiren we;  
Presse on us faste, and thanne wol we fle.*

## Theme

Throughout the Roman Catholic Church Middle Ages authority was in the books and the men who wrote them. Dutiful monks, friars and brothers copied the sacred texts worshipfully as repositories of truth; the books, then, were sacred treasures these men were willing to die defending. They were men of the book, and the book was their distinctive cultural achievement.

But that whole world was swept away by bubonic plague, the Black Death of 1349-51, when Chaucer was ten or eleven and one-third of Europe's population died. The pilgrims in Chaucer's poem are all survivors of that cataclysm, new men and women in a new world.

The old church hierarchy was unable to stop the plague. The survivors looked about for new sources of authority, and one place a number of them began relying on was their own experience. "I know by experience that the old church fathers were wrong when they wrote x (or y)," these new Europeans claimed. And that is the shape of the Wife of Bath's opening claim: 'From experience I know the woe that is in marriage.'

In the Introduction to the Cambridge University Press edition of "The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale" James Winny sums it up this way: "Against the accumulated learning of her times she poses the pungent wisdom of proverbial sayings, and the certainties of knowledge which she has gained in the cut and thrust of daily events. One side of the contest fetches its opinions from written commentaries, not consulting the evidence of tangible fact but regarding the pronouncements of the Church and the Schoolmen as unassailable authority. The other bases itself upon the certainty of everyday events, and the pressing realities of human affairs, where learned opinions seem insubstantial." (16)

The tale utilizes the "loathly lady" motif, the oldest examples of which are the medieval Irish sovereignty myths like that of Niall of the Nine Hostages. Arthur's nephew Gawain goes on a nearly identical quest to discover what women truly want in the medieval poem "The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle", and the ballad "The Marriage of Sir Gawain", a retelling of the same story. The usual formula is simply that the woman will be a hag during the day and a beautiful woman at night. Where "The Wife's Tale" differs from these stories is the initial rape and his emphasis on faithfulness and the redemptive decision of the knight. The knight's decision of faithfulness or fairness, his choice of the most honourable option, and then his eventual reward for making the right choice, displays his chivalrous nature. Both the tale and the Wife of Bath's prologue deal with the question of who has control in relationships between men and women.

Critics are divided on the personality of the Wife of Bath. Some see her as a strong independent woman while others regard her as a terrible old harridan. This latter view is helped by potential hints in the text that she may have murdered her fourth husband. A significant body of modern literary criticism regards the Wife of Bath as attacking the substantial body of antifeminist literature known by the later middle ages, though these critics are cognisant of the fact that [[feminism]], as a distinct political and intellectual movement, did not emerge until the nineteenth century. Chaucer was taking inspiration from a significant amount of misogynist literature around at the time but it is subject to debate whether he is copying these sentiments or slyly lampooning them.

There are also theories that the Wife's tale was written to ease Chaucer's guilty conscience. It is recorded that in 1380 associates of Chaucer stood surety for an amount equal to half his yearly salary for a charge brought by Cecilia Champaign for "de rpto" rape or abduction; the same view has been taken of his Legend of Good Women, which Chaucer himself describes as a penance. It remains important, however, as with any author, to observe the difference between the author's intentions and the multiplicity of potential meanings in the text.

## **The English Literature as a part of General Medieval European Literature.**

One of the most striking general facts in the later Middle Ages is the uniformity of life in many of its aspects throughout all Western Europe. It was only during this period that the modern nations, acquiring national consciousness, began definitely to shape themselves out of the chaos which had followed the fall of the Roman Empire. The Roman Church, firmly established in every corner of every land, was the actual inheritor of much of the unifying power of the Roman government, and the feudal system everywhere gave to society the same political organization and ideals. In a truer sense, perhaps, than at any later time, Western Europe was one great brotherhood, thinking much the same thoughts, speaking in part the same speech, and actuated by the same beliefs. At least, the literature of the period, largely composed and copied by the great army of monks, exhibits everywhere a thorough uniformity in types and ideas.

We of the twentieth century should not allow ourselves to think vaguely of the Middle Ages as a benighted or shadowy period when life and the people who constituted it had scarcely anything in common with ourselves. In reality the men of the Middle Ages were moved by the same emotions and impulses as our own, and their lives presented the same incongruous mixture of nobility and baseness. Yet it is true that the externals of their existence were strikingly different from those of more recent times. In society the feudal system--lords with their serfs, towns struggling for municipal independence, kings and nobles doing, peaceably or with violence, very much what they pleased; a constant condition of public or private war; cities walled as a matter of course for protection against bands of robbers or hostile armies; the country still largely covered with forests, wildernesses, and fens; roads infested with brigands and so bad that travel was scarcely possible except on horseback; in private life, most of the modern comforts unknown, and the houses, even of the wealthy, so filthy and uncomfortable that all classes regularly, almost necessarily, spent most of the daylight hours in the open air; in industry no coal, factories, or large machinery, but in the towns guilds of workmen each turning out by hand his slow product of single articles; almost no education except for priests and monks, almost no conceptions of genuine science or history, but instead the abstract system of scholastic logic and philosophy, highly ingenious but highly fantastic; in religion no outward freedom of thought except for a few courageous spirits, but the arbitrary dictates of a despotic hierarchy, insisting on an ironbound creed which the remorseless process of time was steadily rendering more and more inadequate--this offers some slight suggestion of the conditions of life for several centuries, ending with the period with which we are now concerned.

In medieval literature likewise the modern student encounters much which seems at first sight grotesque. One of the most conspicuous examples is the pervasive use of allegory. The men of the Middle Ages often wrote, as we do, in direct terms and of simple things, but when they wished to rise above the commonplace they turned with a frequency which to-day appears astonishing to the devices of abstract personification and veiled meanings. No doubt this tendency was due in part to an idealizing dissatisfaction with the crudeness of their actual life (as well as to frequent inability to enter into the realm of deeper and finer thought without the aid of somewhat mechanical imagery); and no doubt it was greatly furthered also by the medieval passion for translating into elaborate and fantastic symbolism all the details of the Bible narratives. But from whatever cause, the tendency hardened into a ruling convention; thousands upon thousands of medieval manuscripts seem to declare that the world is a mirage of shadowy forms, or that it exists merely to body forth remote and highly surprising ideas.

Of all these countless allegories none was reiterated with more unwearied persistence than that of the Seven Deadly Sins (those sins which in the doctrine of the Church lead to spiritual death because they are wilfully committed). These sins are: Covetousness, Unchastity, Anger, Gluttony, Envy, Sloth, and, chief of all, Pride, the earliest of all, through which Lucifer was moved to his fatal rebellion against God, whence spring all human ills. Each of the seven, however, was interpreted as including so many related offences that among them they embraced nearly the whole range of possible wickedness. Personified, the Seven Sins in themselves almost dominate medieval literature, a sort of shadowy evil pantheon. Moral and religious questions could scarcely be discussed without regard to them; and they maintain their commanding place even as late as in Spenser's 'Faerie Queene,' at the very end of the sixteenth century. To the Seven Sins were commonly opposed, but with much less emphasis, the Seven Cardinal Virtues, Faith, Hope, Charity (Love), Prudence, Temperance, Chastity, and Fortitude. Again, almost as prominent as the Seven Sins was the figure of Fortune with her revolving wheel, a goddess whom the violent vicissitudes and tragedies of life led the men of the Middle Ages, in spite of their Christianity, to bring over from classical literature and virtually to accept as a real divinity, with almost absolute control in human affairs. In the seventeenth century Shakespeare's plays are full of allusions to her, but so for that matter is the everyday talk of all of us in the twentieth century.

## **Literature in the three languages.**

It is not to the purpose in a study like the present to give special attention to the literature written in England in Latin and French; we can speak only briefly of that composed in English. But in fact when the English had made its new beginning,

about the year 1200, the same general forms flourished in all three languages, so that what is said in general of the English applies almost as much to the other two as well.

## Religious Literature

We may virtually divide all the literature of the period, roughly, into (1) Religious and (2) Secular. But it must be observed that religious writings were far more important as literature during the Middle Ages than in more recent times, and the separation between religious and secular less distinct than at present. The forms of the religious literature were largely the same as in the previous period. There were songs, many of them addressed to the Virgin, some not only beautiful in their sincere and tender devotion, speaking for the finer spirits in an age of crudeness and violence, but occasionally beautiful as poetry. There were paraphrases of many parts of the Bible, lives of saints, in both verse and prose, and various other miscellaneous work. Perhaps worthy of special mention among single productions is the 'Cursor Mundi' (Surveyor of the World), an early fourteenth century poem of twenty-four thousand lines ('Paradise Lost' has less than eleven thousand), relating universal history from the beginning, on the basis of the Biblical narrative. Most important of all for their promise of the future, there were the germs of the modern drama in the form of the Church plays; but to these we shall give special attention in a later chapter.

## Secular Literature

In secular literature the variety was greater than in religious. We may begin by transcribing one or two of the songs, which, though not as numerous then as in some later periods, show that the great tradition of English secular lyric poetry reaches back from our own time to that of the Anglo-Saxons without a break. The best known of all is the 'Cuckoo Song,' of the thirteenth century, intended to be sung in harmony by four voices:

*Sumer is icumen in;  
Lhude sing, cuccu!  
Groweth sed and bloweth med  
And springth the wde nu.  
Sing, cuccu!  
Awe bleteth after lomb,  
Lhouth after calve cu.  
Bulluc sterteth, bucke verteth;  
Murie sing, cuccu!  
Cuccu, cuccu,  
Wel singes thu, cuccu;  
Ne swik thu never nu.*

Summer is come in; loud sing, cuckoo! Grows the seed and blooms the mead [meadow] and buds the wood anew. Sing, cuckoo! The ewe bleats for the lamb, lows for the calf the cow. The bullock gambols, the buck leaps; merrily sing, cuckoo! Cuckoo, cuckoo, well singest thou, cuckoo; cease thou never now.

The next is the first stanza of 'Alysoun' ('Fair Alice'):

*Bytuene Mersh ant Averil,  
When spray beginnth to springe,  
The lutel foul hath hire wyl  
On hyre lud to synge.  
Ieh libbe in love-longinge  
For semlokest of alle thinge;  
He may me blisse bringe;  
I cham in hire baundoun.  
An hendy hap ichabbe ybent;  
Iehot from hevene it is me sent;  
From alle wymmen mi love is lent  
Ant lyht on Alysoun.*

Between March and April, When the sprout begins to spring, the little bird has her desire In her tongue to sing. I live in love-longing For the fairest of all things; She may bring me bliss; I am at her mercy. A lucky lot I have secured; I think from heaven it is sent me; from all women my love is turned And is lighted on Alysoun.

There were also political and satirical songs and miscellaneous poems of various sorts, among them certain 'Bestiaries,' accounts of the supposed habits of animals, generally drawn originally from classical tradition, and most of them highly fantastic and allegorized in the interests of morality and religion. There was an abundance of extremely realistic coarse tales, hardly belonging to literature, in both prose and verse. The popular ballads of the fourteenth century we must reserve for later consideration. Most numerous of all the prose works, perhaps, were the Chronicles, which were produced generally in the monasteries and chiefly in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the greater part in Latin, some in French, and a few in rude English verse. Many of them were mere annals like the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, but some were the lifelong works of men with genuine historical vision. Some dealt merely with the history of England, or a part of it, others with that of the entire world as it was known to medieval Europe. The majority will never be withdrawn from the obscurity of the manuscripts on which the patient care of their authors inscribed them; others have been printed in full and serve as the main basis for our knowledge of the events of the period.

## The Romances

But the chief form of secular literature during the period, beginning in the middle of the twelfth century, was the romance, especially the metrical (verse) romance. The typical romances were the literary expression of chivalry. They were composed by the professional minstrels, some of whom, as in Anglo-Saxon times, were richly supported and rewarded by kings and nobles, while others still wandered about the country, always welcome in the manor-houses. There, like Scott's Last Minstrel, they recited their sometimes almost endless works from memory, in the great halls or in the ladies' bowers, to the accompaniment of occasional strains on their harps. For two or three centuries the romances were to the lords and ladies, and to the wealthier citizens of the towns, much what novels are to the reading public of our own day. By far the greater part of the romances current in England were written in French, whether by Normans or by French natives of the English provinces in France, and the English ones which have been preserved are mostly translations or imitations of French originals. The romances are extreme representatives of the whole class of literature of all times to which they have given the name. Frankly abandoning in the main the world of reality, they carry into that of idealized and glamorous fancy the chief interests of the medieval lords and ladies, namely, knightly exploits in war, and lovemaking. Love in the romances, also, retains all its courtly affectations, together with that worship of woman by man which in the twelfth century was exalted into a sentimental art by the poets of wealthy and luxurious Provence in Southern France. Side by side, again, with war and love, appears in the romances medieval religion, likewise conventionalized and childish superstitious, but in some inadequate degree a mitigator of cruelty and a restrainer of lawless passion. Artistically, in some respects or all, the greater part of the romances are crude and immature. Their usual main or only purpose is to hold attention by successions of marvellous adventures, natural or supernatural; of structure, therefore, they are often destitute; the characters are ordinarily mere types; and motivation is little considered. There were, however, exceptional authors, genuine artists, masters of meter and narrative, possessed by a true feeling for beauty; and in some of the romances the psychological analysis of love, in particular, is subtle and powerful, the direct precursor of one of the main developments in modern fiction.

The romances may very roughly be grouped into four great classes. First in time, perhaps, come those which are derived from the earlier French epics and in which love, if it appears at all, is subordinated to the military exploits of Charlemagne and his twelve peers in their wars against the Saracens. Second are the romances which, battered salvage from a greater past, retell in strangely altered romantic fashion the great stories of classical antiquity, mainly the achievements of Alexander the Great and the tragic fortunes of Troy. Third come the Arthurian romances, and fourth those scattering miscellaneous ones which do not belong to the other classes, dealing, most of them, with native English heroes. Of these, two, 'King Horn' and 'Havelok,' spring direct from the common people and in both substance and expression reflect the hard reality of their lives, while 'Guy of Warwick' and 'Bevis of Hampton,' which are among the best known but most tedious of all the list, belong, in their original form, to the upper classes.

Of all the romances the Arthurian are by far the most important. They belong peculiarly to English literature, because they are based on traditions of British history, but they have assumed a very prominent place in the literature of the whole western world. Rich in varied characters and incidents to which a universal significance could be attached, in their own time they were the most popular works of their class; and living on vigorously after the others were forgotten, they have continued to form one of the chief quarries of literary material and one of the chief sources of inspiration for modern poets and romancers. It seems well worth while, therefore, to outline briefly their literary history.

The period in which their scene is nominally laid is that of the Anglo-Saxon conquest of Great Britain. Of the actual historical events of this period extremely little is known, and even the capital question whether such a person as Arthur ever really existed can never receive a definite answer. The only contemporary writer of the least importance is the Briton (priest or monk), Gildas, who in a violent Latin pamphlet of about the year 550 ('The Destruction and Conquest of Britain') denounces his countrymen for their sins and urges them to unite against the Saxons; and Gildas gives only the slightest

sketch of what had actually happened. He tells how a British king (to whom later tradition assigns the name Vortigern) invited in the Anglo-Saxons as allies against the troublesome northern Scots and Picts, and how the Anglo-Saxons, victorious against these tribes, soon turned in furious conquest against the Britons themselves, until, under a certain Ambrosius Aurelianus, a man 'of Roman race,' the Britons successfully defended themselves and at last in the battle of Mount Badon checked the Saxon advance.

Next in order after Gildas, but not until about the year 800, appears a strangely jumbled document, last edited by a certain Nennius, and entitled 'Historia Britonum' (The History of the Britons), which adds to Gildas' outline traditions, natural and supernatural, which had meanwhile been growing up among the Britons (Welsh). It supplies the names of the earliest Saxon leaders, Hengist and Horsa (who also figure in the 'Anglo-Saxon Chronicle'), and narrates at length their treacherous dealings with Vortigern. Among other stories we find that of Vortigern's tower, where Gildas' Ambrosius appears as a boy of supernatural nature, destined to develop in the romances into the great magician Merlin. In Nennius' book occurs also the earliest mention of Arthur, who, in a comparatively sober passage, is said, some time after the days of Vortigern, to have 'fought against the Saxons, together with the kings of the Britons, but he himself was leader in the battles.' A list, also, is given of his twelve victories, ending with Mount Badon. It is impossible to decide whether there is really any truth in this account of Nennius, or whether it springs wholly from the imagination of the Britons, attempting to solace themselves for their national overthrow; but it allows us to believe if we choose that sometime in the early sixth century there was a British leader of the name of Arthur, who by military genius rose to high command and for a while beat back the Saxon hordes. At most, however, it should be clearly realized, Arthur was probably only a local leader in some limited region, and, far from filling the splendid place which he occupies in the later romances, was but the hard-pressed captain of a few thousand barbarous and half-armed warriors.

For three hundred years longer the traditions about Arthur continued to develop among the Welsh people. The most important change which took place was Arthur's elevation to the position of chief hero of the British (Welsh) race and the subordination to him, as his followers, of all the other native heroes, most of whom had originally been gods. To Arthur himself certain divine attributes were added, such as his possession of magic weapons, among them the sword Excalibur. It also came to be passionately believed among the Welsh that he was not really dead but would some day return from the mysterious Other World to which he had withdrawn and reconquer the island for his people. It was not until the twelfth century that these Arthurian traditions, the cherished heritage of the Welsh and their cousins, the Bretons across the English Channel in France, were suddenly adopted as the property of all Western Europe, so that Arthur became a universal Christian hero. This remarkable transformation, no doubt in some degree inevitable, was actually brought about chiefly through the instrumentality of a single man, a certain English archdeacon of Welsh descent, Geoffrey of Monmouth. Geoffrey, a literary and ecclesiastical adventurer looking about for a means of making himself famous, put forth about the year 1136, in Latin, a 'History of the Britons' from the earliest times to the seventh century, in which, imitating the form of the serious chronicles, he combined in cleverly impudent fashion all the adaptable miscellaneous material, fictitious, legendary, or traditional, which he found at hand. In dealing with Arthur, Geoffrey greatly enlarges on Gildas and Nennius; in part, no doubt, from his own invention, in part, perhaps, from Welsh tradition. He provides Arthur with a father, King Uther, makes of Arthur's wars against the Saxons only his youthful exploits, relates at length how Arthur conquered almost all of Western Europe, and adds to the earlier story the figures of Merlin, Guenevere, Modred, Gawain, Kay, and Bedivere. What is not least important, he gives to Arthur's reign much of the atmosphere of feudal chivalry which was that of the ruling class of his own age.

Geoffrey may or may not have intended his astonishing story to be seriously accepted, but in fact it was received with almost universal credence. For centuries it was incorporated in outline or in excerpts into almost all the sober chronicles, and what is of much more importance for literature, it was taken up and rehandled in various fashions by very numerous romancers. About twenty years after Geoffrey wrote, the French poet Wace, an English subject, paraphrased his entire 'History' in vivid, fluent, and diffuse verse. Wace imparts to the whole, in a thorough-going way, the manners of chivalry, and adds, among other things, a mention of the Round Table, which Geoffrey, somewhat chary of the supernatural, had chosen to omit, though it was one of the early elements of the Welsh tradition. Other poets followed, chief among them the delightful Chretien of Troyes, all writing mostly of the exploits of single knights at Arthur's court, which they made over, probably, from scattering tales of Welsh and Breton mythology. To declare that most romantic heroes had been knights of Arthur's circle now became almost a matter of course. Prose romances also appeared, vast formless compilations, which gathered up into themselves story after story, according to the fancy of each successive editor. Greatest of the additions to the substance of the cycle was the story of the Holy Grail, originally an altogether independent legend. Important changes necessarily developed. Arthur himself, in many of the romances, was degraded from his position of the bravest knight to be the inactive figurehead of a brilliant court; and the only really historical element in the story, his struggle against the Saxons, was thrust far into the background, while all the emphasis was laid on the romantic achievements of the single knights.

**LAGHAMON'S 'BRUT.'** Thus it had come about that Arthur, originally the national hero of the Welsh, and the deadly foe of the English, was adopted, as a Christian champion, not only for one of the medieval Nine Worthies of all history, but for the special glory of the English race itself. In that light he figures in the first important work in which native English reemerges after the Norman Conquest, the 'Brut' (Chronicle) wherein, about the year 1200, Laghamon paraphrased Wace's paraphrase of Geoffrey.

[Footnote: Laghamon's name is generally written 'Layamon,' but this is incorrect. The word 'Brut' comes from the name 'Brutus,' according to Geoffrey a Trojan hero and eponymous founder of the British race. Standing at the beginning of British (and English) history, his name came to be applied to the whole of it, just as the first two Greek letters, alpha and beta, have given the name to the alphabet.]

Laghamon was a humble parish priest in Worcestershire, and his thirty-two thousand half-lines, in which he imperfectly follows the Anglo-Saxon alliterative meter, are rather crude; though they are by no means dull, rather are often strong with the old-time Anglo-Saxon fighting spirit. In language also the poem is almost purely Saxon; occasionally it admits the French device of rime, but it is said to exhibit, all told, fewer than a hundred words of French origin. Expanding throughout on Wace's version, Laghamon adds some minor features; but English was not yet ready to take a place beside French and Latin with the reading class, and the poem exercised no influence on the development of the Arthurian story or on English literature.

### **Sir Gawain and The Green Knight.**

We can make special mention of only one other romance, which all students should read in modern translation, namely, 'Sir Gawain (pronounced Gaw'-wain) and the Green Knight.' This is the brief and carefully constructed work of an unknown but very real poetic artist, who lived a century and more later than Laghamon and probably a little earlier than Chaucer. The story consists of two old folk-tales, here finely united in the form of an Arthurian romance and so treated as to bring out all the better side of knightly feeling, with which the author is in charming sympathy. Like many other medieval writings, this one is preserved by mere chance in a single manuscript, which contains also three slightly shorter religious poems (of a thousand or two lines apiece), all possibly by the same author as the romance. One of them in particular, 'The Pearl,' is a narrative of much fine feeling, which may well have come from so true a gentleman as he. The dialect is that of the Northwest Midland, scarcely more intelligible to modern readers than Anglo-Saxon, but it indicates that the author belonged to the same border region between England and Wales from which came also Geoffrey of Monmouth and Laghamon, a region where Saxon and Norman elements were mingled with Celtic fancy and delicacy of temperament. The meter, also, is interesting--the Anglo-Saxon unrimed alliterative verse, but divided into long stanzas of irregular length, each ending in a 'bob' of five short riming lines.

'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight' may very fittingly bring to a close our hasty survey of the entire Norman-French period, a period mainly of formation, which has left no literary work of great and permanent fame, but in which, after all, there were some sincere and talented writers, who have fallen into forgetfulness rather through the untoward accidents of time than from lack of genuine merit in themselves.



# The End of The Middle Ages. About 1350 to about 1500

## The first fifty years. Political and social conditions.

Of the century and a half, from 1350 to 1500, which forms our third period, the most important part for literature was the first fifty years, which constitutes the age of Chaucer.

The middle of the fourteenth century was also the middle of the externally brilliant fifty years' reign of Edward III. In 1337 Edward had begun the terrible though often-interrupted series of campaigns in France which historians group together as the Hundred Years' War, and having won the battle of Crecy against amazing odds, he had inaugurated at his court a period of splendor and luxury. The country as a whole was really increasing in prosperity; Edward was fostering trade, and the towns and some of the town-merchants were becoming wealthy; but the oppressiveness of the feudal system, now becoming outgrown, was apparent, abuses in society and state and church were almost intolerable, and the spirit which was to create our modern age, beginning already in Italy to move toward the Renaissance, was felt in faint stirrings even so far to the North as England.

The towns, indeed, were achieving their freedom. Thanks to compact organization, they were loosening the bonds of their dependence on the lords or bishops to whom most of them paid taxes; and the alliance of their representatives with the knights of the shire (country gentlemen) in the House of Commons, now a separate division of Parliament, was laying the foundation of the political power of the whole middle class. But the feudal system continued to rest cruelly on the peasants. Still bound, most of them, to the soil, as serfs of the land or tenants with definite and heavy obligations of service, living in dark and filthy hovels under indescribably unhealthy conditions, earning a wretched subsistence by ceaseless labor, and almost altogether at the mercy of masters who regarded them as scarcely better than beasts, their lot was indeed pitiable. Nevertheless their spirit was not broken nor their state so hopeless as it seemed. It was by the archers of the class of yeomen (small free-holders), men akin in origin and interests to the peasants, that the victories in the French wars were won, and the knowledge that this was so created in the peasants an increased self-respect and an increased dissatisfaction. Their groping efforts to better their condition received strong stimulus also from the ravages of the terrible Black Death, a pestilence which, sweeping off at its first visitation, in 1348, at least half the population, and on two later recurrences only smaller proportions, led to a scarcity of laborers and added strength to their demand for commutation of personal services by money-payments and for higher wages. This demand was met by the ruling classes with sternly repressive measures, and the socialistic Peasants' Revolt of John Ball and Wat Tyler in 1381 was violently crushed out in blood, but it expressed a great human cry for justice which could not permanently be denied.

Hand in hand with the State and its institutions, in this period as before, stood the Church. Holding in the theoretical belief of almost every one the absolute power of all men's salvation or spiritual death, monopolizing almost all learning and education, the Church exercised in the spiritual sphere, and to no small extent in the temporal, a despotic tyranny, a tyranny employed sometimes for good, sometimes for evil. As the only even partially democratic institution of the age it attracted to itself the most ambitious and able men of all classes. Though social and personal influence were powerful within its doors, as always in all human organizations, nevertheless the son of a serf for whom there was no other means of escape from his servitude might steal to the nearest monastery and there, gaining his freedom by a few months of concealment, might hope, if he proved his ability, to rise to the highest position, to become abbot, bishop or perhaps even Pope. Within the Church were many sincere and able men unselfishly devoting their lives to the service of their fellows; but the moral tone of the organization as a whole had suffered from its worldly prosperity and power. In its numerous secular lordships and monastic orders it had become possessor of more than half the land in England, a proportion constantly increased through the legacies left by religious-minded persons for their souls' salvation; but from its vast income, several times greater than that of the Crown, it paid no taxes, and owing allegiance only to the Pope it was in effect a foreign power, sometimes openly hostile to the national government. The monasteries, though still performing important public functions as centers of education, charity, and hospitality, had relaxed their discipline, and the lives of the monks were often scandalous. The Dominican and Franciscan friars, also, who had come to England in the thirteenth century, soon after the foundation of their orders in Italy, and who had been full at first of passionate zeal for the spiritual and physical welfare of the poor, had now departed widely from their early character and become selfish, luxurious, ignorant, and unprincipled. Much the same was true of the 'secular' clergy (those not members of monastic orders, corresponding to the entire clergy of Protestant churches). Then there were such unworthy charlatans as the pardoners and professional pilgrims, traveling everywhere under special privileges and fleecing the credulous of their money with fraudulent relics and preposterous stories of edifying adventure. All this corruption was clear enough to every intelligent person, and we shall find it an object of constant satire by the authors of the age, but it was too firmly established to be easily or quickly rooted out.

## 'Mandeville's Voyage'

One of the earliest literary works of the period, however, was uninfluenced by these social and moral problems, being rather a very complete expression of the naive medieval delight in romantic marvels. This is the highly entertaining 'Voyage and Travels of Sir John Mandeville.' This clever book was actually written at Liege, in what is now Belgium, sometime before the year 1370, and in the French language; from which, attaining enormous popularity, it was several times translated into Latin and English, and later into various other languages. Five centuries had to pass before scholars succeeded in demonstrating that the asserted author, 'Sir John Mandeville,' never existed, that the real author is undiscoverable, and that this pretended account of his journeyings over all the known and imagined world is a compilation from a large number of previous works. Yet the book (the English version along with the others) really deserved its long-continued reputation. Its tales of the Ethiopian Prester John, of diamonds that by proper care can be made to grow, of trees whose fruit is an odd sort of lambs, and a hundred other equally remarkable phenomena, are narrated with skilful verisimilitude and still strongly hold the reader's interest, even if they no longer command belief. With all his credulity, too, the author has some odd ends of genuine science, among others the conviction that the earth is not flat but round. In style the English versions reflect the almost universal medieval uncertainty of sentence structure; nevertheless they are straightforward and clear; and the book is notable as the first example in English after the Norman Conquest of prose used not for religious edification but for amusement (though with the purpose also of giving instruction). 'Mandeville,' however, is a very minor figure when compared with his great contemporaries, especially with the chief of them, Geoffrey Chaucer.

## The Fifteenth Century.

The 15th cent. is not distinguished in English letters, due in part to the social dislocation caused by the prolonged Wars of the Roses. Of the many 15th-century imitators of Chaucer the best-known are John Lydgate and Thomas Hoccleve. Other poets of the time include Stephen Hawes and Alexander Barclay and the Scots poets William Dunbar, Robert Henryson, and Gawin Douglas. The poetry of John Skelton, which is mostly satiric, combines medieval and Renaissance elements.

William Caxton introduced printing to England in 1475 and in 1485 printed Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*. This prose work, written in the twilight of chivalry, casts the Arthurian tales into coherent form and views them with awareness that they represent a vanishing way of life. The miracle play, a long cycle of short plays based upon biblical episodes, was popular throughout the Middle Ages in England. The morality play, an allegorical drama centering on the struggle for man's soul, originated in the 15th cent. The finest of the genre is *Everyman*.

With Chaucer's death in 1400 the half century of original creative literature in which he is the main figure comes to an end, and for a hundred and fifty years thereafter there is only a single author of the highest rank. For this decline political confusion is the chief cause; first, in the renewal of the Hundred Years' War, with its sordid effort to deprive another nation of its liberty, and then in the brutal and meaningless War of the Roses, a mere cut-throat civil butchery of rival factions with no real principle at stake. Throughout the fifteenth century the leading poets (of prose we will speak later) were avowed imitators of Chaucer, and therefore at best only second-rate writers. Most of them were Scots, and best known is the Scottish king, James I. For tradition seems correct in naming this monarch as the author of a pretty poem, 'The King's Quair' ('The King's Quire,' that is Book), which relates in a medieval dream allegory of fourteen hundred lines how the captive author sees and falls in love with a lady whom in the end Fortune promises to bestow upon him. This may well be the poetic record of King James' eighteen-year captivity in England and his actual marriage to a noble English wife. In compliment to him Chaucer's stanza of seven lines (riming *ababbcc*), which King James employs, has received the name of 'rime royal.'

## The 'popular' ballads.

Largely to the fifteenth century, however, belong those of the English and Scottish 'popular' ballads which the accidents of time have not succeeded in destroying. We have already considered the theory of the communal origin of this kind of poetry in the remote pre-historic past, and have seen that the ballads continue to flourish vigorously down to the later periods of civilization. The still existing English and Scottish ballads are mostly, no doubt, the work of individual authors of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, but none the less they express the little-changing mind and emotions of the great body of the common people who had been singing and repeating ballads for so many thousand years. Really essentially 'popular,' too, in spirit are the more pretentious poems of the wandering professional minstrels, which have been handed down along with the others, just as the minstrels were accustomed to recite both sorts indiscriminately. Such minstrel ballads are the famous ones on the battle of Chevy Chase, or Otterburn. The production of genuine popular ballads began to wane in the fifteenth century when the printing press gave circulation to the output of cheap London writers and substituted reading for the verbal memory by which the ballads had been transmitted, portions, as it were, of a half

mysterious and almost sacred tradition. Yet the existing ballads yielded slowly, lingering on in the remote regions, and those which have been preserved were recovered during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by collectors from simple men and women living apart from the main currents of life, to whose hearts and lips they were still dear. Indeed even now the ballads and ballad-making are not altogether dead, but may still be found nourishing in such outskirts of civilization as the cowboy plains of Texas, Rocky Mountain mining camps, or the nooks and corners of the Southern Alleghenies.

The true 'popular' ballads have a quality peculiarly their own, which renders them far superior to the sixteenth century imitations and which no conscious literary artist has ever successfully reproduced. Longfellow's 'Skeleton in Armor' and Tennyson's 'Revenge' are stirring artistic ballads, but they are altogether different in tone and effect from the authentic 'popular' ones. Some of the elements which go to make this peculiar 'popular' quality can be definitely stated.

1. The 'popular' ballads are the simple and spontaneous expression of the elemental emotion of the people, emotion often crude but absolutely genuine and unaffected. Phrases are often repeated in the ballads, just as in the talk of the common man, for the sake of emphasis, but there is neither complexity of plot or characterization nor attempt at decorative literary adornment--the story and the emotion which it calls forth are all in all. It is this simple, direct fervor of feeling, the straightforward outpouring of the authors' hearts, that gives the ballads their power and entitles them to consideration among the far more finished works of conscious literature. Both the emotion and the morals of the ballads, also, are pagan, or at least pre-Christian; vengeance on one's enemies is as much a virtue as loyalty to one's friends; the most shameful sins are cowardice and treachery in war or love; and the love is often lawless.
2. From first to last the treatment of the themes is objective, dramatic, and picturesque. Everything is action, simple feeling, or vivid scenes, with no merely abstract moralizing (except in a few unusual cases); and often much of the story or sentiment is implied rather than directly stated. This too, of course, is the natural manner of the common man, a manner perfectly effective either in animated conversation or in the chant of a minstrel, where expression and gesture can do so much of the work which the restraints of civilized society have transferred to words.
3. To this spirit and treatment correspond the subjects of the ballads. They are such as make appeal to the underlying human instincts--brave exploits in individual fighting or in organized war, and the romance and pathos and tragedy of love and of the other moving situations of simple life. From the 'popular' nature of the ballads it has resulted that many of them are confined within no boundaries of race or nation, but, originating one here, one there, are spread in very varying versions throughout the whole, almost, of the world. Purely English, however, are those which deal with Robin Hood and his 'merry men,' idealized imaginary heroes of the Saxon common people in the dogged struggle which they maintained for centuries against their oppressive feudal lords.
4. The characters and 'properties' of the ballads of all classes are generally typical or traditional. There are the brave champion, whether noble or common man, who conquers or falls against overwhelming odds; the faithful lover of either sex; the woman whose constancy, proving stronger than man's fickleness, wins back her lover to her side at last; the traitorous old woman (victim of the blind and cruel prejudice which after a century or two was often to send her to the stake as a witch); the loyal little child; and some few others.
5. The verbal style of the ballads, like their spirit, is vigorous and simple, generally unpolished and sometimes rough, but often powerful with its terse dramatic suggestiveness. The usual, though not the only, poetic form is the four-lined stanza in lines alternately of four and three stresses and riming only in the second and fourth lines. Besides the refrains which are perhaps a relic of communal composition and the conventional epithets which the ballads share with epic poetry there are numerous traditional ballad expressions--rather meaningless formulas and line-tags used only to complete the rime or meter, the common useful scrap-bag reserve of these unpretentious poets. The license of Anglo-Saxon poetry in the number of the unstressed syllables still remains. But it is evident that the existing versions of the ballads are generally more imperfect than the original forms; they have suffered from the corruptions of generations of oral repetition, which the scholars who have recovered them have preserved with necessary accuracy, but which for appreciative reading editors should so far as possible revise away.

Among the best or most representative single ballads are: The Hunting of the Cheviot (otherwise called The Ancient Ballad of Chevy Chase--clearly of minstrel authorship); Sir Patrick Spens; Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne; Adam Bell, Clym of the Clough, and William of Cloudelee; Captain Car, or Edom o' Gordon; King Estmere (though this has been somewhat altered by Bishop Percy, who had and destroyed the only surviving copy of it); Edward, Edward; Young Waters; Sweet William's Ghost; Lord Thomas and Fair Annet. Kinmont Willie is very fine, but seems to be largely the work of Sir Walter Scott and therefore not truly 'popular.'

## **Sir Thomas Malory and his 'Morte Darthur.'**

The one fifteenth century author of the first rank, above referred to, is Sir Thomas Malory (the *a* is pronounced as in *tally*). He is probably to be identified with the Sir Thomas Malory who during the wars in France and the civil strife of the Roses that followed was an adherent of the Earls of Warwick and who died in 1471 under sentence of outlawry by the victorious Edward IV. And some passing observations, at least, in his book seem to indicate that if he knew and had shared all the splendor and inspiration of the last years of medieval chivalry, he had experienced also the disappointment and bitterness of defeat and prolonged captivity. Further than this we know of him only that he wrote 'Le Morte Darthur' and had finished it by 1467.

Malory's purpose was to collect in a single work the great body of important Arthurian romance and to arrange it in the form of a continuous history of King Arthur and his knights. He called his book 'Le Morte Darthur,' The Death of Arthur, from the title of several popular Arthurian romances to which, since they dealt only with Arthur's later years and death, it was properly enough applied, and from which it seems to have passed into general currency as a name for the entire story of Arthur's life. [Footnote: Since the French word 'Morte' is feminine, the preceding article was originally 'La,' but the whole name had come to be thought of as a compound phrase and hence as masculine or neuter in gender.] Actually to get together all the Arthurian romances was not possible for any man in Malory's day, or in any other, but he gathered up a goodly number, most of them, at least, written in French, and combined them, on the whole with unusual skill, into a work of about one-tenth their original bulk, which still ranks, with all qualifications, as one of the masterpieces of English literature. Dealing with such miscellaneous material, he could not wholly avoid inconsistencies, so that, for example, he sometimes introduces in full health in a later book a knight whom a hundred pages earlier he had killed and regularly buried; but this need not cause the reader anything worse than mild amusement. Not Malory but his age, also, is to blame for his sometimes hazy and puzzled treatment of the supernatural element in his material. In the remote earliest form of the stories, as Celtic myths, this supernatural element was no doubt frank and very large, but Malory's authorities, the more skeptical French romancers, adapting it to their own age, had often more or less fully rationalized it; transforming, for instance, the black river of Death which the original heroes often had to cross on journeys to the Celtic Other World into a rude and forbidding moat about the hostile castle into which the romancers degraded the Other World itself. Countless magic details, however, still remained recalcitrant to such treatment; and they evidently troubled Malory, whose devotion to his story was earnest and sincere. Some of them he omits, doubtless as incredible, but others he retains, often in a form where the impossible is merely garbled into the unintelligible. For a single instance, in his seventh book he does not satisfactorily explain why the valiant Gareth on his arrival at Arthur's court asks at first only for a year's food and drink. In the original story, we can see to-day, Gareth must have been under a witch's spell which compelled him to a season of distasteful servitude; but this motivating bit of superstition Malory discards, or rather, in this case, it had been lost from the story at a much earlier stage. It results, therefore, that Malory's supernatural incidents are often far from clear and satisfactory; yet the reader is little troubled by this difficulty either in so thoroughly romantic a work.

Other technical faults may easily be pointed out in Malory's book. Thorough unity, either in the whole or in the separate stories so loosely woven together, could not be expected; in continual reading the long succession of similar combat after combat and the constant repetition of stereotyped phrases become monotonous for a present-day reader; and it must be confessed that Malory has little of the modern literary craftsman's power of close-knit style or proportion and emphasis in details. But these faults also may be overlooked, and the work is truly great, partly because it is an idealist's dream of chivalry, as chivalry might have been, a chivalry of faithful knights who went about redressing human wrongs and were loyal lovers and zealous servants of Holy Church; great also because Malory's heart is in his stories, so that he tells them in the main well, and invests them with a delightful atmosphere of romance which can never lose its fascination.

The style, also, in the narrower sense, is strong and good, and does its part to make the book, except for the Wiclif Bible, unquestionably the greatest monument of English prose of the entire period before the sixteenth century. There is no affectation of elegance, but rather knightly straightforwardness which has power without lack of ease. The sentences are often long, but always 'loose' and clear; and short ones are often used with the instinctive skill of sincerity. Everything is picturesque and dramatic and everywhere there is chivalrous feeling and genuine human sympathy.

## **William Caxton and the introduction of printing to England, 1476**

Malory's book is the first great English classic which was given to the world in print instead of written manuscript; for it was shortly after Malory's death that the printing press was brought to England by William Caxton. The invention of printing, perhaps the most important event of modern times, took place in Germany not long after the middle of the fifteenth century, and the development of the art was rapid. Caxton, a shrewd and enterprising Kentishman, was by first profession a cloth merchant, and having taken up his residence across the Channel, was appointed by the king to the important post of Governor of the English Merchants in Flanders. Employed later in the service of the Duchess of Burgundy (sister of Edward IV), his ardent delight in romances led him to translate into English a French 'Recueil des Histoires de Troye' (Collection of the Troy Stories). To supply the large demand for copies he investigated and mastered

the new art by which they might be so wonderfully multiplied and about 1475, at fifty years of age, set up a press at Bruges in the modern Belgium, where he issued his 'Recueil,' which was thus the first English book ever put into print. During the next year, 1476, just a century before the first theater was to be built in London, Caxton returned to England and established his shop in Westminster, then a London suburb. During the fifteen remaining years of his life he labored diligently, printing an aggregate of more than a hundred books, which together comprised over fourteen thousand pages. Aside from Malory's romance, which he put out in 1485, the most important of his publications was an edition of Chaucer's 'Canterbury Tales.' While laboring as a publisher Caxton himself continued to make translations, and in spite of many difficulties he, together with his assistants, turned into English from French no fewer than twenty-one distinct works. From every point of view Caxton's services were great. As translator and editor his style is careless and uncertain, but like Malory's it is sincere and manly, and vital with energy and enthusiasm. As printer, in a time of rapid changes in the language, when through the wars in France and her growing influence the second great infusion of Latin-French words was coming into the English language, he did what could be done for consistency in forms and spelling. Partly medieval and partly modern in spirit, he may fittingly stand at the close, or nearly at the close, of our study of the medieval period.

## **The Medieval Drama**

For the sake of clearness we have reserved for a separate chapter the discussion of the drama of the whole medieval period, which, though it did not reach a very high literary level, was one of the most characteristic expressions of the age. It should be emphasized that to no other form does what we have said of the similarity of medieval literature throughout Western Europe apply more closely, so that what we find true of the drama in England would for the most part hold good for the other countries as well.

### ***Jugglers, Folk-Plays, Pageants.***

At the fall of the Roman Empire, which marks the beginning of the Middle Ages, the corrupt Roman drama, proscribed by the Church, had come to an unhonored end, and the actors had been merged into the great body of disreputable jugglers and inferior minstrels who wandered over all Christendom. The performances of these social outcasts, crude and immoral as they were, continued for centuries unsuppressed, because they responded to the demand for dramatic spectacle which is one of the deepest though not least troublesome instincts in human nature. The same demand was partly satisfied also by the rude country folk-plays, survivals of primitive heathen ceremonials, performed at such festival occasions as the harvest season, which in all lands continue to flourish among the country people long after their original meaning has been forgotten. In England the folk-plays, throughout the Middle Ages and in remote spots down almost to the present time, sometimes took the form of energetic dances (Morris dances, they came to be called, through confusion with Moorish performances of the same general nature). Others of them, however, exhibited in the midst of much rough-and-tumble fighting and buffoonery, a slight thread of dramatic action. Their characters gradually came to be a conventional set, partly famous figures of popular tradition, such as St. George, Robin Hood, Maid Marian, and the Green Dragon. Other offshoots of the folk-play were the 'mummings' and 'disguisings,' collective names for many forms of processions, shows, and other entertainments, such as, among the upper classes, that precursor of the Elizabethan Mask in which a group of persons in disguise, invited or uninvited, attended a formal dancing party. In the later part of the Middle Ages, also, there were the secular pageants, spectacular displays (rather different from those of the twentieth century) given on such occasions as when a king or other person of high rank made formal entry into a town. They consisted of an elaborate scenic background set up near the city gate or on the street, with figures from allegorical or traditional history who engaged in some pantomime or declamation, but with very little dramatic dialog, or none.

### ***Tropes, Liturgical Plays, and Mystery Plays.***

But all these forms, though they were not altogether without later influence, were very minor affairs, and the real drama of the Middle Ages grew up, without design and by the mere nature of things, from the regular services of the Church.

We must try in the first place to realize clearly the conditions under which the church service, the mass, was conducted during all the medieval centuries. We should picture to ourselves congregations of persons for the most part grossly ignorant, of unquestioning though very superficial faith, and of emotions easily aroused to fever heat. Of the Latin words of the service they understood nothing; and of the Bible story they had only a very general impression. It was necessary, therefore, that the service should be given a strongly spectacular and emotional character, and to this end no effort was spared. The great cathedrals and churches were much the finest buildings of the time, spacious with lofty pillars and shadowy recesses, rich in sculptured stone and in painted windows that cast on the walls and pavements soft and glowing patterns of many colors and shifting forms. The service itself was in great part musical, the confident notes of the full choir joining with the resonant organ-tones; and after all the rest the richly robed priests and ministrants passed along the aisles in stately processions enveloped in fragrant clouds of incense. That the eye if not the ear of the spectator, also, might

catch some definite knowledge, the priests as they read the Bible stories sometimes displayed painted rolls which vividly pictured the principal events of the day's lesson.

Still, however, a lack was strongly felt, and at last, accidentally and slowly, began the process of dramatizing the services. First, inevitably, to be so treated was the central incident of Christian faith, the story of Christ's resurrection. The earliest steps were very simple. First, during the ceremonies on Good Friday, the day when Christ was crucified, the cross which stood all the year above the altar, bearing the Savior's figure, was taken down and laid beneath the altar, a dramatic symbol of the Death and Burial; and two days later, on 'the third day' of the Bible phraseology, that is on Easter Sunday, as the story of the Resurrection was chanted by the choir, the cross was uncovered and replaced, amid the rejoicings of the congregation. Next, and before the Norman Conquest, the Gospel dialog between the angel and the three Marys at the tomb of Christ came sometimes to be chanted by the choir in those responses which are called 'tropes':

'Whom seek ye in the sepulcher, O Christians?' 'Jesus of Nazareth the crucified, O angel.' 'He is not here; he has arisen as he said. Go, announce that he has risen from the sepulcher.' After this a little dramatic action was introduced almost as a matter of course. One priest dressed in white robes sat, to represent the angel, by one of the square-built tombs near the junction of nave and transept, and three others, personating the Marys, advanced slowly toward him while they chanted their portion of the same dialog. As the last momentous words of the angel died away a jubilant 'Te Deum' burst from, organ and choir, and every member of the congregation exulted, often with sobs, in the great triumph which brought salvation to every Christian soul.

