



SRI AKILANDESWARI WOMEN'S COLLEGE

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

**TOPIC: HISTORY OF ENGLISH
LITERATURE**

CLASS: UG ENGLISH

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1. Old English Period

469 AD - 1066 AD

- Norman conquests.
- The Song of Beowulf:



England in the Middle Ages

Replica of a 7th-century ceremonial helmet from the Kingdom of East Anglia, found at Sutton Hoo.



Roman military withdrawals left Britain open to invasion by pagan, seafaring warriors from north-western continental Europe, chiefly the Angles, Saxons and Jutes who had long raided the coasts of the Roman province and began to settle, initially in the eastern part of the country.¹ Their advance was contained for some decades after the Britons' victory at the Battle of Mount Badon, but subsequently resumed, over-running the fertile lowlands of Britain and reducing the area under Brythonic control to a series of separate enclaves in the more rugged country to the west by the end of the 6th century. Contemporary texts describing this period are extremely scarce, giving rise to its description as a Dark Age. The nature and progression of the Anglo-Saxon settlement of Britain is consequently subject to considerable disagreement. Roman-dominated Christianity had in general disappeared from the conquered territories, but was reintroduced by missionaries from Rome led by Augustine from 597 onwards. Disputes between the Roman- and Celtic-dominated forms of Christianity ended in victory for the Roman tradition at the Council of Whitby (664), which was ostensibly about haircuts and the date of Easter, but more significantly, about the differences in Roman and Celtic forms of authority, theology, and practice (Lehane).

During the settlement period the lands ruled by the incomers seem to have been fragmented into numerous tribal territories, but by the 7th century, when substantial evidence of the situation again becomes available, these had coalesced into roughly a **dozen kingdoms** including Northumbria, Mercia, Wessex, East Anglia, Essex, Kent and Sussex. Over the following centuries this **process of political consolidation** continued. **The 7th century saw a struggle for hegemony between Northumbria and Mercia, which in the 8th century gave way to Mercian preeminence.** In the early **9th century Mercia was displaced as the foremost kingdom by Wessex.** Later in that century escalating attacks by the Danes culminated in the conquest of the north and east of England, overthrowing the kingdoms of Northumbria, Mercia and East Anglia. **Wessex under Alfred the Great was left as the only surviving English kingdom,** and under his successors it steadily expanded at the expense of the kingdoms of the Danelaw. This brought about the **political unification of England, first accomplished under Æthelstan in 927** and definitively established after further conflicts by Eadred in 953. A fresh wave of Scandinavian attacks from the late 10th century ended with the conquest of this united kingdom by Sweyn Forkbeard in 1013 and again by his son Cnut in 1016, turning it into the centre of a short-lived North Sea empire that also included Denmark and Norway. However the native **royal dynasty was restored** with the accession of Edward the Confessor in 1042.

The Norman Conquest

- A dispute over the succession to Edward led to the **Norman conquest of England** in **1066**, accomplished by an army led by **Duke William of Normandy**.
- The **Normans** themselves originated from **Scandinavia** and had settled in Normandy in the late 9th and early 10th centuries. This conquest led to the almost total dispossession of the English elite and its **replacement by a new French-speaking aristocracy**, whose speech had a profound and permanent effect on the English language.
- Subsequently the **House of Plantagenet** from Anjou inherited the English throne under **Henry II**, adding England to the budding **Angevin Empire** of fiefs the family had inherited in France including **Aquitaine**.^[51] They reigned for three centuries, proving noted monarchs such as **Richard I**, **Edward I**, **Edward III** and **Henry V**.
- The period saw changes in trade and legislation, including the signing of the **Magna Carta**, an English legal charter used to limit the sovereign's powers by law and protect the privileges of freemen. Catholic **monasticism** flourished, providing philosophers and the universities of Oxford and Cambridge were founded with royal patronage. The **Principality of Wales** became a Plantagenet fief during the 13th century and the **Lordship of Ireland** was gifted to the English monarchy by the Pope.

