

British Literature

SEMESTER I

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Why Study British Literature?

- Our language came from England. Most of our language originated there.
- Our forefathers came from England. They were responsible for establishing our nation.
- We inherited the ideas of personal rights and government by consensus.
- We inherited the rich literary tradition.

Beginning Information

➤ BC

refers to the recorded time Before Christ

➤ AD

Anno Domini – The Year of Our Lord – refers to the recorded time after the death of Christ. We live in this recorded time era.

Time Periods of the World

- **Anglo Saxons** 44
9 – 1066
- **Middle Ages** 1
066 – 1485
- **Renaissance** 148
5 – 1660
- **Restoration**
1660 - 1800
- **Romantic Period** 179
8 – 1832
- **Victorian Period** 1
832 – 1901
- **Modern World** 19
00 – Present

Before & During the Anglo Saxon Period...

The land known as Great Britain was invaded by
4 main groups:

1. Romans 55 BC
2. Angles, Saxons, Jutes 449
3. Vikings 793
4. Normans 1066

The Roman Empire



The Roman Empire occupied the British Isles, most of Europe, Asia Minor, the Middle East, and North Africa.

- They dominated most of the world.
- They argued that they fought only “just wars” – only fought when they were provoked.



Roman Occupation of Britain

- Roman conquerors arrived under the direction of Julius Caesar.
- Romans occupied Britain from 55 BC – 409 AD.
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- They had to defeat a group of Celts known as Britons.



Celts

- The Celts were tall blonde warriors.
- They painted their bodies blue for a more terrifying look in battle.
- They wore their hair long and shaved all of their bodies except the head and the upper lip.
- They saw spirits everywhere, did ritual dances, and human sacrifices.



Celts

- **The Celts put up a strong resistance against the Roman invaders.**
- **Arthur was a heroic Celtic leader; his deeds were developed into the legend of King Arthur, Britain's once and future king.**
- **Celt descendants still live in Cornwall, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and northwestern France.**



Roman Improvements



While in charge, the Romans:

- 1. Provided armies and organization to protect the land from invaders**
- 2. Built 5,000 miles of stone roads – this had a tremendous impact on trade**
- 3. Built villas and great public baths**
- 4. Built Hadrian's Wall**

Hadrian's Wall

- **Hadrian's Wall was between the North Sea and the Atlantic**
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- **It was 73 miles long**
- **It held back Picts and Scots for 250 years.**



Stone Henge



- The invaders also found Stone Henge.
- Stone Henge was the Saxon name for the famous monument on the Salisbury plain, and the "henge" part is Old English for "hang," not earthwork.

Stone Henge



- This was made of large sandstone blocks and smaller bluestone pillars.
- It is located in Southern England.
- No one really knows why it is arranged this way or how the pillars were moved there.
- Some pillars weigh up to 4 tons and were transported 240 miles from Wales.
- Historians believe it was used as a ceremonial gathering place.

Religion

- Anglo Saxon had warrior gods.
- It was a dark, fatalistic religion.
- Woden was the god of death. He helped humans communicate with spirits and was associated with burial rites. (We call Woden's day Wednesday.)



Religion

- Thunor was the god of thunder and lightning. This was the same as the Norse god Thor. His sign was the hammer. (We call Thunor's day /Thor's day Thursday.)
- The dragon was a personification of "death the devourer."



Introduction of Christianity

- **Christianity was introduced during the Roman occupation.**
- **Before Christianity, religion was pagan.**
- **Missionaries were sent from Rome by Pope Gregory I, and were led by Augustine.**



Augustine

- **Augustine built a monastery and cathedral at Canterbury in 601.**
- **He became the first archbishop of Canterbury – this is the highest ranking cleric in England.**



Effect of Christianity

- **Christianity served as a unifying force.**
- **It produced a common faith and a common system of morality and right conduct.**
- **It linked England to Europe.**
- **Christian Monks copied ancient manuscripts to preserve classical text and Anglo Saxon literature.**



Monks and Monasteries

- Monasteries were centers of learning where monks wrote down works that had been passed on only by word of mouth for centuries.
- English gained respect as a written language.



Romans Departed...

- Because of problems at home, the Romans withdrew in 409 AD.
- They left Britain with no central government, and this made Britain vulnerable to invasion once again.



Anglo Saxon Invasion

- Anglo Saxons were from Germany; the Jutes, who invaded also, were from Denmark.
- The Anglo Saxons were first invited to Britain by the King to help him fight Picts and Scots.
- Angles & Saxons imposed language and warrior culture on most of Britain.
- With them, they brought fierce loyalty and scops.



Scops or Bards

- **Scops or Bards were the storytellers of this time. They wrote of great battles and sang/spoke in public halls, usually strumming harps.**
- **Writing poetry was as important as fighting, hunting, farming, or loving.**
- **They emphasized that life is hard and ends in death.**
- **Bards worked hard at writing poetry because this was the only way they could fight against death – the warriors in their tales would be famous after death.**
- **Because of this, Bards were given favors by the warriors and held in high regard.**