Little by little, probably, as time passed, this Easter scene was further enlarged, in part by additions from the closing incidents of the Savior's life. A similar treatment, too, was being given to the Christmas scene, still more humanly beautiful, of his birth in the manger, and occasionally the two scenes might be taken from their regular places in the service, combined, and presented at any season of the year. Other Biblical scenes, as well, came to be enacted, and, further, there were added stories from Christian tradition, such as that of Antichrist, and, on their particular days, the lives of Christian saints. Thus far these compositions are called Liturgical Plays, because they formed, in general, a part of the church service (liturgy). But as some of them were united into extended groups and as the interest of the congregation deepened, the churches began to seem too small and inconvenient, the excited audiences forgot the proper reverence, and the performances were transferred to the churchyard, and then, when the gravestones proved troublesome, to the market place, the village-green, or any convenient field. By this time the people had ceased to be patient with the unintelligible Latin, and it was replaced at first, perhaps, and in part, by French, but finally by English; though probably verse was always retained as more appropriate than prose to the sacred subjects. Then, the religious spirit yielding inevitably in part to that of merrymaking, minstrels and mountebanks began to flock to the celebrations; and regular fairs, even, grew up about them. Gradually, too, the priests lost their hold even on the plays themselves; skilful actors from among the laymen began to take many of the parts; and at last in some towns the trade-guilds, or unions of the various handicrafts, which had secured control of the town governments, assumed entire charge.

These changes, very slowly creeping in, one by one, had come about in most places by the beginning of the fourteenth century. In 1311 a new impetus was given to the whole ceremony by the establishment of the late spring festival of Corpus Christi, a celebration of the doctrine of transubstantiation. On this occasion, or sometimes on some other festival, it became customary for the guilds to present an extended series of the plays, a series which together contained the essential substance of the Christian story, and therefore of the Christian faith. The Church generally still encouraged attendance, and not only did all the townspeople join wholeheartedly, but from all the country round the peasants flocked in. On one occasion the Pope promised the remission of a thousand days of purgatory to all persons who should be present at the Chester plays, and to this exemption the bishop of Chester added sixty days more.

The list of plays thus presented commonly included: The Fall of Lucifer; the Creation of the World and the Fall of Adam; Noah and the Flood; Abraham and Isaac and the promise of Christ's coming; a Procession of the Prophets, also foretelling Christ; the main events of the Gospel story, with some additions from Christian tradition; and the Day of Judgment. The longest cycle now known, that at York, contained, when fully developed, fifty plays, or perhaps even more. Generally each play was presented by a single guild (though sometimes two or three guilds or two or three plays might be combined), and sometimes, though not always, there was a special fitness in the assignment, as when the watermen gave the play of Noah's Ark or the bakers that of the Last Supper. In this connected form the plays are called the Mystery or Miracle Cycles. [Footnote: 'Miracle' was the medieval word in England; 'Mystery' has been taken by recent scholars from the medieval French usage. It is not connected with our usual word 'mystery,' but possibly is derived from the Latin 'ministerium,' 'function,' which was the name applied to the trade-guild as an organization and from which our title 'Mr.' also comes.] In many places, however, detached plays, or groups of plays smaller than the full cycles, continued to be presented at one season or another.

Each cycle as a whole, it will be seen, has a natural epic unity, centering about the majestic theme of the spiritual history and the final judgment of all Mankind. But unity both of material and of atmosphere suffers not only from the diversity among the separate plays but also from the violent intrusion of the comedy and the farce which the coarse taste of the audience demanded. Sometimes, in the later period, altogether original and very realistic scenes from actual English life were added, like the very clever but very coarse parody on the Nativity play in the 'Towneley' cycle. More often comic treatment was given to the Bible scenes and characters themselves. Noah's wife, for example, came regularly to be presented as a shrew, who would not enter the ark until she had been beaten into submission; and Herod always appears as a blustering tyrant, whose fame still survives in a proverb of Shakespeare's coinage--'to out-Herod Herod.'

The manner of presentation of the cycles varied much in different towns. Sometimes the entire cycle was still given, like the detached plays, at a single spot, the market-place or some other central square; but often, to accommodate the great crowds, there were several 'stations' at convenient intervals. In the latter case each play might remain all day at a particular station and be continuously repeated as the crowd moved slowly by; but more often it was the, spectators who remained, and the plays, mounted on movable stages, the 'pageant'-wagons, were drawn in turn by the guild-apprentices from one station to another. When the audience was stationary, the common people stood in the square on all sides of the stage, while persons of higher rank or greater means were seated on temporary wooden scaffolds or looked down from the windows of the adjacent houses. In the construction of the 'pageant' all the little that was possible was done to meet the needs of the presentation. Below the main floor, or stage, was the curtained dressing-room of the actors; and when the play required, on one side was attached 'Hell-Mouth,' a great and horrible human head, whence issued flames and fiendish cries, often the fiends themselves, and into which lost sinners were violently hurled. On the stage the scenery was necessarily very simple. A small raised platform or pyramid might represent Heaven, where God the Father was seated, and from which as the action required the angels came down; a single tree might indicate the Garden of Eden; and a doorway an entire house. In partial compensation the costumes were often elaborate, with all the finery of the church wardrobe and much of those of the wealthy citizens. The expense accounts of the guilds, sometimes luckily preserved, furnish many picturesque and amusing items, such as these: 'Four pair of angels' wings, 2 shillings and 8 pence.' 'For mending of hell head, 6 pence.' 'Item, link for setting the world on fire.' Apparently women never acted; men and boys took the women's parts. All the plays of the cycle were commonly performed in a single day, beginning, at the first station, perhaps as early as five o'clock in the morning; but sometimes three days or even more were employed. To the guilds the giving of the plays was a very serious matter. Often each guild had a 'pageant-house' where it stored its 'properties,' and a pageant-master who trained the actors and imposed substantial fines on members remiss in cooperation.

We have said that the plays were always composed in verse. The stanza forms employed differ widely even within the same cycle, since the single plays were very diverse in both authorship and dates. The quality of the verse, generally mediocre at the outset, has often suffered much in transmission from generation to generation. In other respects also there are great contrasts; sometimes the feeling and power of a scene are admirable, revealing an author of real ability, sometimes there is only crude and wooden amateurishness. The medieval lack of historic sense gives to all the plays the setting of the authors' own times; Roman officers appear as feudal knights; and all the heathens (including the Jews) are Saracens, worshippers of 'Mahound' and 'Termagaunt'; while the good characters, however long they may really have lived before the Christian era, swear stoutly by St. John and St. Paul and the other medieval Christian divinities. The frank coarseness of the plays is often merely disgusting, and suggests how superficial, in most cases, was the medieval religious sense. With no thought of incongruity, too, these writers brought God the Father onto the stage in bodily form, and then, attempting in all sincerity to show him reverence, gilded his face and put into his mouth long speeches of exceedingly tedious declamation. The whole emphasis, as generally in the religion of the times, was on the fear of hell rather than on the love of righteousness. Yet in spite of everything grotesque and inconsistent, the plays no doubt largely fulfilled their religious purpose and exercised on the whole an elevating influence. The humble submission of the boy Isaac to the will of God and of his earthly father, the yearning devotion of Mary the mother of Jesus, and the infinite love and pity of the tortured Christ himself, must have struck into even callous hearts for at least a little time some genuine consciousness of the beauty and power of the finer and higher life. A literary form which supplied much of the religious and artistic nourishment of half a continent for half a thousand years cannot be lightly regarded or dismissed.

### ***The Morality Plays.***

The Mystery Plays seem to have reached their greatest popularity in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In the dawning light of the Renaissance and the modern spirit they gradually waned, though in exceptional places and in special revivals they did not altogether cease to be given until the seventeenth century. On the Continent of Europe, indeed, they still survive, after a fashion, in a single somewhat modernized form, the celebrated Passion Play of Oberammergau. In England by the end of the fifteenth century they had been for the most part replaced by a kindred species which had long been growing up beside them, namely the Morality Plays.

The Morality Play probably arose in part from the desire of religious writers to teach the principles of Christian living in a more direct and compact fashion than was possible through the Bible stories of the Mysteries. In its strict form the Morality Play was a dramatized moral allegory. It was in part an offshoot from the Mysteries, in some of which there had appeared among the actors abstract allegorical figures, either good or bad, such as The Seven Deadly Sins, Contemplation, and Raise-Slander. In the Moralities the majority of the characters are of this sort--though not to the exclusion of supernatural persons such as God and the Devil--and the hero is generally a type-figure standing for all Mankind. For the control of the hero the two definitely opposing groups of Virtues and Vices contend; the commonest type of Morality presents in brief glimpses the entire story of the hero's life, that is of the life of every man. It shows how he yields to temptation and lives for the most part in reckless sin, but at last in spite of all his flippancy and folly is saved by Perseverance and Repentance, pardoned through God's mercy, and assured of salvation. As compared with the usual type of Mystery plays the Moralities had for the writers this advantage, that they allowed some independence in the invention of the story; and how powerful they might be made in the hands of a really gifted author has been finely demonstrated in our own time by the stage-revival of the best of them, 'Everyman' (which is probably a translation from a Dutch original). In most cases, however, the spirit of medieval allegory proved fatal, the genuinely abstract characters are mostly shadowy and unreal, and the speeches of the Virtues are extreme examples of intolerable sanctimonious declamation. Against this tendency, on the other hand, the persistent instinct for realism provided a partial antidote; the Vices are often very lifelike rascals, abstract only in name. In these cases the whole plays become vivid studies in contemporary low life, largely human and interesting except for their proximity and the coarseness which they inherited from the Mysteries and multiplied on their own account. During the Reformation period, in the early sixteenth century, the character of the Moralities, more strictly so called, underwent something of a change, and they were--sometimes made the vehicle for religious argument, especially by Protestants.

### ***The Interludes.***

Early in the sixteenth century, the Morality in its turn was largely superseded by another sort of play called the Interlude. But just as in the case of the Mystery and the Morality, the Interlude developed out of the Morality, and the two cannot always be distinguished, some single plays being distinctly described by the authors as 'Moral Interludes.' In the Interludes the realism of the Moralities became still more pronounced, so that the typical Interlude is nothing more than a coarse farce, with no pretense at religious or ethical meaning. The name Interlude denotes literally 'a play between,' but the meaning intended between whom or what) is uncertain. The plays were given sometimes in the halls of nobles and gentlemen, either when banquets were in progress or on other festival occasions; sometimes before less select audiences in the town halls or on village greens. The actors were sometimes strolling companies of players, who might be minstrels 'or rustics, and were sometimes also retainers of the great nobles, allowed to practice their dramatic ability on tours about the country when they were not needed for their masters' entertainment. In the Interlude-Moralities and Interludes first appears *The Vice*, a rogue who sums up in himself all the Vices of the older Moralities and serves as the buffoon. One of his most popular exploits was to belabor the Devil about the stage with a wooden dagger, a habit which took a great hold on the popular imagination, as numerous references in later literature testify. Transformed by time, the Vice appears in the Elizabethan drama, and thereafter, as the clown.

### ***The later influence of the Medieval Drama.***

The various dramatic forms from the tenth century to the middle of the sixteenth at which we have thus hastily glanced--folk-plays, mummings and disguisings, secular pageants, Mystery plays, Moralities, and Interludes--have little but a historical importance. But besides demonstrating the persistence of the popular demand for drama, they exerted a permanent influence in that they formed certain stage traditions which were to modify or largely control the great drama of the Elizabethan period and to some extent of later times. Among these traditions were the disregard for unity, partly of action, but especially of time and place; the mingling of comedy with even the intensest scenes of tragedy; the nearly complete lack of stage scenery, with a resultant willingness in the audience to make the largest possible imaginative assumptions; the presence of certain stock figures, such as the clown; and the presentation of women's parts by men and boys. The plays, therefore, must be reckoned with in dramatic history.

## **The Sixteenth Century. The Renaissance and the Reign of Elizabeth**

### **The Renaissance**

The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries are the period of the European Renaissance or New Birth, one of the three or four great transforming movements of European history. This impulse by which the medieval society of scholasticism, feudalism, and chivalry was to be made over into what we call the modern world came first from Italy. Italy, like the rest of



the Roman Empire, had been overrun and conquered in the fifth century by the barbarian Teutonic tribes, but the devastation had been less complete there than in the more northern lands, and there, even more, perhaps, than in France, the bulk of the people remained Latin in blood and in character. Hence it resulted that though the Middle Ages were in Italy a period of terrible political anarchy, yet Italian culture recovered far more rapidly than that of the northern nations, whom the Italians continued down to the modern period to regard contemptuously as still mere barbarians. By the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, further, the Italians had become intellectually one of the keenest races whom the world has ever known, though in morals they were sinking to almost incredible corruption. Already in fourteenth century Italy, therefore, the movement for a much fuller and freer intellectual life had begun, and we have seen that by Petrarch and Boccaccio something of this spirit was transmitted to Chaucer. In England Chaucer was followed by the medievalizing fifteenth century, but in Italy there was no such interruption.

The Renaissance movement first received definite direction from the rediscovery and study of Greek literature, which clearly revealed the unbounded possibilities of life to men who had been groping dissatisfied within the now narrow limits of medieval thought. Before Chaucer was dead the study of Greek, almost forgotten in Western Europe during the Middle Ages, had been renewed in Italy, and it received a still further impulse when at the taking of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453 Greek scholars and manuscripts were scattered to the West. It is hard for us to-day to realize the meaning for the men of the fifteenth century of this revived knowledge of the life and thought of the Greek race. The medieval Church, at first merely from the brutal necessities of a period of anarchy, had for the most part frowned on the joy and beauty of life, permitting pleasure, indeed, to the laity, but as a thing half dangerous, and declaring that there was perfect safety only within the walls of the nominally ascetic Church itself. The intellectual life, also, nearly restricted to priests and monks, had been formalized and conventionalized, until in spite of the keenness of its methods and the brilliancy of many of its scholars, it had become largely barren and unprofitable. The whole sphere of knowledge had been subjected to the mere authority of the Bible and of a few great minds of the past, such as Aristotle. All questions were argued and decided on the basis of their assertions, which had often become wholly inadequate and were often warped into grotesquely impossible interpretations and applications. Scientific investigation was almost entirely stifled, and progress was impossible. The whole field of religion and knowledge had become largely stagnant under an arbitrary despotism.

To the minds which were being paralyzed under this system, Greek literature brought the inspiration for which they longed. For it was the literature of a great and brilliant people who, far from attempting to make a divorce within man's nature, had aimed to 'see life steadily and see it whole,' who, giving free play to all their powers, had found in pleasure and beauty some of the most essential constructive forces, and had embodied beauty in works of literature and art where the significance of the whole spiritual life was more splendidly suggested than in the achievements of any, or almost any, other period. The enthusiasm, therefore, with which the Italians turned to the study of Greek literature and Greek life was boundless, and it constantly found fresh nourishment. Every year restored from forgotten recesses of libraries or from the ruins of Roman villas another Greek author or volume or work of art, and those which had never been lost were reinterpreted with much deeper insight. Aristotle was again vitalized, and Plato's noble idealistic philosophy was once more appreciatively studied and understood. In the light of this new revelation Latin literature, also, which had never ceased to be almost superstitiously studied, took on a far greater human significance. Vergil and Cicero were regarded no longer as mysterious prophets from a dimly imagined past, but as real men of flesh and blood, speaking out of experiences remote in time from the present but no less humanly real. The word 'human,' indeed, became the chosen motto of the Renaissance scholars; 'humanists' was the title which they applied to themselves as to men for whom 'nothing human was without appeal.' New creative enthusiasm, also, and magnificent actual new creation, followed the discovery of the old treasures, creation in literature and all the arts; culminating particularly in the early sixteenth century in the greatest group of painters whom any country has ever seen, Lionardo da Vinci, Raphael, and Michelangelo. In Italy, to be sure, the light of the Renaissance had its palpable shadow; in breaking away from the medieval bondage into the unhesitating enjoyment of all pleasure, the humanists too often overleaped all restraints and plunged into wild excess, often into mere sensuality. Hence the Italian Renaissance is commonly called Pagan, and hence when young English nobles began to travel to Italy to drink at the fountain head of the new inspiration moralists at home protested with much reason against the ideas and habits which many of them brought back with their new clothes and flaunted as evidences of intellectual emancipation. History, however, shows no great progressive movement unaccompanied by exaggerations and extravagances.

The Renaissance, penetrating northward, past first from Italy to France, but as early as the middle of the fifteenth century English students were frequenting the Italian universities. Soon the study of Greek was introduced into England, also, first at Oxford; and it was cultivated with such good results that when, early in the sixteenth century, the great Dutch student and reformer, Erasmus, unable through poverty to reach Italy, came to Oxford instead, he found there a group of accomplished scholars and gentlemen whose instruction and hospitable companionship aroused his unbounded delight. One member of this group was the fine-spirited John Colet, later Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in London, who was to bring new life into the secondary education of English boys by the establishment of St. Paul's Grammar School, based on the principle of kindness in place of the merciless severity of the traditional English system.

Great as was the stimulus of literary culture, it was only one of several influences that made up the Renaissance. While Greek was speaking so powerfully to the cultivated class, other forces were contributing to revolutionize life as a whole and all men's outlook upon it. The invention of printing, multiplying books in unlimited quantities where before there had been only a few manuscripts laboriously copied page by page, absolutely transformed all the processes of knowledge and almost of thought. Not much later began the vast expansion of the physical world through geographical exploration. Toward the end of the fifteenth century the Portuguese sailor, Vasco da Gama, finishing the work of Diaz, discovered the sea route to India around the Cape of Good Hope. A few years earlier Columbus had revealed the New World and virtually proved that the earth is round, a proof scientifically completed a generation after him when Magellan's ship actually circled the globe. Following close after Columbus, the Cabots, Italian-born, but naturalized Englishmen, discovered North America, and for a hundred years the rival ships of Spain, England, and Portugal filled the waters of the new West and the new East. In America handfuls of Spanish adventurers conquered great empires and despatched home annual treasure fleets of gold and silver, which the audacious English sea-captains, half explorers and half pirates, soon learned to intercept and plunder. The marvels which were constantly being revealed as actual facts seemed no less wonderful than the extravagances of medieval romance; and it was scarcely more than a matter of course that men should search in the new strange lands for the fountain of perpetual youth and the philosopher's stone. The supernatural beings and events of Spenser's 'Faerie Queene' could scarcely seem incredible to an age where incredulity was almost unknown because it was impossible to set a bound how far any one might reasonably believe. But the horizon of man's expanded knowledge was not to be limited even to his own earth. About the year 1540, the Polish Copernicus opened a still grander realm of speculation (not to be adequately possessed for several centuries) by the announcement that our world is not the center of the universe, but merely one of the satellites of its far-superior sun.

The whole of England was profoundly stirred by the Renaissance to a new and most energetic life, but not least was this true of the Court, where for a time literature was very largely to center. Since the old nobility had mostly perished in the wars, both Henry VII, the founder of the Tudor line, and his son, Henry VIII, adopted the policy of replacing it with able and wealthy men of the middle class, who would be strongly devoted to themselves. The court therefore became a brilliant and crowded circle of unscrupulous but unusually adroit statesmen, and a center of lavish entertainments and display. Under this new aristocracy the rigidity of the feudal system was relaxed, and life became somewhat easier for all the dependent classes. Modern comforts, too, were largely introduced, and with them the Italian arts; Tudor architecture, in particular, exhibited the originality and splendor of an energetic and self-confident age. Further, both Henries, though perhaps as essentially selfish and tyrannical as almost any of their predecessors, were politic and far-sighted, and they took a genuine pride in the prosperity of their kingdom. They encouraged trade; and in the peace which was their best gift the well-being of the nation as a whole increased by leaps and bounds.

## **The Reformation**

Lastly, the literature of the sixteenth century and later was profoundly influenced by that religious result of the Renaissance which we know as the Reformation. While in Italy the new impulses were chiefly turned into secular and often corrupt channels, in the Teutonic lands they deeply stirred the Teutonic conscience. In 1517 Martin Luther, protesting against the unprincipled and flippant practices that were disgracing religion, began the breach between Catholicism, with its insistence on the supremacy of the Church, and Protestantism, asserting the independence of the individual judgment. In England Luther's action revived the spirit of Lollardism, which had nearly been crushed out, and in spite of a minority devoted to the older system, the nation as a whole began to move rapidly toward change. Advocates of radical revolution thrust themselves forward in large numbers, while cultured and thoughtful men, including the Oxford group, indulged the too ideal hope of a gradual and peaceful reform.

The actual course of the religious movement was determined largely by the personal and political projects of Henry VIII. Conservative at the outset, Henry even attacked Luther in a pamphlet, which won from the Pope for himself and his successors the title 'Defender of the Faith.' But when the Pope finally refused Henry's demand for the divorce from Katharine of Spain, which would make possible a marriage with Anne Boleyn, Henry angrily threw off the papal authority and declared himself the Supreme Head of the Church in England, thus establishing the separate English (Anglican, Episcopal) church. In the brief reign of Henry's son, Edward VI, the separation was made more decisive; under Edward's sister, Mary, Catholicism was restored; but the last of Henry's children, Elizabeth, coming to the throne in 1558, gave the final victory to the English communion. Under all these sovereigns (to complete our summary of the movement) the more radical Protestants, Puritans as they came to be called, were active in agitation, undeterred by frequent cruel persecution and largely influenced by the corresponding sects in Germany and by the Presbyterianism established by Calvin in Geneva and later by John Knox in Scotland. Elizabeth's skilful management long kept the majority of the Puritans within the English Church, where they formed an important element, working for simpler practices and introducing them in congregations which they controlled. But toward the end of the century and of Elizabeth's reign, feeling grew tenser, and groups of the Puritans, sometimes under persecution, definitely separated themselves from the State Church and established various sectarian bodies. Shortly after 1600, in particular, the Independents, or Congregationalists, founded in Holland the church

which was soon to colonize New England. At home, under James I, the breach widened, until the nation was divided into two hostile camps, with results most radically decisive for literature. But for the present we must return to the early part of the sixteenth century.

### **Sir Thomas More and his 'Utopia'**

Out of the confused and bitter strife of churches and parties, while the outcome was still uncertain, issued a great mass of controversial writing which does not belong to literature. A few works, however, more or less directly connected with the religious agitation, cannot be passed by.

One of the most attractive and finest spirits of the reign of Henry VIII was Sir Thomas More. A member of the Oxford group in its second generation, a close friend of Erasmus, his house a center of humanism, he became even more conspicuous in public life. A highly successful lawyer, he was rapidly advanced by Henry VIII in court and in national affairs, until on the fall of Cardinal Wolsey in 1529 he was appointed, much against his will, to the highest office open to a subject, that of Lord Chancellor (head of the judicial system). A devoted Catholic, he took a part which must have been revolting to himself in the torturing and burning of Protestants; but his absolute loyalty to conscience showed itself to better purpose when in the almost inevitable reverse of fortune he chose harsh imprisonment and death rather than to take the formal oath of allegiance to the king in opposition to the Pope. His quiet jests on the scaffold suggest the never-failing sense of humor which was one sign of the completeness and perfect poise of his character; while the hair-shirt which he wore throughout his life and the severe penances to which he subjected himself reveal strikingly how the expression of the deepest convictions of the best natures may be determined by inherited and outworn modes of thought.

More's most important work was his 'Utopia,' published in 1516. The name, which is Greek, means No-Place, and the book is one of the most famous of that series of attempts to outline an imaginary ideal condition of society which begins with Plato's 'Republic' and has continued to our own time.

'Utopia,' broadly considered, deals primarily with the question which is common to most of these books and in which both ancient Greece and Europe of the Renaissance took a special interest, namely the question of the relation of the State and the individual. It consists of two parts. In the first there is a vivid picture of the terrible evils which England was suffering through war, lawlessness, the wholesale and foolish application of the death penalty, the misery of the peasants, the absorption of the land by the rich, and the other distressing corruptions in Church and State. In the second part, in contrast to all this, a certain imaginary Raphael Hythlodaye describes the customs of Utopia, a remote island in the New World, to which chance has carried him. To some of the ideals thus set forth More can scarcely have expected the world ever to attain; and some of them will hardly appeal to the majority of readers of any period; but in the main he lays down an admirable program for human progress, no small part of which has been actually realized in the four centuries which have since elapsed.

The controlling purpose in the life of the Utopians is to secure both the welfare of the State and the full development of the individual under the ascendancy of his higher faculties. The State is democratic, socialistic, and communistic, and the will of the individual is subordinated to the advantage of all, but the real interests of each and all are recognized as identical. Every one is obliged to work, but not to overwork; six hours a day make the allotted period; and the rest of the time is free, but with plentiful provision of lectures and other aids for the education of mind and spirit. All the citizens are taught the fundamental art, that of agriculture, and in addition each has a particular trade or profession of his own. There is no surfeit, excess, or ostentation. Clothing is made for durability, and every one's garments are precisely like those of every one else, except that there is a difference between those of men and women and those of married and unmarried persons. The sick are carefully tended, but the victims of hopeless or painful disease are mercifully put to death if they so desire. Crime is naturally at a minimum, but those who persist in it are made slaves (not executed, for why should the State be deprived of their services?). Detesting war, the Utopians make a practice of hiring certain barbarians who, conveniently, are their neighbors, to do whatever fighting is necessary for their defense, and they win if possible, not by the revolting slaughter of pitched battles, but by the assassination of their enemies' generals. In especial, there is complete religious toleration, except for atheism, and except for those who urge their opinions with offensive violence. 'Utopia' was written and published in Latin; among the multitude of translations into many languages the earliest in English, in which it is often reprinted, is that of Ralph Robinson, made in 1551.

### **The English Bible and Books of Devotion.**

To this century of religious change belongs the greater part of the literary history of the English Bible and of the ritual books of the English Church. Since the suppression of the Wiclifite movement the circulation of the Bible in English had been forbidden, but growing Protestantism insistently revived the demand for it. The attitude of Henry VIII and his

ministers was inconsistent and uncertain, reflecting their own changing points of view. In 1526 William Tyndale, a zealous Protestant controversialist then in exile in Germany, published an excellent English translation of the New Testament. Based on the proper authority, the Greek original, though with influence from Wiclif and from the Latin and German (Luther's) version, this has been directly or indirectly the starting-point for all subsequent English translations except those of the Catholics.

Ten years later Tyndale suffered martyrdom, but in 1535 Miles Coverdale, later bishop of Exeter, issued in Germany a translation of the whole Bible in a more gracious style than Tyndale's, and to this the king and the established clergy were now ready to give license and favor. Still two years later appeared a version compounded of those of Tyndale and Coverdale and called, from the fictitious name of its editor, the 'Matthew' Bible. In 1539, under the direction of Archbishop Cranmer, Coverdale issued a revised edition, officially authorized for use in churches; its version of the Psalms still stands as the Psalter of the English Church. In 1560 English Puritan refugees at Geneva put forth the 'Geneva Bible,' especially accurate as a translation, which long continued the accepted version for private use among all parties and for all purposes among the Puritans, in both Old and New England. Eight years later, under Archbishop Parker, there was issued in large volume form and for use in churches the 'Bishops' Bible,' so named because the majority of its thirteen editors were bishops. This completes the list of important translations down to those of 1611 and 1881, of which we shall speak in the proper place. The Book of Common Prayer, now used in the English Church coordinately with Bible and Psalter, took shape out of previous primers of private devotion, litanies, and hymns, mainly as the work of Archbishop Cranmer during the reign of Edward VI.

Of the influence of these translations of the Bible on English literature it is impossible to speak too strongly. They rendered the whole nation familiar for centuries with one of the grandest and most varied of all collections of books, which was adopted with ardent patriotic enthusiasm as one of the chief national possessions, and which has served as an unflinching storehouse of poetic and dramatic allusions for all later writers. Modern English literature as a whole is permeated and enriched to an incalculable degree with the substance and spirit of the English Bible.

### **Wyatt and Surrey and the new poetry.**

In the literature of fine art also the new beginning was made during the reign of Henry VIII. This was through the introduction by Sir Thomas Wyatt of the Italian fashion of lyric poetry. Wyatt, a man of gentle birth, entered Cambridge at the age of twelve and received his degree of M. A. seven years later. His mature life was that of a courtier to whom the king's favor brought high appointments, with such vicissitudes of fortune, including occasional imprisonments, as formed at that time a common part of the courtier's lot. Wyatt, however, was not a merely worldly person, but a Protestant seemingly of high and somewhat severe moral character. He died in 1542 at the age of thirty-nine of a fever caught as he was hastening, at the king's command, to meet and welcome the Spanish ambassador.

On one of his missions to the Continent, Wyatt, like Chaucer, had visited Italy. Impressed with the beauty of Italian verse and the contrasting rudeness of that of contemporary England, he determined to remodel the latter in the style of the former. Here a brief historical retrospect is necessary. The Italian poetry of the sixteenth century had itself been originally an imitation, namely of the poetry of Provence in Southern France. There, in the twelfth century, under a delightful climate and in a region of enchanting beauty, had arisen a luxurious civilization whose poets, the troubadours, many of them men of noble birth, had carried to the furthest extreme the woman-worship of medieval chivalry and had enshrined it in lyric poetry of superb and varied sweetness and beauty. In this highly conventionalized poetry the lover is forever sighing for his lady, a correspondingly obdurate being whose favor is to be won only by years of the most unqualified and unreasoning devotion. From Provence, Italy had taken up the style, and among the other forms for its expression, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, had devised the poem of a single fourteen-line stanza which we call the sonnet. The whole movement had found its great master in Petrarch, who, in hundreds of poems, mostly sonnets, of perfect beauty, had sung the praises and cruelty of his nearly imaginary Laura.

It was this highly artificial but very beautiful poetic fashion which Wyatt deliberately set about to introduce into England. The nature and success of his innovation can be summarized in a few definite statements.

1. Imitating Petrarch, Wyatt nearly limits himself as regards substance to the treatment of the artificial love-theme, lamenting the unkindness of ladies who very probably never existed and whose favor in any case he probably regarded very lightly; yet even so, he often strikes a manly English note of independence, declaring that if the lady continues obstinate he will not die for her love.
2. Historically much the most important feature of Wyatt's experiment was the introduction of the sonnet, a very substantial service indeed; for not only did this form, like the love-theme, become by far the most popular one among English lyric poets of the next two generations, setting a fashion which was carried to an astonishing

excess; but it is the only artificial form of foreign origin which has ever been really adopted and naturalized in English, and it still remains the best instrument for the terse expression of a single poetic thought. Wyatt, it should be observed, generally departs from the Petrarchan rime-scheme, on the whole unfortunately, by substituting a third quatrain for the first four lines of the sestet. That is, while Petrarch's rime-arrangement is either *a b b a a b b a c d c d c d* or *a b b a a b b a c d e c d e* Wyatt's is usually *a b b a a b b a c d d c e e*.

3. In his attempted reformation of English metrical irregularity Wyatt, in his sonnets, shows only the uncertain hand of a beginner. He generally secures an equal number of syllables in each line, but he often merely counts them off on his fingers, wrenching the accents all awry, and often violently forcing the rimes as well. In his songs, however, which are much more numerous than the sonnets, he attains delightful fluency and melody. His 'My Lute, Awake,' and 'Forget Not Yet' are still counted among the notable English lyrics.
4. A particular and characteristic part of the conventional Italian lyric apparatus which Wyatt transplanted was the 'conceit.' A conceit may be defined as an exaggerated figure of speech or play on words in which intellectual cleverness figures at least as largely as real emotion and which is often dragged out to extremely complicated lengths of literal application. An example is Wyatt's declaration (after Petrarch) that his love, living in his heart, advances to his face and there encamps, displaying his banner (which merely means that the lover blushes with his emotion). In introducing the conceit Wyatt fathered the most conspicuous of the superficial general features which were to dominate English poetry for a century to come.
5. Still another, minor, innovation of Wyatt was the introduction into English verse of the Horatian 'satire' (moral poem, reflecting on current follies) in the form of three metrical letters to friends. In these the meter is the terza rima of Dante.

Wyatt's work was continued by his poetical disciple and successor, Henry Howard, who, as son of the Duke of Norfolk, held the courtesy title of Earl of Surrey. A brilliant though wilful representative of Tudor chivalry, and distinguished in war, Surrey seems to have occupied at Court almost the same commanding position as Sir Philip Sidney in the following generation. His career was cut short in tragically ironical fashion at the age of thirty by the plots of his enemies and the dying bloodthirstiness of King Henry, which together led to his execution on a trumped-up charge of treason. It was only one of countless brutal court crimes, but it seems the more hateful because if the king had died a single day earlier Surrey could have been saved.

Surrey's services to poetry were two:

1. He improved on the versification of Wyatt's sonnets, securing fluency and smoothness.
2. In a translation of two books of Vergil's 'Aeneid' he introduced, from the Italian, pentameter blank verse, which was destined thenceforth to be the meter of English poetic drama and of much of the greatest English non-dramatic poetry. Further, though his poems are less numerous than those of Wyatt, his range of subjects is somewhat broader, including some appreciative treatment of external Nature. He seems, however, somewhat less sincere than his teacher. In his sonnets he abandoned the form followed by Wyatt and adopted (still from the Italian) the one which was subsequently used by Shakespeare, consisting of three independent quatrains followed, as with Wyatt, by a couplet which sums up the thought with epigrammatic force, thus: *a b a b c d c d e f e f g g*.

Wyatt and Surrey set a fashion at Court; for some years it seems to have been an almost necessary accomplishment for every young noble to turn off love poems after Italian and French models; for France too had now taken up the fashion. These poems were generally and naturally regarded as the property of the Court and of the gentry, and circulated at first only in manuscript among the author's friends; but the general public became curious about them, and in 1557 one of the publishers of the day, Richard Tottel, securing a number of those of Wyatt, Surrey, and a few other noble or gentle authors, published them in a little volume, which is known as

'Tottel's Miscellany.' Coming as it does in the year before the accession of Queen Elizabeth, at the end of the comparatively barren reigns of Edward and Mary, this book is taken by common consent as marking the beginning of the literature of the Elizabethan period. It was the premature predecessor, also, of a number of such anthologies which were published during the latter half of Elizabeth's reign.

## The Elizabethan Period

The earlier half of Elizabeth's reign, also, though not lacking in literary effort, produced no work of permanent importance. After the religious convulsions of half a century time was required for the development of the internal quiet and confidence from which a great literature could spring. At length, however, the hour grew ripe and there came the greatest outburst of creative energy in the whole history of English literature. Under Elizabeth's wise guidance the prosperity and

enthusiasm of the nation had risen to the highest pitch, and London in particular was overflowing with vigorous life. A special stimulus of the most intense kind came from the struggle with Spain. After a generation of half-piratical depredations by the English seadogs against the Spanish treasure fleets and the Spanish settlements in America, King Philip, exasperated beyond all patience and urged on by a bigot's zeal for the Catholic Church, began deliberately to prepare the Great Armada, which was to crush at one blow the insolence, the independence, and the religion of England. There followed several long years of breathless suspense; then in 1588 the Armada sailed and was utterly overwhelmed in one of the most complete disasters of the world's history. Thereupon the released energy of England broke out exultantly into still more impetuous achievement in almost every line of activity. The great literary period is taken by common consent to begin with the publication of Spenser's 'Shepherd's Calendar' in 1579, and to end in some sense at the death of Elizabeth in 1603, though in the drama, at least, it really continues many years longer.

Several general characteristics of Elizabethan literature and writers should be indicated at the outset.

1. The period has the great variety of almost unlimited creative force; it includes works of many kinds in both verse and prose, and ranges in spirit from the loftiest Platonic idealism or the most delightful romance to the level of very repulsive realism.
2. It was mainly dominated, however, by the spirit of romance.
3. It was full also of the spirit of dramatic action, as befitted an age whose restless enterprise was eagerly extending itself to every quarter of the globe.
4. In style it often exhibits romantic luxuriance, which sometimes takes the form of elaborate affectations of which the favorite 'conceit' is only the most apparent.
5. It was in part a period of experimentation, when the proper material and limits of literary forms were being determined, oftentimes by means of false starts and grandiose failures. In particular, many efforts were made to give prolonged poetical treatment to many subjects essentially prosaic, for example to systems of theological or scientific thought, or to the geography of all England.
6. It continued to be largely influenced by the literature of Italy, and to a less degree by those of France and Spain.
7. The literary spirit was all-pervasive, and the authors were men (not yet women) of almost every class, from distinguished courtiers, like Raleigh and Sidney, to the company of hack writers, who starved in garrets and hung about the outskirts of the bustling taverns.

## Prose fiction

The period saw the beginning, among other things, of English prose fiction of something like the later modern type. First appeared a series of collections of short tales chiefly translated from Italian authors, to which tales the Italian name 'novella' (novel) was applied. Most of the separate tales are crude or amateurish and have only historical interest, though as a class they furnished the plots for many Elizabethan dramas, including several of Shakespeare's. The most important collection was Painter's 'Palace of Pleasure,' in 1566. The earliest original, or partly original, English prose fictions to appear were handbooks of morals and manners in story form, and here the beginning was made by John Lyly, who is also of some importance in the history of the Elizabethan drama. In 1578 Lyly, at the age of twenty-five, came from Oxford to London, full of the enthusiasm of Renaissance learning, and evidently determined to fix himself as a new and dazzling star in the literary sky. In this ambition he achieved a remarkable and immediate success, by the publication of a little book entitled 'Euphues and His Anatomie of Wit.' 'Euphues' means 'the well-bred man,' and though there is a slight action, the work is mainly a series of moralizing disquisitions (mostly rearranged from Sir Thomas North's translation of 'The Dial of Princes' of the Spaniard Guevara) on love, religion, and conduct. Most influential, however, for the time-being, was Lyly's style, which is the most conspicuous English example of the later Renaissance craze, then rampant throughout Western Europe, for refining and beautifying the art of prose expression in a mincingly affected fashion. Witty, clever, and sparkling at all costs, Lyly takes especial pains to balance his sentences and clauses antithetically, phrase against phrase and often word against word, sometimes emphasizing the balance also by an exaggerated use of alliteration and assonance. A representative sentence is this: 'Although there be none so ignorant that doth not know, neither any so impudent that will not confesse, friendship to be the jewell of humaine joye; yet whosoever shall see this amitie grounded upon a little affection, will soone conjecture that it shall be dissolved upon a light occasion.' Others of Lyly's affectations are rhetorical questions, hosts of allusions to classical history, and literature, and an unending succession of similes from all the recondite knowledge that he can command, especially from the fantastic collection of fables which, coming down through the Middle Ages from the Roman writer Pliny, went at that time by the name of natural history and which we have already encountered in the medieval Bestiaries. Preposterous by any reasonable standard, Lyly's style, 'Euphuism,' precisely hit the Court taste of his age and became for a decade its most approved conversational dialect.

In literature the imitations of 'Euphues' which flourished for a while gave way to a series of romances inaugurated by the 'Arcadia' of Sir Philip Sidney. Sidney's brilliant position for a few years as the noblest representative of chivalrous ideals in

the intriguing Court of Elizabeth is a matter of common fame, as is his death in 1586 at the age of thirty-two during the siege of Zutphen in Holland. He wrote 'Arcadia' for the amusement of his sister, the Countess of Pembroke, during a period of enforced retirement beginning in 1580, but the book was not published until ten years later. It is a pastoral romance, in the general style of Italian and Spanish romances of the earlier part of the century. The pastoral is the most artificial literary form in modern fiction. It may be said to have begun in the third century B. C. with the perfectly sincere poems of the Greek Theocritus, who gives genuine expression to the life of actual Sicilian shepherds. But with successive Latin, Medieval, and Renaissance writers in verse and prose the country characters and setting had become mere disguises, sometimes allegorical, for the expression of the very far from simple sentiments of the upper classes, and sometimes for their partly genuine longing, the outgrowth of sophisticated weariness and ennui, for rural naturalness. Sidney's very complicated tale of adventures in love and war, much longer than any of its successors, is by no means free from artificiality, but it finely mirrors his own knightly spirit and remains a permanent English classic. Among his followers were some of the better hack-writers of the time, who were also among the minor dramatists and poets, especially Robert Greene and Thomas Lodge. Lodge's 'Rosalynde,' also much influenced by Lyly, is in itself a pretty story and is noteworthy as the original of Shakespeare's 'As You Like It.'

Lastly, in the concluding decade of the sixteenth century, came a series of realistic stories depicting chiefly, in more or less farcical spirit, the life of the poorer classes. They belonged mostly to that class of realistic fiction which is called picaresque, from the Spanish word 'pícaro,' a rogue, because it began in Spain with the 'Lazarillo de Tormes' of Diego de Mendoza, in 1553, and because its heroes are knavish serving-boys or similar characters whose unprincipled tricks and exploits formed the substance of the stories. In Elizabethan England it produced nothing of individual note.

### **Edmund Spenser, 1552-1599.**

The first really commanding figure in the Elizabethan period, and one of the chief of all English poets, is Edmund Spenser. [Footnote: His name should never be spelled with a c. ] Born in London in 1552, the son of a clothmaker, Spenser passed from the newly established Merchant Taylors' school to Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, as a sizar, or poor student, and during the customary seven years of residence took the degrees of B. A. and, in 1576, of M. A. At Cambridge he assimilated two of the controlling forces of his life, the moderate Puritanism of his college and Platonic idealism. Next, after a year or two with his kinspeople in Lancashire, in the North of England, he came to London, hoping through literature to win high political place, and attached himself to the household of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, Queen Elizabeth's worthless favorite. Together with Sidney, who was Leicester's nephew, he was for a while a member of a little group of students who called themselves 'The Areopagus' and who, like occasional other experimenters of the later Renaissance period, attempted to make over English versification by substituting for rime and accentual meter the Greek and Latin system based on exact quantity of syllables. Spenser, however, soon outgrew this folly and in 1579 published the collection of poems which, as we have already said, is commonly taken as marking the beginning of the great Elizabethan literary period, namely 'The Shepherd's Calendar.' This is a series of pastoral pieces (eclogues, Spenser calls them, by the classical name) twelve in number, artificially assigned one to each month in the year. The subjects are various--the conventionalized love of the poet for a certain Rosalind; current religious controversies in allegory; moral questions; the state of poetry in England; and the praises of Queen Elizabeth, whose almost incredible vanity exacted the most fulsome flattery from every writer who hoped to win a name at her court. The significance of 'The Shepherd's Calendar' lies partly in its genuine feeling for external Nature, which contrasts strongly with the hollow conventional phrases of the poetry of the previous decade, and especially in the vigor, the originality, and, in some of the eclogues, the beauty, of the language and of the varied verse. It was at once evident that here a real poet had appeared. An interesting innovation, diversely judged at the time and since, was Spenser's deliberate employment of rustic and archaic words, especially of the Northern dialect, which he introduced partly because of their appropriateness to the imaginary characters, partly for the sake of freshness of expression. They, like other features of the work, point forward to 'The Faerie Queene.'

In the uncertainties of court intrigue literary success did not gain for Spenser the political rewards which he was seeking, and he was obliged to content himself, the next year, with an appointment, which he viewed as substantially a sentence of exile, as secretary to Lord Grey, the governor of Ireland. In Ireland, therefore, the remaining twenty years of Spenser's short life were for the most part spent, amid distressing scenes of English oppression and chronic insurrection among the native Irish. After various activities during several years Spenser secured a permanent home in Kilcolman, a fortified tower and estate in the southern part of the island, where the romantic scenery furnished fit environment for a poet's imagination. And Spenser, able all his life to take refuge in his art from the crass realities of life, now produced many poems, some of them short, but among the others the immortal 'Faerie Queene.' The first three books of this, his crowning achievement, Spenser, under enthusiastic encouragement from Raleigh, brought to London and published in 1590. The dedication is to Queen Elizabeth, to whom, indeed, as its heroine, the poem pays perhaps the most splendid compliment ever offered to any human being in verse. She responded with an uncertain pension of £50 (equivalent to perhaps \$1500 at the present time), but not with the gift of political preferment which was still Spenser's hope; and in some bitterness of spirit he retired to Ireland, where in satirical poems he proceeded to attack the vanity of the world and

the fickleness of men. His courtship and, in 1594, his marriage produced his sonnet sequence, called 'Amoretti' (Italian for 'Love-poems'), and his 'Epithalamium,' the most magnificent of marriage hymns in English and probably in world-literature; though his 'Prothalamium,' in honor of the marriage of two noble sisters, is a near rival to it.

Spenser, a zealous Protestant as well as a fine-spirited idealist, was in entire sympathy with Lord Grey's policy of stern repression of the Catholic Irish, to whom, therefore, he must have appeared merely as one of the hated crew of their pitiless tyrants. In 1598 he was appointed sheriff of the county of Cork; but a rebellion which broke out proved too strong for him, and he and his family barely escaped from the sack and destruction of his tower. He was sent with despatches to the English Court and died in London in January, 1599, no doubt in part as a result of the hardships that he had suffered. He was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Spenser's 'Faerie Queene' is not only one of the longest but one of the greatest of English poems; it is also very characteristically Elizabethan. To deal with so delicate a thing by the method of mechanical analysis seems scarcely less than profanation, but accurate criticism can proceed in no other way.

1. Sources and Plan. Few poems more clearly illustrate the variety of influences from which most great literary works result. In many respects the most direct source was the body of Italian romances of chivalry, especially the 'Orlando Furioso' of Ariosto, which was written in the early part of the sixteenth century. These romances, in turn, combine the personages of the medieval French epics of Charlemagne with something of the spirit of Arthurian romance and with a Renaissance atmosphere of magic and of rich fantastic beauty. Spenser borrows and absorbs all these things and moreover he imitates Ariosto closely, often merely translating whole passages from his work. But this use of the Italian romances, further, carries with it a large employment of characters, incidents, and imagery from classical mythology and literature, among other things the elaborated similes of the classical epics. Spenser himself is directly influenced, also, by the medieval romances. Most important of all, all these elements are shaped to the purpose of the poem by Spenser's high moral aim, which in turn springs largely from his Platonic idealism.

What the plan of the poem is Spenser explains in a prefatory letter to Sir Walter Raleigh. The whole is a vast epic allegory, aiming, in the first place, to portray the virtues which make up the character of a perfect knight; an ideal embodiment, seen through Renaissance conceptions, of the best in the chivalrous system which in Spenser's time had passed away, but to which some choice spirits still looked back with regretful admiration. As Spenser intended, twelve moral virtues of the individual character, such as Holiness and Temperance, were to be presented, each personified in the hero of one of twelve Books; and the crowning virtue, which Spenser, in Renaissance terms, called Magnificence, and which may be interpreted as Magnanimity, was to figure as Prince (King) Arthur, nominally the central hero of the whole poem, appearing and disappearing at frequent intervals. Spenser states in his prefatory letter that if he shall carry this first projected labor to a successful end he may continue it in still twelve other Books, similarly allegorizing twelve political virtues. The allegorical form, we should hardly need to be reminded, is another heritage from medieval literature, but the effort to shape a perfect character, completely equipped to serve the State, was characteristically of the Platonizing Renaissance. That the reader may never be in danger of forgetting his moral aim, Spenser fills the poem with moral observations, frequently setting them as guides at the beginning of the cantos.