The Anglo-Saxon literature and oral tradition

- "Old English literature" (sometimes referred to as "Anglo-Saxon literature") encompasses literature written in Old English (also called Anglo-Saxon) in Anglo-Saxon England from the 7th century to the decades after the Norman Conquest of 1066.
- 'Cædmon's Hymn', composed in the 7th century according to Bede, is often considered the oldest extant poem in English, whereas the later poem, The Grave is one of the final poems written in Old English, and presents a transitional text between Old and Middle English.
- Likewise, the Parker Chronicle continues until the 12th century.
- The poem Beowulf, which often begins the traditional canon of English literature, is the most famous work of **Old English literature**.
- The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle has also proven significant for historical study, preserving a chronology of early English history.
- In descending order of quantity, Old English literature consists of: sermons and saints' lives, biblical translations; translated Latin works of the early **Church Fathers**; Anglo-Saxon chronicles and narrative history works; laws, wills and other legal works; practical works on grammar, medicine, geography; and poetry. In all there are over 400 surviving manuscripts from the period, of which about 189 are considered "major".
- Alongside, Old English literature, Anglo-Saxons wrote a number of Anglo-Latin works.

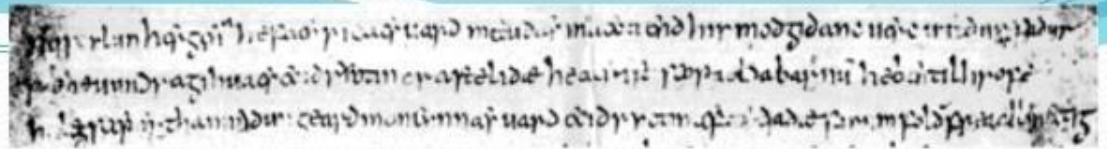
Cædmon's Hymn

Composed in the 7th century according to Bede, is often considered the oldest extant poem in English

Cædmon is the earliest English (Northumbrian) poet whose name is known. An Anglo-Saxon who cared for the animals at the double monastery of Streonæshalch (Whitby Abbey) during the abbacy (657–680) of St. Hilda (614–680). He was originally ignorant of "the art of song" but learned to compose one night in the course of a dream, according to the 8th-century monk Bede. He later became a zealous monk and an accomplished and inspirational Christian poet.



Cædmon's Hymn



One of two candidates for the earliest surviving copy of *Cædmon's Hymn* is found in "The Moore Bede" (ca. 737) which is held by the [Cambridge University Library](#) (Kk. 5. 16, often referred to as **M**). The other candidate is St. Petersburg, National Library of Russia, lat. Q. v. I. 18 (P)

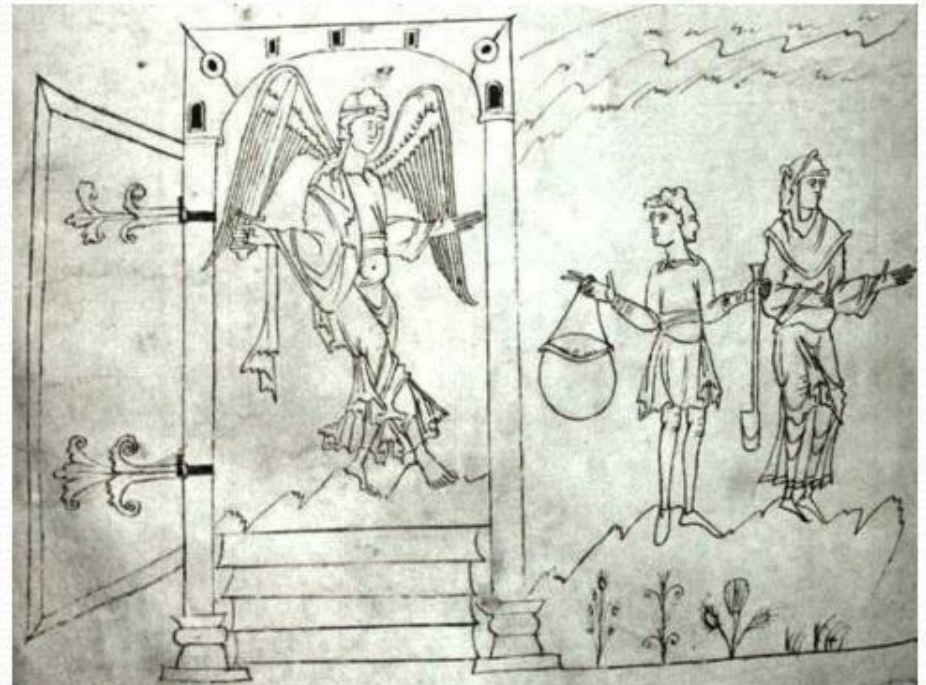
The only known survivor from Cædmon's oeuvre is his *Hymn*.