Anglo Saxons Life

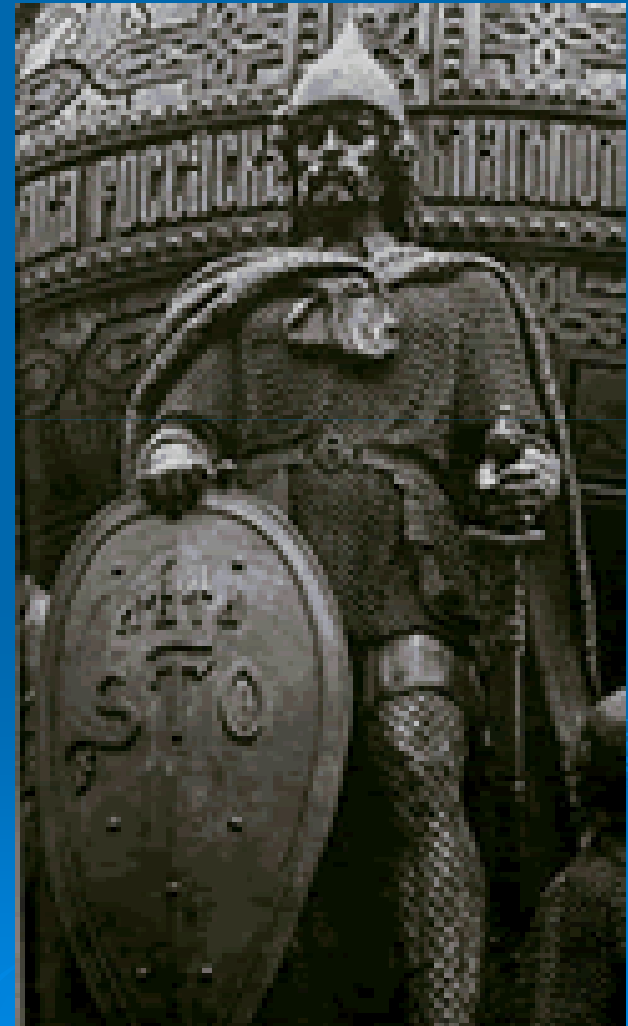
Life was hard.

- **There were numerous diseases.**
- **People were considered to be old at the age of 30 and grateful to have lived that long.**
- **Many women died in childbirth.**



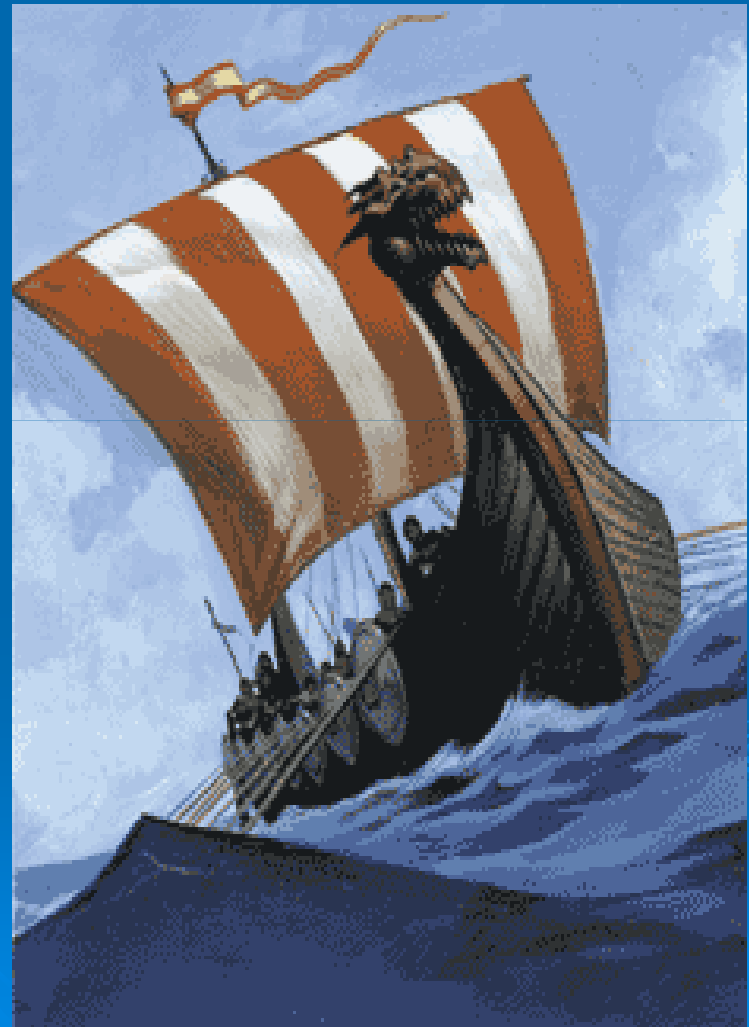
Anglo Saxons England

- **At first, this was not unified; several areas had their own kings.**
- **They were often attacked by the Danes.**
- **Danes were a fierce Viking people who crossed the cold North Sea in dragon prowed boats in 8th, 9th centuries**



The Danes

- **The Danes plundered and destroyed everything in their path.**
- **They eventually settled parts of northeast and central England.**
- **Anglo Saxons and Danes fought against each other until 1066.**



The Danes

- Example of Viking boat



King Alfred of Wessex



- **AKA Alfred the Great – w as a strong warrior**
- **Brilliant scholar**
- **Founded English navy because of the Vikings**
- **Led the Anglo Saxons against the Danes - united the people and helped England become a nation**
- **Clarified and enforced laws**
- **Led the introduction of Latin**
- **Had Latin works translated into English**

Key Features of the Anglo-Saxon Age

- **Society was based on kinship or groups of related people, lead by a strong chief**
- **People fought wars, farmed, governed, and created fine crafts.**
- **Christianity slowly replaced the old religion and linked England to Europe.**



The Norman Invasion, 1066

- **William the Conqueror crossed the English Channel in 1066 and defeated the Anglo Saxon armies at the Battle of Hastings.**
- **This ended the Anglo-Saxon culture and proved to be one of the pivotal points in world history.**



THANK YOU SO MUCH