2. The Allegory. Lack of Unity. So complex and vast a plan could scarcely have been worked out by any human genius in a perfect and clear unity, and besides this, Spenser, with all his high endowments, was decidedly weak in constructive skill. The allegory, at the outset, even in Spenser's own statement, is confused and hazy. For beyond the primary moral interpretation, Spenser applies it in various secondary or parallel ways. In the widest sense, the entire struggle between the good and evil characters is to be taken as figuring forth the warfare both in the individual soul and in the world at large between Righteousness and Sin; and in somewhat narrower senses, between Protestantism and Catholicism, and between England and Spain. In some places, also, it represents other events and aspects of European politics. Many of the single persons of the story, entering into each of these overlapping interpretations, bear double or triple roles. Gloriana, the Fairy Queen, is abstractly Glory, but humanly she is Queen Elizabeth; and from other points of view Elizabeth is identified with several of the lesser heroines. So likewise the witch Duessa is both Papal Falsehood and Mary Queen of Scots; Prince Arthur both Magnificence and (with sorry inappropriateness) the Earl of Leicester; and others of the characters stand with more or less consistency for such actual persons as Philip II of Spain, Henry IV of France, and Spenser's chief, Lord Grey. In fact, in Renaissance spirit, and following Sidney's 'Defense of Poesie,' Spenser attempts to harmonize history, philosophy, ethics, and politics, subordinating them all to the art of poetry. The plan is grand but impracticable, and except for the original moral interpretation, to which in the earlier books the incidents are skilfully adapted, it is fruitless as one reads to undertake to follow the allegories. Many readers are able, no doubt, merely to disregard them, but there are others, like Lowell, to whom the moral, 'when they come suddenly upon it, gives a shock of unpleasant surprise, as when in eating strawberries one's teeth encounter grit.'



The same lack of unity pervades the external story. The first Book begins abruptly, in the middle; and for clearness' sake Spenser had been obliged to explain in his prefatory letter that the real commencement must be supposed to be a scene like those of Arthurian romance, at the court and annual feast of the Fairy Queen, where twelve adventures had been assigned to as many knights. Spenser strangely planned to narrate this beginning of the whole in his final Book, but even if it had been properly placed at the outset it would have served only as a loose enveloping action for a series of stories essentially as distinct as those in Malory. More serious, perhaps, is the lack of unity within the single books. Spenser's genius was never for strongly condensed narrative, and following his Italian originals, though with less firmness, he wove his story as a tangled web of intermingled adventures, with almost endless elaboration and digression. Incident after incident is broken off and later resumed and episode after episode is introduced, until the reader almost abandons any effort to trace the main design. A part of the confusion is due to the mechanical plan. Each Book consists of twelve cantos (of from forty to ninety stanzas each) and oftentimes Spenser has difficulty in filling out the scheme. No one, certainly, can regret that he actually completed only a quarter of his projected work. In the six existing Books he has given almost exhaustive expression to a richly creative imagination, and additional prolongation would have done little but to repeat.

Still further, the characteristic Renaissance lack of certainty as to the proper materials for poetry is sometimes responsible for a rudely inharmonious element in the otherwise delightful romantic atmosphere. For a single illustration, the description of the House of Alma in Book II, Canto Nine, is a tediously literal medieval allegory of the Soul and Body; and occasional realistic details here and there in the poem at large are merely repellent to more modern taste.

3. The Lack of Dramatic Reality. A romantic allegory like 'The Faerie Queene' does not aim at intense lifelikeness--a certain remoteness from the actual is one of its chief attractions. But sometimes in Spenser's poem the reader feels too wide a divorce from reality. Part of this fault is ascribable to the use of magic, to which there is repeated but inconsistent resort, especially, as in the medieval romances, for the protection of the good characters. Oftentimes, indeed, by the persistent loading of the dice against the villains and scapegoats, the reader's sympathy is half aroused in their behalf. Thus in the fight of the Red Cross Knight with his special enemy, the dragon, where, of course, the Knight must be victorious, it is evident that without the author's help the dragon is incomparably the stronger. Once, swooping down on the Knight, he seizes him in his talons (whose least touch was elsewhere said to be fatal) and bears him aloft into the air. The valor of the Knight compels him to relax his hold, but instead of merely dropping the Knight to certain death, he carefully flies back to earth and sets him down in safety. More definite regard to the actual laws of life would have given the poem greater firmness without the sacrifice of any of its charm.

4. The Romantic Beauty. General Atmosphere and Description. Critical sincerity has required us to dwell thus long on the defects of the poem; but once recognized we should dismiss them altogether from mind and turn attention to the far more important beauties. The great qualities of 'The Faerie Queene' are suggested by the title, 'The Poets' Poet,' which Charles Lamb, with happy inspiration, applied to Spenser. Most of all are we indebted to Spenser's high idealism. No poem in the world is nobler than 'The Faerie Queene' in atmosphere and entire effect. Spenser himself is always the perfect gentleman of his own imagination, and in his company we are secure from the intrusion of anything morally base or mean. But in him, also, moral beauty is in full harmony with the beauty of art and the senses. Spenser was a Puritan, but a Puritan of the earlier English Renaissance, to whom the foes of righteousness were also the foes of external loveliness. Of the three fierce Saracen brother-knights who repeatedly appear in the service of Evil, two are Sansloy, the enemy of law, and Sansfoy, the enemy of religion, but the third is Sansjoy, enemy of pleasure. And of external beauty there has never been a more gifted lover than Spenser. We often feel, with Lowell, that 'he is the pure sense of the beautiful incarnated.' The poem is a romantically luxuriant wilderness of dreamily or languorously delightful visions, often rich with all the harmonies of form and motion and color and sound. As Lowell says, 'The true use of Spenser is as a gallery of pictures which we visit as the mood takes us, and where we spend an hour or two, long enough to sweeten our perceptions, not so long as to cloy them.' His landscapes, to speak of one particular feature, are usually of a rather vague, often of a vast nature, as suits the unreality of his poetic world, and usually, since Spenser was not a minute observer, follow the conventions of Renaissance literature. They are commonly great plains, wide and gloomy forests (where the trees of many climates often grow together in impossible harmony), cool caves--in general, lonely, quiet, or soothing scenes, but all unquestionable portions of a delightful fairyland. To him, it should be added, as to most men before modern Science had subdued the world to human uses, the sublime aspects of Nature were mainly dreadful; the ocean, for example, seemed to him a raging 'waste of waters, wide and deep,' a mysterious and insatiate devourer of the lives of men.

To the beauty of Spenser's imagination, ideal and sensuous, corresponds his magnificent command of rhythm and of sound. As a verbal melodist, especially a melodist of sweetness and of stately grace, and as a harmonist of prolonged and complex cadences, he is unsurpassable. But he has full command of his rhythm according to the subject, and can range from the most delicate suggestion of airy beauty to the roar of the tempest or the strident energy of battle. In vocabulary and phraseology his fluency appears inexhaustible. Here, as in 'The Shepherd's Calendar,' he deliberately introduces, especially from Chaucer, obsolete words and forms, such as the inflectional ending in -en which distinctly contribute to his

romantic effect. His constant use of alliteration is very skilful; the frequency of the alliteration on w is conspicuous but apparently accidental.

5. The Spenserian Stanza. For the external medium of all this beauty Spenser, modifying the ottava rima of Ariosto (a stanza which rimes abababcc), invented the stanza which bears his own name and which is the only artificial stanza of English origin that has ever passed into currency. [Footnote: Note that this is not inconsistent with what is said above, of the sonnet.] The rime-scheme is ababbcbcc and in the last line the iambic pentameter gives place to an Alexandrine (an iambic hexameter). Whether or not any stanza form is as well adapted as blank verse or the rimed couplet for prolonged narrative is an interesting question, but there can be no doubt that Spenser's stanza, firmly unified, in spite of its length, by its central couplet and by the finality of the last line, is a discovery of genius, and that the Alexandrine, 'forever feeling for the next stanza,' does much to bind the stanzas together. It has been adopted in no small number of the greatest subsequent English poems, including such various ones as Burns' 'Cotter's Saturday Night,' Byron's 'Childe Harold,' Keats' 'Eve of St. Agnes,' and Shelley's 'Adonais.'

In general style and spirit, it should be added, Spenser has been one of the most powerful influences on all succeeding English romantic poetry. Two further sentences of Lowell well summarize his whole general achievement:

'His great merit is in the ideal treatment with which he glorified common things and gilded them with a ray of enthusiasm. He is a standing protest against the tyranny of the commonplace, and sows the seeds of a noble discontent with prosaic views of life and the dull uses to which it may be put.'

## Elizabethan lyric poetry

'The Faerie Queene' is the only long Elizabethan poem of the very highest rank, but Spenser, as we have seen, is almost equally conspicuous as a lyric poet. In that respect he was one among a throng of melodists who made the Elizabethan age in many respects the greatest lyric period in the history of English or perhaps of any literature. Still grander, to be sure, by the nature of the two forms, was the Elizabethan achievement in the drama, which we shall consider in the next chapter; but the lyrics have the advantage in sheer delightfulness and, of course, in rapid and direct appeal.

The zest for lyric poetry somewhat artificially inaugurated at Court by Wyatt and Surrey seems to have largely subsided, like any other fad, after some years, but it vigorously revived, in much more genuine fashion, with the taste for other imaginative forms of literature, in the last two decades of Elizabeth's reign. It revived, too, not only among the courtiers but among all classes; in no other form of literature was the diversity of authors so marked; almost every writer of the period who was not purely a man of prose seems to have been gifted with the lyric power.

The qualities which especially distinguish the Elizabethan lyrics are fluency, sweetness, melody, and an enthusiastic joy in life, all spontaneous, direct, and exquisite. Uniting the genuineness of the popular ballad with the finer sense of conscious artistic poetry, these poems possess a charm different, though in an only half definable way, from that of any other lyrics. In subjects they display the usual lyric variety. There are songs of delight in Nature; a multitude of love poems of all moods; many pastorals, in which, generally, the pastoral conventions sit lightly on the genuine poetical feeling; occasional patriotic outbursts; and some reflective and religious poems. In stanza structure the number of forms is unusually great, but in most cases stanzas are internally varied and have a large admixture of short, ringing or musing, lines. The lyrics were published sometimes in collections by single authors, sometimes in the series of anthologies which succeeded to Tottel's 'Miscellany.' Some of these anthologies were books of songs with the accompanying music; for music, brought with all the other cultural influences from Italy and France, was now enthusiastically cultivated, and the soft melody of many of the best Elizabethan lyrics is that of accomplished composers. Many of the lyrics, again, are included as songs in the dramas of the time; and Shakespeare's comedies show him nearly as preeminent among the lyric poets as among the playwrights.

Some of the finest of the lyrics are anonymous. Among the best of the known poets are these: George Gascoigne (about 1530-1577), a courtier and soldier, who bridges the gap between Surrey and Sidney; Sir Edward Dyer (about 1545-1607), a scholar and statesman, author of one perfect lyric, 'My mind to me a kingdom is'; John Lyly (1553-1606), the Euphuist and dramatist; Nicholas Breton (about 1545 to about 1626), a prolific writer in verse and prose and one of the most successful poets of the pastoral style; Robert Southwell (about 1562-1595), a Jesuit intriguer of ardent piety, finally imprisoned, tortured, and executed as a traitor; George Peele (1558 to about 1598), the dramatist; Thomas Lodge (about 1558-1625), poet, novelist, and physician; Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593), the dramatist; Thomas Nash (1567-1601), one of the most prolific Elizabethan hack writers; Samuel Daniel (1562-1619), scholar and critic, member in his later years of the royal household of James I; Barnabe Barnes (about 1569-1609); Richard Barnfield (1574-1627); Sir Walter Raleigh (1552-1618), courtier, statesman, explorer, and scholar; Joshua Sylvester (1563-1618), linguist and merchant, known for his translation of the long religious poems of the Frenchman Du Bartas, through which he exercised an influence on Milton; Francis

Davison (about 1575 to about 1619), son of a counsellor of Queen Elizabeth, a lawyer; and Thomas Dekker (about 1570 to about 1640), a ne'er-do-weel dramatist and hack-writer of irrepressible and delightful good spirits.

## The sonnets

In the last decade, especially, of the century, no other lyric form compared in popularity with the sonnet. Here England was still following in the footsteps of Italy and France; it has been estimated that in the course of the century over three hundred thousand sonnets were written in Western Europe. In England as elsewhere most of these poems were inevitably of mediocre quality and imitative in substance, ringing the changes with wearisome iteration on a minimum of ideas, often with the most extravagant use of conceits. Petrarch's example was still commonly followed; the sonnets were generally composed in sequences (cycles) of a hundred or more, addressed to the poet's more or less imaginary cruel lady, though the note of manly independence introduced by Wyatt is frequent. First of the important English sequences is the 'Astrophel and Stella' of Sir Philip Sidney, written about 1580, published in 1591. 'Astrophel' is a fanciful half-Greek anagram for the poet's own name, and Stella (Star) designates Lady Penelope Devereux, who at about this time married Lord Rich. The sequence may very reasonably be interpreted as an expression of Platonic idealism, though it is sometimes taken in a sense less consistent with Sidney's high reputation. Of Spenser's 'Amoretti' we have already spoken. By far the finest of all the sonnets are the best ones (a considerable part) of Shakespeare's one hundred and fifty-four, which were not published until 1609 but may have been mostly written before 1600. Their interpretation has long been hotly debated. It is certain, however, that they do not form a connected sequence. Some of them are occupied with urging a youth of high rank, Shakespeare's patron, who may have been either the Earl of Southampton or William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, to marry and perpetuate his race; others hint the story, real or imaginary, of Shakespeare's infatuation for a 'dark lady,' leading to bitter disillusion; and still others seem to be occasional expressions of devotion to other friends of one or the other sex. Here as elsewhere Shakespeare's genius, at its best, is supreme over all rivals; the first recorded criticism speaks of the 'sugared sweetness' of his sonnets; but his genius is not always at its best.

## John Donne and the beginning of the 'metaphysical' poetry

The last decade of the sixteenth century presents also, in the poems of John Donne, a new and very strange style of verse. Donne, born in 1573, possessed one of the keenest and most powerful intellects of the time, but his early manhood was largely wasted in dissipation, though he studied theology and law and seems to have seen military service. It was during this period that he wrote his love poems. Then, while living with his wife and children in uncertain dependence on noble patrons, he turned to religious poetry. At last he entered the Church, became famous as one of the most eloquent preachers of the time, and through the favor of King James was rapidly promoted until he was made Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral. He died in 1631 after having furnished a striking instance of the fantastic morbidness of the period (post-Elizabethan) by having his picture painted as he stood wrapped in his shroud on a funeral urn.

The distinguishing general characteristic of Donne's poetry is the remarkable combination of an aggressive intellectuality with the lyric form and spirit. Whether true poetry or mere intellectual cleverness is the predominant element may reasonably be questioned; but on many readers Donne's verse exercises a unique attraction. Its definite peculiarities are outstanding: 1. By a process of extreme exaggeration and minute elaboration Donne carries the Elizabethan conceits almost to the farthest possible limit, achieving what Samuel Johnson two centuries later described as 'enormous and disgusting hyperboles.' 2. In so doing he makes relentless use of the intellect and of verbally precise but actually preposterous logic, striking out astonishingly brilliant but utterly fantastic flashes of wit. 3. He draws the material of his figures of speech from highly unpoetical sources--partly from the activities of every-day life, but especially from all the sciences and school-knowledge of the time. The material is abstract, but Donne gives it full poetic concrete picturesqueness. Thus he speaks of one spirit overtaking another at death as one bullet shot out of a gun may overtake another which has lesser velocity but was earlier discharged. It was because of these last two characteristics that Dr. Johnson applied to Donne and his followers the rather clumsy name of 'Metaphysical' (Philosophical) poets. 'Fantastic' would have been a better word. 4. In vigorous reaction against the sometimes nerveless melody of most contemporary poets Donne often makes his verse as ruggedly condensed (often as obscure) and as harsh as possible. Its wrenched accents and slurred syllables sometimes appear absolutely unmetrical, but it seems that Donne generally followed subtle rhythmical ideas of his own. He adds to the appearance of irregularity by experimenting with a large number of lyric stanza forms--a different form, in fact, for nearly every poem. 5. In his love poems, while his sentiment is often Petrarchan, he often emphasizes also the English note of independence, taking as a favorite theme the incredible fickleness of woman.

In spirit Donne belongs much less to Elizabethan poetry than to the following period, in which nearly half his life fell. Of his great influence on the poetry of that period we shall speak in the proper place.

## The influence of classical comedy and tragedy

In Chapter IV we left the drama at that point, toward the middle of the sixteenth century, when the Mystery Plays had largely declined and Moralities and Interlude-Farces, themselves decadent, were sharing in rather confused rivalry that degree of popular interest which remained unabsorbed by the religious, political, and social ferment. There was still to be a period of thirty or forty years before the flowering of the great Elizabethan drama, but they were to be years of new, if uncertain, beginnings.

The first new formative force was the influence of the classical drama, for which, with other things classical, the Renaissance had aroused enthusiasm. This force operated mainly not through writers for popular audiences, like the authors of most Moralities and Interludes, but through men of the schools and the universities, writing for performances in their own circles or in that of the Court. It had now become a not uncommon thing for boys at the large schools to act in regular dramatic fashion, at first in Latin, afterward in English translation, some of the plays of the Latin comedians which had long formed a part of the school curriculum. Shortly after the middle of the century, probably, the head-master of Westminster School, Nicholas Udall, took the further step of writing for his boys on the classical model an original farce-comedy, the amusing 'Ralph Roister Doister.' This play is so close a copy of Plautus' 'Miles Gloriosus' and Terence's 'Eunuchus' that there is little that is really English about it; a much larger element of local realism of the traditional English sort, in a classical framework, was presented in the coarse but really skillful 'Gammer Gurton's Needle,' which was probably written at about the same time, apparently by the Cambridge student William Stevenson.

Meanwhile students at the universities, also, had been acting Plautus and Terence, and further, had been writing and acting Latin tragedies, as well as comedies, of their own composition. Their chief models for tragedy were the plays of the first-century Roman Seneca, who may or may not have been identical with the philosopher who was the tutor of the Emperor Nero. Both through these university imitations and directly, Seneca's very faulty plays continued for many years to exercise a great influence on English tragedy. Falling far short of the noble spirit of Greek tragedy, which they in turn attempt to copy, Seneca's plays do observe its mechanical conventions, especially the unities of Action and Time, the use of the chorus to comment on the action, the avoidance of violent action and deaths on the stage, and the use of messengers to report such events. For proper dramatic action they largely substitute ranting moralizing declamation, with crudely exaggerated passion, and they exhibit a great vein of melodramatic horror, for instance in the frequent use of the motive of implacable revenge for murder and of a ghost who incites to it. In the early Elizabethan period, however, an age when life itself was dramatically intense and tragic, when everything classic was looked on with reverence, and when standards of taste were unformed, it was natural enough that such plays should pass for masterpieces.

A direct imitation of Seneca, famous as the first tragedy in English on classical lines, was the 'Gorboduc, or Ferrex and Porrex,' of Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville, acted in 1562. Its story, like those of some of Shakespeare's plays later, goes back ultimately to the account of one of the early reigns in Geoffrey of Monmouth's 'History.' 'Gorboduc' outdoes its Senecan models in tedious moralizing, and is painfully wooden in all respects; but it has real importance not only because it is the first regular English tragedy, but because it was the first play to use the iambic pentameter blank verse which Surrey had introduced to English poetry and which was destined to be the verse-form of really great English tragedy. When they wrote the play Norton and Sackville were law students at the Inner Temple, and from other law students during the following years came other plays, which were generally acted at festival seasons, such, as Christmas, at the lawyers' colleges, or before the Queen, though the common people were also admitted among the audience. Unlike 'Gorboduc,' these other university plays were not only for the most part crude and coarse in the same manner as earlier English plays, but in accordance also with the native English tradition and in violent defiance of the classical principle of Unity, they generally combined tragical classical stories with realistic scenes of English comedy (somewhat later with Italian stories). Nevertheless, and this is the main thing, the more thoughtful members of the Court and University circles, were now learning from the study of classical plays a sense for form and the fundamental distinction between tragedy and comedy.

## The chronicle-history play

About twenty years before the end of the century there began to appear, at first at the Court and the Universities, later on the popular stage, a form of play which was to hold, along with tragedy and comedy, an important place in the great decades that were to follow, namely the Chronicle-History Play. This form of play generally presented the chief events in the whole or a part of the reign of some English king. It was largely a product of the pride which was being awakened among the people in the greatness of England under Elizabeth, and of the consequent desire to know something of the past history of the country, and it received a great impulse from the enthusiasm aroused by the struggle with Spain and the defeat of the Armada. It was not, however, altogether a new creation, for its method was similar to that of the university plays which dealt with monarchs of classical history. It partly inherited from them the formless mixture of

farcical humor with historical or supposedly historical fact which it shared with other plays of the time, and sometimes also an unusually reckless disregard of unity of action, time, and place. Since its main serious purpose, when it had one, was to convey information, the other chief dramatic principles, such as careful presentation of a few main characters and of a universally significant human struggle, were also generally disregarded. It was only in the hands of Shakespeare that the species was to be moulded into true dramatic form and to attain real greatness; and after a quarter century of popularity it was to be reabsorbed into tragedy, of which in fact it was always only a special variety.

## John Lyly

The first Elizabethan dramatist of permanent individual importance is the comedian John Lyly, of whose early success at Court with the artificial romance 'Euphues' we have already spoken. From 'Euphues' Lyly turned to the still more promising work of writing comedies for the Court entertainments with which Queen Elizabeth was extremely lavish. The character of Lyly's plays was largely determined by the light and spectacular nature of these entertainments, and further by the fact that on most occasions the players at Court were boys. These were primarily the 'children [choir-boys] of the Queen's Chapel,' who for some generations had been sought out from all parts of England for their good voices and were very carefully trained for singing and for dramatic performances. The choir-boys of St. Paul's Cathedral, similarly trained, also often acted before the Queen. Many of the plays given by these boys were of the ordinary sorts, but it is evident that they would be most successful in dainty comedies especially adapted to their boyish capacity. Such comedies Lyly proceeded to write, in prose. The subjects are from classical mythology or history or English folk-lore, into which Lyly sometimes weaves an allegorical presentation of court intrigue. The plots are very slight, and though the structure is decidedly better than in most previous plays, the humorous sub-actions sometimes have little connection with the main action. Characterization is still rudimentary, and altogether the plays present not so much a picture of reality as 'a faint moonlight reflection of life.' None the less the best of them, such as 'Alexander and Campaspe,' are delightful in their sparkling delicacy, which is produced partly by the carefully-wrought style, similar to that of 'Euphues,' but less artificial, and is enhanced by the charming lyrics which are scattered through them. For all this the elaborate scenery and costuming of the Court entertainments provided a very harmonious background.

These plays were to exert a strong influence on Shakespeare's early comedies, probably suggesting to him: the use of prose for comedy; the value of snappy and witty dialog; refinement, as well as affectation, of style; lyric atmosphere; the characters and tone of high comedy, contrasting so favorably with the usual coarse farce of the period; and further such details as the employment of impudent boy-pages as a source of amusement.

## Peele, Greene, And Kyd

Of the most important early contemporaries of Shakespeare we have already mentioned two as noteworthy in other fields of literature. George Peele's masque-like 'Arraignment of Paris' helps to show him as more a lyric poet than a dramatist. Robert Greene's plays, especially 'Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay,' reveal, like his novels, some real, though not very elaborate, power of characterization. They are especially important in developing the theme of romantic love with real fineness of feeling and thus helping to prepare the way for Shakespeare in a very important particular. In marked contrast to these men is Thomas Kyd, who about the year 1590 attained a meteoric reputation with crude 'tragedies of blood,' specialized descendants of Senecan tragedy, one of which may have been the early play on Hamlet which Shakespeare used as the groundwork for his masterpiece.

## Christopher Marlowe, 1564-1593

Peele and Greene were University men who wrote partly for Court or academic audiences, partly for the popular stage. The distinction between the two sorts of drama was still further broken down in the work of Christopher Marlowe, a poet of real genius, decidedly the chief dramatist among Shakespeare's early contemporaries, and the one from whom Shakespeare learned the most.

Marlowe was born in 1564 (the same year as Shakespeare), the son of a shoemaker at Canterbury. Taking his master's degree after seven years at Cambridge, in 1587, he followed the other 'university wits' to London. There, probably the same year and the next, he astonished the public with the two parts of 'Tamburlaine the Great,' a dramatization of the stupendous career of the bloodthirsty Mongol fourteenth-century conqueror. These plays, in spite of faults now conspicuous enough, are splendidly imaginative and poetic, and were by far the most powerful that had yet been written in England. Marlowe followed them with 'The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus,' a treatment of the medieval story which two hundred years later was to serve Goethe for his masterpiece; with 'The Jew of Malta,' which was to give Shakespeare suggestions for 'The Merchant of Venice'; and with 'Edward the Second,' the first really artistic Chronicle History play.

Among the literary adventurers of the age who led wild lives in the London taverns Marlowe is said to have attained a conspicuous reputation for violence and irreligion. He was killed in 1593 in a reckless and foolish brawl, before he had reached the age of thirty.

If Marlowe's life was unworthy, the fault must be laid rather at the door of circumstances than of his own genuine nature. His plays show him to have been an ardent idealist and a representative of many of the qualities that made the greatness of the Renaissance. The Renaissance learning, the apparently boundless vistas which it had opened to the human spirit, and the consciousness of his own power, evidently intoxicated Marlowe with a vast ambition to achieve results which in his youthful inexperience he could scarcely even picture to himself. His spirit, cramped and outraged by the impassable limitations of human life and by the conventions of society, beat recklessly against them with an impatience fruitless but partly grand. This is the underlying spirit of almost all his plays, struggling in them for expression. The Prolog to 'Tamburlaine' makes pretentious announcement that the author will discard the usual buffoonery of the popular stage and will set a new standard of tragic majesty:

*From jiggling veins of rhyming mother wits,  
And such conceits as clownage keeps in pay,  
We'll lead you to the stately tent of war,  
Where you shall hear the Scythian Tamburlaine  
Threatening the world with high astounding terms,  
And scourging kingdoms with his conquering sword.*

Tamburlaine himself as Marlowe presents him is a titanic, almost superhuman, figure who by sheer courage and pitiless unbending will raises himself from shepherd to general and then emperor of countless peoples, and sweeps like a whirlwind over the stage of the world, carrying everywhere overwhelming slaughter and desolation. His speeches are outbursts of incredible arrogance, equally powerful and bombastic. Indeed his blasphemous boasts of superiority to the gods seem almost justified by his apparently irresistible success. But at the end he learns that the laws of life are inexorable even for him; all his indignant rage cannot redeem his son from cowardice, or save his wife from death, or delay his own end. As has been said,

[Footnote: Professor Barrett Wendell, 'William Shakespeare,' p. 36.] 'Tamburlaine' expresses with 'a profound, lasting, noble sense and in grandly symbolic terms, the eternal tragedy inherent in the conflict between human aspiration and human power.'

For several other reasons 'Tamburlaine' is of high importance. It gives repeated and splendid expression to the passionate haunting Renaissance zest for the beautiful. It is rich with extravagant sensuous descriptions, notable among those which abound gorgeously in all Elizabethan poetry. But finest of all is the description of beauty by its effects which Marlowe puts into the mouth of Faustus at the sight of Helen of Troy:

*Was this the face that launched a thousand ships  
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?*

Much of Marlowe's strength, again, lies in his powerful and beautiful use of blank verse. First among the dramatists of the popular stage he discarded rime, and taking and vitalizing the stiff pentameter line of

'Gorboduc,' gave it an immediate and lasting vogue for tragedy and high comedy. Marlowe, virtually a beginner, could not be expected to carry blank verse to that perfection which his success made possible for Shakespeare; he did not altogether escape monotony and commonplaceness; but he gained a high degree of flexibility and beauty by avoiding a regularly end-stopped arrangement, by taking pains to secure variety of pause and accent, and by giving his language poetic condensation and suggestiveness. His workmanship thoroughly justifies the characterization 'Marlowe's mighty line,' which Ben Jonson in his tribute to Shakespeare bestowed on it long after Marlowe's death.

The greatest significance of 'Tamburlaine,' lastly, lies in the fact that it definitely established tragedy as a distinct form on the English popular stage, and invested it with proper dignity.

These are Marlowe's great achievements both in 'Tamburlaine' and in his later more restrained plays. His limitations must also be suggested. Like other Elizabethans he did not fully understand the distinction between drama and other literary forms; 'Tamburlaine' is not so much a regularly constructed tragedy, with a struggle between nearly equal persons and forces, artistically complicated and resolved, as an epic poem, a succession of adventures in war (and love). Again, in spite of the prolog in 'Tamburlaine,' Marlowe, in almost all his plays, and following the Elizabethan custom, does attempt scenes

of humor, but he attains only to the coarse and brutal horse-play at which the English audiences had laughed for centuries in the Mystery plays and the Interludes. Elizabethan also (and before that medieval) is the lack of historical perspective which gives to Mongol shepherds the manners and speech of Greek classical antiquity as Marlowe had learned to know it at the university. More serious is the lack of mature skill in characterization. Tamburlaine the man is an exaggerated type; most of the men about him are his faint shadows, and those who are intended to be comic are preposterous. The women, though they have some differentiating touches, are certainly not more dramatically and vitally imagined. In his later plays Marlowe makes gains in this respect, but he never arrives at full easy mastery and trenchantly convincing lifelikeness either in characterization, in presentation of action, or in fine poetic finish. It has often been remarked that at the age when Marlowe died Shakespeare had produced not one of the great plays on which his reputation rests; but Shakespeare's genius came to maturity more surely, as well as more slowly, and there is no basis for the inference sometimes drawn that if Marlowe had lived he would ever have equalled or even approached Shakespeare's supreme achievement.

## Theatrical conditions and the theater buildings

Before we pass to Shakespeare we must briefly consider those external facts which conditioned the form of the Elizabethan plays and explain many of those things in them which at the present time appear perplexing.

TIMON OF ATHENS, v, 4. OUTER SCENE.

Trumpets sound. Enter Alcibiades with his Powers before Athens.

"Alc. Sound to this Coward, and lascivious Towne, Our terrible approach."

Sounds a parly. The Senators appears upon the Walls.

## An Elizabethan stage

The medieval religious drama had been written and acted in many towns throughout the country, and was a far less important feature in the life of London than of many other places. But as the capital became more and more the center of national life, the drama, with other forms of literature, was more largely appropriated by it; the Elizabethan drama of the great period was altogether written in London and belonged distinctly to it. Until well into the seventeenth century, to be sure, the London companies made frequent tours through the country, but that was chiefly when the prevalence of the plague had necessitated the closing of the London theaters or when for other reasons acting there had become temporarily unprofitable. The companies themselves had now assumed a regular organization. They retained a trace of their origin in that each was under the protection of some influential noble and was called, for example, 'Lord Leicester's Servants,' or 'The Lord Admiral's Servants.' But this connection was for the most part nominal--the companies were virtually very much like the stock-companies of the nineteenth century. By the beginning of the great period the membership of each troupe was made up of at least three classes of persons. At the bottom of the scale were the boy-apprentices who were employed, as Shakespeare is said to have been at first, in miscellaneous menial capacities. Next came the paid actors; and lastly the shareholders, generally also actors, some or all of whom were the general managers. The writers of plays were sometimes members of the companies, as in Shakespeare's case; sometimes, however, they were independent.

Until near the middle of Elizabeth's reign there were no special theater buildings, but the players, in London or elsewhere, acted wherever they could find an available place--in open squares, large halls, or, especially, in the quadrangular open inner yards of inns. As the profession became better organized and as the plays gained in quality, such makeshift accommodations became more and more unsatisfactory; but there were special difficulties in the way of securing better ones in London. For the population and magistrates of London were prevailingly Puritan, and the great body of the Puritans, then as always, were strongly opposed to the theater as a frivolous and irreligious thing--an attitude for which the lives of the players and the character of many plays afforded, then as almost always, only too much reason. The city was very jealous of its prerogatives; so that in spite of Queen Elizabeth's strong patronage of the drama, throughout her whole reign no public theater buildings were allowed within the limits of the city corporation. But these limits were narrow, and in 1576 James Burbage inaugurated a new era by erecting 'The Theater' just to the north of the 'city,' only a few minutes' walk from the center of population. His example was soon followed by other managers, though the favorite place for the theaters soon came to be the 'Bankside,' the region in Southwark just across the Thames from the 'city' where Chaucer's Tabard Inn had stood and where pits for bear-baiting and cock-fighting had long flourished.

The structure of the Elizabethan theater was naturally imitated from its chief predecessor, the inn-yard. There, under the open sky, opposite the street entrance, the players had been accustomed to set up their stage. About it, on three sides, the ordinary part of the audience had stood during the performance, while the inn-guests and persons able to pay a fixed

price had sat in the open galleries which lined the building and ran all around the yard. In the theaters, therefore, at first generally square-built or octagonal, the stage projected from the rear wall well toward the center of an unroofed pit (the present-day 'orchestra'), where, still on three sides of the stage, the common people, admitted for sixpence or less, stood and jostled each other, either going home when it rained or staying and getting wet as the degree of their interest in the play might determine. The enveloping building proper was occupied with tiers of galleries, generally two or three in number, provided with seats; and here, of course, sat the people of means, the women avoiding embarrassment and annoyance only by being always masked. Behind the unprotected front part of the stage the middle part was covered by a lean-to roof sloping down from the rear wall of the building and supported by two pillars standing on the stage. This roof concealed a loft, from which gods and goddesses or any appropriate properties could be let down by mechanical devices. Still farther back, under the galleries, was the 'rear-stage,' which could be used to represent inner rooms; and that part of the lower gallery immediately above it was generally appropriated as a part of the stage, representing such places as city walls or the second stories of houses. The musicians' place was also just beside in the gallery.

The stage, therefore, was a 'platform stage,' seen by the audience from almost all sides, not, as in our own time, a 'picture-stage,' with its scenes viewed through a single large frame. This arrangement made impossible any front curtain, though a curtain was generally hung before the rear stage, from the floor of the gallery. Hence the changes between scenes must generally be made in full view of the audience, and instead of ending the scenes with striking situations the dramatists must arrange for a withdrawal of the actors, only avoiding if possible the effect of a mere anti-climax. Dead bodies must either get up and walk away in plain sight or be carried off, either by stage hands, or, as part of the action, by other characters in the play. This latter device was sometimes adopted at considerable violence to probability, as when Shakespeare makes Falstaff bear away Hotspur, and Hamlet, Polonius. Likewise, while the medieval habit of elaborate costuming was continued, there was every reason for adhering to the medieval simplicity of scenery. A single potted tree might symbolize a forest, and houses and caverns, with a great deal else, might be left to the imagination of the audience. In no respect, indeed, was realism of setting an important concern of either dramatist or audience; in many cases, evidently, neither of them cared to think of a scene as located in any precise spot; hence the anxious effort of Shakespeare's editors on this point is beside the mark. This nonchalance made for easy transition from one place to another, and the whole simplicity of staging had the important advantage of allowing the audience to center their attention on the play rather than on the accompaniments. On the rear-stage, however, behind the curtain, more elaborate scenery might be placed, and Elizabethan plays, like those of our own day, seem sometimes to have 'alternation scenes,' intended to be acted in front, while the next background was being prepared behind the balcony curtain. The lack of elaborate settings also facilitated rapidity of action, and the plays, beginning at three in the afternoon, were ordinarily over by the dinner-hour of five. Less satisfactory was the entire absence of women-actors, who did not appear on the public stage until after the Restoration of 1660. The inadequacy of the boys who took the part of the women-characters is alluded to by Shakespeare and must have been a source of frequent irritation to any dramatist who was attempting to present a subtle or complex heroine.

Lastly may be mentioned the picturesque but very objectionable custom of the young dandies who insisted on carrying their chairs onto the sides of the stage itself, where they not only made themselves conspicuous objects of attention but seriously crowded the actors and rudely abused them if the play was not to their liking. It should be added that from the latter part of Elizabeth's reign there existed within the city itself certain 'private' theaters, used by the boys' companies and others, whose structure was more like that of the theaters of our own time and where plays were given by artificial light.

## **Shakespeare, 1564-1616**

William Shakespeare, by universal consent the greatest author of England, if not of the world, occupies chronologically a central position in the Elizabethan drama. He was born in 1564 in the good-sized village of Stratford-on-Avon in Warwickshire, near the middle of England, where the level but beautiful country furnished full external stimulus for a poet's eye and heart. His father, John Shakespeare, who was a general dealer in agricultural products and other commodities, was one of the chief citizens of the village, and during his son's childhood was chosen an alderman and shortly after mayor, as we should call it. But by 1577 his prosperity declined, apparently through his own shiftlessness, and for many years he was harassed with legal difficulties. In the village 'grammar' school William Shakespeare had acquired the rudiments of book-knowledge, consisting largely of Latin, but his chief education was from Nature and experience. As his father's troubles thickened he was very likely removed from school, but at the age of eighteen, under circumstances not altogether creditable to himself, he married Anne Hathaway, a woman eight years his senior, who lived in the neighboring village of Shottery. The suggestion that the marriage proved positively unhappy is supported by no real evidence, but what little is known of Shakespeare's later life implies that it was not exceptionally congenial. Two girls and a boy were born from it.



In his early manhood, apparently between 1586 and 1588, Shakespeare left Stratford to seek his fortune in London. As to the circumstances, there is reasonable plausibility in the later tradition that he had joined in poaching raids on the deer-park of Sir Thomas Lucy, a neighboring country gentleman, and found it desirable to get beyond the bounds of that gentleman's authority. It is also likely enough that Shakespeare had been fascinated by the performances of traveling dramatic companies at Stratford and by the Earl of Leicester's costly entertainment of Queen Elizabeth in 1575 at the castle of Kenilworth, not many miles away. At any rate, in London he evidently soon secured mechanical employment in a theatrical company, presumably the one then known as Lord Leicester's company, with which, in that case, he was always thereafter connected. His energy and interest must soon have won him the opportunity to show his skill as actor and also reviser and collaborator in play-writing, then as independent author; and after the first few years of slow progress his rise was rapid. He became one of the leading members, later one of the chief shareholders, of the company, and evidently enjoyed a substantial reputation as a playwright and a good, though not a great, actor. This was both at Court (where, however, actors had no social standing) and in the London dramatic circle. Of his personal life only the most fragmentary record has been preserved, through occasional mentions in miscellaneous documents, but it is evident that his rich nature was partly appreciated and thoroughly loved by his associates. His business talent was marked and before the end of his dramatic career he seems to have been receiving as manager, shareholder, playwright and actor, a yearly income equivalent to \$25,000 in money of the present time. He early began to devote attention to paying the debts of his father, who lived until 1601, and restoring the fortunes of his family in Stratford. The death of his only son, Hamnet, in 1596, must have been a severe blow to him, but he obtained from the Heralds' College the grant of a family coat of arms, which secured the position of the family as gentlefolks; in 1597 he purchased New Place, the largest house in Stratford; and later on he acquired other large property rights there. How often he may have visited Stratford in the twenty-five years of his career in London we have no information; but however enjoyable London life and the society of the writers at the 'Mermaid' Tavern may have been to him, he probably always looked forward to ending his life as the chief country gentleman of his native village. Thither he retired about 1610 or 1612, and there he died prematurely in 1616, just as he was completing his fifty-second year.

Shakespeare's dramatic career falls naturally into four successive divisions of increasing maturity. To be sure, no definite record of the order of his plays has come down to us, and it can scarcely be said that we certainly know the exact date of a single one of them; but the evidence of the title-page dates of such of them as were hastily published during his lifetime, of allusions to them in other writings of the time, and other scattering facts of one sort or another, joined with the more important internal evidence of comparative maturity of mind and art which shows 'Macbeth' and 'The Winter's Tale,' for example, vastly superior to 'Love's Labour's Lost'--all this evidence together enables us to arrange the plays in a chronological order which is certainly approximately correct. The first of the four periods thus disclosed is that of experiment and preparation, from about 1588 to about 1593, when Shakespeare tried his hand at virtually every current kind of dramatic work. Its most important product is 'Richard III,' a melodramatic chronicle-history play, largely imitative of Marlowe and yet showing striking power. At the end of this period Shakespeare issued two rather long narrative poems on classical subjects, 'Venus and Adonis,' and 'The Rape of Lucrece,' dedicating them both to the young Earl of Southampton, who thus appears as his patron. Both display great fluency in the most luxuriant and sensuous Renaissance manner, and though they appeal little to the taste of the present day 'Venus and Adonis,' in particular, seems to have become at once the most popular poem of its own time. Shakespeare himself regarded them very seriously, publishing them with care, though he, like most Elizabethan dramatists, never thought it worth while to put his plays into print except to safeguard the property rights of his company in them. Probably at about the end of his first period, also, he began the composition of his sonnets, of which we have already spoken.

The second period of Shakespeare's work, extending from about 1594 to about 1601, is occupied chiefly with chronicle-history plays and happy comedies. The chronicle-history plays begin (probably) with the subtle and fascinating, though not yet absolutely masterful study of contrasting characters in 'Richard II'; continue through the two parts of 'Henry IV,' where the realistic comedy action of Falstaff and his group makes history familiarly vivid; and end with the epic glorification of a typical English hero-king in 'Henry V.' The comedies include the charmingly fantastic 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'; 'The Merchant of Venice,' where a story of tragic sternness is strikingly contrasted with the most poetical idealizing romance and yet is harmoniously blended into it; 'Much Ado About Nothing,' a magnificent example of high comedy of character and wit; 'As You Like It,' the supreme delightful achievement of Elizabethan and all English pastoral romance; and 'Twelfth Night,' where again charming romantic sentiment is made believable by combination with a story of comic realism. Even in the one, unique, tragedy of the period, 'Romeo and Juliet,' the main impression is not that of the predestined tragedy, but that of ideal youthful love, too gloriously radiant to be viewed with sorrow even in its fatal outcome.

The third period, extending from about 1601 to about 1609, includes Shakespeare's great tragedies and certain cynical plays, which formal classification mis-names comedies. In these plays as a group Shakespeare sets himself to grapple with the deepest and darkest problems of human character and life; but it is only very uncertain inference that he was himself passing at this time through a period of bitterness and disillusion.

'Julius Caesar' presents the material failure of an unpractical idealist (Brutus); 'Hamlet' the struggle of a perplexed and divided soul; 'Othello' the ruin of a noble life by an evil one through the terrible power of jealousy; 'King Lear' unnatural ingratitude working its hateful will and yet thwarted at the end by its own excess and by faithful love; and

'Macbeth' the destruction of a large nature by material ambition. Without doubt this is the greatest continuous group of plays ever wrought out by a human mind, and they are followed by 'Antony and Cleopatra,' which magnificently portrays the emptiness of a sensual passion against the background of a decaying civilization.

Shakespeare did not solve the insoluble problems of life, but having presented them as powerfully, perhaps, as is possible for human intelligence, he turned in his last period, of only two or three years, to the expression of the serene philosophy of life in which he himself must have now taken refuge. The noble and beautiful romance-comedies, 'Cymbeline,' 'The Winter's Tale,' and 'The Tempest,' suggest that men do best to forget what is painful and center their attention on the pleasing and encouraging things in a world where there is at least an inexhaustible store of beauty and goodness and delight.

Shakespeare may now well have felt, as his retirement to Stratford suggests, that in his nearly forty plays he had fully expressed himself and had earned the right to a long and peaceful old age. The latter, as we have seen, was denied him; but seven years after his death two of his fellow-managers assured the preservation of the plays whose unique importance he himself did not suspect by collecting them in the first folio edition of his complete dramatic works.

Shakespeare's greatness rests on supreme achievement--the result of the highest genius matured by experience and by careful experiment and labor--in all phases of the work of a poetic dramatist. The surpassing charm of his rendering of the romantic beauty and joy of life and the profundity of his presentation of its tragic side we have already suggested. Equally sure and comprehensive is his portrayal of characters. With the certainty of absolute mastery he causes men and women to live for us, a vast representative group, in all the actual variety of age and station, perfectly realized in all the subtle diversities and inconsistencies of protean human nature. Not less notable than his strong men are his delightful young heroines, romantic Elizabethan heroines, to be sure, with an unconventionality, many of them, which does not belong to such women in the more restricted world of reality, but pure embodiments of the finest womanly delicacy, keenness, and vivacity. Shakespeare, it is true, was a practical dramatist. His background characters are often present in the plays not in order to be entirely real but in order to furnish amusement; and even in the case of the chief ones, just as in the treatment of incidents, he is always perfectly ready to sacrifice literal truth to dramatic effect. But these things are only the corollaries of all successful playwriting and of all art.

To Shakespeare's mastery of poetic expression similarly strong superlatives must be applied. For his form he perfected Marlowe's blank verse, developing it to the farthest possible limits of fluency, variety, and melody; though he retained the riming couplet for occasional use (partly for the sake of variety) and frequently made use also of prose, both for the same reason and in realistic or commonplace scenes. As regards the spirit of poetry, it scarcely need be said that nowhere else in literature is there a like storehouse of the most delightful and the greatest ideas phrased with the utmost power of condensed expression and figurative beauty. In dramatic structure his greatness is on the whole less conspicuous. Writing for success on the Elizabethan stage, he seldom attempted to reduce its romantic licenses to the perfection of an absolute standard. 'Romeo and Juliet,' 'Hamlet,' and indeed most of his plays, contain unnecessary scenes, interesting to the Elizabethans, which Sophocles as well as Racine would have pruned away. Yet when Shakespeare chooses, as in 'Othello,' to develop a play with the sternest and most rapid directness, he proves essentially the equal even of the most rigid technician.

Shakespeare, indeed, although as Ben Jonson said, 'he was not for an age but for all time,' was in every respect a thorough Elizabethan also, and does not escape the superficial Elizabethan faults. Chief of these, perhaps, is his fondness for 'conceits,' with which he makes his plays, especially some of the earlier ones, sparkle, brilliantly, but often inappropriately. In his prose style, again, except in the talk of commonplace persons, he never outgrew, or wished to outgrow, a large measure of Elizabethan self-conscious elegance. Scarcely a fault is his other Elizabethan habit of seldom, perhaps never, inventing the whole of his stories, but drawing the outlines of them from previous works--English chronicles, poems, or plays, Italian 'novels,' or the biographies of Plutarch. But in the majority of cases these sources provided him only with bare or even crude sketches, and perhaps nothing furnishes clearer proof of his genius than the way in which he has seen the human significance in stories baldly and wretchedly told, where the figures are merely wooden types, and by the power of imagination has transformed them into the greatest literary masterpieces, profound revelations of the underlying forces of life.