The poem is known from 21 [manuscript](#) copies, making it the best-attested Old English poem after [Bede's Death Song](#) (with 35 [witnesses](#)) and the best attested in the poetic corpus in manuscripts copied or owned in the British Isles during the Anglo-Saxon period. The *Hymn* also has by far the most complicated known textual history of any surviving Anglo-Saxon poem. It is found in two dialects and five distinct [recensions](#) (Northumbrian *aelda*, Northumbrian *eordu*, West-Saxon *eorðan*, West-Saxon *ylda*, and West-Saxon *eorðe*), all but one of which are known from three or more witnesses. It is one of the earliest attested examples of written Old English and one of the earliest recorded examples of sustained poetry in a [Germanic language](#). Together with the runic [Ruthwell Cross](#) and [Franks Casket](#) inscriptions, *Cædmon's Hymn* is one of three candidates for the earliest attested example of [Old English poetry](#).

CAEDMON

Now let us praise the Guardian of the Kingdom of Heaven the might of the Creator and the thought of his mind, the work of the glorious Father, how He, the eternal Lord established the beginning of every wonder. For the sons of men, He, the Holy Creator first made heaven as a roof, then the Keeper of mankind, the eternal Lord God Almighty afterwards made the middle world the earth, for men.

(Caedmon, Hymn, [St Petersburg Bede](#))



THE GRAVE

The Grave is one of the final poems written in Old English, and presents a transitional text between Old and Middle English

