

English Literature (I)

Classical Age: 500 BC to 500 AD

Middle Ages: 500 to 1350

Renaissance: 1350 to 1660

Old English: 500 AD to 1100 AD

Middle English: 1100 AD to 1500 AD

Modern English: 1500 to the present

The Old English Period:

A. Birth of the English Language

- a. Earlier, the native tribes spoke in a Celtic language
- b. The Romans introduced the Latin language and Christianity in England.
- c. Germanic tribes (the Angles, the Saxons, the Frisians, the Jutes...) from Europe came to England. Their language became predominant. The English Language was born.

B. Christianity and War, so we have heroic poetry and Christian poetry (Both belong to the oral tradition, and one cannot separate them easily.)

- a. Heroic poetry: *The Battle of Maldon*, *Beowulf*
- b. Christian poetry: *Cædmon's Hymn*, *The Wanderer*
- c. The aristocratic heroic and kinship values of Germanic society
- d. Literary terms to be noted: alliteration/ synonym /synecdoche /Metonymy / kenning /irony /understatement /litotes (ironic understatement)

The Middle English Period

A. In 1066 William and his soldiers came to England from France to fight for the throne. His victory changed the language and literature in England. In the 1330s, Edward III waged a war with France. English becomes a dominant language in England. The levying of taxes for the war also led to the beginning of capitalism.

B. lyrics (ex. *Alison*) / ballads/ historical works (*Morte Darthur* (romance))

C. Zenith of Middle English Poetry (1350-1400):

- a. *Canterbury Tales*
- b. *Piers Plowman*
- c. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *Morte Darthur* (medieval romances (an

important literary term))

d. *Everyman* (a morality play though the mystery play is also an important genre)

Renaissance (Rebirth)

Rebirth of the learning, literature, and the arts of the Classical Age.

A. The 16th Century

a. The Society

- i. English Renaissance begins 100 years later than that in Europe. So, in 1500.
- ii. In 1476, William Caxton brings the printing press to England.
- iii. In 1492, Christopher Columbus lands the New World.
- iv. In 1517, Martin Luther protests against the Catholic Church. So, there appears the Catholic and the Protestant.
- v. In 1558, Elizabeth I becomes Queen of England, who writes poems and patronizes literature.
- vi. In 1588, England defeats the Spanish Armada.
- vii. Humanism: no longer theo-centered, but anthropocentric.

b.. Poetry (artificial, ornamental, and inventive)

- i.. Sonnet sequences (Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella*, Shakespeare's sonnets)
- ii. Pastoral romance
- iii. Chivalric allegory (Spenser's *Faerie Queen*)
- iv. Erotic idyll
- v. Masque
- vi. Modern epic (not developing out of oral tradition, but by one specific author):
Spenser's *Faerie Queen*.

c. Drama (← miracle plays + mystery plays + dramas from the Classical Age)

- i. Christopher Marlow's *Doctor Faustus*
- ii. Shakespeare's plays
- d. *Utopia* (a work of humanism)