Shakespeare, like every other great man, has been the object of much unintelligent, and misdirected adulation, but his greatness, so far from suffering diminution, grows more apparent with the passage of time and the increase of study.

[Note: The theory persistently advocated during the last half century that Shakespeare's works were really written not by himself but by Francis Bacon or some other person can never gain credence with any competent judge. Our knowledge of Shakespeare's life, slight as it is, is really at least as great as that which has been preserved of almost any dramatist of the period; for dramatists were not then looked on as persons of permanent importance. There is really much direct contemporary documentary evidence, as we have already indicated, of Shakespeare's authorship of the plays and poems. No theory, further, could be more preposterous, to any one really acquainted with literature, than the idea that the imaginative poetry of Shakespeare was produced by the essentially scientific and prosaic mind of Francis Bacon. As to the cipher systems supposed to reveal hidden messages in the plays: First, no poet bending his energies to the composition of such masterpieces as Shakespeare's could possibly concern himself at the same time with weaving into them a complicated and trifling cryptogram. Second, the cipher systems are absolutely arbitrary and unscientific, applied to any writings whatever can be made to 'prove' anything that one likes, and indeed have been discredited in the hands of their own inventors by being made to 'prove' far too much. Third, it has been demonstrated more than once that the verbal coincidences on which the cipher systems rest are no more numerous than the law of mathematical probabilities requires. Aside from actually vicious pursuits, there can be no more melancholy waste of time than the effort to demonstrate that Shakespeare is not the real author of his reputed works.]

## National life from 1603 to 1660

We have already observed that, as Shakespeare's career suggests, there was no abrupt change in either life or literature at the death of Queen Elizabeth in 1603; and in fact the Elizabethan period of literature is often made to include the reign of James I, 1603-1625 (the Jacobean period [Footnote: 'Jaco'bus' is the Latin form of 'James.']), or even, especially in the case of the drama, that of Charles I, 1625-1649 (the Carolean period). Certainly the drama of all three reigns forms a continuously developing whole, and should be discussed as such. None the less the spirit of the first half of the seventeenth century came gradually to be widely different from that of the preceding fifty years, and before going on to Shakespeare's successors we must stop to indicate briefly wherein the difference consists and for this purpose to speak of the determining events of the period. Before the end of Elizabeth's reign, indeed, there had been a perceptible change; as the queen grew old and morose the national life seemed also to lose its youth and freshness. Her successor and distant cousin, James of Scotland (James I of England), was a bigoted pedant, and under his rule the perennial Court corruption, striking in, became foul and noisome. The national Church, instead of protesting, steadily identified itself more closely with the Court party, and its ruling officials, on the whole, grew more and more worldly and intolerant. Little by little the nation found itself divided into two great factions; on the one hand the Cavaliers, the party of the Court, the nobles, and the Church, who continued to be largely dominated by the Renaissance zest for beauty and, especially, pleasure; and on the other hand the Puritans, comprising the bulk of the middle classes, controlled by the religious principles of the Reformation, often, in their opposition to Cavalier frivolity, stern and narrow, and more and more inclined to separate themselves from the English Church in denominations of their own. The breach steadily widened until in 1642, under the arbitrary rule of Charles I, the Civil War broke out. In three years the Puritan Parliament was victorious, and in 1649 the extreme minority of the Puritans, supported by the army, took the unprecedented step of putting King Charles to death, and declared England a Commonwealth. But in four years more the Parliamentary government, bigoted and inefficient, made itself impossible, and then for five years, until his death, Oliver Cromwell strongly ruled England as Protector. Another year and a half of chaos confirmed the nation in a natural reaction, and in 1660 the unworthy Stuart race was restored in the person of the base and frivolous Charles II. The general influence of the forces which produced these events shows clearly in the changing tone of the drama, the work of those dramatists who were Shakespeare's later contemporaries and successors.

## Ben Jonson

The second place among the Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists is universally assigned, on the whole justly, to Ben Jonson, who both in temperament and in artistic theories and practice presents a complete contrast to Shakespeare. Jonson, the posthumous son of an impoverished gentleman-clergyman, was born in London in 1573. At Westminster School he received a permanent bent toward classical studies from the headmaster, William Camden, who was one of the greatest scholars of the time. Forced into the uncongenial trade of his stepfather, a master-bricklayer, he soon deserted it to enlist among the English soldiers who were helping the Dutch to fight their Spanish oppressors. Here he exhibited some of his dominating traits by challenging a champion from the other army and killing him in classical fashion in single combat between the lines. By about the age of twenty he was back in London and married to a wife whom he later described as being 'virtuous but a shrew,' and who at one time found it more agreeable to live apart from him. He became an actor (at which profession he failed) and a writer of plays. About 1598 he displayed his distinguishing realistic style in the comedy 'Every Man in His Humour,' which was acted by Shakespeare's company, it is said through Shakespeare's friendly influence. At about the same time the burly Jonson killed another actor in a duel and escaped capital punishment only through 'benefit of clergy' (the exemption still allowed to educated men).

The plays which Jonson produced during the following years were chiefly satirical attacks on other dramatists, especially Marston and Dekker, who retorted in kind. Thus there developed a fierce actors' quarrel, referred to in Shakespeare's 'Hamlet,' in which the 'children's' companies had some active but now uncertain part. Before it was over most of the dramatists had taken sides against Jonson, whose arrogant and violent self-assertiveness put him at odds, sooner or later, with nearly every one with whom he had much to do. In 1603 he made peace, only to become involved in other, still more, serious difficulties. Shortly after the accession of King James, Jonson, Chapman, and Marston brought out a comedy, 'Eastward Hoe,' in which they offended the king by satirical flings at the needy Scotsmen to whom James was freely awarding Court positions. They were imprisoned and for a while, according to the barbarous procedure of the time, were in danger of losing their ears and noses. At a banquet celebrating their release, Jonson reports, his 'old mother' produced a paper of poison which, if necessary, she had intended to administer to him to save him from this disgrace, and of which, she said, to show that she was 'no churl,' she would herself first have drunk.

Just before this incident, in 1603, Jonson had turned to tragedy and written 'Sejanus,' which marks the beginning of his most important decade. He followed up 'Sejanus' after several years with the less excellent 'Catiline,' but his most significant dramatic works, on the whole, are his four great satirical comedies. 'Volpone, or the Fox,' assails gross vice; 'Epicoene, the Silent Woman,' ridicules various sorts of absurd persons; 'The Alchemist' castigates quackery and its foolish encouragers; and 'Bartholomew Fair' is a coarse but overwhelming broadside at Puritan hypocrisy. Strange as it seems in the author of these masterpieces of frank realism, Jonson at the same time was showing himself the most gifted writer of the Court masks, which now, arrived at the last period of their evolution, were reaching the extreme of spectacular elaborateness. Early in James' reign, therefore, Jonson was made Court Poet, and during the next thirty years he produced about forty masks, devoting to them much attention and care, and quarreling violently with Inigo Jones, the Court architect, who contrived the stage settings. During this period Jonson was under the patronage of various nobles, and he also reigned as dictator at the club of literary men which Sir Walter Raleigh had founded at the Mermaid Tavern (so called, like other inns, from its sign). A well-known poetical letter of the dramatist Francis Beaumont to Jonson celebrates the club meetings; and equally well known is a description given in the next generation from hearsay and inference by the antiquary Thomas Fuller: 'Many were the wit-combats betwixt Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, which two I behold like a Spanish great galleon and an English man-of-war: Master Jonson, like the former, was built far higher in learning; solid, but slow in his performances; Shakespere, with the English man-of-war, lesser in bulk, but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about and take advantage of all winds, by the quickness of his wit and invention.'

The last dozen years of Jonson's life were unhappy. Though he had a pension from the Court, he was sometimes in financial straits; and for a time he lost his position as Court Poet. He resumed the writing of regular plays, but his style no longer pleased the public; and he often suffered much from sickness. Nevertheless at the Devil Tavern he collected about him a circle of younger admirers, some of them among the oncoming poets, who were proud to be known as 'Sons of Ben,' and who largely accepted as authoritative his opinions on literary matters. Thus his life, which ended in 1637, did not altogether go out in gloom. On the plain stone which alone, for a long time, marked his grave in Westminster Abbey an unknown admirer inscribed the famous epitaph, 'O rare Ben Jonson.'

As a man Jonson, pugnacious, capricious, ill-mannered, sometimes surly, intemperate in drink and in other respects, is an object for only very qualified admiration; and as a writer he cannot properly be said to possess that indefinable thing, genius, which is essential to the truest greatness. But both as man and as writer he manifested great force; and in both drama and poetry he stands for several distinct literary principles and attainments highly important both in themselves and for their subsequent influence.

1. Most conspicuous in his dramas is his realism, often, as we have said, extremely coarse, and a direct reflection of his intellect, which was as strongly masculine as his body and altogether lacking, where the regular drama was concerned, in fineness of sentiment or poetic feeling. He early assumed an attitude of pronounced opposition to the Elizabethan romantic plays, which seemed to him not only lawless in artistic structure but unreal and trifling in atmosphere and substance. (That he was not, however, as has sometimes been said, personally hostile to Shakespeare is clear, among other things, from his poetic tributes in the folio edition of Shakespeare and from his direct statement elsewhere that he loved Shakespeare almost to idolatry.) Jonson's purpose was to present life as he believed it to be; he was thoroughly acquainted with its worsen side; and he refused to conceal anything that appeared to him significant. His plays, therefore, have very much that is flatly offensive to the taste which seeks in literature, prevailingly, for idealism and beauty; but they are, nevertheless, generally speaking, powerful portrayals of actual life.

2. Jonson's purpose, however, was never unworthy; rather, it was distinctly to uphold morality. His frankest plays, as we have indicated, are attacks on vice and folly, and sometimes, it is said, had important reformatory influence on contemporary manners. He held, indeed, that in the drama, even in comedy, the function of teaching was as important as that of giving pleasure. His attitude toward his audiences was that of a learned schoolmaster, whose ideas they should accept with deferential respect; and when they did not approve his plays he was outspoken in indignant contempt.

3. Jonson's self-satisfaction and his critical sense of intellectual superiority to the generality of mankind produce also a marked and disagreeable lack of sympathy in his portrayal of both life and character. The world of his dramas is mostly made up of knaves, scoundrels, hypocrites, fools, and dupes; and it includes among its really important characters very few excellent men and not a single really good woman. Jonson viewed his fellow-men, in the mass, with complete scorn, which it was one of his moral and artistic principles not to disguise. His characteristic comedies all belong, further, to the particular type which he himself originated, namely, the 'Comedy of Humors.'

[Footnote: The meaning of this, term can be understood only by some explanation of the history of the word 'Humor.' In the first place this was the Latin name for 'liquid.' According to medieval physiology there were four chief liquids in the human body, namely blood, phlegm, bile, and black bile, and an excess of any of them produced an undue predominance of the corresponding quality; thus, an excess of phlegm made a person phlegmatic, or dull; or an excess of black bile, melancholy. In the Elizabethan idiom, therefore, 'humor' came to mean a mood, and then any exaggerated quality or marked peculiarity in a person.]

Aiming in these plays to flail the follies of his time, he makes his chief characters, in spite of his realistic purpose, extreme and distorted

'humors,' each, in spite of individual traits, the embodiment of some one abstract vice--cowardice, sensualism, hypocrisy, or what not. Too often, also, the unreality is increased because Jonson takes the characters from the stock figures of Latin comedy rather than from genuine English life.

4. In opposition to the free Elizabethan romantic structure, Jonson stood for and deliberately intended to revive the classical style; though with characteristic good sense he declared that not all the classical practices were applicable to English plays. He generally observed unity not only of action but also of time (a single day) and place, sometimes with serious resultant loss of probability. In his tragedies, 'Sejanus' and 'Catiline,' he excluded comic material; for the most part he kept scenes of death and violence off the stage; and he very carefully and slowly constructed plays which have nothing, indeed, of the poetic greatness of Sophocles or Euripides (rather a Jonsonese broad solidity) but which move steadily to their climaxes and then on to the catastrophes in the compact classical manner. He carried his scholarship, however, to the point of pedantry, not only in the illustrative extracts from Latin authors with which in the printed edition he filled the lower half of his pages, but in the plays themselves in the scrupulous exactitude of his rendering of the details of Roman life. The plays reconstruct the ancient world with much more minute accuracy than do Shakespeare's; the student should consider for himself whether they succeed better in reproducing its human reality, making it a living part of the reader's mental and spiritual possessions.

5. Jonson's style in his plays, especially the blank verse of his tragedies, exhibits the same general characteristics. It is strong, compact, and sometimes powerful, but it entirely lacks imaginative poetic beauty--it is really only rhythmical prose, though sometimes suffused with passion.

6. The surprising skill which Jonson, author of such plays, showed in devising the court masks, daintily unsubstantial creations of moral allegory, classical myth, and Teutonic folklore, is rendered less surprising, perhaps, by the lack in the masks of any very great lyric quality. There is no lyric quality at all in the greater part of his non-dramatic verse, though there is an occasional delightful exception, as in the famous 'Drink to me only with thine eyes.' But of his non-dramatic verse we shall speak in the next chapter.

7. Last, and not least: Jonson's revolt from romanticism to classicism initiated, chiefly in non-dramatic verse, the movement for restraint and regularity, which, making slow headway during the next half century, was to issue in the triumphant pseudo-classicism of the generations of Dryden and Pope. Thus, notable in himself, he was significant also as one of the moving forces of a great literary revolution.

## The other dramatists

From the many other dramatists of this highly dramatic period, some of whom in their own day enjoyed a reputation fully equal to that of Shakespeare and Jonson, we may merely select a few for brief mention. For not only does their light now pale hopelessly in the presence of Shakespeare, but in many cases their violations of taste and moral restraint pass the limits of present-day tolerance. Most of them, like Shakespeare, produced both comedies and tragedies, prevaillingly romantic but with elements of realism; most of them wrote more often in collaboration than did Shakespeare; they all shared the Elizabethan vigorously creative interest in life; but none of them attained either Shakespeare's wisdom, his power, or his mastery of poetic beauty. One of the most learned of the group was George Chapman, whose verse has a Jonsonian solidity not unaccompanied with Jonsonian ponderousness. He won fame also in non-dramatic poetry,

especially by vigorous but rather clumsy verse translations of the 'Iliad' and 'Odyssey,' Another highly individual figure is that of Thomas Dekker, who seems to have been one of the completest embodiments of irrepressible Elizabethan cheerfulness, though this was joined in him with an irresponsibility which kept him commonly floundering in debt or confined in debtor's prison. His 'Shoemaker's Holiday' (1600), still occasionally chosen by amateur companies for reproduction, gives a rough-and-ready but (apart from its coarseness) charming romanticized picture of the life of London apprentices and whole-hearted citizens. Thomas Heywood, a sort of journalist before the days of newspapers, produced an enormous amount of work in various literary forms; in the drama he claimed to have had 'an entire hand, or at least a maine finger' in no less than two hundred and twenty plays. Inevitably, therefore, he is careless and slipshod, but some of his portrayals of sturdy English men and women and of romantic adventure (as in 'The Fair Maid of the West') are of refreshing naturalness and breeziness. Thomas Middleton, also a very prolific writer, often deals, like Jonson and Heywood, with sordid material. John Marston, as well, has too little delicacy or reserve; he also wrote catch-as-catch-can non-dramatic satires.

The sanity of Shakespeare's plays, continuing and indeed increasing toward the end of his career, disguises for modern students the tendency to decline in the drama which set in at about the time of King James' accession. Not later than the end of the first decade of the century the dramatists as a class exhibit not only a decrease of originality in plot and characterization, but also a lowering of moral tone, which results largely from the closer identification of the drama with the Court party. There is a lack of seriousness of purpose, an increasing tendency to return, in more morbid spirit, to the sensationalism of the 1580's, and an anxious straining to attract and please the audiences by almost any means. These tendencies appear in the plays of Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, whose reputations are indissolubly linked together in one of the most famous literary partnerships of all time. Beaumont, however, was short-lived, and much the greater part of the fifty and more plays ultimately published under their joint names really belong to Fletcher alone or to Fletcher and other collaborators. The scholarship of our day agrees with the opinion of their contemporaries in assigning to Beaumont the greater share of judgment and intellectual power and to Fletcher the greater share of spontaneity and fancy. Fletcher's style is very individual. It is peculiarly sweet; but its unmistakable mark is his constant tendency to break down the blank verse line by the use of extra syllables, both within the line and at the end. The lyrics which he scatters through his plays are beautifully smooth and musical. The plays of Beaumont and Fletcher, as a group, are sentimentally romantic, often in an extravagant degree, though their charm often conceals the extravagance as well as the lack of true characterization. They are notable often for their portrayal of the loyal devotion of both men and women to king, lover, or friend. One of the best of them is 'Philaster, or Love Lies Bleeding,' while Fletcher's 'Faithful Shepherdess' is the most pleasing example in English of the artificial pastoral drama in the Italian and Spanish style.

The Elizabethan tendency to sensational horror finds its greatest artistic expression in two plays of John Webster, 'The White Devil, or Vittoria Corombona,' and 'The Duchess of Malfi.' Here the corrupt and brutal life of the Italian nobility of the Renaissance is presented with terrible frankness, but with an overwhelming sense for passion, tragedy, and pathos. The most moving pathos permeates some of the plays of John Ford (of the time of Charles I), for example, 'The Broken Heart'; but they are abnormal and unhealthy. Philip Massinger, a pupil and collaborator of Fletcher, was of thoughtful spirit, and apparently a sincere moralist at heart, in spite of much concession in his plays to the contrary demands of the time. His famous comedy, 'A New Way to Pay Old Debts,' a satire on greed and cruelty, is one of the few plays of the period, aside from Shakespeare's, which are still occasionally acted. The last dramatist of the whole great line was James Shirley, who survived the Commonwealth and the Restoration and died of exposure at the Fire of London in 1666. In his romantic comedies and comedies of manners Shirley vividly reflects the thoughtless life of the Court of Charles I and of the well-to-do contemporary London citizens and shows how surprisingly far that life had progressed toward the reckless frivolity and abandonment which after the interval of Puritan rule were to run riot in the Restoration period.

The great Elizabethan dramatic impulse had thus become deeply degenerate, and nothing could be more fitting than that it should be brought to a definite end. When the war broke out in 1642 one of the first acts of Parliament, now at last free to work its will on the enemies of Puritanism, was to decree that 'whereas public sports do not well agree with public calamities, nor public stage-plays with the seasons of humiliation,' all dramatic performances should cease. This law, fatal, of course, to the writing as well as the acting of plays, was enforced with only slightly relaxing rigor until very shortly before the Restoration of Charles II in 1660. Doubtless to the Puritans it seemed that their long fight against the theater had ended in permanent triumph; but this was only one of many respects in which the Puritans were to learn that human nature cannot be forced into permanent conformity with any rigidly over-severe standard, on however high ideals it may be based.

#### SUMMARY.

The chief dramatists of the whole sixty years of the great period may be conveniently grouped as follows: I. Shakespeare's early contemporaries, about 1580 to about 1593: Lyly, Peele, Greene, Kyd, Marlowe. II. Shakespeare. III. Shakespeare's

later contemporaries, under Elizabeth and James I: Jonson, Chapman, Dekker, Heywood, Middleton, Marston, Beaumont and Fletcher, Webster. IV. The last group, under James I and Charles I, to 1642: Ford, Massinger, and Shirley.

## The Seventeenth Century, 1603-1660. Prose And Poetry

The first half of the seventeenth century as a whole, compared with the Elizabethan age, was a period of relaxing vigor. The Renaissance enthusiasm had spent itself, and in place of the danger and glory which had long united the nation there followed increasing dissension in religion and politics and uncertainty as to the future of England and, indeed, as to the whole purpose of life. Through increased experience men were certainly wiser and more sophisticated than before, but they were also more self-conscious and sadder or more pensive. The output of literature did not diminish, but it spread itself over wider fields, in general fields of somewhat recondite scholarship rather than of creation. Nevertheless this period includes in prose one writer greater than any prose writer of the previous century, namely Francis Bacon, and, further, the book which unquestionably occupies the highest place in English literature, that is the King James version of the Bible; and in poetry it includes one of the very greatest figures, John Milton, together with a varied and highly interesting assemblage of lesser lyrists.

### Francis Bacon, Viscount St. Albans, 1561-1626.<sup>3</sup>

Francis Bacon, intellectually one of the most eminent Englishmen of all times, and chief formulator of the methods of modern science, was born in 1561 (three years before Shakespeare), the son of Sir Nicholas Bacon, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal under Queen Elizabeth and one of her most trusted earlier advisers. The boy's precocity led the queen to call him her 'little Lord Keeper.' At the age of twelve he, like Wyatt, was sent to Cambridge, where his chief impression was of disgust at the unfruitful scholastic application of Aristotle's ideas, still supreme in spite of a century of Renaissance enlightenment. A very much more satisfactory three years' residence in France in the household of the English ambassador was terminated in 1579 (the year of Spenser's 'Shepherd's Calendar') by the death of Sir Nicholas. Bacon was now ready to enter on the great career for which his talents fitted him, but his uncle by marriage, Lord Burghley, though all-powerful with the queen, systematically thwarted his progress, from jealous consciousness of his superiority to his own son. Bacon therefore studied law, and was soon chosen a member of Parliament, where he quickly became a leader. He continued, however, throughout his life to devote much of his time to study and scholarly scientific writing.

On the interpretation of Bacon's public actions depends the answer to the complex and much-debated question of his character. The most reasonable conclusions seem to be: that Bacon was sincerely devoted to the public good and in his earlier life was sometimes ready to risk his own interests in its behalf; that he had a perfectly clear theoretical insight into the principles of moral conduct; that he lacked the moral force of character to live on the level of his convictions, so that after the first, at least, his personal ambition was often stronger than his conscience; that he believed that public success could be gained only by conformity to the low standards of the age; that he fell into the fatal error of supposing that his own preeminent endowments and the services which they might enable him to render justified him in the use of unworthy means; that his sense of real as distinguished from apparent personal dignity was distressingly inadequate; and that, in general, like many men of great intellect, he was deficient in greatness of character, emotion, fine feeling, sympathy, and even in comprehension of the highest spiritual principles. He certainly shared to the full in the usual courtier's ambition for great place and wealth, and in the worldling's inclination to ostentatious display.

Having offended Queen Elizabeth by his boldness in successfully opposing an encroachment on the rights of the House of Commons, Bacon connected himself with the Earl of Essex and received from him many favors; but when Essex attempted a treasonable insurrection in 1601, Bacon, as one of the Queen's lawyers, displayed against him a subservient zeal which on theoretical grounds of patriotism might appear praiseworthy, but which in view of his personal obligations was grossly indecent. For the worldly prosperity which he sought, however, Bacon was obliged to wait until the accession of King James, after which his rise was rapid. The King appreciated his ability and often consulted him, and he frequently gave the wisest advice, whose acceptance might perhaps have averted the worst national disasters of the next fifty years. The advice was above the courage of both the King and the age; but Bacon was advanced through various legal offices, until in 1613 he was made Attorney-General and in 1618 (two years after Shakespeare's death) Lord High Chancellor of England, at the same time being raised to the peerage as Baron Verulam. During all this period, in spite of his better knowledge, he truckled with sorry servility to the King and his unworthy favorites and lent himself as an agent in their most arbitrary acts. Retribution overtook him in 1621, within a few days after his elevation to the dignity of Viscount St. Albans. The House of Commons, balked in an attack on the King and the Duke of Buckingham, suddenly turned on Bacon and impeached him for having received bribes in connection with his legal decisions as Lord Chancellor. Bacon admitted the taking of presents (against which in one of his essays he had directly cautioned judges), and threw himself on the mercy of the House of Lords, with whom the sentence lay. He appears to have been sincere in protesting later that the presents had not influenced his decisions and that he was the justest judge whom England had had for fifty years; it seems that the giving of

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3: Macaulay's well-known essay on Bacon is marred by Macaulay's besetting faults of superficiality and dogmatism and is best left unread.



presents by the parties to a suit was a customary abuse. But he had technically laid himself open to the malice of his enemies and was condemned to very heavy penalties, of which two were enforced, namely, perpetual incapacitation from holding public office, and banishment from Court. Even after this he continued, with an astonishing lack of good taste, to live extravagantly and beyond his means (again in disregard of his own precepts), so that Prince Charles observed that he 'scorned to go out in a snuff.' He died in 1626 from a cold caught in the prosecution of his scientific researches, namely in an experiment on the power of snow to preserve meat.

Bacon's splendid mind and unique intellectual vision produced, perhaps inevitably, considering his public activity, only fragmentary concrete achievements. The only one of his books still commonly read is the series of 'Essays,' which consist of brief and comparatively informal jottings on various subjects. In their earliest form, in 1597, the essays were ten in number, but by additions from time to time they had increased at last in 1625 to fifty-eight. They deal with a great variety of topics, whatever Bacon happened to be interested in, from friendship to the arrangement of a house, and in their condensation they are more like bare synopses than complete discussions. But their comprehensiveness of view, sureness of ideas and phrasing, suggestiveness, and apt illustrations reveal the pregnancy and practical force of Bacon's thought (though, on the other hand, he is not altogether free from the superstitions of his time and after the lapse of three hundred years sometimes seems commonplace). The whole general tone of the essays, also, shows the man, keen and worldly, not at all a poet or idealist. How to succeed and make the most of prosperity might be called the pervading theme of the essays, and subjects which in themselves suggest spiritual treatment are actually considered in accordance with a coldly intellectual calculation of worldly advantage.

The essays are scarcely less notable for style than for ideas. With characteristic intellectual independence Bacon strikes out for himself an extremely terse and clear manner of expression, doubtless influenced by such Latin authors as Tacitus, which stands in marked contrast to the formless diffuseness or artificial elaborateness of most Elizabethan and Jacobean prose. His unit of structure is always a short clause. The sentences are sometimes short, sometimes consist of a number of connected clauses; but they are always essentially loose rather than periodic; so that the thought is perfectly simple and its movement clear and systematic. The very numerous allusions to classical history and life are not the result of affectation, but merely indicate the natural furnishing of the mind of the educated Renaissance gentleman. The essays, it should be added, were evidently suggested and more or less influenced by those of the great French thinker, Montaigne, an earlier contemporary of Bacon. The hold of medieval scholarly tradition, it is further interesting to note, was still so strong that in order to insure their permanent preservation Bacon translated them into Latin—he took for granted that the English in which he first composed them and in which they will always be known was only a temporary vulgar tongue.

But Bacon's most important work, as we have already implied, was not in the field of pure literature but in the general advancement of knowledge, particularly knowledge of natural science; and of this great service we must speak briefly. His avowal to Burghley, made as early as 1592, is famous: 'I have taken all knowledge to be my province.' Briefly stated, his purposes, constituting an absorbing and noble ambition, were to survey all the learning of his time, in all lines of thought, natural science, morals, politics, and the rest, to overthrow the current method of *a priori* deduction, deduction resting, moreover, on very insufficient and long-antiquated bases of observation, and to substitute for it as the method of the future, unlimited fresh observation and experiment and inductive reasoning. This enormous task was to be mapped out and its results summarized in a Latin work called 'Magna Instauratione Scientiarum' (The Great Renewal of Knowledge); but parts of this survey were necessarily to be left for posterity to formulate, and of the rest Bacon actually composed only a fraction. What may be called the first part appeared originally in English in 1605 and is known by the abbreviated title, 'The Advancement of Learning'; the expanded Latin form has the title, 'De Augmentis Scientiarum.' Its exhaustive enumeration of the branches of thought and knowledge, what has been accomplished in each and what may be hoped for it in the future, is thoroughly fascinating, though even here Bacon was not capable of passionate enthusiasm. However, the second part of the work, 'Novum Organum' (The New Method), written in Latin and published in 1620, is the most important. Most interesting here, perhaps, is the classification (contrasting with Plato's doctrine of divinely perfect controlling ideas) of the 'idols' (phantoms) which mislead the human mind. Of these Bacon finds four sorts: idols of the tribe, which are inherent in human nature; idols of the cave, the errors of the individual; idols of the market-place, due to mistaken reliance on words; and idols of the theater (that is, of the schools), resulting from false reasoning.

In the details of all his scholarly work Bacon's knowledge and point of view were inevitably imperfect. Even in natural science he was not altogether abreast of his time—he refused to accept Harvey's discovery of the manner of the circulation of the blood and the Copernican system of astronomy. Neither was he, as is sometimes supposed, the *inventor* of the inductive method of observation and reasoning, which in some degree is fundamental in all study. But he did, much more fully and clearly than any one before him, demonstrate the importance and possibilities of that method; modern experimental science and thought have proceeded directly in the path which he pointed out; and he is fully entitled to the great honor of being called their father, which certainly places him high among the great figures in the history of human thought.

## The King James Bible, 1611

It was during the reign of James I that the long series of sixteenth century translations of the Bible reached its culmination in what we have already called the greatest of all English books (or rather, collections of books), the King James ('Authorized') version. In 1604 an ecclesiastical conference accepted a suggestion, approved by the king, that a new and more accurate rendering of the Bible should be made. The work was entrusted to a body of about fifty scholars, who divided themselves into six groups, among which the various books of the Bible were apportioned. The resulting translation, proceeding with the inevitable slowness, was completed in 1611, and then rather rapidly superseded all other English versions for both public and private use. This King James Bible is universally accepted as the chief masterpiece of English prose style. The translators followed previous versions so far as possible, checking them by comparison with the original Hebrew and Greek, so that while attaining the greater correctness at which they aimed they preserved the accumulated stylistic excellences of three generations of their predecessors; and their language, properly varying according to the nature of the different books, possesses an imaginative grandeur and rhythm not unworthy--and no higher praise could be awarded--of the themes which it expresses. The still more accurate scholarship of a later century demanded the Revised Version of 1881, but the superior literary quality of the King James version remains undisputed. Its style, by the nature of the case, was somewhat archaic from the outset, and of course has become much more so with the passage of time. This entails the practical disadvantage of making the Bible--events, characters, and ideas--seem less real and living; but on the other hand it helps inestimably to create the finer imaginative atmosphere which is so essential for the genuine religious spirit.

### Minor prose writers

Among the prose authors of the period who hold an assured secondary position in the history of English literature three or four may be mentioned: Robert Burton, Oxford scholar, minister, and recluse, whose 'Anatomy of Melancholy' (1621), a vast and quaint compendium of information both scientific and literary, has largely influenced numerous later writers; Jeremy Taylor, royalist clergyman and bishop, one of the most eloquent and spiritual of English preachers, author of 'Holy Living' (1650) and 'Holy Dying' (1651); Izaak Walton, London tradesman and student, best known for his 'Compleat Angler' (1653), but author also of charming brief lives of Donne, George Herbert, and others of his contemporaries; and Sir Thomas Browne, a scholarly physician of Norwich, who elaborated a fastidiously poetic Latinized prose style for his pensively delightful 'Religio Medici' (A Physician's Religion--1643) and other works.

### Lyric poetry

Apart from the drama and the King James Bible, the most enduring literary achievement of the period was in poetry. Milton--distinctly, after Shakespeare, the greatest writer of the century--must receive separate consideration; the more purely lyric poets may be grouped together.

The absence of any sharp line of separation between the literature of the reign of Elizabeth and of those of James I and Charles I is no less marked in the case of the lyric poetry than of the drama. Some of the poets whom we have already discussed in Chapter V continued writing until the second decade of the seventeenth century, or later, and some of those whom we shall here name had commenced their career well before 1600. Just as in the drama, therefore, something of the Elizabethan spirit remains in the lyric poetry; yet here also before many years there is a perceptible change; the Elizabethan spontaneous joyousness largely vanishes and is replaced by more self-conscious artistry or thought.

The Elizabethan note is perhaps most unmodified in certain anonymous songs and other poems of the early years of James I, such as the exquisite 'Weep you no more, sad fountains.' It is clear also in the charming songs of Thomas Campion, a physician who composed both words and music for several song-books, and in Michael Drayton, a voluminous poet and dramatist who is known to most readers only for his finely rugged patriotic ballad on the battle of Agincourt. Sir Henry Wotton, [Footnote: The first *o* is pronounced as in *note*.] statesman and Provost (head) of Eton School, displays the Elizabethan idealism in 'The Character of a Happy Life' and in his stanzas in praise of Elizabeth, daughter of King James, wife of the ill-starred Elector-Palatine and King of Bohemia, and ancestress of the present English royal family. The Elizabethan spirit is present but mingled with seventeenth century melancholy in the sonnets and other poems of the Scotch gentleman William Drummond of Hawthornden (the name of his estate near Edinburgh), who in quiet life-long retirement lamented the untimely death of the lady to whom he had been betrothed or meditated on heavenly things.

In Drummond appears the influence of Spenser, which was strong on many poets of the period, especially on some, like William Browne, who continued the pastoral form. Another of the main forces, in lyric poetry as in the drama, was the beginning of the revival of the classical spirit, and in lyric poetry also this was largely due to Ben Jonson. As we have

already said, the greater part of Jonson's non-dramatic poetry, like his dramas, expresses chiefly the downright strength of his mind and character. It is terse and unadorned, dealing often with commonplace things in the manner of the Epistles and Satires of Horace, and it generally has more of the quality of intellectual prose than of real emotional poetry. A very favorable representative of it is the admirable, eulogy on Shakespeare included in the first folio edition of Shakespeare's works. In a few instances, however, Jonson strikes the true lyric note delightfully. Every one knows and sings his two stanzas 'To Celia'--'Drink to me only with thine eyes,' which would still be famous without the exquisitely appropriate music that has come down to us from Jonson's own time, and which are no less beautiful because they consist largely of ideas culled from the Greek philosopher Theophrastus. In all his poems, however, Jonson aims consistently at the classical virtues of clearness, brevity, proportion, finish, and elimination of all excess.

These latter qualities appear also in the lyrics which abound in the plays of John Fletcher, and yet it cannot be said that Fletcher's sweet melody is more classical than Elizabethan. His other distinctive quality is the tone of somewhat artificial courtliness which was soon to mark the lyrics of the other poets of the Cavalier party. An avowed disciple of Jonson and his classicism and a greater poet than Fletcher is Robert Herrick, who, indeed, after Shakespeare and Milton, is the finest lyric poet of these two centuries.

Herrick, the nephew of a wealthy goldsmith, seems, after a late graduation from Cambridge, to have spent some years about the Court and in the band of Jonson's 'sons.' Entering the Church when he was nearly forty, he received the small country parish of Dean Prior in the southwest (Devonshire), which he held for nearly twenty years, until 1647, when he was dispossessed by the victorious Puritans. After the Restoration he was reinstated, and he continued to hold the place until his death in old age in 1634. He published his poems (all lyrics) in 1633 in a collection which he called

'Hesperides and Noble Numbers.' The 'Hesperides' (named from the golden apples of the classical Garden of the Daughters of the Sun) are twelve hundred little secular pieces, the 'Noble Numbers' a much less extensive series of religious lyrics. Both sorts are written in a great variety of stanza forms, all equally skilful and musical. Few of the poems extend beyond fifteen or twenty lines in length, and many are mere epigrams of four lines or even two. The chief secular subjects are: Herrick's devotion to various ladies, Julia, Anthea, Perilla, and sundry more, all presumably more or less imaginary; the joy and uncertainty of life; the charming beauty of Nature; country life, folk lore, and festivals; and similar light or familiar themes. Herrick's characteristic quality, so far as it can be described, is a blend of Elizabethan joyousness with classical perfection of finish. The finish, however, really the result of painstaking labor, such as Herrick had observed in his uncle's shop and as Jonson had enjoined, is perfectly unobtrusive; so apparently natural are the poems that they seem the irrepressible unmeditated outpourings of happy and idle moments. In care-free lyric charm Herrick can certainly never be surpassed; he is certainly one of the most captivating of all the poets of the world. Some of the 'Noble Numbers' are almost as pleasing as the 'Hesperides,' but not because of real religious significance. For of anything that can be called spiritual religion Herrick was absolutely incapable; his nature was far too deficient in depth. He himself and his philosophy of life were purely Epicurean, Hedonistic, or pagan, in the sense in which we use those terms to-day. His forever controlling sentiment is that to which he gives perfect expression in his best-known song, 'Gather ye rosebuds,' namely the Horatian 'Carpe diem'--'Snatch all possible pleasure from the rapidly-fleeting hours and from this gloriously delightful world.' He is said to have performed his religious duties with regularity; though sometimes in an outburst of disgust at the stupidity of his rustic parishioners he would throw his sermon in their faces and rush out of the church. Put his religion is altogether conventional. He thanks God for material blessings, prays for their continuance, and as the conclusion of everything, in compensation for a formally orthodox life, or rather creed, expects when he dies to be admitted to Heaven. The simple naivete with which he expresses this skin-deep and primitive faith is, indeed, one of the chief sources of charm in the 'Noble Numbers.'

Herrick belongs in part to a group of poets who, being attached to the Court, and devoting some, at least, of their verses to conventional love-making, are called the Cavalier Poets. Among the others Thomas Carew follows the classical principles of Jonson in lyrics which are facile, smooth, and sometimes a little frigid. Sir John Suckling, a handsome and capricious representative of all the extravagances of the Court set, with whom he was enormously popular, tossed off with affected carelessness a mass of slovenly lyrics of which a few audaciously impudent ones are worthy to survive. From the equally chaotic product of Colonel Richard Lovelace stand out the two well-known bits of noble idealism, 'To Lucasta, Going to the Wars,' and 'To Althea, from Prison.' George Wither (1588-1667), a much older man than Suckling and Lovelace, may be mentioned with them as the writer in his youth of light-hearted love-poems. But in the Civil War he took the side of Parliament and under Cromwell he rose to the rank of major-general. In his later life he wrote a great quantity of Puritan religious verse, largely prosy in spite of his fluency.

The last important group among these lyrists is that of the more distinctly religious poets. The chief of these, George Herbert (1593-1633), the subject of one of the most delightful of the short biographies of Izaak Walton, belonged to a distinguished family of the Welsh Border, one branch of which held the earldom of Pembroke, so that the poet was related to the young noble who may have been Shakespeare's patron. He was also younger brother of Lord Edward

Herbert of Cherbury, an inveterate duellist and the father of English Deism. [Footnote: See below, p. 212.] Destined by his mother to peaceful pursuits, he wavered from the outset between two forces, religious devotion and a passion for worldly comfort and distinction. For a long period the latter had the upper hand, and his life has been described by his best editor, Professor George Herbert Palmer, as twenty-seven years of vacillation and three of consecrated service. Appointed Public Orator, or showman, of his university, Cambridge, he spent some years in enjoying the somewhat trifling elegancies of life and in truckling to the great. Then, on the death of his patrons, he passed through a period of intense crisis from which he emerged wholly spiritualized. The three remaining years of his life he spent in the little country parish of Bemerton, just outside of Salisbury, as a fervent High Church minister, or as he preferred to name himself, priest, in the strictest devotion to his professional duties and to the practices of an ascetic piety which to the usual American mind must seem about equally admirable and conventional. His religious poems, published after his death in a volume called 'The Temple,' show mainly two things, first his intense and beautiful consecration to his personal God and Saviour, which, in its earnest sincerity, renders him distinctly the most representative poet of the Church of England, and second the influence of Donne, who was a close friend of his mother. The titles of most of the poems, often consisting of a single word, are commonly fantastic and symbolical--for example, 'The Collar,' meaning the yoke of submission to God; and his use of conceits, though not so pervasive as with Donne, is equally contorted. To a present-day reader the apparent affectations may seem at first to throw doubt on Herbert's genuineness; but in reality he was aiming to dedicate to religious purposes what appeared to him the highest style of poetry. Without question he is, in a true if special sense, a really great poet.

The second of these religious poets, Richard Crashaw, [Footnote: The first vowel is pronounced as in the noun *crash*.] whose life (1612-1649) was not quite so short as Herbert's, combined an ascetic devotion with a glowingly sensuous esthetic nature that seems rather Spanish than English. Born into an extreme Protestant family, but outraged by the wanton iconoclasm of the triumphant Puritans, and deprived by them of his fellowship, at Cambridge, he became a Catholic and died a canon in the church of the miracle-working Lady (Virgin Mary) of Loretto in Italy. His most characteristic poetry is marked by extravagant conceits and by ecstatic outbursts of emotion that have been called more ardent than anything else in English; though he sometimes writes also in a vein of calm and limpid beauty. He was a poetic disciple of Herbert, as he avowed by humbly entitling his volume 'Steps to the Temple.'

The life of Henry Vaughan [Footnote: The second *a* is not now sounded.] (1621-1695) stands in contrast to those of Herbert and Crashaw both by its length and by its quietness. Vaughan himself emphasized his Welsh race by designating himself 'The Silurist' (native of South Wales). After an incomplete university course at Jesus College (the Welsh college), Oxford, and some apparently idle years in London among Jonson's disciples, perhaps also after serving the king in the war, he settled down in his native mountains to the self-denying life of a country physician. His important poems were mostly published at this time, in 1650 and 1655, in the collection which he named 'Silex Scintillans' (The Flaming Flint), a title explained by the frontispiece, which represents a flinty heart glowing under the lightning stroke of God's call. Vaughan's chief traits are a very fine and calm philosophic-religious spirit and a carefully observant love of external Nature, in which he sees mystic revelations of God. In both respects he is closely akin to the later and greater Wordsworth, and his 'Retreat' has the same theme as Wordsworth's famous 'Ode on Intimations of Immortality,' the idea namely that children have a greater spiritual sensitiveness than older persons, because they have come to earth directly from a former life in Heaven.

The contrast between the chief Anglican and Catholic religious poets of this period has been thus expressed by a discerning critic: 'Herrick's religious emotions are only as ripples on a shallow lake when compared to the crested waves of Crashaw, the storm-tides of Herbert, and the deep-sea stirrings of Vaughan.'

We may give a further word of mention to the voluminous Francis Quarles, who in his own day and long after enjoyed enormous popularity, especially among members of the Church of England and especially for his 'Emblems,' a book of a sort common in Europe for a century before his time, in which fantastic woodcuts, like Vaughan's 'Silex Scintillans,' were illustrated with short poems of religious emotion, chiefly dominated by fear. But Quarles survives only as an interesting curiosity.

Three other poets whose lives belong to the middle of the century may be said to complete this entire lyric group. Andrew Marvell, a very moderate Puritan, joined with Milton in his office of Latin Secretary under Cromwell, wrote much poetry of various sorts, some of it in the Elizabethan octosyllabic couplet. He voices a genuine love of Nature, like Wither often in the pastoral form; but his best-known poem is the 'Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland,' containing the famous eulogy of King Charles' bearing at his execution. Abraham Cowley, a youthful prodigy and always conspicuous for intellectual power, was secretary to Queen Henrietta Maria after her flight to France and later was a royalist spy in England. His most conspicuous poems are his so-called 'Pindaric Odes,' in which he supposed that he was imitating the structure of the Greek Pindar but really originated the pseudo-Pindaric Ode, a poem in irregular, non-correspondent stanzas. He is the last important representative of the 'Metaphysical' style. In his own day he was acclaimed as the greatest poet of all time, but as is usual in such cases his reputation very rapidly waned. Edmund Waller (1606-1687), a very wealthy gentleman in public life who played a flatly discreditable part in the Civil War, is most important for his share

in shaping the riming pentameter couplet into the smooth pseudo-classical form rendered famous by Dryden and Pope; but his only notable single poems are two Cavalier love-lyrics in stanzas, 'On a Girdle' and 'Go, Lovely Rose.'

## John Milton, 1608-1674

Conspicuous above all his contemporaries as the representative poet of Puritanism, and, by almost equally general consent, distinctly the greatest of English poets except Shakespeare, stands John Milton. His life falls naturally into three periods: 1. Youth and preparation, 1608-1639, when he wrote his shorter poems. 2. Public life, 1639-1660, when he wrote, or at least published, in poetry, only a few sonnets. 3. Later years, 1660-1674, of outer defeat, but of chief poetic achievement, the period of 'Paradise Lost,' 'Paradise Regained,' and 'Samson Agonistes.'

Milton was born in London in December, 1608. His father was a prosperous scrivener, or lawyer of the humbler sort, and a Puritan, but broad-minded, and his children were brought up in the love of music, beauty, and learning. At the age of twelve the future poet was sent to St. Paul's School, and he tells us that from this time on his devotion to study seldom allowed him to leave his books earlier than midnight. At sixteen, in 1625, he entered Cambridge, where he remained during the seven years required for the M. A. degree, and where he was known as 'the lady of Christ's' [College], perhaps for his beauty, of which all his life he continued proud, perhaps for his moral scrupulousness. Milton was never, however, a conventional prig, and a quarrel with a self-important tutor led at one time to his informal suspension from the University. His nature, indeed, had many elements quite inconsistent with the usual vague popular conception of him. He was always not only inflexible in his devotion to principle, but--partly, no doubt, from consciousness of his intellectual superiority--haughty as well as reserved, self-confident, and little respectful of opinions and feelings that clashed with his own. Nevertheless in his youth he had plenty of animal spirits and always for his friends warm human sympathies.

To his college years belong two important poems. His Christmas hymn, the 'Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity,' shows the influence of his early poetical master, Spenser, and of contemporary pastoral poets, though it also contains some conceits--truly poetic conceits, however, not exercises in intellectual cleverness like many of those of Donne and his followers. With whatever qualifications, it is certainly one of the great English lyrics, and its union of Renaissance sensuousness with grandeur of conception and sureness of expression foretells clearly enough at twenty the poet of 'Paradise Lost.' The sonnet on his twenty-third birthday, further, is known to almost every reader of poetry as the best short expression in literature of the dedication of one's life and powers to God.

Milton had planned to enter the ministry, but the growing predominance of the High-Church party made this impossible for him, and on leaving the University in 1632 he retired to the country estate which his parents now occupied at Horton, twenty miles west of London. Here, for nearly six years, amid surroundings which nourished his poet's love for Nature, he devoted his time chiefly to further mastery of the whole range of approved literature, Greek, Latin, French, Italian, and English. His poems of these years also are few, but they too are of the very highest quality.