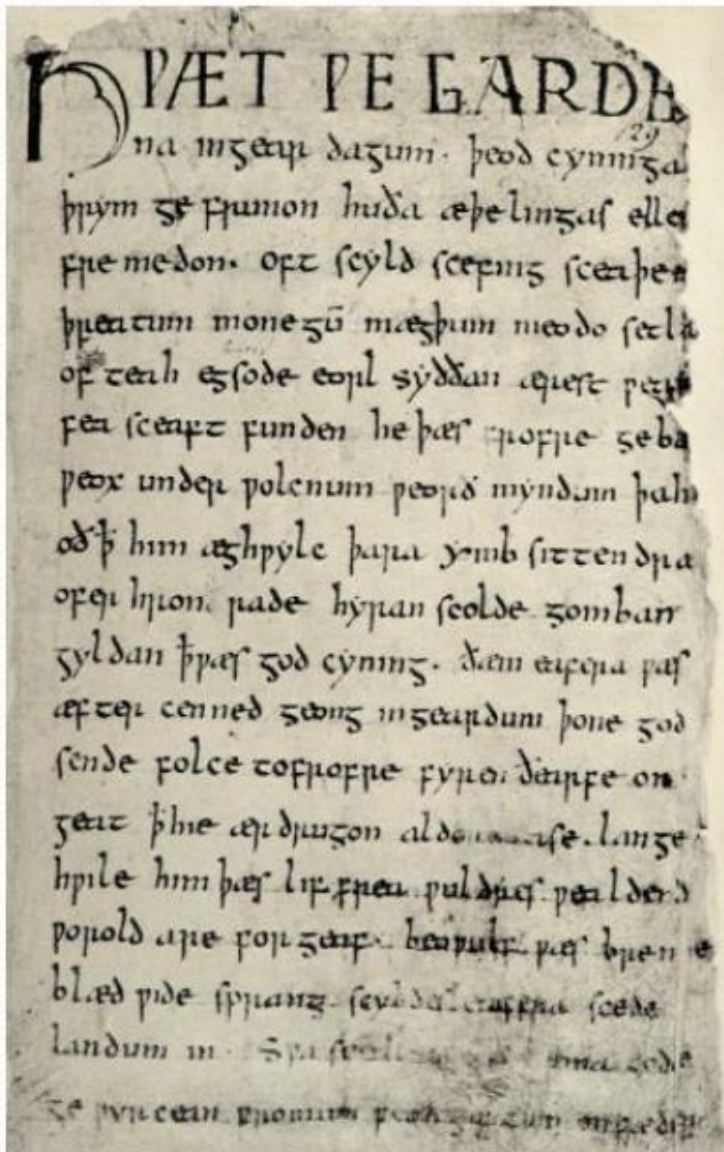
PARKER CHRONICLE

The *Parker Chronicle* continues until the 12th century.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_English_corpus

8th and the early 11th century →

Beowulf



Old English heroic epic poem consisting of 3182 alliterative long lines, set in Scandinavia, commonly cited as one of the most important works of Anglo-Saxon literature.

It survives in a single manuscript known as the Nowell Codex. Its composition by an anonymous Anglo-Saxon poet is dated between the 8th and the early 11th century.

In 1731, the manuscript was badly damaged by a fire that swept through a building housing a collection of Medieval manuscripts assembled by Sir Robert Bruce Cotton.

The poem fell into obscurity for decades, and its existence did not become widely known again until it was printed in 1815 in an edition prepared by the Icelandic-Danish scholar Grímur Jónsson Thorkelin.

Beowulf

The Main Story Line

The main protagonist, **Beowulf**, a hero of the **Geats**, comes to the aid of **Hroðgar**, the king of the **Danes**, whose great hall, **Heorot**, is plagued by the monster **Grendel**. Beowulf kills Grendel with his bare hands and Grendel's mother with a sword of a giant that he found in her lair (=guarida).

Later in his life, Beowulf is himself king of the Geats, and finds his kingdom terrorised by a **dragon** whose treasure had been stolen from his treasure in a burial mound. He attacks the **dragon** with the help of his **thegns** or servants, but they do not succeed. Beowulf decides to follow the dragon into its lair, at **Earnanæs**, but only his young Swedish relative **Wiglaf** dares join him along with Tinslaw. Beowulf finally slays (=kills) the dragon, but is mortally wounded. He is buried in a **tumulus** or burial mound, by the sea.

Beowulf is considered an epic poem in that the main character is a hero who travels great distances to prove his strength at impossible odds against supernatural demons and beasts. The poem also begins **in medias res** ("into the middle of affairs") or simply, "in the middle", which is a characteristic of the epics of antiquity. Although the poem begins with Beowulf's arrival, Grendel's attacks have been an ongoing event. An elaborate history of characters and their lineages is spoken of, as well as their interactions with each other, debts owed and repaid, and deeds of courage.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v9qpqyO_dmU → Beowulf Trailer



Migration Period (5th – 10th centuries)

The British history is considered to begin in the 5th century, when the country was invaded from the Continent by the warlike tribes of Angles, Saxons and Jutes. At the very end of the 5th century they settled in Britain and began to call themselves English.

In those early days epic poems were created in many countries, such as: “Iliad” and “Odyssey” by Homer.

The main literary forms of the period were: lyric, riddle, epic and prose.