'L'Allegro' and 'Il Penseroso' are idealized visions, in the tripping Elizabethan octosyllabic couplet, of the pleasures of suburban life viewed in moods respectively of light-hearted happiness and of reflection.

'Comus,' the last of the Elizabethan and Jacobean masks, combines an exquisite poetic beauty and a real dramatic action more substantial than that of any other mask with a serious moral theme (the security of Virtue) in a fashion that renders it unique. 'Lycidas' is one of the supreme English elegies; though the grief which helps to create its power sprang more from the recent death of the poet's mother than from that of the nominal subject, his college acquaintance, Edward King, and though in the hands of a lesser artist the solemn denunciation of the false leaders of the English Church might not have been wrought into so fine a harmony with the pastoral form.

Milton's first period ends with an experience designed to complete his preparation for his career, a fifteen months' tour in France and Italy, where the highest literary circles received him cordially. From this trip he returned in 1639, sooner than he had planned, because, he said, the public troubles at home, foreshadowing the approaching war, seemed to him a call to service; though in fact some time intervened before his entrance on public life.

The twenty years which follow, the second period of Milton's career, developed and modified his nature and ideas in an unusual degree and fashion. Outwardly the occupations which they brought him appear chiefly as an unfortunate waste of his great poetic powers. The sixteen sonnets which belong here show how nobly this form could be adapted to the varied expression of the most serious thought, but otherwise Milton abandoned poetry, at least the publication of it, for prose, and for prose which was mostly ephemeral. Taking up his residence in London, for some time he carried on a small private school in his own house, where he much overworked his boys in the mistaken effort to raise their intellectual ambitions to the level of his own. Naturally unwilling to confine himself to a private sphere, he soon engaged in a prose controversy

supporting the Puritan view against the Episcopal form of church government, that is against the office of bishops. There shortly followed the most regrettable incident in his whole career, which pathetically illustrates also the lack of a sense of humor which was perhaps his greatest defect. At the age of thirty-four, and apparently at first sight, he suddenly married Mary Powell, the seventeen-year-old daughter of a royalist country gentleman with whom his family had long maintained some business and social relations. Evidently this daughter of the Cavaliers met a rude disillusionment in Milton's Puritan household and in his Old Testament theory of woman's inferiority and of a wife's duty of strict subjection to her husband; a few weeks after the marriage she fled to her family and refused to return. Thereupon, with characteristic egoism, Milton put forth a series of pamphlets on divorce, arguing, contrary to English law, and with great scandal to the public, that mere incompatibility of temper was adequate ground for separation. He even proceeded so far as to make proposals of marriage to another woman. But after two years and the ruin of the royalist cause his wife made unconditional submission, which Milton accepted, and he also received and supported her whole family in his house. Meanwhile his divorce pamphlets had led to the best of his prose writings. He had published the pamphlets without the license of Parliament, then required for all books, and a suit was begun against him. He replied with 'Areopagitica,' an eloquent and noble argument against the licensing system and in favor of freedom of publication within the widest possible limits. (The name is an allusion to the condemnation of the works of Protagoras by the Athenian Areopagus.) In the stress of public affairs the attack on him was dropped, but the book remains, a deathless plea for individual liberty.

Now at last Milton was drawn into active public life. The execution of the King by the extreme Puritan minority excited an outburst of indignation not only in England but throughout Europe. Milton, rising to the occasion, defended the act in a pamphlet, thereby beginning a paper controversy, chiefly with the Dutch scholar Salmasius, which lasted for several years. By 1652 it had resulted in the loss of Milton's eyesight, previously over-strained by his studies--a sacrifice in which he gloried but which lovers of poetry must always regret, especially since the controversy largely consisted, according to the custom of the time, in a disgusting exchange of personal scurrilities. Milton's championship of the existing government, however, together with his scholarship, had at once secured for him the position of Latin secretary, or conductor of the diplomatic correspondence of the State with foreign countries. He held this office, after the loss of his eyesight, with Marvell as a colleague, under both Parliament and Cromwell, but it is an error to suppose that he exerted any influence in the management of affairs or that he was on familiar terms with the Protector. At the Restoration he necessarily lost both the position and a considerable part of his property, and for a while he went into hiding; but through the efforts of Marvell and others he was finally included in the general amnesty.

In the remaining fourteen years which make the third period of his life Milton stands out for subsequent ages as a noble figure. His very obstinacy and egoism now enabled him, blind, comparatively poor, and the representative of a lost cause, to maintain his proud and patient dignity in the midst of the triumph of all that was most hateful to him, and, as he believed, to God. His isolation, indeed, was in many respects extreme, though now as always he found the few sympathetic friends on whom his nature was quite dependent. His religious beliefs had become what would at present be called Unitarian, and he did not associate with any of the existing denominations; in private theory he had even come to believe in polygamy. At home he is said to have suffered from the coldness or more active antipathy of his three daughters, which is no great cause for wonder if we must credit the report that he compelled them to read aloud to him in foreign languages of which he had taught them the pronunciation but not the meaning. Their mother had died some years before, and he had soon lost the second wife who is the subject of one of his finest sonnets. In 1663, at the age of fifty-four, he was united in a third marriage to Elizabeth Minshull, a woman of twenty-four, who was to survive him for more than fifty years.

The important fact of this last period, however, is that Milton now had the leisure to write, or to complete, 'Paradise Lost.' For a quarter of a century he had avowedly cherished the ambition to produce 'such a work as the world would not willingly let die' and had had in mind, among others, the story of Man's Fall. Outlines for a treatment of it not in epic but in dramatic form are preserved in a list of a hundred possible subjects for a great work which he drew up as early as 1640, and during the Commonwealth period he seems not only to have been slowly maturing the plan but to have composed parts of the existing poem; nevertheless the actual work of composition belongs chiefly to the years following 1660. The story as told in Genesis had received much elaboration in Christian tradition from a very early period and Milton drew largely from this general tradition and no doubt to some extent from various previous treatments of the Bible narrative in several languages which he might naturally have read and kept in mind. But beyond the simple outline the poem, like every great work, is essentially the product of his own genius. He aimed, specifically, to produce a Christian epic which should rank with the great epics of antiquity and with those of the Italian Renaissance.

In this purpose he was entirely successful. As a whole, by the consent of all competent judges, 'Paradise Lost' is worthy of its theme, perhaps the greatest that the mind of man can conceive, namely 'to justify the ways of God.' Of course there are defects. The seventeenth century theology, like every successive theological, philosophical, and scientific system, has lost its hold on later generations, and it becomes dull indeed in the long expository passages of the poem. The attempt to express spiritual ideas through the medium of the secular epic, with its battles and councils and all the forms of physical

life, is of course rationally paradoxical. It was early pointed out that in spite of himself Milton has in some sense made Satan the hero of the poem--a reader can scarcely fail to sympathize with the fallen archangel in his unconquerable Puritan-like resistance to the arbitrary decrees of Milton's despotic Deity. Further, Milton's personal, English, and Puritan prejudices sometimes intrude in various ways. But all these things are on the surface. In sustained imaginative grandeur of conception, expression, and imagery 'Paradise Lost' yields to no human work, and the majestic and varied movement of the blank verse, here first employed in a really great non-dramatic English poem, is as magnificent as anything else in literature. It cannot be said that the later books always sustain the greatness of the first two; but the profusely scattered passages of sensuous description, at least, such as those of the Garden of Eden and of the beauty of Eve, are in their own way equally fine. Stately and more familiar passages alike show that however much his experience had done to harden Milton's Puritanism, his youthful Renaissance love of beauty for beauty's sake had lost none of its strength, though of course it could no longer be expressed with youthful lightness of fancy and melody. The poem is a magnificent example of classical art, in the best Greek spirit, united with glowing romantic feeling. Lastly, the value of Milton's scholarship should by no means be overlooked. All his poetry, from the 'Nativity Ode' onward, is like a rich mosaic of gems borrowed from a great range of classical and modern authors, and in 'Paradise Lost' the allusions to literature and history give half of the romantic charm and very much of the dignity. The poem could have been written only by one who combined in a very high degree intellectual power, poetic feeling, religious idealism, profound scholarship and knowledge of literature, and also experienced knowledge of the actual world of men.

'Paradise Lost' was published in 1677. It was followed in 1671 by 'Paradise Regained,' only one-third as long and much less important; and by 'Samson Agonistes' (Samson in his Death Struggle). In the latter Milton puts the story of the fallen hero's last days into the majestic form of a Greek drama, imparting to it the passionate but lofty feeling evoked by the close similarity of Samson's situation to his own. This was his last work, and he died in 1674. Whatever his faults, the moral, intellectual and poetic greatness of his nature sets him apart as in a sense the grandest figure in English literature.

## **John Bunyan**

Seventeenth century Puritanism was to find a supreme spokesman in prose fiction as well as in poetry; John Milton and John Bunyan, standing at widely different angles of experience, make one of the most interesting complementary pairs in all literature. By the mere chronology of his works, Bunyan belongs in our next period, but in his case mere chronology must be disregarded.

Bunyan was born in 1628 at the village of Elstow, just outside of Bedford, in central England. After very slight schooling and some practice at his father's trade of tinker, he was in 1644 drafted for two years and a half into garrison service in the Parliamentary army. Released from this occupation, he married a poor but excellent wife and worked at his trade; but the important experiences of his life were the religious ones. Endowed by nature with great moral sensitiveness, he was nevertheless a person of violent impulses and had early fallen into profanity and laxity of conduct, which he later described with great exaggeration as a condition of abandoned wickedness. But from childhood his abnormally active dramatic imagination had tormented him with dreams and fears of devils and hell-fire, and now he entered on a long and agonizing struggle between his religious instinct and his obstinate self-will. He has told the whole story in his spiritual autobiography, 'Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners,' which is one of the notable religious books of the world. A reader of it must be filled about equally with admiration for the force of will and perseverance that enabled Bunyan at last to win his battle, and pity for the fantastic morbidness that created out of next to nothing most of his well-nigh intolerable tortures. One Sunday, for example, fresh from a sermon on Sabbath observance, he was engaged in a game of 'cat,' when he suddenly heard within himself the question, 'Wilt thou leave thy sins and go to heaven, or have thy sins and go to hell?' Stupefied, he looked up to the sky and seemed there to see the Lord Jesus gazing at him 'hotly displeased' and threatening punishment. Again, one of his favorite diversions was to watch bellmen ringing the chimes in the church steeples, and though his Puritan conscience insisted that the pleasure was 'vain,' still he would not forego it. Suddenly one day as he was indulging in it the thought occurred to him that God might cause one of the bells to fall and kill him, and he hastened to shield himself by standing under a beam. But, he reflected, the bell might easily rebound from the wall and strike him; so he shifted his position to the steeple-door. Then 'it came into his head, "How if the steeple itself should fall?"' and with that he fled alike from the controversy and the danger.

Relief came when at the age of twenty-four he joined a non-sectarian church in Bedford (his own point of view being Baptist). A man of so energetic spirit could not long remain inactive, and within two years he was preaching in the surrounding villages. A dispute with the Friends had already led to the beginning of his controversial writing when in 1660 the Restoration rendered preaching by persons outside the communion of the Church of England illegal, and he was arrested and imprisoned in Bedford jail. Consistently refusing to give the promise of submission and abstention from preaching which at any time would have secured his release, he continued in prison for twelve years, not suffering particular discomfort and working for the support of his family by fastening the ends onto shoestrings. During this time he

wrote and published several of the most important of his sixty books and pamphlets. At last, in 1672, the authorities abandoned the ineffective requirement of conformity, and he was released and became pastor of his church. Three years later he was again imprisoned for six months, and it was at that time that he composed the first part of 'The Pilgrim's Progress,' which was published in 1678. During the remaining ten years of his life his reputation and authority among the Dissenters almost equalled his earnest devotion and kindness, and won for him from his opponents the good-naturedly jocosely title of 'the Baptist bishop.' He died in 1688.

Several of Bunyan's books are strong, but none of the others is to be named together with 'The Pilgrim's Progress.' This has been translated into nearly or quite a hundred languages and dialects—a record never approached by any other book of English authorship. The sources of its power are obvious. It is the intensely sincere presentation by a man of tremendous moral energy of what he believed to be the one subject of eternal and incalculable importance to every human being, the subject namely of personal salvation. Its language and style, further, are founded on the noble and simple model of the English Bible, which was almost the only book that Bunyan knew, and with which his whole being was saturated. His triumphant and loving joy in his religion enables him often to attain the poetic beauty and eloquence of his original; but both by instinct and of set purpose he rendered his own style even more simple and direct, partly by the use of homely vernacular expressions. What he had said in 'Grace Abounding' is equally true here: 'I could have stepped into a style much higher ... but I dare not. God did not play in convincing of me ... wherefore I may not play in my relating of these experiences.' 'Pilgrim's Progress' is perfectly intelligible to any child, and further, it is highly dramatic and picturesque. It is, to be sure, an allegory, but one of those allegories which seem inherent in the human mind and hence more natural than the most direct narrative. For all men life is indeed a journey, and the Slough of Despond, Doubting Castle, Vanity Fair, and the Valley of Humiliation are places where in one sense or another every human soul has often struggled and suffered; so that every reader goes hand in hand with Christian and his friends, fears for them in their dangers and rejoices in their escapes. The incidents, however, have all the further fascination of supernatural romance; and the union of this element with the homely sincerity of the style accounts for much of the peculiar quality of the book. Universal in its appeal, absolutely direct and vivid in manner—such a work might well become, as it speedily did, one of the most famous of world classics. It is interesting to learn, therefore, that Bunyan had expected its circulation to be confined to the common people; the early editions are as cheap as possible in paper, printing, and illustrations.

Criticism, no doubt, easily discovers in 'Pilgrim's Progress' technical faults. The story often lacks the full development and balance of incidents and narration which a trained literary artist would have given it; the allegory is inconsistent in a hundred ways and places; the characters are only types; and Bunyan, always more preacher than artist, is distinctly unfair to the bad ones among them. But these things are unimportant. Every allegory is inconsistent, and Bunyan repeatedly takes pains to emphasize that this is a dream; while the simplicity of character-treatment increases the directness of the main effect. When all is said, the book remains the greatest example in literature of what absolute earnestness may make possible for a plain and untrained man. Nothing, of course, can alter the fundamental distinctions. 'Paradise Lost' is certainly greater than 'Pilgrim's Progress,' because it is the work of a poet and a scholar as well as a religious enthusiast. But 'Pilgrim's Progress,' let it be said frankly, will always find a dozen readers where Milton has one by choice, and no man can afford to think otherwise than respectfully of achievements which speak powerfully and nobly to the underlying instincts and needs of all mankind.

The naturalness of the allegory, it may be added, renders the resemblance of 'Pilgrim's Progress' to many previous treatments of the same theme and to less closely parallel works like 'The Faerie Queene' probably accidental; in any significant sense Bunyan probably had no other source than the Bible and his own imagination.

## **The Tudors and the Elizabethan Age**

The beginning of the Tudor dynasty coincided with the first dissemination of printed matter. William Caxton's press was established in 1476, only nine years before the beginning of Henry VII's reign. Caxton's achievement encouraged writing of all kinds and also influenced the standardization of the English language. The early Tudor period, particularly the reign of Henry VIII, was marked by a break with the Roman Catholic Church and a weakening of feudal ties, which brought about a vast increase in the power of the monarchy.

Stronger political relationships with the Continent were also developed, increasing England's exposure to Renaissance culture. Humanism became the most important force in English literary and intellectual life, both in its narrow sense—the study and imitation of the Latin classics—and in its broad sense—the affirmation of the secular, in addition to the otherworldly, concerns of people. These forces produced during the reign (1558–1603) of Elizabeth I one of the most fruitful eras in literary history.



The energy of England's writers matched that of its mariners and merchants. Accounts by men such as Richard Hakluyt, Samuel Purchas, and Sir Walter Raleigh were eagerly read. The activities and literature of the Elizabethans reflected a new nationalism, which expressed itself also in the works of chroniclers (John Stow, Raphael Holinshed, and others), historians, and translators and even in political and religious tracts. A myriad of new genres, themes, and ideas were incorporated into English literature. Italian poetic forms, especially the sonnet, became models for English poets.

Sir Thomas Wyatt was the most successful sonneteer among early Tudor poets, and was, with Henry Howard, earl of Surrey, a seminal influence. *Tottel's Miscellany* (1557) was the first and most popular of many collections of experimental poetry by different, often anonymous, hands. A common goal of these poets was to make English as flexible a poetic instrument as Italian. Among the more prominent of this group were Thomas Churchyard, George Gascoigne, and Edward de Vere, earl of Oxford. An ambitious and influential work was *A Mirror for Magistrates* (1559), a historical verse narrative by several poets that updated the medieval view of history and the morals to be drawn from it.

The poet who best synthesized the ideas and tendencies of the English Renaissance was Edmund Spenser. His unfinished epic poem *The Faerie Queen* (1596) is a treasure house of romance, allegory, adventure, Neoplatonic ideas, patriotism, and Protestant morality, all presented in a variety of literary styles. The ideal English Renaissance man was Sir Philip Sidney—scholar, poet, critic, courtier, diplomat, and soldier—who died in battle at the age of 32. His best poetry is contained in the sonnet sequence *Astrophel and Stella* (1591) and his *Defence of Poesie* is among the most important works of literary criticism in the tradition.

Many others in a historical era when poetic talents were highly valued, were skilled poets. Important late Tudor sonneteers include Spenser and Shakespeare, Michael Drayton, Samuel Daniel, and Fulke Greville. More versatile even than Sidney was Sir Walter Raleigh—poet, historian, courtier, explorer, and soldier—who wrote strong, spare poetry.

Early Tudor drama owed much to both medieval morality plays and classical models. *Ralph Roister Doister* (c.1545) by Nicholas Udall and *Gammer Gurton's Needle* (c.1552) are considered the first English comedies, combining elements of classical Roman comedy with native burlesque. During the late 16th and early 17th cent., drama flourished in England as never before or since. It came of age with the work of the University Wits, whose sophisticated plays set the course of Renaissance drama and paved the way for Shakespeare.

The Wits included John Lyly, famed for the highly artificial and much imitated prose work *Euphues* (1578); Robert Greene, the first to write romantic comedy; the versatile Thomas Lodge and Thomas Nashe; Thomas Kyd, who popularized neo-Senecan tragedy; and Christopher Marlowe, the greatest dramatist of the group. Focusing on heroes whose very greatness leads to their downfall, Marlowe wrote in blank verse with a rhetorical brilliance and eloquence superbly equal to the demands of high drama. William Shakespeare, of course, fulfilled the promise of the Elizabethan age. His history plays, comedies, and tragedies set a standard never again equaled, and he is universally regarded as the greatest dramatist and one of the greatest poets of all time.

## The Jacobean Era, Cromwell, and the Restoration

Elizabethan literature generally reflects the exuberant self-confidence of a nation expanding its powers, increasing its wealth, and thus keeping at bay its serious social and religious problems. Disillusion and pessimism followed, however, during the unstable reign of James I (1603–25). The 17th century was to be a time of great upheaval—revolution and regicide, restoration of the monarchy, and, finally, the victory of Parliament, landed Protestantism, and the moneyed interests.

Jacobean literature begins with the drama, including some of Shakespeare's greatest, and darkest, plays. The dominant literary figure of James's reign was Ben Jonson, whose varied and dramatic works followed classical models and were enriched by his worldly, peculiarly English wit. His satiric dramas, notably the great *Volpone* (1606), all take a cynical view of human nature. Also cynical were the horrific revenge tragedies of John Ford, Thomas Middleton, Cyril Tourneur, and John Webster (the best poet of this grim genre). Novelty was in great demand, and the possibilities of plot and genre were exploited almost to exhaustion. Still, many excellent plays were written by men such as George Chapman, the masters of comedy Thomas Dekker and Philip Massinger, and the team of Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher. Drama continued to flourish until the closing of the theaters at the onset of the English Revolution in 1642.

The foremost poets of the Jacobean era, Ben Jonson and John Donne, are regarded as the originators of two diverse poetic traditions—the Cavalier and the metaphysical poets. Jonson and Donne shared not only a common fund of literary resources, but also a dryness of wit and precision of expression. Donne's poetry is distinctive for its passionate intellection, Jonson's for its classicism and urbane guidance of passion.

Although George Herbert and Donne were the principal metaphysical poets, the meditative religious poets Henry Vaughan and Thomas Traherne were also influenced by Donne, as were Abraham Cowley and Richard Crashaw. The greatest of the Cavalier poets was the sensuously lyrical Robert Herrick. Such other Cavaliers as Thomas Carew, Sir John Suckling, and Richard Lovelace were lyricists in the elegant Jonsonian tradition, though their lyricism turned political during the English Revolution. Although ranked with the metaphysical poets, the highly individual Andrew Marvell partook of the traditions of both Donne and Jonson.

Among the leading prose writers of the Jacobean period were the translators who produced the classic King James Version of the Bible (1611) and the divines Lancelot Andrewes, Jeremy Taylor, and John Donne. The work of Francis Bacon helped shape philosophical and scientific method. Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) offers a varied, virtually encyclopedic view of the moral and intellectual preoccupations of the 17th cent. Like Burton, Sir Thomas Browne sought to reconcile the mysteries of religion with the newer mysteries of science. Izaak Walton, author of *The Compleat Angler* (1653), produced a number of graceful biographies of prominent writers. Thomas Hobbes wrote the most influential political treatise of the age, *Leviathan* (1651).

The Jacobean era's most fiery and eloquent author of political tracts (many in defense of Cromwell's government, of which he was a member) was also one of the greatest of all English poets, John Milton. His *Paradise Lost* (1667) is a Christian epic of encompassing scope. In Milton the literary and philosophical heritage of the Renaissance merged with Protestant political and moral conviction.

With the restoration of the English monarchy in the person of Charles II, literary tastes widened. The lifting of Puritan restrictions and the reassembling of the court led to a relaxation of restraints, both moral and stylistic, embodied in such figures as the Earl of Rochester. Restoration comedy reveals both the influence of French farce (the English court spent its exile in France) and of Jacobean comedy. It generously fed the public's appetite for broad satire, high style, and a licentiousness that justified the worst Puritan imaginings. Such dramatists as Sir George Etherege, William Wycherley, and William Congreve created superbly polished high comedy. Sparkling but not quite so brilliant were the plays of George Farquhar, Thomas Shadwell, and Sir John Vanbrugh.

John Druden began as a playwright but became the foremost poet and critic of his time. His greatest works are satirical narrative poems, notably *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681), in which prominent contemporary figures are unmistakably and devastatingly portrayed. Another satiric poet of the period was Samuel Butler, whose *Hudibras* (1663) satirizes Puritanism together with all the intellectual pretensions of the time. During the Restoration Puritanism or, more generally, the Dissenting tradition, remained vital. The most important Dissenting literary work was John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (1675), an allegorical prose narrative that is considered a forerunner of the novel. Lively and illuminating glimpses of Restoration manners and mores are provided by the diaries of Samuel Pepys and John Evelyn.

## The sixteenth-century

Literary works in sixteenth-century England were rarely if ever created in isolation from other currents in the social and cultural world. The boundaries that divided the texts we now regard as aesthetic from other texts were porous and constantly shifting. It is perfectly acceptable, of course, for the purposes of reading to redraw these boundaries more decisively, treating Renaissance texts as if they were islands of the autonomous literary imagination. One of the greatest writers of the period, Sir Philip Sidney, defended poetry in just such terms; the poet, Sidney writes in *The Defence of Poetry* (NAEL 8, 1.953–74), is not constrained by nature or history but freely ranges "only within the zodiac of his own wit." But Sidney knew well, and from painful personal experience, how much this vision of golden autonomy was contracted by the pressures, perils, and longings of the brazen world. And only a few pages after he imagines the poet orbiting entirely within the constellations of his own intellect, he advances a very different vision, one in which the poet's words not only imitate reality but also actively change it.

We have no way of knowing to what extent, if at all, this dream of literary power was ever realized in the world. We do know that many sixteenth-century artists, such as Christopher Marlowe, Edmund Spenser, and William Shakespeare, brooded on the magical, transforming power of art. This power could be associated with civility and virtue, as Sidney claims, but it could also have the demonic qualities manifested by the "pleasing words" of Spenser's enchanter, Archimago (NAEL 8, 1.714–902), or by the incantations of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (NAEL 8, 1.1022–1057). It is significant that Marlowe's great play was written at a time in which the possibility of sorcery was not merely a theatrical fantasy but a widely shared fear, a fear upon which the state could act — as the case of Doctor Fian vividly shows — with horrendous ferocity. Marlowe was himself the object of suspicion and hostility, as indicated by the strange report filed by a secret agent, Richard Baines, professing to list Marlowe's wildly heretical opinions, and by the gleeful (and factually inaccurate) report by the Puritan Thomas Beard of Marlowe's death.



Marlowe's tragedy emerges not only from a culture in which bargains with the devil are imaginable as real events but also from a world in which many of the most fundamental assumptions about spiritual life were being called into question by the movement known as the Reformation. Catholic and Protestant voices struggled to articulate the precise beliefs and practices thought necessary for the soul's salvation. One key site of conflict was the Bible, with Catholic authorities trying unsuccessfully to stop the circulation of the unauthorized Protestant translation of Scripture by William Tyndale, a translation in which doctrines and institutional structures central to the Roman Catholic church were directly challenged. Those doctrines and structures, above all the interpretation of the central ritual of the eucharist, or Lord's Supper, were contested with murderous ferocity, as the fates of the Protestant martyr Anne Askew and the Catholic martyr Robert Aske make painfully clear. The Reformation is closely linked to many of the texts printed in the sixteenth-century section of the Norton Anthology: Book 1 of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (NAEL 8, 1.719–856), for example, in which a staunchly Protestant knight of Holiness struggles against the

satanic forces of Roman Catholicism, or the Protestant propagandist Foxe's account of Lady Jane Grey's execution (NAEL 8, 1.674-75), or the Catholic Robert Southwell's moving religious lyric, "The windows on the Reformation offer a revealing glimpse of the inner lives of men and women in Burning Babe" (NAEL 8, 1.640-41).

If these Tudor England, the subsection entitled "The Wider World" provides a glimpse of the huge world that lay beyond the boundaries of the kingdom, a world that the English were feverishly attempting to explore and exploit. Ruthless military expeditions and English settlers (including the poet Edmund Spenser) struggled to subdue and colonize nearby



Ireland, but with very limited success. Farther afield, merchants from cities such as London and Bristol established profitable trading links to markets in North Africa, Turkey, and Russia. And daring seamen such as Drake and Cavendish commanded voyages to still more distant lands. The texts collected here, which supplement the selections from Raleigh's *Discoverie of Guiana* (NAEL 8, 1.923-26) and Hariot's *Brief and True Report* (NAEL 1.938-43) in the Norton Anthology, are fascinating, disturbing records of intense human curiosity, greed, fear, wonder, and intelligence. And lest we imagine that the English

were only the observers of the world and never the observed, "The Wider World" includes a sample of a foreign tourist's description of London. The tourist, Thomas Platter, had the good sense to go to the theater and to see, as so many thousands of visitors to England have done since, a play by Shakespeare.

## The early seventeenth century



The earlier seventeenth century, and especially the period of the English Revolution (1640–60), was a time of intense ferment in all areas of life — religion, science, politics, domestic relations, culture. That ferment was reflected in the literature of the era, which also registered a heightened focus on and analysis of the self and the personal life. However, little of this seems in evidence in the elaborate frontispiece to Michael Drayton's long "chorographical" poem on the landscape, regions, and local history of Great Britain (1612), which appeared in the first years of the reign of the Stuart king James I (1603–1625). The

frontispiece appears to represent a peaceful, prosperous, triumphant Britain, with England, Scotland, and Wales united, patriarchy and monarchy firmly established, and the nation serving as the great theme for lofty literary celebration. Albion (the Roman name for Britain) is a young and beautiful virgin wearing as cloak a map featuring rivers, trees, mountains, churches, towns; she carries a scepter and holds a cornucopia, symbol of plenty. Ships on the horizon signify exploration, trade, and garnering the riches of the sea. In the four corners stand four conquerors whose descendants ruled over Britain: the legendary Brutus, Julius Caesar, Hengist the Saxon, and the Norman William the Conqueror, "whose line yet rules," as Drayton's introductory poem states.



Yet this frontispiece also registers some of the tensions, conflicts, and redefinitions evident in the literature of the period and explored more directly in the topics and texts in this portion of the NTO Web site. It is Albion herself, not King James, who is seated in the center holding the emblems of sovereignty; her male conquerors stand to the side, and their smaller size and their number suggest something unstable in monarchy and patriarchy. Albion's robe with its multiplicity of regional features, as well as the "Poly" of the title, suggests forces pulling against national unity. Also, *Poly-Olbion* had no successors: instead of a celebration of the nation in the vein of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* or *Poly-Olbion* itself, the great seventeenth-century heroic poem, *Paradise Lost*, treats the Fall of Man and its tragic consequences, "all our woe."

The first topic here, "Gender, Family, Household: Seventeenth-Century Norms and Controversies," provides important religious, legal, and domestic advice texts through which to explore cultural assumptions about gender roles and the patriarchal family. It also invites attention to how those assumptions are modified or challenged in the practices of actual families and households; in tracts on transgressive subjects (cross-dressing, women speaking in church, divorce); in women's texts asserting women's worth, talents, and rights; and especially in the upheavals of the English Revolution.



"*Paradise Lost* in Context," the second topic for this period, surrounds that radically revisionist epic with texts that invite readers to examine how it engages with the interpretative traditions surrounding the Genesis story, how it uses classical myth, how it challenges orthodox notions of Edenic innocence, and how it is positioned within but also against the epic tradition from Homer to Virgil to Du Bartas. The protagonists here are not martial heroes but a domestic couple who must, both before and after their Fall, deal with questions hotly contested in the seventeenth century but also perennial: how to build a good marital relationship; how to think about science, astronomy, and the nature of things; what constitutes tyranny, servitude, and liberty; what history teaches; how to meet the daily challenges of love, work, education, change, temptation, and deceptive rhetoric; how to reconcile free will and divine providence; and how to understand and respond to God's ways.

The third topic, "Civil Wars of Ideas: Seventeenth-Century Politics, Religion, and Culture," provides an opportunity to explore, through political and polemical treatises and striking images, some of the issues and conflicts that led to civil war and the overthrow of monarchical government (1642–60). These include royal absolutism vs. parliamentary or popular sovereignty, monarchy vs. republicanism, Puritanism vs. Anglicanism, church ritual and ornament vs. iconoclasm, toleration vs. religious uniformity, and controversies over court masques and Sunday sports. The climax to all this was the highly dramatic trial and execution of King Charles I (January 1649), a cataclysmic event that sent shock waves through courts, hierarchical institutions, and traditionalists everywhere; this event is presented here through contemporary accounts and graphic images.

## Elisabeth I



The English Elizabethan Era is one of the most fascinating periods in the History of England. The Elizabethan Era is named after the greatest Queens of England - Queen Elizabeth I. The Elizabethan Era is not only famous for the Virgin Queen but also for the era itself - Great Explorers, such as Sir Francis Drake and Walter Raleigh. The era of the very first Theatres in England - William Shakespeare, the globe Theatre and Christopher Marlowe! The people of the era - the Famous Figures who featured in the history of this era such as the Queen's love Robert Dudley, the sinister Dr. John Dee, the intrigues of the spy-master Sir Francis Walsingham and the Queen's chief advisor Sir William Cecil (Lord Burghley). Religion - Politics - Executions - Crime and Punishment all played their part in the Elizabethan era, and so did the commoners.

The Crime and Punishment at her time is not a happy subject it was a violent time. Crimes were met with violent, cruel punishments. Many punishments and executions were witnessed by many hundreds of people. The Lower Classes treated such events as exciting days out. Even royalty were subjected to this most public form of punishment for their crimes. The execution of the tragic Anne Boleyn was restricted to the Upper Classes and Nobility and was witnessed by several hundred spectators!

This era was split into two classes - the Upper Class, the nobility and courtiers, and everyone else! Punishment would vary according to class. The Upper class was well educated, wealthy and associated with Royalty and high members of the clergy. They would often become involved in Political intrigue and matters of Religion. The nobility could therefore become involved in crime which was not shared by other people. Just being accused of one of the serious crimes could well result in torture. A Defendant's chances in receiving any acquittal in court extremely slim. Trials were designed in the favour of the prosecutors and defendants accused any of the following crimes were not even allowed legal counsel.

The most common crimes of the Nobility included: High Treason; Blasphemy; Sedition; Spying; Rebellion; Murder; Witchcraft; Alchemy.

Many crimes committed by **commoners** were through sheer desperation and abject poverty. The most common crimes were: Theft; Cut purses; Begging; Poaching; Adultery; Debtors; Forgers; Fraud; Dice coggers.

Theft for stealing anything over 5 pence resulted in hanging - a terrible price to pay for poor people who were starving. Even such small crimes such as stealing bird eggs could result in the death sentence. Punishment for poaching crimes differed according to when the crime was committed - Poaching at night resulted in the punishment by death, whereas poaching during the day time did not. Begging was a serious crime during the Elizabethan era. The Elizabethan government made begging a crime and therefore illegal and 'poor beggars' As their punishment 'poor beggars' would be beaten until they reached the stones that marked the town parish boundary. The beatings given as punishment were bloody and merciless and those who were caught continually begging could be sent to prison and even hanged as their punishment.

Life in Elizabethan England was chronicled by an Elizabethan called William Harrison - this included details of Elizabethan crime and punishment. The most dreadful punishment of being Hung, Drawn and Quartered was described by William Harrison as:

*"The greatest and most grievous punishment used in England for such as offend against the State is drawing from the prison to the place of execution upon an hurdle or sled, where they are hanged till they be half dead, and then taken down, and quartered alive; after that, their members and bowels are cut from their bodies, and thrown into a fire, provided near hand and within their own sight, even for the same purpose."*

Other punishment included execution by burning and beheading. Being burnt at the stake was a terrible death. Executioners sometimes showed mercy to their victims by placing gunpowder at the base of the stake which helped the victims to a swifter, and less painful, death. The only other respite from the excruciating pain of being burnt to death was if the victims died of suffocation through smoke inhalation and lack of oxygen.

The punishment of Death by the axe was a terrifying prospect. The Elizabethan executioners often took several blows before the head was finally severed. The punishment of death by Execution were held in public and witnessed by many people. Following the execution the severed head was held up by the hair by the executioner, not as many people think to show the crowd the head, but in fact to show the head the crowd and to it's own body! Consciousness remains for at least eight seconds after beheading, until lack of oxygen causes unconsciousness, and eventually death. The punishment by beheading therefore even continued after 'death'. The Heads of Elizabethan traitors were placed on stakes and displayed in public places such as London Bridge.

Punishment for commoners, the lower class, during the Elizabethan period included the following: Hanging; Burning; The Pillory and the Stocks; Whipping; Branding; Pressing; Ducking stools; The Wheel; Boiling in oil water or lead (usually reserved for poisoners); Starvation in a public place; Cutting off various items of the anatomy - hands, ears etc; The Gossip's Bridle or the Brank; The Drunkards Cloak

Minor crime and punishment in small Elizabethan towns were dealt with by the Justice of the Peace. Many crimes during the Elizabethan era were due to a crime committed and the law broken due to the desperate acts of the poor. Every town parish was responsible for the poor and unemployed within that parish. The Justice of the Peace for each town parish was allowed to collect a tax from those who owned land in the town. This was called the Poor Rate which was used to help the poor during the Elizabethan period.

**EVEN TRAVEL AND ACTING IN ELIZABETHAN ENGLAND WAS A CRIME WITHOUT A LICENCE!** People did not travel around a lot during the Tudor and Elizabethan era. Travelling during the Elizabethan era could be dangerous, money was necessary and a license, obtained from the Bailiff in the Guild Hall, was required by anyone who needed to travel around England - it was a crime to travel without a licence. This law ensured that the spread of disease, especially the plague, was contained as much as possible and that the poor and the homeless did not travel from one village to another village - an Elizabethan ploy to lower the crime and punishment levels in England. Strangers were treated with suspicion and risked being accused of crimes and suffered the appropriate punishment.

## **The great Elizabethan Age of Exploration**

It was at first dominated by the Portuguese and the Spanish. The Golden Age of Exploration also saw the emergence of English explorers such as Sir Francis Drake (1542-1596), Sir Walter Raleigh (1554-1618), Sir Humphrey Gilbert (1539-1583), Sir John Hawkins (1532-1595), Sir Richard Grenville (1541-1591) and Sir Martin Frobisher (1535-1594). A biography, timeline, facts, pictures and information has been included about the most famous Explorers and their explorations that made such momentous voyages during the Age of Exploration, many including Scientific curiosity, bred of the Renaissance spirit of free inquiry, the crusading spirit in which Europeans thrilled at the thought of spreading Christianity among heathen peoples. And the opportunities to acquire wealth, fame and power. So we have the scientific improvements in Navigation during this Age of Exploration.

The Elizabethan Times saw the emergence of the bravest and skilful English seamen who revelled in the Renaissance Age of Exploration! New discoveries could bring untold riches in terms of gold and silver and spices - the Elizabethan explorers were searching for adventure, glory and wealth. The Greatest English Explorers were Sir Francis Drake , Sir Walter Raleigh , Sir Humphrey Gilbert , Sir John Hawkins , Sir Richard Grenville and Sir Martin Frobisher . This fact happens between 1000 - 1500 (this early Explorers Timeline provides a 'backdrop' to the achievements and voyages of discovery by the Renaissance and Elizabethan Explorers until the Timeline covering 1500 - 1600.

The Renaissance saw the success of the Spanish explorers in acquiring monopolies on much of the Eastern spice trade and their expeditions to the New World brought great wealth and power to Spain during the Age of Exploration. Rodrigo de Bastidas, Vasco Nunez de Balboa, Juan Diaz de Solis, Francisco Hernandez de Cordoba, Hernan Cortes and Francisco Pizarro were the greatest Spanish Explorers in the great Age of Exploration.

The emergence of some Famous Pirates and the Golden Age of Pirates, the lucrative slave trade, spice trade and the spoils of gold and silver encouraged the activities of Pirates. Many explorers such as Sir Francis Drake and Sir Martin Frobisher were referred to as pirates, the real Pirates of the Caribbean!

In this period, the age of the Renaissance, of new ideas and new thinking, we have the introduction of the printing press, one of the greatest tools in increasing knowledge and learning, was responsible for the interest in the different sciences and inventions - and the supernatural! The new ideas, information and increased knowledge about science, technology and astrology led to a renewed interest in the supernatural including witches, witchcraft and ghosts which led to belief in superstitions and the supernatural. Facts about all of these subjects are included in the plays written at that time.

## **The Elizabethan Theatre**

The history of the theater is fascinating. How plays were first produced in the yards of inns - the Inn-yards. The very first theater and the development of the amphitheatre! The Elizabethan Entrepreneurs (the men with the ideas and the money!). The building, design and construction of a London Elizabethan Theatre. The plays, the playwrights, the politics and the propaganda all play an important part in the history of the Elizabethan Theatre. It was a booming business. People loved the Theatre! The plays and theatres were as popular as the movies and cinemas of the early 20th century. Vast amounts of money could be made! The inn-keepers increased their profits by allowing plays to be shown on temporary stages erected in the yards of their inns (inn-yards). Soon purpose-built playhouses and great open theatres were being constructed. The great success of the theatre and what led to its downfall. The History of the Elizabethan theatre - the Inn-Yards, the Amphitheatres and the Playhouses

It presents all of the imported dates and events in the history of the Elizabethan Theatre in a logical order. The theatre was an expanding industry during this era. Many theatres sprang up in and around the City of London. The excitement, money and fame lured Elizabethan theatre entrepreneurs and actors into working in the famous Theatre. We can mention the Globe Theatre, Newington Butts, the Curtain Elizabethan Theatre, the Rose Theatre, the Swan Theatre, the Fortune Elizabethan Theatre, the Boars Head, the Bear Garden, the Bull Ring and the Hope Elizabethan Theatre.

During Elizabethan era we saw a great flourishing of literature, especially in the field of drama. The Italian Renaissance had rediscovered the ancient Greek and Roman theatre, and this was instrumental in the development of the new drama, which was then beginning to evolve apart from the old mystery and miracle plays of the Middle Ages.

Elizabethan Actors were treated with as much suspicion as beggars. Anyone who needed to travel to earn their living, such as actors, were treated with suspicion and could therefore be expected to be accused of crimes. An actors standing in Elizabethan England was only slightly higher than a beggar, vagabond or a thief. When plays started to become more popular rich nobles, or high ranking courtiers of the land, acted as their sponsors. It was soon decreed that licenses should be granted to legitimise certain Acting Troupes. This raised the actors status somewhat and lead to fewer accusations of crimes. A license also had to be granted by Town Councillors when a troupe of actors came to town. Many actors received punishments for real and sometimes imaginary crimes which included the punishment of branding with red hot irons. The role of women were played by men, as it was not proper for a woman to act.

## William Shakespeare life and work



William Shakespeare was a poet, dramatist, and actor and is considered by many to be the greatest dramatist of all time. He is the foremost figure in English literature and had a primary influence on the development of the English literary language.

He was born in April, 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, about 100 miles northwest of London. According to the records of Stratford's Holy Trinity Church, he was baptized on April 26. Since it was customary to baptize infants within days of birth, and since Shakespeare died 52 years later on April 23, and--most significantly--since April 23 is St. George's day, the patron saint of England, it has become traditional to assign the birth day of England's most famous poet to April 23. As with most sixteenth century births, the actual day is not recorded. And as with most remarkable men, the power of myth and symmetry has proven irresistible. So April 23 it has become.

His parents were John and Mary Shakespeare, who lived in Henley Street, Stratford. John, the son of Richard Shakespeare, was a whittawer (a maker, worker and seller of leather goods such as purses, belts and gloves) and a dealer in agricultural commodities. He was a solid, middle class citizen at the time of William's birth, and a man on the rise. He served in Stratford government successively as a member of the Council (1557), constable (1558), chamberlain (1561), alderman (1565) and finally high bailiff (1568)--the equivalent of town mayor. About 1577 John Shakespeare's fortunes began to decline for unknown reasons. There are records of debts. In 1586 he was replaced as alderman for shirking responsibilities, and in 1592 was reprimanded for not coming to church for fear of process of debt.

Mary, the daughter of Robert Arden, had in all eight children with John Shakespeare. William was the third child and the first son. The eldest child of John Shakespeare, a tradesman and public servant, and Mary Arden Shakespeare, the daughter of a gentleman farmer, William was baptized on April 26, 1564. Based on this fact, it is hypothesized that he was born on or about April 23, 1564.

Little is known about his early life and the only documented facts come from christening and marriage records and other legal documents. Though no records exist, it is possible young William may have attended the King's New School and received what would have been considered a classical education. He probably would have been taught the basics of Latin, Greek, Italian, and French and read such authors as Aesop, Caesar, Virgil, and Ovid. He probably also would have been taught logic, rhetoric, grammar, speech, and drama.

On November 28, 1582 the Bishop of Worcester issued the marriage bond for "William Shagspere", he was eighteen years old and "Ann Hathwey of Stratford." This was, almost beyond doubt, Anne Hathaway, daughter of Richard Hathaway of Shottery--a gathering of farm houses near Stratford on May 26, 1583 their first daughter Susanna was baptised. Six months later, on May 26, 1583, William and Anne's first daughter, Susanna, was born. Two years later, twins were born to them, Hamnet and Judith, named after Hamnet and Judith Sadler, apparently lifetime friends to Shakespeare. Hamnet Sadler was remembered in Shakespeare's will. It was also during this time period that Shakespeare became of part of Lord Chamberlain's Men.

As a member of Lord Chamberlain's Men, Shakespeare enjoyed fame and prosperity and in 1594, he began to hold stock in the company. Shakespeare and his company opened the Globe Theatre in 1599. That same year, Lord Chamberlain's Men performed *Julius Caesar* for the first time, probably at the Globe. In 1603, Queen Elizabeth died and her successor, James I, pronounced Shakespeare's troupe his servants under the name the King's Men.

Around 1610, Shakespeare returned to Stratford-Upon-Avon to retire and live as a country gentleman, though his plays continued to be performed at the Globe until its burning in 1613. On April 23, 1616, Shakespeare died and seven years later, in 1623, the First Folio of his works was published.

### NOTES ABOUT SHAKESPEARE'S WORKS:

Shakespeare's dramatic works do not survive in manuscript and the exact order in which his plays were written and produced is not known with certainty. However, comedies such as *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and his early tragedy *Romeo and Juliet* were performed in the early 1590s.



These early works are influenced by prevailing contemporary conventions, but are also marked by vivid characterization and rich and inventive use of the English Language that are strictly Shakespearean. In the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, Shakespeare produced his four great tragedies; *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*, which mark one of the high points in the history of Western Literature. His last plays, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest* combine elements of romance comedy, and tragedy.

In addition to his dramatic works, Shakespeare wrote over 150 sonnets, which were published in 1609, and two heroic narrative poems, *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *(The Rape of) Lucrece* (1594).

The information for William Shakespeare's biography was adapted from *The Dictionary of Literary Biography (DLB)*, vol. 62, *Elizabethan Dramatists*, pp. 267-353, *The Oxford Companion to the English Language*, edited by Tom McArthur, and *Merriam Webster's Encyclopedia of Literature*.

## Shakespeare Chronological listing of plays

Title	Date Written	Date Range	First Published
The Comedy of Errors	1590	? - 1594	1623
Titus Andronicus	1590	? - 1594	1594
The Taming of the Shrew	1591	? - 1594	1623
2 Henry VI	1591	? - 1592	1594
3 Henry VI	1591	? - 1592	1595
1 Henry VI	1592	? - 1592	1623
Richard III	1592	1592 - 1597	1597
Love's Labor's Lost	1593	? - 1597	1598
Two Gentlemen of Verona	1593	? - 1598	1623
A Midsummer Night's Dream	1594	1594 - 1598	1600
Romeo and Juliet	1595	? - 1597	1597
Richard II	1595	1595 - 1597	1597
King John	1596	? - 1598	1623
The Merchant of Venice	1596	1594 - 1598	1600
Henry IV Part 1	1597	1595 - 1598	1598
The Merry Wives of Windsor	1597	1597 - 1602	1602
Henry IV Part 2	1598	1596 - 1598	1600
As You Like It	1598	1598 - 1600	1623
Henry V	1599	1599	1600
Much Ado About Nothing	1599	1598 - 1600	1600
Julius Caesar	1599	1598 - 1599	1623
Twelfth Night	1600	1600 - 1602	1623
Hamlet	1601	1599 - 1601	1603
Troilus and Cressida	1602	1601 - 1603	1609
All's Well That Ends Well	1603	1598 - ?	1623
Measure For Measure	1604	1598 - 1604	1623
Othello	1604	1598 - 1604	1622
King Lear	1605	1598 - 1606	1608
Macbeth	1605	1603 - 1611	1623
Antony and Cleopatra	1606	1598 - 1608	1623
Timon of Athens	1606	1598 - ?	1623
Pericles Prince of Tyre	1607	1598 - 1608	1609
Coriolanus	1608	1598 - ?	1623
Cymbeline	1609	1598 - 1611	1623
A Winter's Tale	1610	1598 - 1611	1623
The Tempest	1611	1610 - 1611	1623
Henry VIII	1613	1612 - 1613	1623

Before Shakespeare's time and during his boyhood, troupes of actors performed wherever they could in halls, courts, courtyards, and any other open spaces available. However, in 1574, when Shakespeare was ten years old, the Common Council passed a law requiring plays and theaters in London to be licensed. In 1576, actor and future Lord Chamberlain's Man, James Burbage, built the first permanent theater, called "The Theatre", outside London city walls. After this many more theaters were established, including the Globe Theatre, which was where most of Shakespeare's plays premiered.