Anglo-Norman
Period
(11-13 cent)

Medieval Period

Pre-Renaissance
(14-15 cent)

Anglo-Norman Period *(11-13 cent)*

The Normans came from the north-west of France. They brought the culture of their country and the French language. Very popular with the Normans were romances – tales in verse praising the bravery and nobleness of knights. Many romances were based on Celtic legends – about King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table.

Prosaic works started to appear in monasteries

(13th cent)



The literature of the Church was scholastic, moralistic, and it supported the feudal system. The books written in Latin by monks taught the common people that their sufferings on earth would be rewarded in heaven.

Pre-Renaissance



The 14th century was a difficult time for England. The country was waging the Hundred Year's War with France. At the same time England suffered from three epidemics of the plague. But during this stormy period the English nation was being formed; English became the spoken language of the country; English literature was born.

Geoffrey Chaucer (1340 – 1400)

He was the greatest writer of the 14th century. He was born in London. He held a number of positions at the English king's court and several times visited Italy and France on diplomatic missions. In Italy he got acquainted with the works of Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio, whose works were full of new optimistic ideas and love of life and had a great influence on Chaucer's future works.





ANCE
(19th century)

In the 15th-16th centuries capitalist relations began to develop in Europe. The decay of feudalism and development of capitalist relations was followed by a great rise of the cultural life of Europe. It was then that great discoveries by Columbus, Magellan and other explorers were made, as well as astronomical discoveries by Copernicus, Bruno, and Galileo. There was a revival of interest in the ancient culture of Greece and Rome. The progressive ideology of the Renaissance was humanism. Human life, the happiness of people and belief in man's abilities became the main subjects in fine arts and literature. The Renaissance is divided into three periods:

1. The Rise of the Renaissance (1500-1558)
2. The Height of the Renaissance (1558-1603)
3. The Decline the Renaissance (1603-1649)

The Rise of the Renaissance
(1500-1558)

Thomas Wyatt and
Henry Surrey
introduced the
sonnet in the
English
literature.
Thomas More
wrote
“Utopia”



The Height of the Renaissance (1558-1603)



William Shakespeare



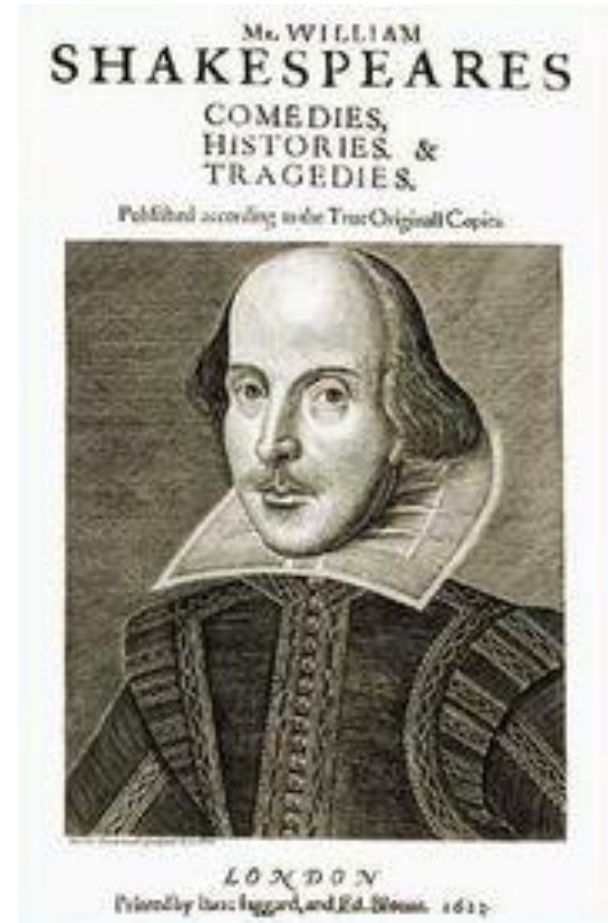
William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