Elizabethan theaters were generally built after the design of the original Theatre. Built of wood, these theaters comprised three tiers of seats in a circular shape, with a stage area on one side of the circle. The audience's seats and part of the stage were roofed, but much of the main stage and the area in front of the stage in the center of the circle were open to the elements. About 1,500 audience members could pay extra money to sit in the covered seating areas, while about 800 "groundlings" paid less money to stand in this open area before the stage. The stage itself was divided into three levels: a main stage area with doors at the rear and a curtained area in the back for "discovery scenes"; an upper, canopied area called "heaven" for balcony scenes; and an area under the stage called "hell," accessed by a trap door in the stage. There were dressing rooms located behind the stage, but no curtain in the front of the stage, which meant that scenes had to flow into each other, and "dead bodies" had to be dragged off.

Performances took place during the day, using natural light from the open center of the theater. Since there could be no dramatic lighting and there was very little scenery or props, audiences relied on the actors' lines and stage directions to supply the time of day and year, the weather, location, and mood of the scenes. Shakespeare's plays masterfully supply this information. For example, in Hamlet the audience learns within the first twenty lines of dialogue where the scene takes place ("Have you had quiet guard?"), what time of day it is ("Tis now strook twelf"), what the weather is like ("Tis bitter cold"), and what mood the characters are in ("and I am sick at heart").

One important difference between plays written in Shakespeare's time and those written today is that Elizabethan plays were published after their performances, sometimes even after their authors' deaths, and were in many ways a record of what happened on stage during these performances rather than directions for what should happen. Actors were allowed to suggest changes to scenes and dialogue and had much more freedom with their parts than actors today. Shakespeare's plays are no exception. In Hamlet, for instance, much of the plot revolves around the fact that Hamlet writes his own scene to be added to a play in order to ensnare his murderous father.

Shakespeare's plays were published in various forms and with a wide variety of accuracy during his time. The discrepancies between versions of his plays from one publication to the next make it difficult for editors to put together authoritative editions of his works. Plays could be published in large anthologies called Folios (the First Folio of Shakespeare's plays contains 36 plays) or smaller Quartos. Folios were so named because of the way their paper was folded in half to make chunks of two pages each which were sewn together to make a large volume. Quartos were smaller, cheaper books containing only one play. Their paper was folded twice, making four pages. In general, the First Folio is of better quality than the quartos. Therefore, plays that are printed in the First Folio are much easier for editors to compile.

Although Shakespeare's language and classical references seem archaic to some modern readers, they were commonplace to his audiences. His viewers came from all classes, and his plays appealed to all kinds of sensibilities, from "highbrow" accounts of kings and queens of old to the "lowbrow" blunderings of clowns and servants. Even his most tragic plays include clown characters for comic relief and to comment on the events of the play. Audiences would have been familiar with his numerous references to classical mythology and literature, since these stories were staples of the Elizabethan knowledge base. While Shakespeare's plays appealed to all levels of society and included familiar story lines and themes, they also expanded his audiences' vocabularies. Many phrases and words that we use today, like "amazement," "in my mind's eye," and "the milk of human kindness" were coined by Shakespeare. His plays contain a greater variety and number of words than almost any other work in the English language, showing that he was quick to innovate, had a huge vocabulary, and was interested in using new phrases and words.

As it is very difficult to select only one play of this great playwright, we decide to read and analyse "Othello", because of the way he presents so perfectly the inner feelings of human beings during the acts.

## **Literary Terms to help reading Shakespeare**

Agent of change -A person or spirit that produces a significant change in a situation. Iago is the main agent of change in Othello. Without him the plot would not proceed to its tragic conclusion.

Alliteration- A poetic technique often used by Shakespeare where two or more words beginning with the same consonant sound appear close to each other within a line or series of lines. It is used to make the poetry sound more impressive or beautiful, or to emphasise a particular feeling or idea.

Antihero-A character who dominates the play because of his evil actions rather than the noble qualities which are usually associated with a hero. Shakespeare created some wonderful antiheroes; in Othello, Iago could be seen as one. He is given many of the play's most impressive soliloquies and the question of why he behaves as he does is often seen as the most interesting aspect of the play.

Assonance -A literary technique in which words containing the same or very similar vowel sounds are placed close together. This can produce a strong, musical effect and is one of the ways in which the sound of Shakespeare's poetry helps to convey particular ideas or feelings.

Catastrophe- A term for the final scene in a classic tragedy in which, either as a result of the workings of fate or as a consequence of a flaw in the hero's or heroine's personality, terrible disasters occur. Usually, this involves the deaths of all or nearly all the main characters. In Othello, Cassio and Iago are the only survivors out of the major characters.

Climax- A key moment in the plot, when the tensions which have been set up and developed throughout the middle part of the play are resolved. In a tragedy, the climax is also known as the 'Catastrophe'.

Comedy-A light, amusing style of drama that usually has a happy ending. Shakespeare usually added some comic scenes and characters to his tragedies in order to provide some 'light relief' and to vary the tone. Othello is unusual because there are very few comic moments. The most famous comic scene in the play occurs at the beginning of Act 3, Scene 1, where the Clown makes fun of a band of musicians who are playing outside Othello's lodgings.

Contrast- Shakespeare often used contrasts to draw the audience's attention to particular ideas or qualities within his characters. For example, in tragedy, there are many contrasting images of black and white, heaven and hell, light and darkness, and so on. Characters are also contrasted with each other; as an example, Desdemona and Iago represent opposing good and evil influences on Othello.

Dramatic irony - A dramatic technique where the audience possesses important information which is not known by the characters on stage. This often creates humour or powerful tension, as we see the characters acting in a way which we know is unwise, or saying things which we know to be mistaken. Othello is full of dramatic irony, often caused by Iago's ability to deceive the other characters.

Dramatic tension- A important feature of a dramatic plot. In the first act, problems or questions are introduced, setting up suspense. This is then developed during the central acts of the play, and eventually resolved at the play's climax. The plot tension keeps the audience interested and intrigued as they wonder what will happen next and how exactly the various tensions will be resolved.

Iambic pentameter-This is the type of unrhymed verse that Shakespeare generally wrote in. It was an extremely popular form of verse in Elizabethan England. It consists of five metrical 'feet'. These are arranged in the following pattern of syllables: either, short/ long/ short/ long/ short; or unstressed/ stressed/ unstressed/ stressed/ unstressed.

Irony - A kind of humour resulting from the fact that the reader or audience knows that the 'real' meaning of a statement may not be the same as its literal meaning. In Othello, it is ironic that almost all the other characters call Iago 'honest Iago', when the audience knows from the very first scene that he is dishonest and proud of it!

Machiavelli - An Italian statesman and political theorist who wrote about statecraft during Shakespeare's lifetime. His ideas were widely discussed throughout Europe, and often appear in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama. He was interested in the idea that 'the end justifies the means'. In other words, the effective use of power may have to involve unethical behaviour in order to achieve a desired result. In Othello, Iago is an example of a Machiavellian antihero. He will do anything in order to achieve his ends.

Metaphor- A comparison which is implicit or indirect rather than explicit. Two ideas or images are compared by using language appropriate to both of them within the same statement or line(s) of poetry. The effect is often complex and thought-provoking.

Oxymoron-A figure of speech in which contradictory terms are brought together in what is at first sight an impossible combination — such as ‘living death’.

Plot -The order in which a play’s storyline unfolds. Shakespeare often used existing stories for his plays, but he made his own decisions about the order in which the story would be revealed and sometimes changed the events in the story, too. For instance, in Othello, he used a basic storyline written by an Italian writer, Cinthio, but he made many alterations to the plot and completely changed both the beginning and the ending, making the story much more powerful and dramatic.

Protagonist- A character (usually the hero or heroine) who is important as an agent of change, influencing the events through which the plot unfolds.

Pun - A kind of joke which relies on a double meaning. A word or phrase has one obvious meaning, but the reader or audience is also aware of a second meaning, which is often rude or funny. We see examples when reading extract from the Tame of The Shrew.

Reliable and unreliable witnesses - A playwright often presents a character through the words and opinions of others. This is made more complex and interesting because of the fact that the audience will also have to work out whether these ‘witnesses’ are reliable or unreliable — in other words, can we trust what they have to say, or should we immediately suspect that the opposite is true? Shakespeare often used this technique to introduce major characters. In Othello, both Othello himself and Desdemona are introduced in this way. This creates intense curiosity as to their ‘real’ characteristics and encourages the audience to focus carefully on their first appearances on the stage.

Representation - The way in which an idea or a particular group of people are presented. For instance, in Othello Shakespeare offers interesting representations of women through the range of female characters. Attitudes towards race in Shakespeare’s time are also explored through the representation of a black hero and the ways in which he is perceived and treated by the Venetians.

Rhyming couplet -Two consecutive lines which rhyme. These are often used at the end of a speech to sum up an idea or series of ideas. Rhyming couplets can also suggest witty humour or a trivial attitude.

Simile-A comparison between two ideas or images which is made explicit, often by using the words ‘like’ or ‘as’.

Soliloquy - A speech in which a character shares his or her inner thoughts with the audience, as if thinking aloud. Even if there are other characters on the stage, the audience is encouraged to believe that they cannot hear what is being said in the soliloquy.

Tragedy- A drama in which the protagonist is in conflict with fate or a superior force, leading to an unhappy or disastrous conclusion. Often, a flaw in the protagonist’s character brings about his or her downfall. In Othello, his tendency to experience jealousy makes the hero vulnerable to the forces of disorder represented by Iago .

Tragic flaw-A weakness within the character of the hero or heroine of a tragedy, which eventually leads to his or her downfall. In Greek tragedy, fate played the biggest part in bringing tragedy upon the characters. Shakespeare developed a more psychological version, in which the characters’ actions and personalities interacted with aspects of earthly reality. Othello’s tragic flaw could be said to be his jealousy.

Tragic hero -The main protagonist in a tragedy. Othello is one of Shakespeare’s greatest tragic heroes.

Unities- In Greek tragedy, the intensity of the drama was heightened through observing the ‘unities’ of time and place. This meant that the action had to occur within one location or setting, and within a short space of time, often one day. Although Shakespeare did not observe the unities strictly, he often confined the action of his tragedies to quite a considerable extent in order to create a feeling of claustrophobia and inevitability. In Othello, most of the action takes place in Cyprus and the final scenes are focused around Othello’s lodgings in the citadel. This helps to create a claustrophobic atmosphere in which tragedy seems more and more inevitable. Shakespeare also contracts time during the play’s middle section, making the rise of Othello’s jealousy seem to occur at a terrifying pace.

XX

# AMERICAN LITERATURE



The painting of William Brewster is part of a thematic representation in the President's room of the Senate Wing, signifying *Religion*. The other themes are: *Discovery* (Christopher Columbus); *History* (Benjamin Franklin); *Exploration* (Americus Vesputius).



The statues of Roger Williams and John Winthrop were chosen by the respective states that they were commissioned to represent-- Rhode Island and Massachusetts. The statue of Williams was sculpted by Franklin Simmons in 1870; that of Winthrop by Richard S. Greenough in 1875.



## American Literary Time Periods

compiled from The American Tradition, Prentice Hall The American Experience, by Cindy Adams

	Puritan Times	Rationalism/Age of Enlightenment
Years	to 1750	1750-1850

Historical Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Puritans move to America for religious freedom</li> <li>❖ Others moved to America to colonize it and endured hardships with the land and the Native Americans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ growing dissatisfaction with England and taxation without representation</li> <li>❖ rebellion against England</li> <li>❖ Revolutionary War</li> </ul>
Genre/Style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ sermons</li> <li>❖ diaries</li> <li>❖ personal narratives</li> <li>❖ captivity narratives</li> <li>❖ plain style</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ political pamphlets</li> <li>❖ travel writing</li> <li>❖ highly ornate writing</li> </ul>
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Christian utopia</li> <li>❖ relationship with God</li> <li>❖ histories</li> <li>❖ Puritan beliefs: community, original sin, and hard work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ national mission and American character</li> <li>❖ democratic utopia</li> <li>❖ use of reason</li> </ul>
Effect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ instructive</li> <li>❖ reinforces authority of Bible and church</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ pride and patriotism grow</li> <li>❖ “print culture” becomes a “vehicle for the new nation’s democratic identity and principles” (144 EMC)</li> <li>❖ proliferation of newspapers and magazines</li> </ul>

	Romanticism	Realism
Years	1800-1855	1855-1900
Historical Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ expansion to 25 states by 1836</li> <li>❖ technological developments make expansion seem easier (telegraph and the steam engine)</li> <li>❖ many states extended voting rights to all free men – a shift in emphasis to “common people”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Slavery</li> <li>❖ Civil War</li> <li>❖ westward expansion continues</li> </ul>
Genre/Style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ poetry</li> <li>❖ short stories</li> <li>❖ novels</li> <li>❖ slave narratives</li> <li>❖ political writings</li> <li>❖ essays</li> <li>❖ sub-genres: Transcendentalism Gothic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ spirituals</li> <li>❖ slave narratives</li> <li>❖ political writing</li> <li>❖ poetry</li> <li>❖ short stories</li> <li>❖ novels</li> <li>❖ sub-genres: Naturalism Regionalism</li> </ul>
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ imagination over reason</li> <li>❖ reverence for nature</li> <li>❖ supernatural/mysterious writing that can be interpreted on two levels</li> <li>❖ focus on individual’s feelings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ abolition of slavery</li> <li>❖ common characters not idealized</li> <li>❖ local color (Regionalism)</li> <li>❖ man’s lack of control over his fate</li> <li>❖ more literature centered around the Midwest and the Far West</li> </ul>
Effect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ fueled abolitionist movement</li> <li>❖ detective fiction, invented by Poe, still popular today</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ social realism – changing social problems</li> <li>❖ realistic fiction remains popular today</li> </ul>
	Modernism	Contemporary/Postmodernism
Years	1900-1946	1946-present
Historical Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ WWI and WWII</li> <li>❖ technological changes</li> <li>❖ Jazz Age – conflicts developed between older, conservative generation and young, alienated generation</li> <li>❖ Great Depression</li> <li>❖ expanded role of women in society</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Civil Rights Movement</li> <li>❖ JFK’s assassination</li> <li>❖ space exploration</li> <li>❖ Vietnam War</li> <li>❖ growing media influence</li> <li>❖ technological advances</li> <li>❖ rethinking of our past at the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century</li> </ul>
Genre/Style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ continuation of the same genres as in the past</li> <li>❖ sub-genre: Harlem Renaissance</li> <li>❖ highly experimental (rejection of the artistic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ continuation of the same genres as in the past</li> <li>❖ new styles: found poems, concrete poems</li> <li>❖ confessional poetry</li> <li>❖ performance poetry</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ convention of the past)</li> <li>❖ free verse, stream-of-consciousness prose</li> <li>❖ new styles; use of allusions</li> <li>❖ irony became a signature technique</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ blurring of lines between fact and fiction</li> <li>❖ much of what is being written right now defies classification until critics have the advantage of time to place it in perspective</li> </ul>
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ reality not absolute but depends upon the point of view of the observer</li> <li>❖ impersonal, alienating</li> <li>❖ people not able to communicate effectively</li> <li>❖ grief over loss of the past (pre world wars)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ people observe life as the media presents it</li> <li>❖ popular culture has seeped into the literature</li> <li>❖ people's identity shaped by cultural and gender attitudes</li> <li>❖ people learning to cope with problems through communication</li> <li>❖ emergence of ethnic and women writers</li> </ul>
Effect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ American literature on the "leading edge of world's artistic achievement" (648 PH)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ poetry slams have become inexpensive, popular entertainment</li> <li>❖ more multicultural literature included in anthologies</li> </ul>

## Overview of American History and Literature



This introduction is meant to help the students to enter the soul of literature, knowing its history and important figures of the American people.

The foundation of American people are due to the pilgrims and puritans. Both very important in producing the American behavior and character.

### The Pilgrims

The immigration of the Pilgrims to New England occurred in stages. But that they had to go somewhere became apparent soon enough. Theirs was the position of the Separatist: they believed that the reforms of the Anglican church had not gone far enough, that, although the break with Catholicism in 1535 had moved some way toward the Puritan belief in and idea of religious authority grounded solely in Scripture, by substituting king for pope as the head of the church, England was only recapitulating an unnecessary, corrupt, and even idolatrous order (Gill, 19-21). In one basic respect, the Pilgrims are a logical outcome of the Reformation. In its increasing dissemination of the Bible, the increasing emphasis on it as the basis of spiritual meaning, the subsequently increasing importance of literacy as a mode of religious authority and awareness, a growing individualism was implicit. This individualism may then have easily led to an atomization or dispersion of authority that the monarchy duly feared, and that later generations of Americans could easily label *democratization*. As a writer in 1921 put it, "They accepted Calvin's rule, that those who are to exercise any public function in the church should be chosen by common voice" (Wheelwright, vii). However much this might emphasize the democratic qualities of the Pilgrims, as dissenters they do suggest at some level the origins of democratic society, in its reliance upon contending and even conflicting points of view, and in its tendency toward a more fluid social structure.

But theirs was a religious, not a political agenda; moral and theological principles were involved, and from their perspective, there could be no compromise. For them 2 Corinthians made it clear: "Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord." To achieve and preserve a simplicity and 'purity' that they felt had been lost amid the some of the surviving features of Catholicism--the rituals which continued through into the Anglican Church and were epitomized in its statement, "'I believe in...the holy Catholick Church'" (Gill, 19). To establish themselves as rightful interpreters of the Bible independent of an inherited social and cultural order, they removed from the Anglican Church in order to re-establish it as they believed it truly should be. This of course meant leaving the country, and they left for Holland in 1608.

After 12 years, they decided to move again. Having gone back to England to obtain the backing of the Virginia Company, 102 Pilgrims set out for America. The reasons are suggested by William Bradford, when he notes the "discouragements" of the hard life they had in Holland, and the hope of attracting others by finding "a better, and easier place of living"; the "children" of the group being "drawne away by evill examples into extravagance and dangerous courses"; the "great hope, for the propagating and advancing the gospell of the kingdom of Christ in those remote parts of the world" (Wheelwright, 7-8). In these reasons, the second sounds most like the Pilgrims many Americans are familiar with--the group that wants to be left alone and live in its own pure and righteous way. Behind it seems to lie not only the fear of the breakdown of individual families, but even a concern over the dissolution of the larger community. The concern seems to be that their split with England was now only effecting their own disolution into Dutch culture. But it is also interesting to note the underlying traces of evangelism in, if not the first, certainly the last of the reasons. On the one hand, this strain would find its later expression (and perversion) in such portrayals of the Pilgrims as the Rotunda fresco, where the idea of conversion is baldly fashioned within the image of conquest; here, the Indian is shown as subdued before the word of the "kingdom" even as the Pilgrims are landing, and the Pilgrim is seen as an agent of domination, a superior moral force commanding by its sheer presence. On the other hand, such a portrayal suggests an uneasy tension with the common (and seemingly accurate) conception of the Pilgrims as a model of tolerance. Indeed, the first of their reasons for sailing to America is fairly passive--they want to "draw" others by the example of their prosperity, not necessarily go conquer and actively convert. Such an idea reflects the one that would be expressed explicitly by the Puritan John Winthrop, where the New World would become a beacon of religious light, a model of spiritual promise, a "citty upon a hill."

In any case, from their own point of view, they are 'agents' only insofar as they are agents of Providence, and as Bradford strives to make clear throughout, the narrative of their actions is only an interpretation of the works of God. Thus, in a remarkable instance when a "proud and very profane yonge man" who "would curse and swear most bitterly" falls overboard from the Mayflower and drowns, it is seen as "the just hand of God upon him" (Wheelwright, 14). So too when a member of their party is saved from drowning, or when the initial landing party finds the corn and beans for seed, or with their safe arrival at Plymouth Bay in general, is the "spetiall providence of God" evinced. And Bradford seems to self-consciously maintain this version of the Christian perspective as an historical one, never allowing the reader or student of the Pilgrims to forget that their story is one with a trajectory--coming from its beginnings England, and moving through the beginnings of the 'New World'. This is an emphasis that will serve histories and memories alike, especially in viewing the Revolution and the increased democratization of the United States as some necessary fulfillment of the Pilgrim promise.

### **The mayflower compact**

Naturally, the primary text for later interpreters would be the Mayflower Compact, which Bradford gives:

In the name of God, Amen. We whose names are underwritten, by the loyall subjects of our dread soveraigne Lord, King James, by the grace of God, of Great Britaine, Franc, and Ireland king, defender of the faith, etc.

Haveing undertaken, for the glorie of God, and advancemente of the Christian faith, and honour of our king and countrie, a voyage to plant the first colonie in the Northerne parts of Virginia, doe by these presents solemnly and mutually in the presence of God, and one another, covenant and combine our selves together into a civill body politick, for our better ordering and preservation and furtherance of the ends aforesaid; and by vertue hereof to enacte, constitute and frame such just and equall lawes, ordinances, acts, constitutions, and offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meete and convenient for the generall good of the Colonie, unto which we promise all due submission and obedience. In witnes whereof we have hereunder subscribed our names at Cap-Codd the .11. of November, in the year of the raigne of our soveraigne lord, King James, of England, France, and Ireland, the eighteenth, and of Scotland the fiftie-fourth. Anno Dom. 1620 (Wheelwright, 32-33)

Bradford writes of the Compact, that it developed partly in response to "the discontented and mutinous speeches" of some of the "strangers"--colonists who had travelled with them but who "were uncommitted to church fellowship"--and that it asserted and firmed the Pilgrims' "owne libertie; for none had the power to command them, the patente they had being for Virginia, and not for New england..." The Compact thus arose out of a need to maintain social and civic coherence, to ensure that the officials elected and the group as a whole would have some legitimation against challenges to its "legal authority" (McQuade, 140; Wheelwright, 32). Michael Kammen, however, notes a "tradition" in the early 19th century "in which the Compact was viewed as part of the repudiation of English domination" (Kammen, 64). Surely there are evident democratic tendencies in the text, wherein a code established from the consent of the people becomes the underpinning of a society of "just and equall lawes," where the officials and figures of authority are all elected. But as "loyall subjects" to the "dread soveraigne Lord, King James," their task is twofold: to maintain a degree of independence that would allow them to live in accordance with their Separatist views, but also to keep the ties to England strong enough



so that those who did not share their religion nevertheless would be bound by an order ultimately traceable to the Crown. The misreadings that Kammen notes will be discussed further in following sections.

## Thanksgiving and the indians



*"The First Thanksgiving," a painting by J.L.G. Ferris, depicts America's early settlers and Native Americans celebrating a bountiful harvest.*

The first few months were grueling for the Pilgrims. Half of their 102 members perished: "of the 17 male heads of families, ten died during the first infection"; of the 17 wives, only three were left after three months. When such devastation is seen against the following summer, when conditions improved so that Bradford would write of "all things in good plenty," the sincerity of 'Thanksgiving' becomes apparent. Regardless of how far removed one may be now or even may have been when it was established as a national holiday in 1863, the sense of Providence had undoubtedly been heightened to an extreme pitch for the Pilgrims. After such devastating sickness, everyday survival itself was probably seen as cause for gratitude, but when given a full and prosperous harvest (with the help and instruction of Native Americans such as Squanto), the previous ordeal could be understood as a trial by God, a test of faith, the heavenly reward prefigured by an earthly one.

The institutional--by which is meant primarily the Capitol's--portrayal of Native Americans throughout the establishment of Plymouth Plantation stands in curious relation to Bradford's narrative. First of all, there is the initial landing party, with its description of the men led by Captain Miles Standish, firing shots into the darkness at "a hideous and great crie." This they mistook for a "companie of wolves, or such like wild beasts," until the next morning's skirmish--when the "arrowes came flying" and one "lustie man, and no less valiente" who "was seen shoot .3. arrowes" and "stood .3. shot of a musket..." (Wheelwright, 25-26). This is hardly the humble servant offering up the corn at the mere sight of the Pilgrim's arrival. And when Samoset, the first representative of the Indians, comes to speak (in "broken English") with the Pilgrims, "he came *bouldly* amongst them" (emphasis added); and having had previous contact with Europeans, he presumably knew as much or more about the Pilgrims than they about him. Squanto, who had been to England and could communicate well with the colonists, and who taught them "how to set their corne, wher to take fish, and to procure other commodities," is understood by the Pilgrims as "a spetiall instrument sent of God for their good beyond their expectation" (Wheelwright, 41). Regardless of the sense of utility in such an expression (all things being for them the effect or instrument of God), there is an undeniable gratitude, and even the sense of dependence that those must have before one who would provide aid and instruction. The treaty with Massasoit was initiated not by the Pilgrims but by the sachem himself, who had already made an equivalent pact with earlier explorers. The success of the treaty during Massasoit's lifetime suggests an equality, fairness, and tolerance that would be idealized and wistfully re-presented in various remembrances of the overall colonial experience. It allows both the positive exemplar of the 'Indian' in Massasoit, and reassurance of European good-faith in dealing with him.

## The Puritans

The most obvious difference between the Pilgrims and the Puritans is that the Puritans had no intention of breaking with the Anglican church. The Puritans were nonconformists as were the Pilgrims, both of which refusing to accept an authority beyond that of the revealed word. But where with the Pilgrims this had translated into something closer to an egalitarian mode, the "Puritans considered religion a very complex, subtle, and highly intellectual affair," and its leaders thus were highly trained scholars, whose education tended to translate into positions that were often authoritarian. There was a built-in hierarchism in this sense, but one which mostly reflected the age: "Very few Englishmen had yet broached the notion that a lackey was as good as a lord, or that any Tom, Dick, or Harry...could understand the Sermon on the Mount as well as a Master of Arts from Oxford, Cambridge, or Harvard" (Miller, I: 4, 14). Of course, while the Puritan emphasis on

scholarship did foster such class distinction, it nevertheless encouraged education among the whole of its group, and in fact demanded a level of learning and understanding in terms of salvation. Thomas Hooker stated in *The Application of Redemption*, "Its with an ignorant sinner in the midst of all means as with a sick man remaining in the Apothecaries shop, ful of choycest Medicines in the darkest night: ...because he cannot see what he takes, and how to use them, he may kill himself or encrease his distempers, but never cure any disease" (qtd. in Miller, I: 13).

Knowledge of Scripture and divinity, for the Puritans, was essential. This was an uncompromising attitude that characterized the Puritans' entry into New England, according to Perry Miller and Thomas H. Johnson, whose thematic anthology, *The Puritans* (1932, 1963), became a key text of revisionist historicism, standing as an influential corrective against the extreme anti-Puritanism of the early twentieth century. Following Samuel Eliot Morison, they noted that the emphasis on education saw the establishment, survival, and flourishing of Harvard College--which survived only because the entire community was willing to support it, so that even the poor yeoman farmers "contributed their pecks of wheat" for the continued promise of a "literate ministry" (Miller, I: 14). And again, to their credit, Puritan leaders did not bolster the knowledge of its ministry simply to perpetuate the level of power of the ruling elite. A continuing goal was to further education among the laity, and so ensure that not only were the right and righteous ideas and understandings being held and expressed, but that the expressions were in fact *messages* received by a comprehending audience. An Act passed in Massachusetts in 1647 required "that every town of one hundred families or more should provide free common and grammar school instruction." Indeed, the first "Free Grammar School" was established in Boston in 1635, only five years after the Massachusetts Bay Colony was founded (Miller, II: 695-97). For all the accusations of superstition and narrow-mindedness, the Puritans could at least be said to have provided their own antidote in their system of schools. As John Cotton wrote in *Christ the Fountaine of Life*, "zeale is but a wilde-fire without knowledge" (qtd. in Miller, I: 22).

The Puritans who, in the 1560s, first began to be (contemptuously) referred to as such, were ardent reformers, seeking to bring the Church to a state of *purity* that would match Christianity as it had been in the time of Christ. This reform was to involve, depending upon which Puritan one asked, varying degrees of stripping away practices seen as residual "popery"--vestments, ceremony, and the like. But many of the ideas later associated strictly with the Puritans were not held only by them. The Calvinist doctrine of predestination, with which Puritanism agreed, was held by the Pilgrims as well: both believed that the human state was one of sin and depravity; that after the Fall all but an elect group were irrevocably bound for hell; that, because God's knowledge and power was not limited by space or time, this group had always been elect. In other words, there was nothing one could do about the condition of one's soul but try to act as one would expect a heaven-bound soul to act.

As Perry Miller points out, they inherited Renaissance humanism just as they inherited the Reformation, and so held an interesting place for reason in their overall beliefs. The Puritan idea of "Covenant Theology" describes how "after the fall of man, God voluntarily condescended...to draw up a covenant or contract with His creature in which He laid down the terms and conditions of salvation, and pledged Himself to abide by them" (Miller, I: 58). The doctrine was not so much one of prescription as it was of explanation: it reasoned *why* certain people were saved and others were not, it gave the conditions against which one might measure up one's soul, and it ensured that God would abide by "human conceptions of right and justice"--"not in all aspects, but in the main" (Miller, I: 58). The religious agency for the individual Puritan was then located in intense introspection, in the attempt to come to an awareness of one's own spiritual state. As with the Pilgrims, the world, history, everything for the Puritan became a *text* to be interpreted. One could not expect all of God's actions to be limited by one's *ideas* of reason and justice, but one at least had a general sense, John Cotton's "essential wisdom," as guidance. And of course, one had the key, the basis of spiritual understanding, the foundational text and all-encompassing code, the Bible.

## Salem witchcraft

It was because the Puritan mode of interpretivity--with its readings of providence and secondary causes--could reach such extremes that the Salem witch-trials broke out. Of course, as Thomas H. Johnson writes, the belief in witches was generally questioned by no one--Puritan or otherwise--"and even as late as the close of the seventeenth century hardly a scientist of repute in England but accepted certain phenomena as due to witchcraft." But the Puritan cosmology held a relentless imaginative power, especially demonstrated in narratives wherein Providence was shown to be at work through nature and among human beings. The laity read and took in such readings or demonstrations of Providence, and the ministry felt compelled by a sense of official responsibility to offer their interpretations and explain the work of God in the world (Miller, II: 734-35).

Johnson notes the "lurid details" of Cotton Mather's *Memorable Providences, Relating to Witchcrafts and Possessions* (1689), which helped generate an unbalanced fascination with witchcraft. This would prove both fire and tinder for Salem Village, so that "by September, twenty people and two dogs had been executed as witches" and hundreds more were

either in jail or were accused (Miller, II: 735). Yet to envision the Puritan community at this point simply as a mob of hysterical zealots is to lose sight of those prominent figures who stood against the proceedings. Granted that they did not speak out too loudly at the height of the fervor, but then to do so would be to risk exposure to a confusion of plague-like properties, where the testimony of an alleged victim alone was enough to condemn a person. But it was the injustice of this very condition against which men such as Thomas Brattle and Increase Mather wrote. Brattle's "A Full and Candid Account of the Delusion called Witchcraft...." (1692) argued that the evidence was no true evidence at all, because the *forms* of the accused were taken to *be* the accused, and the accusers, in declaring that they were informed by the devil as to who afflicted them, were only offering the devil's testimony. His was an argument which seemed wholly reasonable to many, but it led Brattle to the fear "that ages will not wear off that reproach and those stains which these things will leave behind them upon our land" (In Miller, II: 762). Mather wrote in 1693, in *Cases of Conscience concerning Evil Spirits*, that "it were better that Ten Suspected Witches should escape, than that one Innocent Person be Condemned" (Qtd. in Miller, II: 736).

Beyond this is as well is the journal of Samuel Sewall, which records his fascinating approach to what had happened. This complicates the idea of the 'Puritan' on another level because while Brattle and (Increase) Mather may have offered challenges to any conception of the homogeneity of Puritan belief, Sewall reminds one of the variability within an *individual*. It introduces an axis of time by which the measure of the 'Puritan mind' must be adjusted. On Christmas Day, 1696, one reads the terse opening, "We bury our little daughter." And three weeks later is a transcript of the notice Sewall had posted publicly. It relates that "Samuel Sewall, sensible of the reiterated strokes of God upon himself and family...Desires to take the Blame and Shame of [the Salem proceedings], Asking pardon of Men..." (In Miller, 513). This is once again an interpretation of the "reiterated strokes of God" which has brought the sense of shame to his consciousness, and it suggests that, at least for Puritans such as Sewall, these readings of nature and events are not merely those of convenience or self-justification. There is at least the indication here that if some Puritans stood ready to see the guilt in others, some of those same people at least made their judgments in good faith and with honesty, giving credence to their understanding of the ways of God, even when they themselves were the object of judgment. Sewall's example suggests a kind of Puritan whose Puritanism not only carries him to almost inhuman extremes, but also relentlessly brings him back, full circle, to humility.

## The revealed word, antinomianism, individualism

What also must be emphasized is the absolute ground of religious understanding that the Biblical text represented for the Puritans. The Bible was the Lord's revealed word, and only through it does He directly communicate to human beings. While the natural world may be studied and interpreted in order to gain a sense of His will, He *is not* the world itself, and does not instill Himself directly into human beings by means of visitations or revelations or divine inspirations of any sort (Miller, I: 10). The antinomian crisis involving Anne Hutchinson focused on this issue. John Winthrop records it in his journal:

[October 21, 1636] One Mrs. Hutchinson, a member of the church of Boston, a woman of ready wit and bold spirit, brought over with her two dangerous errors: 1. That the person of the Holy Ghost dwells in a justified person. 2. That no sanctification can help to evidence to us our justification... (In Miller I: 129)

What the Puritans faced in Hutchinson, or in the Quaker idea of "inner light" which allowed every person direct access to God, was an outbreak of "dangerous" individualism, one which threatened the foundation of their social order. It was not simply a matter of letting Hutchinson spread her ideas freely--not when those ideas could carry the Puritan conception of grace to such an extreme that it translated into an overall abandonment of any structured church, which is to say, the basis of a Puritan society. Miller states how the followers of Hutchinson became caught up in a "fanatical anti-intellectualism" fed by the original Puritan "contention that regenerate men were illuminated with divine truth," which was in turn taken indicate the irrelevance of scholarship and study of the Bible. Both possibilities were potentially destructive to the Massachusetts Bay colony, and both only carried out Puritan ideas further than they were meant to go (Miller, I: 14-15); the individualistic tendencies that was embedded in the Pilgrim community, exists as well with the Puritans. In reference to Tocqueville's use of the term in volume II of *Democracy in America*, Ellwood Johnson goes so far as to say, "The anti-traditionalism and de-ritualization of society that he named *Individualisme* had their sources in Puritan culture. This Puritan individualism had survived especially in the habit of judging others by their characters of mind and will, rather than rank, sex, or race..." (Johnson, 119). Of course, as Johnson notes, Tocqueville's experience in America was limited both in time and geographic location. But Hutchinson and her followers *were* banished, after all, and while Puritanism did substitute the more simplified approach of Ramean logic to replace the overly recondite and complicated mediaeval scholasticism, and while it fostered a more personal mode of religion with its emphasis on individual faith and access to Scripture instead of the structured ritualism and mediation of the Catholic church, it nevertheless took for granted a society and state which relied upon what was only a translated form of class division, and which depended upon a hierarchy where the word of God would not become dispersed (and so, altered) into a kind of religious precursor to

democracy. The Puritans had themselves suffered repeatedly under a society which had seemed to evince the potentially ominous side of the relation of church and state. The king was the leader of the church, and the state decided how the church was to function, and in 1629 when Charles I dissolved parliament, the people found that they no longer had any political representation, any means to act legislatively. Their secular agency had then become a measure of their religious agency; the removal to Massachusetts in turn was a way to gain a political voice, to create a state that would develop according to their own beliefs and fashion itself harmoniously with the church.

It was not an effort to establish a society wherein one might unreservedly express what one wished to express and still hope to have a say in communal affairs. If religion was to come to bear on the governance of the society, to what good would a more egalitarian, democratic form come? The integrity of the community as religious entity (Winthrop's "city on a hill"), which had been the purpose of their coming to America, could only be, at best, weakened and dispersed, and at worst, be challenged to such a degree and in so many ways that there would be no agreement, no action or political effectiveness. Their religion itself would seem to be faced with a prospect of which kind does not easily (if at all) admit--a prefiguration of what is now called 'gridlock.' Despite what some later commentators would say, Puritanism and Democracy were not coproductive ideas, no matter how much one might have anticipated, and even allowed the eventuality of, the other.

One who stated the problems which would ultimately unravel Puritanism as a dominant political force was Roger Williams. For one thing, Williams's critique of the institutions being developed in Massachusetts directly illuminates the difficulty indicated above--that of perpetuating a religion which both held the seed of an increasingly liberating individualism and at the same time maintained the need of a limited meritocracy. The primary point of contention for Williams began in 1631 when he declared that the church in New England was, in its failure to fully separate from the English church, inadequate, and tainted. He removed to Plymouth, where he remained for a year. But even there "Williams wore out his welcome" (Heimert, 196). Part of the reason lay in another of Williams's critique of New England as it was developing, that the lands granted to the colonists had been unjustly given by the crown, because they had not been first purchased from the Indians. For his efforts, Williams was banished. His primary response to this was one of his more threatening ideas, "that the civil magistrates had no power to punish persons for their religious opinions" (Miller, I: 215). This was not necessarily an overarching argument for full toleration, but rather implied a statement specific to Christian salvation, that "no power on earth was entitled to prevent any individual from seeking Christ in his own way" (Heimert, 198). For the Puritan ministry, this was far enough, because it targeted the strongest tie between it and civil government, and thus implied a potential disconnection between the two. As John Cotton wrote, the question of "mens goods or lands, lives or liberties, tributes, customes, worldly honors and inheritances" was already the jurisdiction of "the civill state" (qtd. in Hall, 117), but the establishment of laws which fostered Christian principles and punished threats to them-- that was only part of the continued and increasing realization of divine will on earth.

That dissenters such as Hutchinson and Williams were banished, suggests what has recurrently been described as a major factor in the evolution not only of the Puritan theocracy, but of supposed national identity in general--the *frontier*. Both Crèvecoeur and Tocqueville portray the pioneer type, the individual who, being away from the influence of religion and mannered, social customs, becomes increasingly rough, and even near-barbaric. This same figure is also seen as a necessary precursor to more and more 'civilized' waves of society. Another view of the frontier effect comes with the increasing democratization of the United States, where populist movements occur such as the Jacksonian Revolution, suggesting a kind of evolutionary mode through which the American socio-political 'self' is more and more fully realized. For Puritan society, Miller suggests a more socio-economic effect, where the frontier increasingly disperses communities and so disperses the effect and control of the clergy, and where the drive for material profit begins to predominate over the concern with "religion and salvation" (Miller, I: 17). And if the frontier demands more a stripped-down material efficacy than the finer attributes of 'culture' and class distinction, then so too does frontier-influenced religion lose its taste for the nicer distinctions of theological scholarship, and move instead toward a greater simplicity, toward the eventual evangelism of the Great Awakening in the 1740s, further out toward "fundamentalism" and other forms of belief that had long-since ceased to be Puritan.

## **Caveat-a-note on the jeremiad**

At this point one must step back with a bit of caution, and once again take note of an important provision underlying the terminology. That is, in using the term "puritan" above and assigning to it a set of characteristics and preponderances, I must qualify the grounds of the (non)definition. Specifically, an argument such as that belonging to Darrett Rutman becomes useful, even if one does not take it as far as does he (in using specifically against the likes of Perry Miller). Primarily, he takes issue with an approach to history that employs only the selected writings of a selected few, in determining some "notion of Puritan quintessence"--one which is supposed to represent *all* of Puritan New England, ministry and laity alike. As he puts it, this "view of New England Puritanism...rests upon two major implicit

assumptions....that there is such a thing as 'Puritanism'...and that the acme of Puritan ideals is to be found in New England during the years 1630-1650" (In Hall, 110). His argument is correlative to one which Sacvan Bercovitch will take up in *The American Jeremiad*, where he points out that historians, in assuming this so-called decline, are simply following the lead of "Cotton Mather and other New England Jeremiahs." Taking statements such as Mather's, historians, instead of seeing it as part of a tradition of "political sermon" (to use Bercovitch's phrase) that could be evinced all the way from the sailing of the *Arbella*, have instead interpreted them as even more historically specific, reactions against an increasing lack of coherence between religious and secular authority, and declarations of a failing mission. Rutman indicates the "pragmatic value" of seeing the jeremiad this way, in that it helps isolate a model of Puritanism, and narrows the historian's task to one of describing the thought of a specific twenty-year period.

Rutman's basic argument rests on the recognition that, to gain a clearer picture, one must study not only published sermons and theological treatises, but also more wide-ranging anthropologic data--records of social, political, and economic relations within and among individuals and communities. Into the specifics of this, one need not go; a study in this vein of Sudbury, Massachusetts, reveals underlying instabilities that challenge assumptions of a dominant Puritan 'theocracy,' but then this is not so far from Miller's own conclusion, that Puritan ideology held within it the basis of its own loss of control. The point here is rather the point from which Rutman begins and with which he concludes, that one must be careful not assume an essence of identity to be described before attempting to describe simply what one finds, that such an assumption may lead to dangerous equivocations between the ideology of Puritanism and the history of New England (and extrapolating from that, much of the United States as a whole).

It is the old instability--that between the religious and the secular--which the idea of Puritanism contains. The confusion then becomes translated into the historical perspective in terms that, as Bercovitch states, come from the jeremiad itself: "the New England Puritan jeremiad evokes the mythic past not merely to elicit imitation but above all to demand progress" (Bercovitch, 24). For Bercovitch, who reads those key texts of the 'Great Migration'--John Winthrop's "A Model of Christian Charity" and John Cotton's "God's Promise to His Plantations"--as important transitions into distinctly *American* forms of the jeremiad, this entails an "effort to fuse the sacred and profane," to historicize transcendent values and goals into what he calls a "ritual of errand" (Bercovitch, 26,29). Defined then not so much by pre-existing social distinctions but rather by a continual and purposefully-held sense of mission to which the modern idea of 'progress' is intrinsic and out of which the notion of "civil religion" (as Kammen would say, "memory in place of religion") develops, Puritanism, as an ideological mode and not (Rutman's) historical "actuality," suggests America as a modern region from the very beginnings of its colonization.

Less so with historians than popularizers of a Puritan mythos, the evocation of a "golden age" existing less as past fact than future promise, comes to dominate the sense of 'Puritan tradition'. This, as Bercovitch indicates, is at the heart of 'explaining' America, with all its promise as a New World, with its idea of Manifest Destiny, with the kind of self-idealization of National Purpose that Henry Nash Smith describes in *Virgin Land*. The modern perspective and its blurred secular and religious (or moral) understandings, thus is what will be explored in the sequel.

The first Europeans in America did not encounter a silent world. A chorus of voices had been alive and moving through the air for approximately 25,000 years before. Weaving tales of tricksters, warriors and gods; spinning prayers, creation stories, and spiritual prophesies, the First Nations carved out their oral traditions long before colonial minds were fired and flummoxed by a world loud with language when Leif Ericsson first sighted Newfoundland in A.D. 1000. Gradually the stories that these first communities told about themselves became muffled as the eminences of the European Renaissance began to contemplate the New World. One of them, the French thinker and father of the essay, Michel de Montaigne, was not loath to transform the anecdotes of a servant who had visited Antarctic France (modern Brazil) into a report on the lives of virtuous cannibals. According to his "On Cannibals" (1588), despite their predilection for white meat, these noble individuals led lives of goodness and dignity, in shaming contrast to corrupt Europe. Little wonder that on an imaginary New World island in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (first performed in 1611), the rude savage Caliban awaits a conquering Prospero in the midst of natural bounty.

## Pioneers to Puritans

Whether partially or entirely fanciful, these visions of paradise on Earth were not much different from Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), itself partly inspired by the Italian Amerigo Vespucci's voyages to the New World. Wonders of a new Eden, untainted by European decadence, beckoned to those who would venture to America, even as others spared no ink to paint accounts of the savagery of this hostile, unknown world. Between these extremes lay something approaching the truth: America as equal parts heaven and hell, its aboriginal inhabitants as human beings capable of both virtue and vice. While wealth, albeit cloaked in Christian missionary zeal, may have been the primary motive for transatlantic journeys, many explorers quickly understood that survival had to be secured before pagan souls or gold. John Smith, himself an

escaped slave from the Balkans who led the 1606 expedition to Virginia, wrote of his plunders with a raconteur's flair for embellishment, impatient with those who bemoaned the rigors of earning their colonial daily bread. His twin chronicles, *A True Relation of Virginia* (1608) and *The General History of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles* (1624), differ in at least one suggestive detail: the Indian maiden Pocahontas appears only in the latter, betraying the freedom with which European imagination worked on some "facts" of this encounter.

Competing accounts of the American experiment multiplied with Thomas Morton, whose Maypole paganism and free trade in arms with the natives raised the ire of his Puritan neighbors, Governor William Bradford, who led *Mayflower* Pilgrims from religious persecution in England to Plymouth Rock in 1620, and Roger Williams, who sought to understand the language of the natives, earning him expulsion from the "sanctuary" of Massachusetts. More often than not, feverish religiosity cast as potent a spell on these early American authors as their English literary heritage. The terrors of Judgment Day inspired Michael Wigglesworth's *The Day of Doom* (1662), a poem so sensational that one in twenty homes ended up harboring a copy. Equally electrifying were narratives of captivity and restoration, like that of Mary Rowlandson (1682), often cast as allegories of the soul's journey from a world of torment to heaven. Beset by fragile health and religious doubt, Anne Bradstreet captured in her *Several Poems* (1678) a moving picture of a Pilgrim mind grappling with the redemptive trials of life with a courage that would later bestir Emily Dickinson.