His literary work can
be divided into
three periods:

1590 – 1600

1601 – 1608

1609 – 1612



The Decline of the Renaissance

(1603-1649)

John Milton (1608 – 1674):

“Paradise Lost”

“Paradise Regained”

“Samson Agonistis”

His other works:

“L’Allegro”,

“Il Penseroso”

“Comus”

“Lycidas”

“Aeropagitica”



LITERATURE OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT

(The 18th century)



The Enlighteners defended the interests of the common people – craftsmen, tradesmen and peasants. Their criticism was directed against social inequality and religious hypocrisy as well as the immorality of the aristocracy. The central philosophical problem was that of man and his nature.

In the period of Enlightenment the poetic forms of the Renaissance were replaced by prose. The didactic novel was born and became the leading genre of the period. Ordinary people, mostly representatives of the middle class, became the heroes of these novels. The characters, either good or bad, were accordingly, either rewarded or punished at the end of the novel. By these means the Enlighteners hoped to improve the morals of the people and society in general.

Daniel Defoe (1660-1731)



He is rightly considered the father of the English and the European novel:

- "An Essay on Projects" (1697)
- "The Shortest Way with the Dissenters" (1702)
- "Hymn to the Pillory"
- "The Life and the Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe" (1719)
- "Captain Singleton"
- "Moll Flanders"
- "Roxana"

Jonathan Swift (1667-1745)

He was the greatest satirist in English literature.

“Journal for Stella” (1710-1713) – letters to his faithful lifelong friend Stella.

The allegory:

- “A Tale of a Tub”

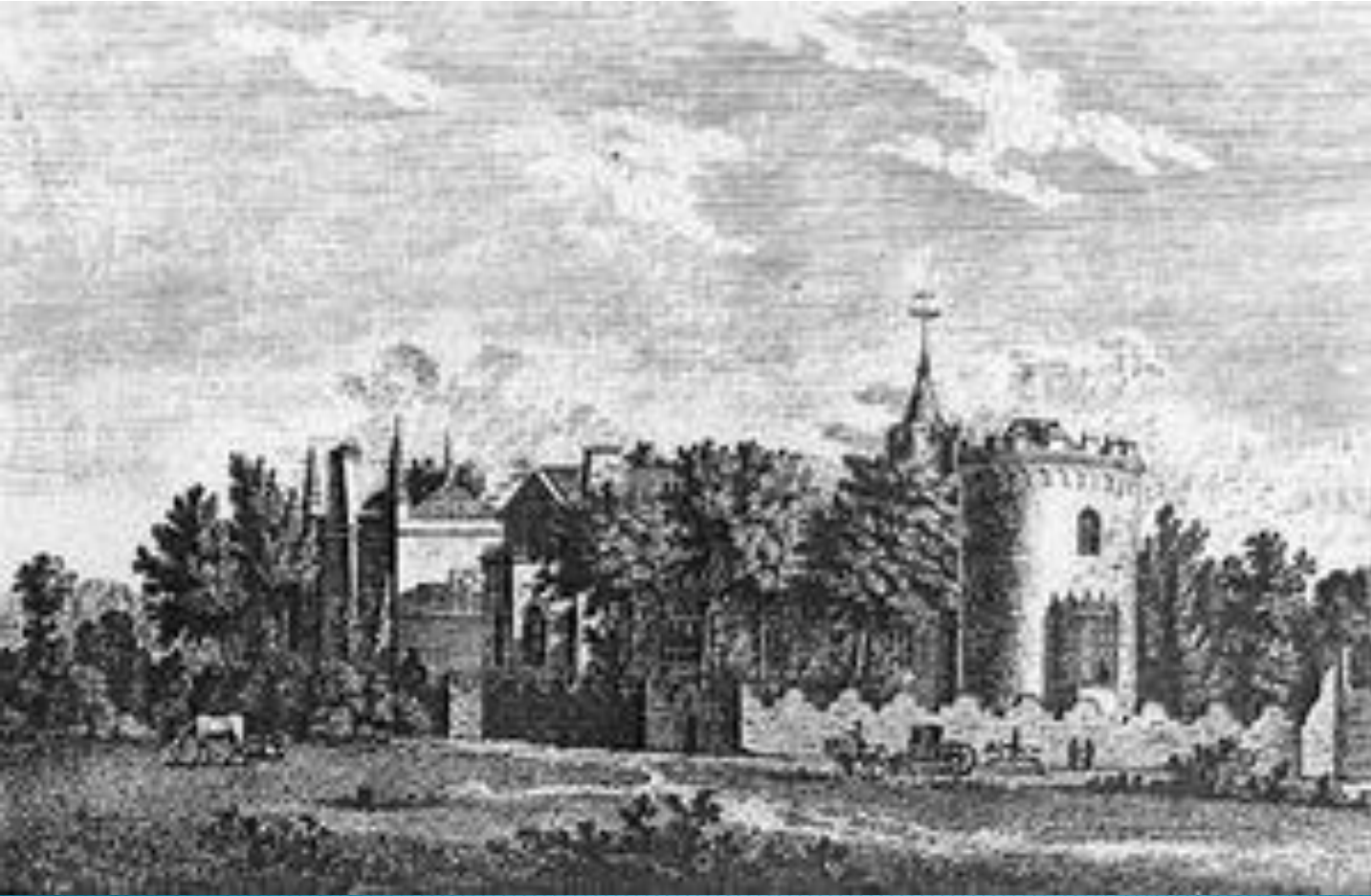
The satire:

- “A Modest Proposal for Preventing the Children of Poor People of Ireland from Being a Burden to their Parents” (1729)

The novel:

- “Gulliver’s Travels” (1726)





*ANTISISM
3th century)*

Robert Burns (1759-1796)

He is a national poet of both Scotland and England.

– “Poems Chiefly in the
Scottish Dialect” (1786)

Poems:

- “My Heart’s in the Highlands”
- “Bruce’s Address to his Army at Bannockburn”
- “Is There for Honest Poverty”
- “Revolutionary Lyric”
- “The Tree of Liberty”
- “The Jolly Beggars”
- “John Barleycorn”
- “Oh, My Love is Like a Red, Red Rose”
- “Auld Lang Syne”
- “The Toadeater”



**“The Scots
Musical
Museum”**

**“Select
Collection
of Original
Scottish
Airs”**

William Blake (1757-1827)



“Poetical Sketches”

**“Songs of
Innocence”**

**“Songs of
Experience”**

**“The Marriage of
Heaven and Hell”**

“Milton”, and others



*ATURE OF THE EARLY 19th CENTURY
ROMANTICISM*

George Gordon Noel Byron (1788-1824)

He is the greatest romantic revolutionary poet of England.

Byron's creative work is usually divided into four periods:

The London Period (1812-1816)

The Swiss Period (May-October 1816)

The Italian Period (1816-1823)

The Greek Period (1823-1824)



Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822)

“Queen Mab”

“Adonais”

“Prometheus Unbound”

“The Cloud”

“To a Skylark”

“The Indian Serenade”

**“To the West Wind” and
other lyrics.**



Walter Scott (1771-1832)

Poetry:



**“The Mystrelsy of the
Scottish Border” –
legends and popular
ballads of Scotland.**

**“The Lay of the Last
Minstrel”**

“Marmion”

“The Lady of the Lake”

Jane Austen (1775-1817)

“Emma”

“Pride and Prejudice”

“Sense and Sensibility”

“Persuasion”

“Mansfield Park”

“Northanger Abbey”





*FROM THE 1830s TO THE 1860s
VICTORIAN LITERATURE*

Early Victorian Literature

**Charles Dickens
(1812-1870):**

The first period:

“Sketches by Boz” (1836)

**“The Posthumous Papers
of the Pickwick Club”
(1837)**

“American Notes”