It seems unlikely that two college roommates at Harvard, Edward Taylor and Samuel Sewall, would both come to define Puritan literary culture—yet they did. Influenced by the English verse of John Donne and George Herbert, Taylor, a New England minister, became as great a poet as the Puritans managed to produce. Sewall's *Diary* (begun 12 August 1674) made him as much a rival of his British counterpart Samuel Pepys as of the more ribald chronicler of Virginia, William Byrd. While it is easy to caricature the Puritans as models of virtue or else vicious persecutors of real or imagined heresy, the simplicity of myth beggars the complexity of reality. A jurist who presided over the Salem Witch Trials, Sewall was also the author of *The Selling of Joseph* (1700), the first antislavery tract in an America that had accepted the practice since 1619.

The Great Awakening, a period in which the Puritan mindset enjoyed a brief revival, is notable for the prolific historian and hagiographer Cotton Mather. *The Wonders of the Invisible World* (1693) afforded a glimpse of his skepticism about the prosecutors of the witch trials, while his *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702) provided a narrative of settlers' history of America, regularly illuminated with the exemplary "lives of the saints." Moved equally by dogmatic piety and the imperatives of reason and science, Jonathan Edwards delivered arresting sermons that swayed not only his peers, but also centuries later, William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902). True to form, Edwards's *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God* (1737) is a celebration not only of spiritual reawakening, but of the empiricism of John Locke as well.

## Enlightenment to Autonomy

If anyone embodied the recoil from seventeenth-century Puritan orthodoxy toward the Enlightenment, it was the architect of an independent, modern United States, Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790). Printer, statesman, scientist, and journalist, he first delighted his readers with the annual wit and wisdom of Poor Richard's Almanac (launched in 1733). In 1741, in parallel with Andrew Bradford's *The American Magazine*, Franklin's *General Magazine and Historical Chronicle* marked the beginning of New England magazine publishing. But it was his best-selling *Autobiography* (1791) that revealed the extent to which his personal destiny twined with the turbulent course of the new state. Ostensibly a lesson in life for his son, the book became a compass for generations of Americans as it tracked Citizen Franklin's progress from a humble printer's apprentice, through his glory as a diplomat in the Revolutionary War (1775–1783), to the exclusive club of the founding fathers who drafted the Declaration of Independence and ratified the Constitution.

The Revolution that stamped Franklin's life with the destiny of the nation found its most brazen exponent in Thomas Paine. Author of *Common Sense* (1776) and *The American Crisis* (pamphlet series, 1776–1783), Paine was a British expatriate who came to Philadelphia sponsored by Franklin and galvanized the battle for independence. His fervid opposition to the British social order, slavery, and the inferior status of women made him a lightning rod of the Revolution, helping to create an American identity in its wake. America's emergence as a sovereign power became enshrined in the Declaration of Independence, drafted by Thomas Jefferson. Harking back to Montaigne in *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1784–1785), this patrician statesman idolized the purity of agrarian society in the fear that the closer the New World edged toward the satanic mills of industrial Europe, the more corrupt it would become. The founder of the University of Virginia, whose library would seed the Library of Congress, Jefferson was elected president in 1800 and again in 1804.

## Literature After the Revolution

After the Revolution, American literary culture grew less dependent on British models, and the popular success of poets like the Connecticut Wits, including Timothy Dwight, composer of an American would be epic, *The Conquest of Canaan* (1785), only confirmed this point. The broad appeal of novels like *The Power of Sympathy* (1789) by William Hill Brown and *Charlotte Temple* (1791) by Susanna Haswell Rowson, both tales of seduction that spoke to what future critics would call a pulp fiction sensibility, signaled the growing success of domestic authors (Rowson's novel, *the* best-seller of the eighteenth century, would do equally well in the nineteenth). Modeled on *Don Quixote*, the comic writings of Hugh Henry Brackenridge and the gothic sensibilities of Charles Brockden Brown also won a degree of popular and critical laurels, the latter presaging the dark strains of Poe and Hawthorne.

# History of American Literature / Colonial Period

## Early Colonial Literature. 1607-1700

*I. The English in Virginia.*

*II. Pilgrims and Puritans in New England.*

*III. The New England Clergy.*

*IV. Puritan Poetry in New England.*

### **I. The English in Virginia: Captain John Smith, William Strachey, George Sandys.**

The story of a nation's literature ordinarily has its beginning far back in the remoter history of that nation, obscured by the uncertainties of an age of which no trustworthy records have been preserved. The earliest writings of a people are usually the first efforts at literary production of a race in its childhood; and as these compositions develop they record the intellectual and artistic growth of the race. The conditions which attended the development of literature in America, therefore, are peculiar. At the very time when Sir Walter Raleigh -- a type of the great and splendid men of action who made such glorious history for England in the days of Elizabeth -- was organizing the first futile efforts to colonize the new world, English Literature, which is the joint possession of the whole English-speaking race, was rapidly developing. Sir Philip Sidney had written his *Arcadia*, first of the great prose romances, and enriched English poetry with his sonnets; Edmund Spenser had composed *The Shepherd's Calendar*; Christopher Marlowe had established the drama upon heroic lines; and Shakespeare had just entered on the first flights of his fancy. When, in 1606, King James granted to a company of London merchants the first charter of Virginia, Sidney and Spenser and Marlowe were dead, Shakespeare had produced some of his greatest plays, the name of Ben Jonson, along with other notable names, had been added to the list of our great dramatists, and the philosopher, Francis Bacon, had published the first of his essays. These are the familiar names which represent the climax of literary achievement in the Elizabethan age; and this brilliant epoch had reached its full height when the first permanent English settlement in America was made at Jamestown in 1607. On New Year's day, the little fleet commanded by Captain Newport sailed forth on its venturesome and romantic enterprise, the significance of which was not altogether unsuspected by those who saw it depart. Michael Drayton, one of the most popular poets of his day, later poet laureate of the kingdom, sang in quaint, prophetic verses a cheery farewell:

"You brave heroic minds,  
Worthy your country's name,  
That honor still pursue,  
Go and subdue,  
Whilst loitering hinds  
Lurk here at home with shame.

"And in regions farre,  
Such heroes bring ye forth  
As those from whom we came;  
And plant our name  
Under that star  
Not known unto our north.

"And as there plenty grows  
Of laurel everywhere,  
Apollo's sacred tree,  
You it may see,  
A poet's brows  
that may sing there."

### ***The Virginia Colony.***

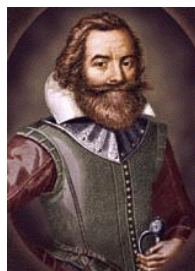




Original map of the New England seacoast made by Captain John Smith.

This little band of adventurers "in regions farre" disembarked from the ships Discovery, Good Speed, and Susan Constant upon the site of a town yet to be built, fifty miles inland, on the shore of a stream as yet unexplored, in the heart of a vast green wilderness the home of savage tribes who were none too friendly. It was hardly to be expected that the ripe seeds of literary culture should be found in such a company, or should germinate under such conditions in any notable luxuriance. The surprising fact, however, is that in this group of gentlemen adventurers there was one man of some literary craft, who, while leading the most strenuous life of all, efficiently protecting and heartening his less courageous comrades in all manner of perilous experiences, compiled and wrote with much literary skill the picturesque chronicles of the settlement.

### **John Smith, 1580-1631**



Captain John Smith, the mainstay of the Jamestown colony in the critical period of its early existence, was a true soldier of fortune, venturesome, resolute, self-reliant, resourceful; withal a man of great good sense, and with the grasp on circumstances which belongs to the man of power. His life since leaving his home on a Lincolnshire farm at sixteen years of age had been replete with romantic adventure. He had been a soldier in the French army and had served in that of Holland. He had wandered through Italy and Greece into the countries of eastern Europe, and had lived for a year in Turkey and Tartary.

He had been in Russia, in Germany, in Spain, and in Africa, and was familiar with the islands of the Mediterranean and those of the eastern Atlantic. Smith afterward wrote a narrative of his singularly full and adventurous life, not sparing, apparently, the embellishment which in his time seems to have been reckoned a natural feature of narrative art. The honesty of his statements has been doubted, perhaps to the point of injustice; and at the present time a reaction is to be seen which presents the writings of the sturdy old adventurer in a more favorable light.

It was natural enough that such a daring rover should catch the spirit of enthusiasm with which the exploration and settlement of the New World had inflamed Englishmen of his time and type. And it was a recognition of his experience and practical sagacity which led to his appointment as a member of the Council at the head of affairs in the Jamestown colony.

#### **The True Relation.**

In so far as the literary accomplishments of Captain John Smith have any immediate connection with American history, our interest centres upon his *True Relation of such occurrences and accidents of noate as hath hapned in Virginia since the first*

*planting of that Collony, which is now resident in the South part thereof, till the last returne from thence* (London, 1608). Smith's writings are plain, blunt narratives, which please by their rough vigor and the breezy picturesqueness of his rugged, unaffected style. Hardly to be accounted *literature* except by way of compliment, the *True Relation* is not unworthy of its place in our literary record as the first English book produced in America. It supplies our earliest chronicle of the perils and hardships of our American pioneers. The romantic story of Pocahontas is found in its pages, briefly recounted by the writer in terms which hardly warrant its dismissal as a myth; and many another thrilling incident of that distressing struggle with the wilderness which makes a genuine appeal to the reader now, as it undoubtedly did to the kinsmen of the colonists in England for whom the book was originally prepared.

#### Other writings.

Smith was the author of several other narrative and descriptive pamphlets in which he recounted the early history of the colonies at Plymouth and on Massachusetts Bay. Indeed, it was the redoubtable Captain who first gave to that part of the country the name New England; and to the little harbor on Cape Cod, before the coming of the Puritans, Smith had already given the name of Plymouth. In 1624, he published *A General History of Virginia*, a compilation edited in England from the reports of various writers.

#### **William Strachey, fl. 1609-1618.**

Another interesting chronicle of this perilous time was written in the summer of 1610 by a gentleman recently arrived at Jamestown after a stormy and eventful voyage. This vivid narrative, called *A true Reportory of the wracke and redemption of Sir Thomas Gates, knight, upon and from the ilands of the Bermudas, his coming to Virginia, and the estate of that colony*, was written by William Strachey, of whose personality little is known. The tremendous picture of shipwreck and disaster is presented in a masterly style.

*"The clouds gathering thick upon us, and the winds singing and whistling most unusually, . . . a dreadful storm and hideous began to blow from out the Northeast, which swelling and roaring as it were by fits, some hours with more violence than others, at length did beat all light from heaven, which like an hell of darkness, turned black upon us. . . ."*

*"Prayers might well be in the heart and lips, but drowned in the outcries of the Officers, -- nothing heard that could give comfort, nothing seen that might encourage hope. . . ."*

*"The sea swelled above the Clouds and gave battle unto heaven."*

Sir George Summers being upon the watch, had an apparition of a little round light, like a faint star, trembling and streaming along with a sparkling blaze, half the height from the mainmast, and shooting sometimes from shroud to shroud, tempting to settle as it were upon any of the four shrouds, and for three or four hours together, or rather more, half the night it kept with us, running sometimes along the mainyard to the very end, and then returning. . . .

*"It being now Friday, the fourth morning, it wanted little but that there had been a general determination to have shut up hatches and commending our sinful souls to God, committed the ship to the mercy of the sea."*

No wonder that when Strachey's little book, printed in London, fell into the hands of William Shakespeare, this dramatic recital of the furious storm which drove the Virginia fleet on the reefs of "the still vexed Bermoothes" should have inspired the poet in his description of the tempest evoked by Prospero on his enchanted island.

So other narratives were written and other chronicles compiled by these industrious Jamestown settlers; but their chronicles and reports were largely official documents prepared for the guidance of the company's officers in London, and for the general enlightenment of Englishmen at home. Nowhere among them do we find the ring of that resounding style which makes literature of Strachey's prose.

#### **George Sandys, 1578-1644.**

It did not seem likely that thus early in Virginia history any laurels would be gathered from Apollo's sacred tree to crown a poet's brow -- as Drayton had pleasantly predicted in his lines of farewell. Yet, after all, among these gentlemen adventurers who continued to come from England in increasing numbers, there arrived in 1621, as treasurer of the Virginia company, one who was recognized as a poet of considerable rank -- George Sandys, author of an excellent metrical translation of the first five books of Ovid. To Sandys also, Drayton, now laureate, had imparted a professional benediction, exhorting his friend with appreciative words: --

*"Let see what lines Virginia will produce.  
Go on with Ovid. . . .  
Entice the muses thither to repair;  
Entreat them gently; train them to that air."*

And amid the exacting duties of his position in a most discouraging time, in experiences of privation and distress, amid the terrors of Indian uprising and massacre, he "went on" with Ovid. After four years of strenuous life in the new America, Sandys went home to England with his translation of the *Metamorphoses* completed, and in 1626 presented his finished work to the king. It was a notable poem, was so accepted by contemporaries, and afterward elicited the admiration of Dryden and of Pope. Thus came the first expression of the poetic art in the New World -- "the first utterance of the conscious literary spirit, articulated in America."

We record with interest these few literary appearances in the annals of our early history, but we can in no sense claim these writers as representatives of our native American literature. Smith, Strachey, and Sandys were Englishmen temporarily interested in a great scheme of colonization. After brief sojourn in the colony, they returned to England. They were not colonists; they were travelers; and while their compositions have a peculiar interest, and are not without significance for us, they cannot be accounted American works.

### ***Development of the Colony.***

The record of Virginia's early struggles, its difficulties with the Indians, its depletion by illness and famine, its losses due to the incapacity of leaders and policies ill adapted to the conditions of a true colonial life, its reinforcements, its acquisition of colonists, its advancement in wealth and importance, -- this is familiar history. The remarkable fact is the rapidity with which the colony developed. In 1619, twelve hundred settlers arrived; along with them were sent one hundred convicts to become servants. Boys and girls, picked up in the London streets, were shipped to Virginia to be bound during their minority to the planters. In the same year a Dutch man-of-war landed twenty negroes at Jamestown, who were

sold as slaves -- the first in America. The cultivation of tobacco became profitable, the plantations were extended, and new colonists were brought over in large numbers. Following the execution of Charles I, and the establishment of the Puritan Protectorate, hundreds of the exiled Cavaliers migrated to Virginia with their families and traditions. These new colonists stamped the character of the dominion that was to be. The best blood of England was thus infused into the new enterprise, and the spirit of the South was determined. In 1650, the population of Virginia was 15,000; twenty years later, it was 40,000.

Yet the southern soil did not prove favorable to literary growth. English books were, of course, brought into the colony, and private libraries were to be found here and there in the homes of the wealthy. There were no free schools in Virginia, and but few private schools. The children of the planters received instruction under tutors in their own homes, or were sent to England for their education. For fear of seditious literature, printing-presses were forbidden by the king. In 1671, Governor Berkeley declared:

#### **Literary Conditions.**

"I thank God there are no free schools, nor printing, and I hope we shall not have these hundred years; for learning has brought disobedience into the world, and printing has divulged them and libels against the best of governments. God keep us from both."

### **"Leah and Rachel."**

Of original literary accomplishment, there was little or no thought until well on in the eighteenth century. Two or three vigorous pamphlets, published in England not long after 1650, are interesting as voicing the first decided utterances of a genuine American spirit in the southern settlements. John Hammond, a resident in the newer colony of Maryland, visiting his old home in 1656, became homesick for the one he had left in America. "It is not long since I came from thence," he said, "nor do I intend, by God's assistance, to be long out of it again. . . . It is that country in which I desire to spend the remnant of my days, in which I covet to make my grave," His little work, entitled *Leach and Rachel* ("the two fruitful sisters, Virginia and Maryland"), was written with a purpose to show what boundless opportunity was afforded in these two colonies to those who in England had no opportunity at all.

## Indian and Early American Literature

American children's literature originated with the oral tradition of its Native peoples. When stories and legends were told by Native Americans, children were included in the audience as a means of passing on the society's culture and values to succeeding generations. This oral literature included creation stories and stories of chiefs, battles, intertribal treaties, spirits, and events of long ago. They entertained as they instructed, and were often the most important part of sacred ceremonies.

The Puritans and other British settlers in New England brought with them printed matter for children to be used for advancing literacy, teaching religion, and other didactic purposes. British works were imported and reprinted in the American colonies, beginning a trend of European imports that would continue for some time. A number of the earliest known children's works written in the colonies borrowed heavily from these imports in theme and purpose. These include John Cotton's *Spiritual Milk for Boston Babes* (1646). Probably the best-known Puritan book that children read at the time was the *New England Primer*, originally published sometime between 1686 and 1690. It contained lessons in literacy and religious doctrine in verse form with pictures, not for the purpose of entertaining children but because Puritans believed children learned best that way. Other common books in early America included John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) and American schoolbooks such as Noah Webster's *Webster's American Spelling Book* (1783) and George Wilson's *American Class Reader* (c. 1810).

### American Literary aspects:

#### Early American and Colonial Period to 1776



American literature begins with the orally transmitted myths, legends, tales, and lyrics (always songs) of Indian cultures. There was no written literature among the more than 500 different Indian languages and tribal cultures that existed in North America before the first Europeans arrived. As a result, Native American oral literature is quite diverse. Narratives from quasi-nomadic hunting cultures like the Navajo are different from stories of settled agricultural tribes such as the pueblo-dwelling Acoma; the stories of northern lakeside dwellers such as the Ojibwa often differ radically from stories of desert tribes like the Hopi.

Tribes maintained their own religions -- worshipping gods, animals, plants, or sacred persons. Systems of government ranged from democracies to councils of elders to theocracies. These tribal variations enter into the oral literature as well.

Still, it is possible to make a few generalizations. Indian stories, for example, glow with reverence for nature as a spiritual as well as physical mother. Nature is alive and endowed with spiritual forces; main characters may be animals or plants, often totems associated with a tribe, group, or individual. The closest to the Indian sense of holiness in later American literature is Ralph Waldo Emerson's transcendental "Over-Soul," which pervades all of life.

The Mexican tribes revered the divine Quetzalcoatl, a god of the Toltecs and Aztecs, and some tales of a high god or culture were told elsewhere. However, there are no long, standardized religious cycles about one supreme divinity. The closest equivalents to Old World spiritual narratives are often accounts of shamans' initiations and voyages. Apart from these, there are stories about culture heroes such as the Ojibwa tribe's Manabozho or the Navajo tribe's Coyote. These tricksters are treated with varying degrees of respect. In one tale they may act like heroes, while in another they may seem selfish or foolish. Although past authorities, such as the Swiss psychologist Carl Jung, have deprecated trickster tales as expressing the inferior, amoral side of the psyche, contemporary scholars -- some of them Native Americans -- point out that Odysseus and Prometheus, the revered Greek heroes, are essentially tricksters as well.

Examples of almost every oral genre can be found in American Indian literature: lyrics, chants, myths, fairy tales, humorous anecdotes, incantations, riddles, proverbs, epics, and legendary histories. Accounts of migrations and ancestors abound, as do vision or healing songs and tricksters' tales. Certain creation stories are particularly popular. In one well-known creation story, told with variations among many tribes, a turtle holds up the world. In a Cheyenne version, the creator, Maheo, has four chances to fashion the world from a watery universe. He sends four water birds diving to try to bring up earth from the bottom. The snow goose, loon, and mallard soar high into the sky and sweep down in a dive, but cannot reach bottom; but the little coot, who cannot fly, succeeds in bringing up some mud in his bill. Only one creature, humble Grandmother Turtle, is the right shape to support the mud world Maheo shapes on her shell -- hence the Indian name for America, "Turtle Island."

The songs or poetry, like the narratives, range from the sacred to the light and humorous: There are lullabies, war chants, love songs, and special songs for children's games, gambling, various chores, magic, or dance ceremonials. Generally the songs are repetitive. Short poem-songs given in dreams sometimes have the clear imagery and subtle mood associated with Japanese haiku or Eastern-influenced imagistic poetry. A Chippewa song runs:

*A loon I thought it was  
But it was  
My love's  
splashing oar.*

Vision songs, often very short, are another distinctive form. Appearing in dreams or visions, sometimes with no warning, they may be healing, hunting, or love songs. Often they are personal, as in this Modoc song:

*I  
the song  
I walk here.*

Indian oral tradition and its relation to American literature as a whole is one of the richest and least explored topics in American studies. The Indian contribution to America is greater than is often believed. The hundreds of Indian words in everyday American English include "canoe," "tobacco," "potato," "moccasin," "moose," "persimmon," "raccoon," "tomahawk," and "totem." *Contemporary Native American writing* also contains works of great beauty.

After 1680 large numbers of immigrants came from Germany, Ireland, Scotland, Switzerland and France; and England ceased to be the chief source of immigration. Again, the new settlers came for various reasons. Thousands fled from Germany to escape the path of war. Many left Ireland to avoid the poverty induced by government oppression and absentee-landlordism, and from Scotland and Switzerland, too, people came fleeing the specter of poverty. By 1690, the American population had risen to a quarter of a million. From then on, it doubled every 25 years until, in 1775, it numbered more than two and a half million.

For the the most part, non-English colonists adapted themselves to the culture of the original settlers. But this did not mean that all settlers transformed themselves into Englishmen. True, they adopted the English language and law and many English customs, but only as these had been modified by conditions in America. The result was a unique culture-a blend of English and continental European conditioned by the environment of the New World.

Although a man and his family could move from Massachusetts to Virginia or from South Carolina to Pennsylvania, without making many basic readjustments, distinctions between individual colonies were marked. They were even more marked between regional groups of colonies.

The settlements fell into fairly well-defined sections determined by geography. In the south, with its warm climate and fertile soil, a predominately agrarian society developed. New England in the northeast, a glaciated area strewn with boulders, was inferior farm country, with generally thin, stony soil, relatively little level land, short summers, and long winters. Turning to other pursuits, the New Englanders harnessed water power and established gristmills and sawmills. Good stands of timber encouraged shipbuilding. Excellent harbors promoted trade, and the sea became a source of great wealth. In Massachusetts, the cod industry alone quickly furnished a basis for prosperity.

Settling in villages and towns around the harbors, New Englanders quickly adopted an urban existence, many of them carrying on some trade or business. Common pastureland and common wood-lots served the needs of townspeople, who worked small farms nearby. Compactness made possible the village school, the village church, and the village or town hall, where citizens met to discuss matters of common interest. Sharing hardships, cultivating the same rocky soil, pursuing

simple trades and crafts, - New Englanders rapidly acquired characteristics that marked them as a self-reliant, independent people.

These qualities had manifested themselves in the 102 seaway Pilgrims who first landed on the peninsula of Cape Cod, projecting into the Atlantic from southeastern Massachusetts. They had sailed to America under the auspices of the London (Virginia) Company and were thus intended for settlement in Virginia, but their ship, the *Mayflower*\* made its landfall far to the north. After some weeks of exploring, the colonists decided not to make the trip to Virginia but to remain where they were. They chose the area near Plymouth harbor as a site for their colony, and though the rigors of the first winter were severe, the settlement survived.

**\*IN The Name of God, Amen.** We, whose names are underwritten, the Loyal Subjects of our dread Sovereign Lord King James, by the Grace of God, of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, &c. Having undertaken for the Glory of God, and Advancement of the Christian Faith, and the Honor of our King and Country, a Voyage to plant the first colony in the northern Parts of Virginia; Do by these Presents, solemnly and mutually in the Presence of God and one another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil Body Politick, for our better Ordering and Preservation, and Furtherance of the Ends aforesaid; And by Virtue hereof do enact, constitute, and frame, such just and equal Laws, Ordinances, Acts, Constitutions, and Offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general Good of the Colony; unto which we promise all due Submission and Obedience. In WITNESS whereof we have hereunto subscribed our names at Cape Cod the eleventh of November, in the Reign of our Sovereign Lord King James of England, France, and Ireland, the eighteenth and of Scotland, the fifty-fourth. Anno Domini, 1620



John Carver	Edward Tilley	Degory Priest
William Bradford	John Tilley	Thomas Williams
Edward Winslow	Francis Cooke	Gilbert Winslow
William Brewster	Thomas Rogers	Edmund Margeson
Issac Allerton	Thomas Tinker	Peter Browne
Myles Standish	John Rigdale	Richard Britteridge
John Alden	Edward Fuller	Georoe Soule
Samuel Fuller	John Turner	Richard Clarke
Christopher Martin	Francis Eaton	Richard Gardiner
William Mullins	James Chilton	John Allerton
William White	John Crackston	Thomas English
Richard Warren	John Billington	Edward Dotey
John Howland	Moses Fletcher	Edward Leister
Stephen Hopkins	John Goodman	

## The literature of exploration

Had history taken a different turn, the United States easily could have been a part of the great Spanish or French overseas empires. Its present inhabitants might speak Spanish and form one nation with Mexico, or speak French and be joined with Canadian Francophone Quebec and Montreal.

Yet the earliest explorers of America were not English, Spanish, or French. The first European record of exploration in America is in a Scandinavian language. The Old Norse *Vinland Saga* recounts how the adventurous Leif Eriksson and a band of wandering Norsemen settled briefly somewhere on the northeast coast of America -- probably Nova Scotia, in Canada -- in the first decade of the 11th century, almost 400 years before the next recorded European discovery of the New World.

The first known and sustained contact between the Americas and the rest of the world, however, began with the famous voyage of an Italian explorer, Christopher Columbus, funded by the Spanish rulers Ferdinand and Isabella. Columbus's journal in his "Epistola," printed in 1493, recounts the trip's drama -- the terror of the men, who feared monsters and thought they might fall off the edge of the world; the near-mutiny; how Columbus faked the ships' logs so the men would

not know how much farther they had travelled than anyone had gone before; and the first sighting of land as they neared America.

Bartolomé de las Casas is the richest source of information about the early contact between American Indians and Europeans. As a young priest he helped conquer Cuba. He transcribed Columbus's journal, and late in life wrote a long, vivid *History of the Indians* criticizing their enslavement by the Spanish.

Initial English attempts at colonization were disasters. The first colony was set up in 1585 at Roanoke, off the coast of North Carolina; all its colonists disappeared, and to this day legends are told about blue-eyed Croatan Indians of the area. The second colony was more permanent: Jamestown, established in 1607. It endured starvation, brutality, and misrule. However, the literature of the period paints America in glowing colors as the land of riches and opportunity. Accounts of the colonizations became world-renowned. The exploration of Roanoke was carefully recorded by Thomas Hariot in *A Briefe and True Report of the New-Found Land of Virginia* (1588). Hariot's book was quickly translated into Latin, French, and German; the text and pictures were made into engravings and widely republished for over 200 years.

The Jamestown colony's main record, the writings of Captain John Smith, one of its leaders, is the exact opposite of Hariot's accurate, scientific account. Smith was an incurable romantic, and he seems to have embroidered his adventures. To him we owe the famous story of the Indian maiden, Pocahontas. Whether fact or fiction, the tale is ingrained in the American historical imagination. The story recounts how Pocahontas, favorite daughter of Chief Powhatan, saved Captain Smith's life when he was a prisoner of the chief. Later, when the English persuaded Powhatan to give Pocahontas to them as a hostage, her gentleness, intelligence, and beauty impressed the English, and, in 1614, she married John Rolfe, an English gentleman. The marriage initiated an eight-year peace between the colonists and the Indians, ensuring the survival of the struggling new colony.

In the 17th century, pirates, adventurers, and explorers opened the way to a second wave of permanent colonists, bringing their wives, children, farm implements, and craftsmen's tools. The early literature of exploration, made up of diaries, letters, travel journals, ships' logs, and reports to the explorers' financial backers -- European rulers or, in mercantile England and Holland, joint stock companies -- gradually was supplanted by records of the settled colonies. Because England eventually took possession of the North American colonies, the best-known and most-anthologized colonial literature is English. As American minority literature continues to flower in the 20th century and American life becomes increasingly multicultural, scholars are rediscovering the importance of the continent's mixed ethnic heritage. Although the story of literature now turns to the English accounts, it is important to recognize its richly cosmopolitan beginnings.

## **The Colonial Period in New England**

It is likely that no other colonists in the history of the world were as intellectual as the Puritans. Between 1630 and 1690, there were as many university graduates in the northeastern section of the United States, known as New England, as in the mother country -- an astounding fact when one considers that most educated people of the time were aristocrats who were unwilling to risk their lives in wilderness conditions. The self-made and often self-educated Puritans were notable exceptions. They wanted education to understand and execute God's will as they established their colonies throughout New England.

The Puritan definition of good writing was that which brought home a full awareness of the importance of worshipping God and of the spiritual dangers that the soul faced on Earth. Puritan style varied enormously -- from complex metaphysical poetry to homely journals and crushingly pedantic religious history. Whatever the style or genre, certain themes remained constant. Life was seen as a test; failure led to eternal damnation and hellfire, and success to heavenly bliss. This world was an arena of constant battle between the forces of God and the forces of Satan, a formidable enemy with many disguises. Many Puritans excitedly awaited the "millennium," when Jesus would return to Earth, end human misery, and inaugurate 1,000 years of peace and prosperity.

Scholars have long pointed out the link between Puritanism and capitalism: Both rest on ambition, hard work, and an intense striving for success. Although individual Puritans could not know, in strict theological terms, whether they were "saved" and among the elect who would go to heaven, Puritans tended to feel that earthly success was a sign of election. Wealth and status were sought not only for themselves, but as welcome reassurances of spiritual health and promises of eternal life.

Moreover, the concept of stewardship encouraged success. The Puritans interpreted all things and events as symbols with deeper spiritual meanings, and felt that in advancing their own profit and their community's well-being, they were also

furthering God's plans. They did not draw lines of distinction between the secular and religious spheres: All of life was an expression of the divine will -- a belief that later resurfaces in Transcendentalism.

In recording ordinary events to reveal their spiritual meaning, Puritan authors commonly cited the Bible, chapter and verse. History was a symbolic religious panorama leading to the Puritan triumph over the New World and to God's kingdom on Earth.

The first Puritan colonists who settled New England exemplified the seriousness of Reformation Christianity. Known as the "Pilgrims," they were a small group of believers who had migrated from England to Holland -- even then known for its religious tolerance -- in 1608, during a time of persecutions.

Like most Puritans, they interpreted the Bible literally. They read and acted on the text of the Second Book of Corinthians - - "Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord." Despairing of purifying the Church of England from within, "Separatists" formed underground "covenanted" churches that swore loyalty to the group instead of the king. Seen as traitors to the king as well as heretics damned to hell, they were often persecuted. Their separation took them ultimately to the New World.



The Dutch possessed New Netherland, later to be called New York, for 40 years. But they were not a migrating people. Colonizing offered them neither political nor religious advantages that they did not already enjoy in Holland. In addition, the Dutch West India Company found it difficult to retain competent officials to administer the colony. In 1664, with a revival of British interest in colonial activity, the Dutch settlement was taken by conquest. Long after this, however, the Dutch continued to exercise an important social and economic influence. Their sharp-stepped, gable roofs became a permanent part of the scene, and their merchants gave the city its bustling commercial atmosphere.

The Dutch also gave New York a style of life quite different from that in Puritan Boston. In New York, holidays were marked by feasting and merrymaking. And many Dutch traditions - such as calling on one's neighbors on New Year's Day and celebrating the visit of Saint Nicholas at Christmastime - survived for many years.

With the transfer from Dutch authority, an English administrator, Richard Nicolls, set about remodeling the legal structure of New York. He did this so gradually and with such wisdom that he won the respect of Dutch as well as English. Town governments had the autonomous characteristics of New England towns, and in a few years there was a workable fusion between residual Dutch law and customs and English practices.

By 1696 nearly 30,000 people lived in the province of New York. In the rich valleys of the Hudson, Mohawk, and other rivers, great estates flourished. Tenant farmers and small independent farmers contributed to the agricultural development of the region. Rolling grasslands supplied feed for cattle, sheep, horses, and pigs; tobacco and flax were planted; and fruits, especially apples, grew in abundance. The fur trade also contributed to the growth of the colony. From Albany, 232 kilometers north of New York City, the Hudson River was a convenient waterway for shipping furs to the busy port.

In contrast to New England and the middle colonies were the predominantly rural southern settlements, Virginia, Maryland, the Carolinas, and Georgia. Jamestown, in Virginia, was the first English colony to survive in the New World. Late in December 1606, a group of about a hundred men, sponsored by a London colonizing company, had set out in search of great adventure. They dreamed of finding gold; homes in the wilderness were not their goal. Among them, Captain John Smith emerged as the dominant figure, and despite quarrels, starvation, and Indian attacks, his will held the little colony together through the first years.

In the earliest days, the promoting company, eager for quick returns, required the colonists to concentrate on producing lumber and other products for sale in the London market, instead of permitting them to plant crops for their own subsistence. After few disastrous years the company eased its requirements and distributed land to the colonists.

In 1612, a development occurred that revolutionized the economy of Virginia. This was the discovery of a method of curing Virginia tobacco to make it palatable to the European taste. The first shipment of this tobacco reached London in 1614, and within a decade it had become Virginia's chief source of revenue.



The cultivation of tobacco exhausted the soil after several crops. Breaking new ground, planters scattered up and down the numerous waterways. No towns dotted the region, and even Jamestown, the capital, had only a few houses.

Though most settlers had come to Virginia to improve their economic position, in Maryland the neighboring colony, religious as well as economic motives led to settlement. While seeking to establish a refuge for Catholics there, the Calvert family was also interested in creating estates that would bring profits. To that end, and to avoid trouble with the British government, the Calverts encouraged Protestant as well as Catholic immigration.

In social structure and in government the Calverts tried to make Maryland an aristocratic land in the ancient tradition, which they aspired to rule with all the prerogatives of kings. But the spirit of independence ran strong in this frontier society. In Maryland, as in the other colonies, the authorities could not circumvent the settlers' stubborn insistence on the guarantees of personal liberty established by English common law and the natural rights of subjects to participate in government through representative assemblies.

Maryland developed an economy very similar to that of Virginia. Devoted to agriculture with a dominant tidewater class of great planters, both colonies had a back country into which yeomen farmers steadily filtered. Both suffered the handicaps of a one-crop system. And before the midpoint of the 18th century, both were profoundly affected by black slavery.

In these two colonies the wealthy planters took their social responsibilities seriously, serving as justices of the peace, colonels of the militia, and members of the legislative assemblies. But yeomen farmers also sat in popular assemblies and found their way into political office. Their outspoken independence was a constant warning to the oligarchy of planters not to encroach too far upon the rights of free men.

By the late 17th and early 18th centuries, the social structure in Maryland and Virginia had taken on the qualities it would retain until the Civil War. Supported by slave labor, the planters held most of the political power and the best land, built great houses, adopted an aristocratic way of life, and kept in touch with the world of culture overseas. Next in the socioeconomic scale were the farmers, placing their hope for prosperity in the fresh soil of the back country. Least prosperous were the small farmers, struggling for existence in competition with slave-owning planters. In neither Virginia nor Maryland did a large trading class develop, for the planters themselves traded directly with London.

It was reserved for the Carolinas, with Charleston as the leading port, to develop into the trading center of the south. There the settlers quickly learned to combine agriculture and commerce, and the marketplace became a major source of prosperity. Dense forests also brought revenue; lumber, tar, and resin from the longleaf pine provided some of the best shipbuilding materials in the world. Not bound to a single crop as was Virginia, the Carolinas also produced and exported rice and indigo. By 1750, more than 100,000 people lived in the two colonies of North and South Carolina.

In the south, as everywhere else in the colonies, the growth of the back country had special significance. Men seeking greater freedom than could be found in the original tidewater settlements pushed inland. Those who could not secure fertile land along the coast, or who had exhausted the lands they held, found the hills farther west a bountiful refuge. Soon the interior was dotted with thriving farms. Humble farmers were not the only ones who found the hinterland attractive. Peter Jefferson, for example, an enterprising surveyor-father of Thomas Jefferson, third President of the United States-settled in the hill country by acquiring 160 hectares of land for a bowl of punch.

Living on the edge of the Indian country, making their cabins their fortresses, and relying on their own sharp eyes and trusty muskets, frontiersmen became, of necessity, a sturdy, self-reliant people. They cleared tracts in the wilderness, burned the brush, and cultivated maize and wheat among the stumps. The men wore buckskin, the women garments of cloth they had spun at home. Their food was venison, wild turkey, and fish. They had their own amusements-great barbecues, housewarmings for newly married couples, shooting matches, and contests where quilted blankets were made.

Already lines of cleavage were discernible between the settled regions of the Atlantic seaboard and the inland regions. Men from the back country made their voices heard in political debate, combatting the inertia of custom and convention. A powerful force deterring authorities in the older communities from obstructing progress and change was the fact that anyone in an established colony could easily find a new home on the frontier. Thus, time after time, dominant tidewater figures were obliged, by the threat of a mass exodus to the frontier, to liberalize political policies, land-grant requirements, and religious practices. Complacency could have small place in the vigorous society generated by an expanding country. The movement into the foothills was of tremendous import for the future of America.

Of equal significance for the future were the foundations of American education and culture established in the colonial period. Harvard College was founded in 1636 in Massachusetts. Near the end of the century, the College of William and Mary was established in Virginia. A few years later, the Collegiate School of Connecticut (later to become Yale College) was chartered. But even more noteworthy was the growth of a school system maintained by governmental authority. In 1647 the Massachusetts Bay Colony, followed shortly by all the other New England colonies except Rhode Island provided for compulsory elementary education.

In the south, the farms and plantations were so widely separated that community schools like those in the more compact northern settlements were impossible. Some planters joined with their nearest neighbors and hired tutors for their children; other children were sent to England for schooling.

In the middle colonies, the situation varied. Too busy with material progress to pay much attention to educational matters, New York lagged far behind. Schools were poor, and only sporadic efforts were made by the royal government to provide public facilities. The College of New Jersey at Princeton, King's College (now Columbia University) in New York City, and Queen's College (now Rutgers) in New Brunswick, New Jersey, were not established until the middle of the 18th century.

One of the most enterprising of the colonies educationally was Pennsylvania. The first school there, begun in 1683, taught reading, writing, and keeping of accounts. Thereafter, in some fashion, every Quaker community provided for the elementary teaching of its children. More advanced training in classical languages, history, literature was offered at the Friends Public School, which still operates in Philadelphia as the William Penn Charter School. The school was free to the poor, but parents who could were required to pay tuition.

In Philadelphia, numerous private schools with no religious affiliation taught languages, mathematics, and natural science, and there were night schools for adults. Women were not entirely overlooked, for private teachers instructed the daughters of prosperous Philadelphians in French, music, dancing, painting, singing, grammar, and sometimes even bookkeeping.

The intellectual and cultural development of Pennsylvania reflected, in large measure, the vigorous personalities of two men: James Logan and Benjamin Franklin. Logan was secretary of the colony, and it was in his fine library that young Franklin found the latest scientific works. In 1745, Logan erected a building for his collection and bequeathed both building and books to the city. Franklin contributed even more to the intellectual activity of Philadelphia. He formed a club known as the Junto, which was the embryo of the American Philosophical Society. His endeavors led, too, to the founding of a public academy that later developed into the University of Pennsylvania. He was also a prime mover in the establishment of a subscription library which he called "*the mother of all North American subscription libraries.*"

In the south, volumes of history, Greek and Latin classics, science, and law were widely exchanged from plantation to plantation. Charleston, South Carolina, already a center for music, painting, and the theater, set up a provincial library before 1700. In New England, the first immigrants had brought their own little libraries and continued to import books from London. And as early as the 1680s, Boston booksellers were doing a thriving business in works of classical literature, history, politics, philosophy, science, theology, and *belles-lettres*. The desire for learning did not stop at the borders of established communities. On the frontier, the hardy Scotch-Irish, though living in primitive cabins, were firm devotees of scholarship, and they made great efforts to attract learned ministers to their settlements.

Literary production in the colonies was largely confined to New England. Here attention was concentrated on religious subjects. Sermons were the most common products of the press. A famous "hell and brimstone" minister, the Reverend Cotton Mather, authored some 400 works, and his masterpiece, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, was so prodigious that it had to be printed in London. In this folio, the pageant of New England's history is displayed by the region's most prolific writer. But the most popular single work was the Reverend Michael Wigglesworth's long poem, *The Day of Doom*, which described the Last Judgment in terrifying terms.

Cambridge, Massachusetts, boasted a printing press, and in 1704 Boston's first successful newspaper was launched. Several others soon entered the field, not only in New England but also in other regions. In New York, freedom of the press had its first important test in the case of Peter Zenger, whose *New York Weekly Journal*, begun in 1733, was spokesman for opposition to the government. After two years of publication, the colonial governor could no longer tolerate Zenger's satirical barbs and had him thrown into prison on a charge of libel. Zenger continued to edit his paper from jail during his nine-month trial, which excited intense interest throughout the colonies. Andrew Hamilton, a prominent lawyer defending him, argued that the charges printed by Zenger were true and hence not libelous. The jury

returned a verdict of not guilty, and Zenger went free. This landmark decision helped establish in America the principle of freedom of the press.

In all phases of colonial development, a striking feature was the lack of controlling influence by the English government. During their formative period, the colonies were, to a large degree, free to develop as circumstances dictated. The English government had taken no direct part in founding any of the colonies except Georgia, and only gradually did it assume any part in their political direction.

The fact that the King had transferred his immediate sovereignty over the New World settlements to stock companies and proprietors did not, of course, mean that the colonists in America would necessarily be free of outside control. Under the terms of the Virginia Company and Massachusetts Bay charters, complete governmental authority was vested in the companies involved, and it was expected that these companies would be resident in England. Inhabitants of America, then, would have no more voice in their government than if the King himself had retained absolute rule.

In one way or another, however, exclusive rule from the outside was broken down. The first step was a decision by the London (Virginia) Company to grant Virginia Colonists representation in the government. In 1618 the Company issued instructions to its appointed governor providing that free inhabitants of the plantations should elect representatives to join with the governor and an appointive council in passing ordinances for the welfare of the colony.

This proved to be one of the most far-reaching events in the entire colonial period. From then on, it was generally accepted that the colonists had a right to participate in their own government. In most instances, the King, in making future grants, provided in the charter that freemen of the colony involved should have a voice in legislation affecting them. Thus, charters awarded to Cecil Calvert of Maryland, William Penn of Pennsylvania, the proprietors of the Carolinas, and the proprietors of New Jersey specified that legislation should be with "the consent of the freemen."

In only two cases was the self-government provision omitted. These were New York, which was granted to Charles II's brother, the Duke of York, later to become King James II; and Georgia, which was granted to a group of "trustees." In both instances the provisions for governance were short-lived, for the colonists demanded legislative representation so insistently that the authorities soon yielded.

At first, the right of colonists to representation in the legislative branch of the government was of limited importance. Ultimately, however, it served as a stepping stone to almost complete domination by the settlers through elective assemblies, which first seized and then utilized control over financial matters. In one colony after another, the principle was established that taxes could not be levied, or collected revenue spent - even to pay the salary of the governor or other appointive officers - without the consent of the elected representatives. Unless the governor and other colonial officials agreed to act in accordance with the will of the popular assembly, the assembly refused to appropriate money for vital functions. Thus there were instances of recalcitrant governors who were voted either no salary at all or a salary of one penny. In the face of this threat, governors and other appointive officials tended to become pliable to the will of the colonists.

In New England, for many years, there was even more complete self-government than in the other colonies. If the Pilgrims had settled in Virginia, they would have been under the authority of the London (Virginia) Company. However, in their own colony of Plymouth, they were beyond any governmental jurisdiction. They decided to set up their own political organization. Aboard the Mayflower, they adopted an instrument for government called the "Mayflower Compact" to *"combine ourselves together into a civil body politic for our better ordering and preservation... and by virtue hereof (to) enact, constitute, and frame much just and equal laws, ordinances, acts, constitutions, and offices... as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the colony..."* Although there was no legal basis for the Pilgrims to establish a system of self-government, the action was not contested and, under the compact, the Plymouth settlers were able for many years to conduct their own affairs without outside interference.

A similar situation developed when the Massachusetts Bay Company, which had been given the right to govern, moved bodily to America with its charter, and thus full authority rested in the hands of persons residing in the colony. The dozen or so original members of the company who had come to America at first attempted to rule autocratically. But the other colonists soon demanded a voice in public affairs and indicated that refusal would lead to a mass migration.

Faced with this threat, the company members yielded, and control of the government passed to elected representatives. Subsequent New England colonies - New Haven, Rhode Island, and Connecticut - also succeeded in becoming self-governing simply by asserting that they were beyond any governmental authority and then setting up their own political system modeled after that of the Pilgrims of Plymouth.

The assumption of self-government in the colonies did not go entirely unchallenged. British authorities took court action against the Massachusetts charter and in 1684 it was annulled. Then all the New England colonies were brought under royal control with complete authority vested in an appointive governor. The colonists strenuously objected and, after the Revolution of 1688 in England, which resulted in the overthrow of James II, they drove out the royal governor.

Rhode Island and Connecticut, which now included the colony of New Haven, were able to reestablish their virtually independent position on a permanent basis. Massachusetts, however, was soon brought again under royal authority, but this time the people were given a share in the government. As in the case of other colonies, this "share" was gradually extended until it became virtual dominance, effective use being made here as elsewhere of control over finances. Still, governors were continually instructed to force adherence to policies that conformed to overall English interests, and the English Privy Council continued to exercise a right of review of colonial legislation. But the colonists proved adept at circumventing these restraints.

Beginning in 1651, the English government, from time to time, passed laws regulating certain aspects of colonial economic life, some beneficial to America, but most favoring England. Generally, the colonists ignored those that they deemed most detrimental. Although the British occasionally tried to secure better enforcement, their efforts were invariably short-lived, and the authorities returned to a policy of "salutary neglect."

The large measure of political independence enjoyed by the colonies naturally resulted in their growing away from Britain, becoming increasingly "American" rather than "English." This tendency was strongly reinforced by the blending of other national groups and cultures that was simultaneously taking place.