“Oliver Twist”

“Nicholas Nickleby”

“Martin Chuzzlewit”

“A Christmas Carol”

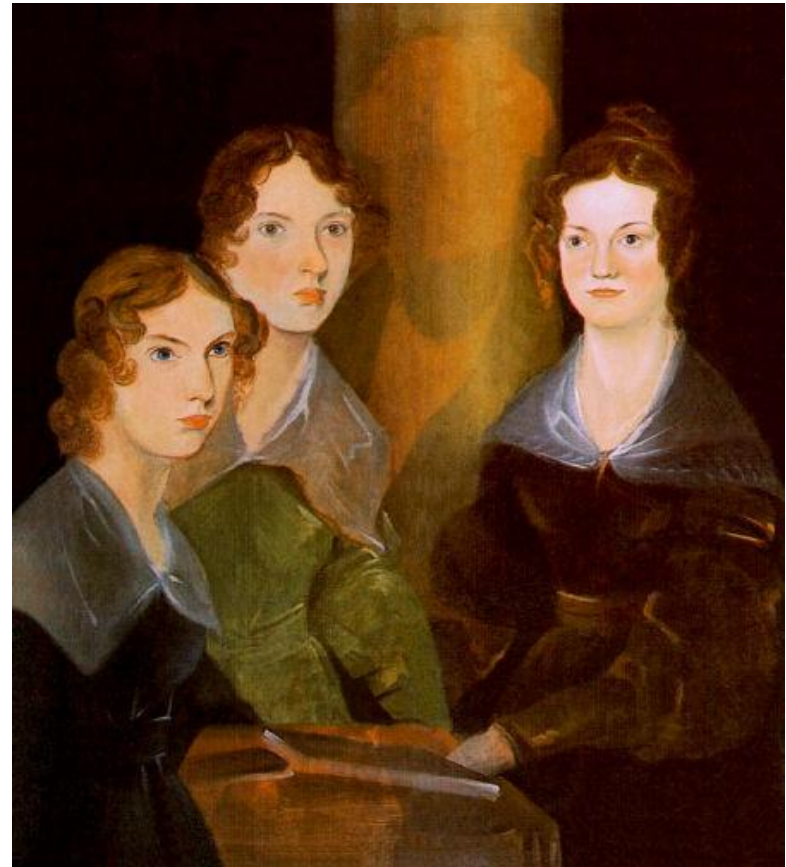


The Bronte Sisters:

Charlotte Bronte: “Jane Eyre”, “The Professor”, “Villette”, “Shirley”.

Emily Bronte:
“Wuthering Heights”,
poems.

Anne Bronte: “Agnes Grey”, “The Tenant of Wildfell Hall”



William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863)



“The Book of Snobs”

*“Vanity Fair, A Novel
without a Hero”*

“Pendennis”

“The Newcomes”

“Henry Esmond”

“The Virginians”

- ▶ Major people...
 - Julius Caesar
 - St. Augustine
 - King Ethelbert of Kent
 - King Alfred “the great”
 - William the Conqueror
 - William, Duke of Normandy

What I really need to know about “the making of the English language”

Major cultural/linguistic influences

Celtic

Roman

Anglo-Saxon

Viking

Norman

Stephen Colbert Satire and “The Word” English

http://colbertnation.mtvnimages.com/images/shows/colbert_report/video_archive/season_2/cr_02123_03_wrd_v6.jpg?width=80

Runic Writing...

- ▶ Write Your Name in Runes at Nova
- ▶ Runes were used by early Germanic tribes on documents in stone, wood and metal. They relied on these symbols not only for writing but also to tell fortunes, cast spells, and provide protection.
- ▶ The runic alphabet, or Futhark, gets its name from the first six sounds, much like our alphabet “A,B,C’s”.
- ▶ Can you write your name in Runes?
- ▶ Check out the Nova website:
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/vikings/runes.html>