How this process operated and the manner in which it laid the foundations of a new nation were vividly described in 1782 by French-born agriculturist J. Hector St John Crèvecoeur: "*What then is the American, this new man?*" he asked in his **Letters from an American Farmer**

*"He is either a European, or the descendant of a European, hence that strange mixture of blood, which you find in no other country..... I could point out to you a family whose grandfather was an Englishman, whose wife was Dutch, whose son married a French woman, and whose present four sons have now four wives of different nations. He is an American, who, leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds..."*

### **William Bradford (1590-1657)**



William Bradford was elected governor of Plymouth in the Massachusetts Bay Colony shortly after the Separatists landed. He was a deeply pious, self-educated man who had learned several languages, including Hebrew, in order to "see with his own eyes the ancient oracles of God in their native beauty." His participation in the migration to Holland and the *Mayflower* voyage to Plymouth, and his duties as governor, made him ideally suited to be the first historian of his colony. His history, *Of Plymouth Plantation* (1651), is a clear and compelling account of the colony's beginning. His description of the first view of America is justly famous:

Being thus passed the vast ocean, and a sea of troubles...they had now no friends to welcome them nor inns to entertain or refresh their weatherbeaten bodies; no houses or much less towns to repair to, to seek for succor...savage barbarians...were readier to fill their sides with arrows than otherwise. And for the reason it was winter, and they that know the winters of that country know them to be sharp and violent, and subject to cruel and fierce storms...all stand upon them with a weatherbeaten face, and the whole country, full of woods and thickets, represented a wild and savage hue.

Bradford also recorded the first document of colonial self-governance in the English New World, the "Mayflower Compact," drawn up while the Pilgrims were still on board ship. The compact was a harbinger of the Declaration of Independence to come a century and a half later.

Puritans disapproved of such secular amusements as dancing and card-playing, which were associated with ungodly aristocrats and immoral living. Reading or writing "light" books also fell into this category. Puritan minds poured their tremendous energies into nonfiction and pious genres: poetry, sermons, theological tracts, and histories. Their intimate diaries and meditations record the rich inner lives of this introspective and intense people.

**Anne Bradstreet (c. 1612-1672)** The first published book of poems by an American was also the first American book to be published by a woman -- Anne Bradstreet. It is not surprising that the book was published in England, given the lack of printing presses in the early years of the first American colonies. Born and educated in England, Anne Bradstreet was the daughter of an earl's estate manager. She emigrated with her family when she was 18. Her husband eventually became governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, which later grew into the great city of Boston. She preferred her long, religious poems on conventional subjects such as the seasons, but contemporary readers most enjoy the witty poems on subjects from daily life and her warm and loving poems to her husband and children. She was inspired by English metaphysical poetry, and her book *The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung Up in America* (1650) shows the influence of Edmund Spenser, Philip Sidney, and other English poets as well. She often uses elaborate conceits or extended metaphors. "To My Dear and Loving Husband" (1678) uses the oriental imagery, love theme, and idea of comparison popular in Europe at the time, but gives these a pious meaning at the poem's conclusion:

*If ever two were one, then surely we.  
If ever man were loved by wife, then thee;  
If ever wife was happy in a man,  
Compare with me, ye women, if you can.  
I prize thy love more than whole mines of gold  
Or all the riches that the East doth hold.  
My love is such that rivers cannot quench,  
Nor ought but love from thee, give recompense.  
Thy love is such I can no way repay,  
The heavens reward thee manifold, I pray.  
Then while we live, in love let's so persevere  
That when we live no more, we may live ever.*

**Edward Taylor (c. 1644-1729)** Like Anne Bradstreet, and, in fact, all of New England's first writers, the intense, brilliant poet and minister Edward Taylor was born in England. The son of a yeoman farmer -- an independent farmer who owned his own land -- Taylor was a teacher who sailed to New England in 1668 rather than take an oath of loyalty to the Church of England. He studied at Harvard College, and, like most Harvard-trained ministers, he knew Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. A selfless and pious man, Taylor acted as a missionary to the settlers when he accepted his lifelong job as a minister in the frontier town of Westfield, Massachusetts, 160 kilometers into the thickly forested, wild interior. Taylor was the best-educated man in the area, and he put his knowledge to use, working as the town minister, doctor, and civic leader.

Modest, pious, and hard-working, Taylor never published his poetry, which was discovered only in the 1930s. He would, no doubt, have seen his work's discovery as divine providence; today's readers should be grateful to have his poems -- the finest examples of 17th-century poetry in North America.

Taylor wrote a variety of verse: funeral elegies, lyrics, a medieval "debate," and a 500-page *Metrical History of Christianity* (mainly a history of martyrs). His best works, according to modern critics, are the series of short Preparatory Meditations.

## **Michael Wigglesworth (1631-1705)**

Michael Wigglesworth, like Taylor an English-born, Harvard-educated Puritan minister who practiced medicine, is the third New England colonial poet of note. He continues the Puritan themes in his best-known work, *The Day of Doom* (1662). A long narrative that often falls into doggerel, this terrifying popularization of Calvinistic doctrine was the most popular poem of the colonial period. This first American best-seller is an appalling portrait of damnation to hell in ballad meter.

It is terrible poetry -- but everybody loved it. It fused the fascination of a horror story with the authority of John Calvin. For more than two centuries, people memorized this long, dreadful monument to religious terror; children proudly recited it, and elders quoted it in everyday speech. It is not such a leap from the terrible punishments of this poem to the ghastly self-inflicted wound of Nathaniel Hawthorne's guilty Puritan minister, Arthur Dimmesdale, in *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) or Herman Melville's crippled Captain Ahab, a New England Faust whose quest for forbidden knowledge sinks the ship of American humanity in *Moby-Dick* (1851). (*Moby-Dick* was the favorite novel of 20th-century American novelist William Faulkner, whose profound and disturbing works suggest that the dark, metaphysical vision of Protestant America has not yet been exhausted.)

Like most colonial literature, the poems of early New England imitate the form and technique of the mother country, though the religious passion and frequent biblical references, as well as the new setting, give New England writing a special identity. Isolated New World writers also lived before the advent of rapid transportation and electronic communications. As a result, colonial writers were imitating writing that was already out of date in England. Thus, Edward Taylor, the best American poet of his day, wrote metaphysical poetry after it had become unfashionable in England. At times, as in Taylor's poetry, rich works of striking originality grew out of colonial isolation.

Colonial writers often seemed ignorant of such great English authors as Ben Jonson. Some colonial writers rejected English poets who belonged to a different sect as well, thereby cutting themselves off from the finest lyric and dramatic models the English language had produced. In addition, many colonials remained ignorant due to the lack of books.

The great model of writing, belief, and conduct was the Bible, in an authorized English translation that was already outdated when it came out. The age of the Bible, so much older than the Roman church, made it authoritative to Puritan eyes.

New England Puritans clung to the tales of the Jews in the Old Testament, believing that they, like the Jews, were persecuted for their faith, that they knew the one true God, and that they were the chosen elect who would establish the New Jerusalem -- a heaven on Earth. The Puritans were aware of the parallels between the ancient Jews of the Old Testament and themselves. Moses led the Israelites out of captivity from Egypt, parted the Red Sea through God's miraculous assistance so that his people could escape, and received the divine law in the form of the Ten Commandments. Like Moses, Puritan leaders felt they were rescuing their people from spiritual corruption in England, passing miraculously over a wild sea with God's aid, and fashioning new laws and new forms of government after God's wishes.

Colonial worlds tend to be archaic, and New England certainly was no exception. New England Puritans were archaic by choice, conviction, and circumstance.

### Samuel Sewall (1652-1730)



Easier to read than the highly religious poetry full of Biblical references are the historical and secular accounts that recount real events using lively details. Governor John Winthrop's *Journal* (1790) provides the best information on the early Massachusetts Bay Colony and Puritan political theory.

Samuel Sewall's *Diary*, which records the years 1674 to 1729, is lively and engaging. Sewall fits the pattern of early New England writers we have seen in Bradford and Taylor. Born in England, Sewall was brought to the colonies at an early age. He made his home in the Boston area, where he graduated from Harvard, and made a career of legal, administrative, and religious work.

Sewall was born late enough to see the change from the early, strict religious life of the Puritans to the later, more worldly Yankee period of mercantile wealth in the New England colonies; his *Diary*, which is often compared to Samuel Pepys's English diary of the same period, inadvertently records the transition.

Like Pepys's diary, Sewall's is a minute record of his daily life, reflecting his interest in living piously and well. He notes little purchases of sweets for a woman he was courting, and their disagreements over whether he should affect aristocratic and expensive ways such as wearing a wig and using a coach.

### **Mary Rowlandson (c.1635-c.1678)**

The earliest woman prose writer of note is Mary Rowlandson, a minister's wife who gives a clear, moving account of her 11-week captivity by Indians during an Indian massacre in 1676. The book undoubtedly fanned the flame of anti-Indian sentiment, as did John Williams's *The Redeemed Captive* (1707), describing his two years in captivity by French and Indians after a massacre. Such writings as women produced are usually domestic accounts requiring no special education. It may be argued that women's literature benefits from its homey realism and common-sense wit; certainly works like Sarah Kemble Knight's lively *Journal* (published posthumously in 1825) of a daring solo trip in 1704 from Boston to New York and back escapes the baroque complexity of much Puritan writing.

### **Cotton Mather\* (1663-1728)**

No account of New England colonial literature would be complete without mentioning Cotton Mather, the master pedant. The third in the four-generation Mather dynasty of Massachusetts Bay, he wrote at length of New England in over 500 books and pamphlets. Mather's 1702 *Magnalia Christi Americana (Ecclesiastical History of New England)*, his most ambitious work, exhaustively chronicles the settlement of New England through a series of biographies. The huge book presents the holy Puritan errand into the wilderness to establish God's kingdom; its structure is a narrative progression of representative American "Saints' Lives." His zeal somewhat redeems his pompousness: "I write the wonders of the Christian religion, flying from the deprivations of Europe to the American strand."

### **Roger Williams (c. 1603-1683)**

As the 1600s wore on into the 1700s, religious dogmatism gradually dwindled, despite sporadic, harsh Puritan efforts to stem the tide of tolerance. The minister Roger Williams suffered for his own views on religion. An English-born son of a tailor, he was banished from Massachusetts in the middle of New England's ferocious winter in 1635. Secretly warned by Governor John Winthrop of Massachusetts, he survived only by living with Indians; in 1636, he established a new colony at Rhode Island that would welcome persons of different religions.

A graduate of Cambridge University (England), he retained sympathy for working people and diverse views. His ideas were ahead of his time. He was an early critic of imperialism, insisting that European kings had no right to grant land charters because American land belonged to the Indians. Williams also believed in the separation between church and state -- still a fundamental principle in America today. He held that the law courts should not have the power to punish people for religious reasons -- a stand that undermined the strict New England theocracies. A believer in equality and democracy, he was a lifelong friend of the Indians. Williams's numerous books include one of the first phrase books of Indian languages, *A Key Into the Languages of America* (1643). The book also is an embryonic ethnography, giving bold descriptions of Indian life based on the time he had lived among the tribes. Each chapter is devoted to one topic -- for example, eating and mealtime. Indian words and phrases pertaining to this topic are mixed with comments, anecdotes, and a concluding poem. The end of the first chapter reads:

*If nature's sons, both wild and tame,  
Humane and courteous be,*

*How ill becomes it sons of God  
To want humanity.*

In the chapter on words about entertainment, he comments that "it is a strange truth that a man shall generally find more free entertainment and refreshing among these barbarians, than amongst thousands that call themselves Christians."

Williams's life is uniquely inspiring. On a visit to England during the bloody Civil War there, he drew upon his survival in frigid New England to organize firewood deliveries to the poor of London during the winter, after their supply of coal had been cut off. He wrote lively defenses of religious toleration not only for different Christian sects, but also for non-Christians. "It is the will and command of God, that...a permission of the most Paganish, Jewish, Turkish, or Antichristian consciences and worships, be granted to all men, in all nations..." he wrote in *The Bloody Tenet of Persecution for Cause of Conscience* (1644). The intercultural experience of living among gracious and humane Indians undoubtedly accounts for much of his wisdom.

Influence was two-way in the colonies. For example, John Eliot translated the Bible into Narragansett. Some Indians converted to Christianity. Even today, the Native American church is a mixture of Christianity and Indian traditional belief.

The spirit of toleration and religious freedom that gradually grew in the American colonies was first established in Rhode Island and Pennsylvania, home of the Quakers. The humane and tolerant Quakers, or "Friends," as they were known, believed in the sacredness of the individual conscience as the fountainhead of social order and morality. The fundamental Quaker belief in universal love and brotherhood made them deeply democratic and opposed to dogmatic religious authority. Driven out of strict Massachusetts, which feared their influence, they established a very successful colony, Pennsylvania, under William Penn in 1681.

## American Texts

### Indigenous People's Literature

#### Tsalagi (Cherokee) Stories

##### *The Bear Man*

One springtime morning a Cherokee named Whirlwind told his wife goodbye and left his village to go up in the Smoky Mountains to hunt for wild game. In the forest he saw a black bear and wounded it with an arrow. The bear turned and started to run away, but the hunter followed, shooting one arrow after another into the animal without bringing it down. Whirlwind did not know that this bear possessed secret powers, and could talk and read the thoughts of people.

At last the black bear stopped and pulled the arrows out of his body and gave them to Whirlwind. "It is of no use for you to shoot at me," he said. "You can't kill me. Come with me and I will show you how bears live."

"This bear may kill me," Whirlwind said to himself, but the bear read his thoughts and said: "No, I will not hurt you.

"How can I get anything to eat if I go with this bear?" Whirlwind thought, and again the bear knew what the hunter was thinking, and said: "I have plenty of food."

Whirlwind decided to go with the bear. They walked until they came to a cave in the side of a mountain, and the bear said: "This is not where I live, but we are holding a council here and you can see what we do." They entered the cave, which widened as they went farther in until it was as large as a Cherokee town- house. It was filled with bears, old and young, brown and black, and one large white bear who was the chief. Whirlwind sat down in a corner beside the black bear who had brought him inside, but soon the other bears scented his presence.



"What is that bad smell of a man?" one asked, but the bear chief answered: "Don't talk so. It is only a stranger come to see us. Let him alone."

The bears began to talk among themselves, and Whirlwind was astonished that he could understand what they were saying. They were discussing the scarcity of food of all kinds in the mountains, and were trying to decide what to do about it. They had sent messengers in all directions, and two of them had returned to report on what they had found. In a valley to the south, they said, was a large stand of chestnuts and oaks, and the ground beneath them was covered with mast. Pleased at this news, a huge black bear named Long Hams announced that he would lead them in a dance.

While they were dancing, the bears noticed Whirlwind's bow and arrows, and Long Hams stopped and said: "This is what men use to kill us. Let us see if we can use them. Maybe we can fight them with their own weapons."

Long Hams took the bow and arrows from Whirlwind. He fitted an arrow and drew back the sinew string, but when he let go, the string caught in his long claws and the arrow fell to the ground. He saw that he could not use the bow and arrows and gave them back to Whirlwind. By this time, the bears had finished their dance, and were leaving the cave to go to their separate homes.

Whirlwind went out with the black bear who had brought him there, and after a long walk they came to a smaller cave in the side of the mountain. "This is where I live," the bear said, and led the way inside. Whirlwind could see no food anywhere in the cave, and wondered how he was going to get something to satisfy his hunger. Reading his thoughts, the bear sat up on his hind legs and made a movement with his forepaws. When he held his paws out to Whirlwind they were filled with chestnuts. He repeated this magic and his paws were filled with huckleberries which he gave to Whirlwind. He then presented him with blackberries, and finally some acorns.

"I cannot eat acorns," Whirlwind said. "Besides you have given me enough to eat already."

For many moons, through the summer and winter, Whirlwind lived in the cave with the bear. After a while he noticed that his hair was growing all over his body like that of a bear. He learned to eat acorns and act like a bear, but he still walked upright like a man.

On the first warm day of spring the bear told Whirlwind that he had dreamed of the Cherokee village down in the valley. In the dream he heard the Cherokees talking of a big hunt in the mountains.

"Is my wife still there waiting for me?" Whirlwind asked.

"She awaits your return," the bear replied. "But you have become a bear man. If you return you must shut yourself out of sight of your people for seven days without food or drink. At the end of that time you will become like a man again."

A few days later a party of Cherokee hunters came up into the mountains. The black bear and Whirlwind hid themselves in the cave, but the hunters' dogs found the entrance and began to bark furiously.

"I have lost my power against arrows," the bear said. "Your people will kill me and take my skin from me, but they will not harm you. They will take you home with them. Remember what I told you, if you wish to lose your bear nature and become a man again."

The Cherokee hunters began throwing lighted pine knots inside the cave.

"They will kill me and drag me outside and cut me in pieces," the bear said. "Afterwards you must cover my blood with leaves. When they are taking you away, if you look back you will see something."

As the bear had foretold, the hunters killed him with arrows and dragged his body outside and took the skin from it and cut the meat into quarters to carry back to their village. Fearing that they might mistake him for another bear, Whirlwind remained in the cave, but the dogs continued barking at him. When the hunters looked inside they saw a hairy man standing upright, and one of them recognized Whirlwind.

Believing that he had been a prisoner of the bear, they asked him if he would like to go home with them and try to rid himself of his bear nature. Whirlwind replied that he would go with them, but explained that he would have to stay alone in a house for seven days without food or water in order to become as a man again.

While the hunters were loading the meat on their backs, Whirlwind piled leaves over the place where they had killed the bear, carefully covering the drops of blood. After they had walked a short distance down the mountain, Whirlwind looked behind him. He saw a bear rise up out of the leaves, shake himself, and go back into the cave.

When the hunters reached their village, they took Whirlwind to an empty house, and obeying his wishes barred the entrance door. Although he asked them to say nothing to anyone of his hairiness and his bear nature, one of the hunters must have told of his presence in the village because the very next morning Whirlwind's wife heard that he was there.

She hurried to see the hunters and begged them to let her see her long missing husband.

"You must wait for seven days," the hunters told her. "Come back after seven days, and Whirlwind will return to you as he was when he left the village twelve moons ago."

Bitterly disappointed, the woman went away, but she returned to the hunters each day, pleading with them to let her see her husband. She begged so hard that on the fifth day they took her to the house, unfastened the door, and told Whirlwind to come outside and let his wife see him.

Although he was still hairy and walked like a bear on hind legs, Whirlwind's wife was so pleased to see him again that she insisted he come home with her. Whirlwind went with her, but a few days later he died, and the Cherokees knew that the bears had claimed him because he still had a bear's nature and could not live like a man. If they had kept him shut up in the house without food until the end of the seven days he would have become like a man again. And that is why in that village on the first warm and misty nights of springtime, the ghosts of two bears--one walking on all fours, the other walking upright--are still seen to this day.



## **Cotton Mather -What Must I Do To Be Saved?**

*The Greatest Concern in the World- [The jailer] "brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:30-31)*

What Must I Do to Be Saved?

It is impossible to ask a more weighty Question! It is deplorable that we hear it asked with no more Frequency, with nor more Agony. The Spirit of Slumber which the Poison of the old Serpent has brought upon the children of Men is to be deplored exceedingly. Awaken us out of this [terrible] stupidity, O God of all Grace, lest we perish [eternally].

My Design is to bring in a Good and full Answer to this Weighty Question, Oh! how Thankful ought we to be, for the Glorious Gospel of the Blessed God, that makes us able to Answer it! The Gospel which we have in our hands, this a Gospel of such astonishing Mystery, of such Heavenly Majesty, and of such Consummate Purity, that it can be no other than the Word of God; It must be of a Divine Original. Oh! highly Favoured People, who know this Joyful Sound! Oh! Unavoidably and Inexcusably Wretched, if we disregard it.

The Devils knew, That those Excellent Ministers of the Lord Paul and Silas, were come to Philippi, with a design to answer this Weighty Question. They could not bear it; they feared it would issue in a Destruction upon their Kingdom there. They stirred up the minds of some Wicked People, to abuse and Revile these Ministers, and run them into Prison. Some Wicked People were afraid lest they should lose a little Money, by the coming of such Ministers among them; and the Devils inspired these Muckworms to use incessant Endeavours until they had made these Ministers incapable of Preaching any more unto them.

Our Glorious Lord appeared for his Faithful Servants. They Glorified Him in the midst of their Trials. They Sang His Praises under the Stripes and the Stocks which the Satanic Party inflicted on them. Oh, Patient Servants of the Lord! What a symptom have you that you shall one Day Reign in Glory with Him? These poor men Sang unto the Lord; the Lord heard them, and sav'd them! A terrible Earthquake at Midnight shook open the Doors of their Prison. The Keeper that had the now superseded keys of the Prison, was terrified. In his consternation, he falls down at the feet of his Prisoners, he treats them no longer as Prisoners, but rather as Angels. He fervently puts to them the Question, which, Oh! That it were often heard with an equal fervency among us! What must I do to be Saved?

Some Learned men think that the Gaoler had from the Traditions of their Philosophers, conceived some Hope of a better Life; and seeing his Life here in danger, he does, as distressed Wretches in the Last minutes of their Life use to do, Cry out for some help to make sure of a Better Life, Or, more probably, the late words of the possessed Young Woman in the Town about these Ministers; These men are the Servants of the most High God, who show unto us the way of Salvation; might run in his mind, and mind him of that Salvation, and make him think, whether these men were not appointed of God, for the Instruction of others in the way to that Salvation.

There is a most important matter which must now be undertaken to be demonstrated. That whereas there must be something done, by every man that would be saved, it should be the Sollicitious Inquiry of every man What must be done by him, that he may be Saved.

We will proceed upon the awakening Demonstrations of this thing; Demonstrations more powerful than any Thunderbolts. Oh! that the issue might be, that the Hearers may be Awakened, with a mighty Impression upon their Souls to make the Enquiry What must I do to be Saved?

I. You must know, that There is a Great Salvation proposed unto the sinful Children of men; And you must Know, and Think, That there is Nothing of So Great Concernment for any man, as to obtain a part in that Great Salvation.

Indeed Knowledge is the first Thing, that is necessary in order to Salvation; And it is absolutely necessary, Unspeakable Necessary. [Prov. 1] We read Hosea 4:6. of People Destroyed for the lack of Knowledge.

Ah! destructive Ignorance, what shall be done to chase thee out of the World! A world which by thee is rendered a dark World, the Kingdom of Darkness! The Oracles of Wisdom have assured us The Soul without knowledge is not good; They assured us, They who know not God shall have a Vengeance in flaming Fire, taken of them; They have assured us; 'Tis Life Eternal, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent. An Ignorance of the [true] Gospel, is attended with a long Train of Unknown, but very Evil Consequences. 'Tis the Gospel of Salvation; They that are Ignorant of it must needs miss of Salvation.

'Tis an Erroneous and Pernicious Principle, That a Man may be Saved in any Religion, if he do but Live according to it. The unerring and infallible Gospel has expressly taught us otherwise [in] 2 Cor. 4:3 "If our gospel be hid, it is hid unto them that be lost."

It is not unseasonable here, and as Early as may be, to bring in that Admonition.

Knowledge, Knowledge; To get good Knowledge, let that be the First Care of them that would be Saved. Knowledge, 'Tis a Principal thing; My Child, Get Knowledge; with all thy might, Get understanding. Oh! That this Resolution might immediately be made in the minds of all our people; I will get as much Knowledge as ever I can!

The Word of God must be Read and Heard with Diligence that so you may arrive to the Knowledge that is needful for you.

The Catechisms in which you have the Word of God fitted for your more early Apprehension of it must be diligently Studied.

Unto all the other Means of Knowledge, there must be added, Humble and Earnest Supplications before the Glorious Lord, You must cry to God for Knowledge, and lift up your Voice to Him for Understanding; Prefer it before Silver, Before any Earthy Treasures.

There may be some so very Ignorant, that they know not how to Pray. I would advise them to take the Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm. They will find in it many a Prayer suited unto their circumstances, Take it, Use it, and particularly those Petitions in it: Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy Statutes; and Lord, Teach me Good Judgment and Knowledge; and Lord, Give me Understanding, that I may know thy Testimonies: Give me understanding and I shall Live. Take Encouragement from that word; and Plead it before the Lord: James 1:5. If any of you lack of Wisdom, let him ask of God that giveth to all men Liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

And now to pursue diverse Ends at once, I am to tell you That the Main Things which 'tis necessary for you to know, are the things which concern Salvation. More Particularly; You must know, first; From What you do need Salvation. And here, First; You are to know, That the One Eternal and Infinite God who Subsisteth in Three Persons which His Word call, The Father and the Son, and the Holy Spirit Created our First Parents, in an Holy and Happy State, at the End of the Six Days, in which He Created all things.

But, our First Parents hearkening to the Temptations of Wicked Spirits, did Eat a Forbidden Fruit; and by that sin, they fell from God, and from their Holy and Happy State; And their Fall has bro't their Children with them, into a State of Sin and Misery, their Sin was our Sin, from their corrupt nature we are born into the world envenom'd with such a Nature [heart].

The Death [eternal] which the Broken Law of God threatened unto them; is due to us all: A Death which intends all Misery, not only in this World, but in Another, where our Souls continue Immortal [live forever], after they have left this world.

Then you are to know; That there is a Law given to us, which, is the Everlasting Rule, according to which God requires us to glorify Him; a Law of Love to God and Man, contained in our Ten Commandments.

But, that you daily break this Law; and that every Breach of it Incurs the Wrath of God who is of Purer Eyes than to behold Evil and cannot look upon Iniquity.

Lastly, you are to know, That while you lie under the Guilt of Sin, you are also under the Reign of Sin, and under the Reign of Satan too; A most woeful Oppression from the Worst Enemies That Can Be. God is in Ill Terms with you. He visits you not with His great consolations All Things are against you; The things that appear for your Welfare, do but Ensnare you, do but Poison you, do but produce your further Distance from God.

Your very prosperity hurts you; Your Adversary lays the Chains of Death upon you. You are every moment in danger, of being seized by the formidable Justice of God for Eternal Burnings. If you Die Unpardoned, you are sent among Devils. Damn'd unto torments; must undergo a strange Punishment, and a long one which is Reserved in a Future State, for the workers of iniquity [unrepentant sinners].

Oh! Sinner; this, is thy Lamentable Case And Knowing this how canst thou do any other than make that Sollicitious Enquiry; What must I do to be Saved? Knowing this Terror of the Lord. Oh!

Be Perswaded!

You must know secondly by Whom you may have Salvation. And here; You are to know the great mystery of godliness God manifests in flesh. Your Salvation depends on your knowing of such a Saviour.

We have not the least Intimation in the Book of God, That a unknown Saviour will be ours. But it is dreadfully intimated, That if People have no Understanding of Him, He that made them will not have mercy on them and He that formed them will shew them no Favour.

You are then to know; That the Son of God assumed the Blessed Jesus, the Sinless and Holy Son of a Virgin, into one person with Himself.

And this Admirable Person, who is God and Man in one Person, has as our Surety, fulfilled the Law of God for us; answered the precept of it, in his Righteous Life; answered the Penalty of it, in His grievous death; suffered the Cross, and Endured the Curse in our stead.

You are to know herewithal; that this mighty and matchless and Only Saviour of the world, who is also the Govenor of the World, is Risen from the Dead, and is Enthroned in the Heavens, and will return to rule and Judge the World; but He will Save unto the utermost All that come unto God by Him.

Oh! Undone Sinner; canst thou hear of such a Saviour and not make that Sollicitious enquiry, What must I do, that I may have an Interest in the Only Saviour?

You must Know, Thirdly; What shall be done for you if you find Salvation.

And here; You are to know that no good thing shall be withheld from the Saved of the Lord. Wonder wonder. Be swallowed up with wonderment, at this Grace, O self destroyed ones!

There is Proposed unto You A deliverance from all the undesirable Circumstances, into which you have Run, by your Departure from God.

It is proposed unto you, That you shall No longer be the children of Death, but be made the Children of God. That you shall be Forgiven and Accepted with a Reconciled God and be followed with perpetual Testimonies of his Fatherly Love: That No Iniquity shall have Dominion over you, but you shall become the amiable Temples, wherein He will dwell, with the sweet Influences of His Good Spirit forever irradiating of you.

It is propos'd unto you; That your Spirits, at your Dissolution [death] shall put on the Garments of Light, and Enter into the Peace a Rest of an Heavenly Paradise: That your Bodies ere long by a Resurrection shall be Restored unto your Spirits: but be the Lively, the Lovely, the most Agreeable and Everlasting Mansions for them: That you shall have a Joyful Portion in the city of God, and have His marvelous kindness Forever doing unutterable things for you, in that strong city: There you shall at length be filled with all the Fulness of God and have God become All in All unto you for ever and ever.

All this is contained in the Salvation whereof You have a Tender. Salvation, 'Tis a comprehensive Word as Incomprehensible Good! Eye has not seen, Ear has not heard, no Heart can conceive, what is laid up in the Salvation of God.

Oh! Ruin'd Sinner; why does it not now become thy Sollicitous Enquiry; What must I do that I may not lose the vast things whereunto I am invited by my Saviour? These are the things that must be known. And if these Things Be known, and Own'd, the plain Inference from them will be this; That the Man is forsaken of Reason, Unworthy to be called a Reasonable Man, who is not very solicitously Inquisitive; What must I do to be saved? But now, 'tis time to answer that great Enquiry, we will do it by calling in a Second Proposition.

II. Something must be done by every man that would not forfeit all claim, Reject all Hope of the Great Salvation.

And this also must be known. You must Know What must be done. And thereupon it shall be said unto you; Job 13:17. "When you know these things happy are you If you do them." It is Not Enough to Know; There must be Practice Joyn'd With your knowledge.

Something must be done; Else it had never been said, Hebrews 5:6 "Christ is the Author of eternal Salvation, unto all them that Obey him", Something must be done; Else we had never been told; Hebrews 6:9 "There are the things that accompany Salvation."

We are often instructed in the Sacred Writings, That there Is a Way, wherein alone Salvation is to be Expected, A way called The way of Life; and, The way of truth; The way of the Lord; and the way of Peace; and The way of Good men; and, The way of the Righteous. In this way, Something must be done, There are Steps to be taken that we may Find this way, and Keep this way. Tis the Everlasting way; There is no Altering of it.

Something must be done; For we are sure, All men are not saved. There are some, who are Children of Perdition, There are some, who are Vessels of wrath; there are some who go away into everlasting punishment, Something must be done, to distinguish you from that crooked Generation. We read, Matthew 7:14 "Narrow is the way which leadeth unto life and Few there be that Find it".

Indeed there is Nothing to be done by us, to merit our Salvation, But something must be done to secure our Salvation.

Indeed there is Nothing to be done by us, in our own strength. But something Must be done by us, thro' Christ who strengthens us.

More plainly, Our Blessedness now come not unto us, on the Terms of a Covenant of works, 'Tis not properly our doings, that is the condition of our Blessedness. We are to be Saved, by Taking rather than by Doing. The condition is receive and be saved. It is, approve, and be Saved. Or, Be willing to be Saved. We speak of Doing, in the Largest sense of the word; and we still say, something must be done, that we may be Saved.

Let the Question then come in. And, Oh! Bring it in with all the Solitude, which were proper for, the Greatest Concern in the World.

#### WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

I have seen this Question Scandalously answered, in Pamphlets that have been dispersed about our Nation. The One Thing that is needful has been left unregarded, unmention'd. Perhaps the Observation of certain Superstitious Holidays has been recommended instead of that one thing. Alas how have the souls of men been betrayed, by men unskilful in the word of righteousness! How unskilfully, and unfaithfully have the methods of Salvation been declared by many who pervert the Gospel of Christ! Not so now I hope! A pure gospel, a sound doctrine, must be pursu'd, You are now to be treated with nothing but wholesome Words; nothing but the faithful sayings of God.

I. And what Better, what other Answer can be given, (Other Foundation can no man Lay!) to this Question, but what the Apostles of God gave to it of old? When the poor man said what must I do to be Saved, we read they said Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.

This is the Sum of the Gospel; This is the Charge given to the Ministers of the Gospel; Mark 16:15, 16 "Preach the Gospel to every Creature. He that believeth... shall be saved." Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Only Saviour; This, This must be found in all that will be saved.

The faith, which is, A satisfaction of the mind in the way of Salvation by a Glorious Christ Revealed in the Gospel.

The Faith by which we deny our selves, and Rely on a Glorious Christ, for all Salvation. The Faith by which we Receive a Glorious Christ, and Rest on Him for Salvation as He is offered unto us.

But How must this faith operate in all that would be saved? Oh Set! Your Hearts to these things; they are not vain things; Your Lives, the very Lives of your Souls are concerned in them.

If your Hearts may now fall in with these things, and form'd and shap'd according to the Evangelical Mold of them lo, This Day Salvation is come unto your souls. Glorious Lord, incline the hearts of our People, to do what must be done that so thy Salvation may be bestow'd upon them. First this must be done; You must come to be bitterly Sensible, that you want [lack] a Glorious Christ for your Saviour. We read, John 7:37. "If any Man Thirst let him come unto me." Truly, no man will come to a Christ, until a Thirst or a pungent and Painful Sense of the Want of a Christ be raised in him. You must feel the Burden of your sin, lying on you; and cry out, Oh' Tis a heavy Burden too heavy for me! You must see God Angry with you, Sin Binding of you, Hell gaping for you; and utterly Despair of helping yourselves out of the confusion that is come upon you.

You must be filled with sorrow, for what you have done; with horror at what you are Expos'd unto. The Cry of your Uneasy Souls must be that; of Romans 7:24. "O wretched man that I am who shall deliver me!" You must be no strangers to such soliloquies as these; I have sinned; I have sinned, and, woe is unto me, that I have sinned, I have lost the knowledge of God and lost the Image of God, and lost the Favour of God. My Sin renders me obnoxious to the Vengeance of God. Lust enchants me, enslaves me; Satan Tyrannizes over me. I am in hourly Hazzard of an Eternal Banishment from God, into Outer Darkness, into the Place of Dragons. Oh! wretched man that I am: I can do nothing to deliver myself. I perish, I perish, except a Glorious Christ be my deliverer.

The Degree of this Distress on the minds of them that shall be saved is Various. There is a Variety in that Preparatory Work, which does distress the Elect of God, in their coming to a Saviour. Converts do sometimes needlessly Distress themselves, and Even deceive themselves, by insisting too much on the Measure of this Preparation. But so much of this Work, as will render us restless without a Christ; so much of this Work, as will render a whole Christ precious to us before there must be so much in our Experience, if we would be saved.

Secondly; This must be Done; You must confess yourselves, Unable To Do Anything Effectually of yourselves, in coming to a glorious Christ, as your Saviour. With a fearful trembling of Soul, you must make this Profession; Lord thou worketh in us to Will and to Do, of thy own good Pleasure! Your Profession must be that of Eph 2:8 "By Grace are ye saved, thro' Faith and that not of yourselves it is the Gift of God."

Your Profession must be that of John 6:65. "No man can come, except it be given to him." Oh! Lie at the Foot of Sovereign Grace confessing and Imploring Lord, I am justly destroyed. If I do not sincerely renounce my sin, sincerely embrace my Saviour. But I cannot, Oh! I cannot! I have deadly fetters upon my Soul; I shall never answer thy gracious Calls, except thy Sovereign Grace enable me. Oh! Quicken me: Oh! Strengthen me: Oh! Enable me; Turn thou me and I Shall be Turned. Your Impotency must not now be made an Excuse for your Impenitency. Your Inability must Affright you exceedingly. Affect you Exceedingly; It may not Excuse you in a slothful Negligence. You must Not Remain Careless of doing anything, Because you can thoroughly do nothing. Having first Cry'd unto God, that He would help you to do what you have to do, you must now try to do it; now try, whether He do not help you to do it.

Thirdly; This must be done; You must Admire, You must Adore, You must Address a Glorious Christ, in all His offices for all His Benefits. Oh! Hear a Compassionate Redeemer Calling you; Isai. 45:22 "Look unto me all ye Ends of the Earth, and be ye Saved." Comply, Reply; Lord, I look unto thee, I will be thine, Save me.

And here, you are to Remember that the First Thing you want is Attonement and Acceptance with God. For this Purpose you must behold a Glorious Christ, as a Priest bringing a Sacrifice and making a Righteousness for you Accordingly. Your first Address to Heaven must be this; Lord let my many and horrid sins be Forgiven me for the sake of that great Sacrifice, which thou hast had in the Blood of Jesus Christ thy Son, which Cleanseth from all sin. And Lord Let me who am a poor Sinner utterly hopeless of working out for myself a Righteousness now stand before Thee in the wondrous Righteousness of that Lord, who is the Head of His church, and who has wrought out a Spotless Righteousness for us.

But Remember to Depend on this most sufficient Sacrifice and Righteousness, not as Qualified for it by any good Thing to be observed in yourselves. Do not stay from it on a Prospect anon to come recommended unto it by some commendable goodness in yourselves first attained. No Depend, and Venture upon it, as Encouraged by no other Qualification but this; A most miserable Sinner; yet invited, yet Compelled unto this Mercy of the Lord.

Well; If the Faith which has got thus far, be not a counterfeit, it wont stop here. You must behold a glorious Christ, as a Prophet, and a King. Faith has other errands unto the Saviour besides that, of a desire to be Justified. A true Believer will not count himself saved, if he be not Sanctified, as well as justified. The Saviour puts this demand unto you; Matthew 20:32 What will ye that I shall do unto you? You answer; O, my great Saviour I come unto thee that by thy being my Sacrifice and my Righteousness and my Advocate, Everliving to make Intercession for me, I may be Saved unto the Uttermost. But this must not be all. There must be this in the Answer, O my Saviour I come unto thee for Instruction: Let thy Spirit with thy Word cause me to Know the Things of my Peace, and keep me from all Delusions.

And there must be this in the Answer, O my Saviour I come unto thee for Government: Let thy Spirit of Grace, conquer the Enmity of my Heart against the things that are pleasing to God and make me a conquerer over all my Spiritual Adversaries.

This is that Faith, whereof the End is the Salvation of the Soul. Believe after this manner, and you believe to the Saving of the Soul.

II. But we may carry on the Answer, without being reproved for adding anything unto the words of God. A true Faith, will always have Repentance accompanying of it.

Repentance unto life; 'Tis a Dead Faith which cannot show it; A Dead Soul that has it not, A genuine Faith is always a Repenting Faith. We see the two sisters hand in hand; Acts 20: 21 Repentance towards God and Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. We constantly see it in the Experience of all the Faithful. 'Tis the Denomination of Repentance; 2 Cor 7:10. Repentance to Salvation. It must be found in all the Candidates of Salvation.

Well then; First; This must be done; You must heartily and bitterly Bewail all your Sins. Your Original Sin, your Actual Sin; the monstrous Aggravation of your Sin; You must be convinced of it. A contrition must follow this conviction; With a Broken heart you must cry out, Psalm 38:18 "I will declare my iniquity, I will be sorry for my Sin."

You must mourn for your Sin, and mourn for the Offence given to God by your Sin, as well as for the Mischief done to yourselves: Mourn, Mourn, and never count that you have mourned enough.

Secondly; This must be done You must make a Penitent Confession of your Sins; a Remorseful confession of them, All your known crimes, you must as particularly as you can, Enumerate with shame and grief before the Lord.

You must be able to say; Psalm 51:3, "I acknowledge my Transgressions and my Sin is ever before me. Your Acknowledgement of your secret Sins must be only to the Lord: but where your Sins are Known, where your Neighbors have been either Sufferers by, or Witnesses of your Miscarriages, they also should Know that you acknowledged them.

Thirdly; This must be done; Every way of Sin must be Abhorr'd, must be Avoided, must be Forsaken. Amendment is Essential to Repentance: Except you reform you don't repent. So you are warn'd of God; Prov. 28:13. "He that confesseth and forsaketh shall find mercy." If you go on in any Evident way of Sin you will find it a Way of Death, a Path of the Destroyer; it will bring to a Damnation that slumbereth not.

Very tremendous Things will be done to those Enemies of God, who go on still in their trespasses. Have you done Amiss? You must say I will do so no more you must not persist in what you have done.

And hence, if you have wrong'd another man in what you have done, you must Vigorously Endeavour all possible restitution, restitution, a Thing too little understood, too little exhorted, too little practised; restitution without which there can be no right repentance. This is the Repentance which is found in every true believer; It must be found in every one that would be saved.

III. And, Holiness, Holiness; A patient continuance in will doing. There is No Life in the Faith, which is not Productive to an Holy Life; 'Tis not a Faith which will bring to everlasting Life. If the Grace to Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, be infused into the Soul, the Habit of every other Grace is at the same Instant infused.

I will show you the Motto on the Golden Gates of the Holy City; Hebrews 12:14. "Without Holiness no man shall see the Lord." An Holy Life, A Life pressing after Universal and Perpetual conformity to the Rules of Holiness; This, This is the Royal Path leading to salvation; Yea, tis no little part of our Salvation.



This must be done; You must Resign yourselves up unto the Holy Spirit of the Lord; Consent, Request, Entreat, That He would Eternally take Possession of you. From the Dust, cry unto Him; Psalm 141:10. "Thou art my God thy Spirit is good; lead me unto the land of Rectitude." Cry unto Him; O Spirit of Holiness, Raise me out of the Ruins that my Sin has brought upon me. Possess me forever. Cause me to fear God, and Love Christ, and hate Sin, and slight this World and know myself, and make me meet for the Inheritance of the Saints in Light; Bring me to be one of them, I pray thee, I pray thee! There is a good Foundation of Holiness laid in this resignation.

But then, This must be done; You must Livelily Pursue the Death of Every Sin. You must fly to the Death of your Saviour, as the purchase and the Pattern of so great a Blessing; but you must count no Trouble too much to be undergone, that you may come at such a Blessing. This is that Holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. This must be done: You must set before yourselves the Example of your Saviour: Study how He was in the World; Study to walk as He walked; mightily Delight in every stroke of Resemblance unto Him; Yea, tho' it be in Sufferings that you resemble him. This is that Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

This must be done; You must by a solemn Dedication of yourselves, and your All unto the Lord, become the Lord's.

It must therefore be your Desire to have all your Talents, all your Possessions, and Enjoyments and Interests employ'd for the Honour of the Lord: and owning the Lord, as the great Giver, and Owner, the Lord Proprietor of all that you have, you must be ready to submit unto the will of God when he pleases with afflictive Dispensations to take any of it from you. This is the Holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.

This must be done; You must remember, That the Eye of the omnipotent God is upon you, You must often bring this to remembrance, God sees me, hears me, knows me, is acquainted with all my ways, A sense of your being under the Notice of God, and of the Account unto which you will be called by God must make you afraid of incurring His Displeasure; Afraid even of Secret Miscarriages. This is that Holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.

This must be done: You must make it your Exercise to keep a conscience clear of Offence towards God and towards Man. You must labour to be Acquainted with your Whole Duty; and your Acquaintance with the Will of God must be followed with proportionable Desires and Labours after Obedience to it.

You must Pray always with all Prayer, with secret Prayer, with Household Prayer, with Public Prayer. You must have an High Value for those two Sacraments of the New Testament, the Baptism and the Supper of the Lord.

You must religiously Observe the Lord's Day.

You must Preserve your own Place and Life and Bed and Wealth and Name: You must, with the same Sincerity, befriend your Neighbours also in theirs. Love your Neighbours as yourselves, and Do as you would be Done unto.

You must be especially and mightily conscientious of Relative Christianity. Carry it well in all the Relations wherein the Lord has placed you, whether Superiors, or Inferiors, or Equals; with such a Carriage as may adorn the Doctrine of God your Saviour; such a Carriage as may render your co-relatives the better for you.

Briefly, You must Deny all Ungodliness and Worldly Lusts and Live godly and soberly and righteously in the World. This is that Holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. Methinks a most Obvious Inference may be drawn from these Things, That the Ministry of the Gospel must be attended, and not neglected, by them who would not neglect the great Salvation; A most awful Inference, That it is a dangerous Thing to live without the means of Salvation, which are in the ministry of the [True] Gospel ordinarily to be met withal. The Wells of Salvation are kept open in such a ministry. Oh! Do not undervalue the Blessings of those Upper Springs! There are men, who by the command of a glorious Christ, give themselves up unto the service of the Evangelical Ministry, and are the Preachers of the Gospel unto the rest of the world:

An order of men concerning whom our glorious Lord has promised Matthew 28:20, "Lo, I am with you always to the end of the world." If an Angel should come from Heaven unto you as unto Cornelius, once to Speak unto this Question, What must I do to be saved? He would unquestionably say, Repair to such a ministry don't think to live without it.

We have settled the Point; Without Faith we can have no Salvation. But I assume: Romans 10:14, 17 "How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. Oh! That the Ungospelized Plantations which live, I should rather say, which die, without the means of salvation, would consider of it.

Your Question is answered. O souls in Peril, I may now say unto you; I Cor. 15:2 "You are saved if you keep in memory what I have preached unto you." And yet I must say unto you, That if after all, you trample upon these things, it will be good for you that you had never been born; the very mention of them will dreadfully increase and inflame your condemnation. But the success of all must be left with the Glorious One.

And O Father of mercies, Do thou mercifully look down upon the Soul that has heard these Things. Dispose and assist that soul, to do those Good Things, upon which thou hast promised the salvation of the soul. I Pray thee, I Pray thee!

*Awake up my soul! the awful day,  
Is coming swiftly on,  
When thou must leave this House of Clay,  
And fly to Worlds unknown.  
Oh! do not pass thy Life in Dreams,  
To be surpriz'd by Death:  
And drop unthinking down to Flames,  
When I resign my Breath.  
No: every day thy Course review,  
Thy real State to learn:  
And with an ardent Zeal pursue  
Thy Great and Chief concern.  
Rouze all the man: thy Work is great,  
And all the man demands;  
Thine Head, thine Heart, thy Breath, thy Sweat,  
Thy Strength and both thine Hands.  
Oh! let the important Work be done,  
Done whilst 'tis call'd to Day.  
Lest thou the time of Hope out-run,  
And rue the mad Delay.  
Repent (my soul) Believe and Pray:  
Bid every lust farewell.  
To thy Redeemer haste away,  
And scape from Death and Hell.  
To whom Dear Jesus, should I live  
To whom but Thee alone.  
Thou didst at first my being give,  
And I am all Thine own.  
To Thee I'll then my self devote,  
My Life and all my Pow'rs.  
Each warm affection, busy thought,  
And all my passing Hours.  
O Let those glorious Hopes refine,  
And elevate my Soul.  
To heavenly Things my Heart incline,  
And meaner Joys control.  
May Faith and Hope stretch all their wings,  
And bear me up on high;  
And as I mount may Earthly Things,  
Below unheeded lie.  
JESUS my Saviour and my God,  
My Life and Sacrifice,  
My Hopes deep founded in thy Blood,  
Raise far above the skies.  
Prepare me, Lord, for thy Right Hand,  
Then come the joyful Day:  
Come Death, and come Celestial band,  
To bear my Soul away.*

*F I N I S*

XX

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