CHAPTER ONE
((The Middle Ages))

A Quick Review of the Relevant Facts about the Period:

- The Middle Ages is a vast literary time period. It stretches from the collapse of the Roman Empire in Britain (ca. 450) to the beginning of the Renaissance (ca. 1485).
- The period is subdivided into three parts: Anglo-Saxon literature, Anglo-Norman literature, and Middle English literature.
- The word "medieval" comes from the Latin medium (middle) and aevum (age).
- There are two trends in scholarship concerning the Middle Ages: some scholars view the Middle Ages as the beginning of ideas that continued developing well into the sixteenth century; others feel the Middle Ages were "created" by sixteenth-century writers who wanted to emphasize the originality of their contributions to literary culture.
- Old English was spoken by the Germanic invaders of Britain; Old French or Anglo-Norman was spoken in Britain after the Norman Conquest of 1066; and Middle English, which appeared in the twelfth century, displaced French as Britain's official language by the end of the fourteenth century.
- Monasteries and other religious houses were the major producers of books until they were dissolved by King Henry VIII in the 1530s (at which point the king assured the nobility's loyalty to himself by giving them much of the former monastic houses' lands and assets); commercial book-making enterprises began around the fourteenth century.
- Religious houses were the major consumers of books during the Middle Ages. Nobles began purchasing and commissioning books during the Anglo-Norman period; later, in the fourteenth century, wealthy urbanites also entered the book market.
- Anglo-Saxon Literature
- The Angles, the Saxons, and the Jutes were the three related Germanic tribes who invaded the Roman province Britannia (England) around the year 450, after the Romans withdrew.
- The name "English" derives from the Angles.
- As the Germanic tribes invaded, native Britons withdrew from England to Wales, where the modern-day version of their language is still spoken.
- The widespread adoption of Christianity in the seventh century had an effect on literacy, as laws, histories, and ecclesiastic writings were propagated by the church.
- The Anglo-Saxons were invaded in turn by the Danes in the ninth century.
- Anglo-Saxons had a tradition of oral poetry, but only circumstantial evidence of this tradition remains in manuscripts-most remaining Old English poetry is contained in just four manuscripts.
- Admiration for and performance of Germanic heroic poetry continued into the Christian era.

- Values of Anglo-Saxon heroic poetry include: 1) kinship relations rather than geography form the idea of a nation; 2) generosity is expected on the part of the lord (from Old English words meaning ‘protector' and ‘loaf'), who leads men in war and rewards them with a share of the booty; 3) on the part of the lord's men, what is valued is loyalty until the lord's death, and revenge killing (or eternal shame if vengeance is not pursued) after it.
- Old English poetry is often elegiac. It often combines Christian texts with Germanic heroic values.
- Old English poetry uses a special, formal poetic vocabulary, including devices like synecdoche, metonymy, and kenning (a two-word compound in place of a more straightforward noun; e.g., "life-house" for "body"), and frequently employs irony.

Anglo-Norman Literature

- The Normans (a contraction of "Norsemen") took possession of England in 1066. The ruling class in England during this period spoke Old French.
- Four main languages circulated in England during the Anglo-Norman period: Old French or Anglo-Norman; Latin (the language of clerics and the learned); Old English; and different branches of the Celtic language group.
- Anglo-Norman aristocrats loved the old Celtic oral tales sung by Breton storytellers. These tales were called Breton "lays."
- Breton lays were developed by writers like Marie de France and Chrétien de Troyes into the form known as "romance." Romance was the main narrative genre for late medieval readers.
- A chivalric romance (from the word "roman" meaning a work in the French vernacular tongue) focuses on knightly adventures (including ethical and spiritual quests), knightly love for and courtesy toward ladies, and the display of martial prowess against powerful, sometimes supernatural foes.
- The most famous example of knightly chivalry was the legendary court of King Arthur.
- Romances, in which a knight must prove his worthiness through bravery and noble deeds, can reflect the social aspirations of members of the lower nobility to rise socially.
- French sources and writers were influential; however, works like the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and Early Middle English religious prose texts for women such as Ancrene Wisses how the continued development of the English language during this period.

The Britons and the Anglo-Saxons (to 1066 A.D.)

The present English race has gradually shaped itself out of several distinct people which successively occupied or conquered the island of Great Britain. The Britons, from whom the present Welsh are descended, inhabited what is now England and Wales; and they were still further subdivided, like most barbarous people, into many tribes which were often at war with one another. Though the Britons were conquered and chiefly supplanted later on by the Anglo-Saxons, enough of them, as we shall see, were spared and intermarried with the victors to transmit something of their racial qualities to the English nation and literature.

The Roman Occupation

Of the Roman conquest and occupation of Britain (England and Wales) we need only make a brief mention, since it produced virtually no effect on English literature. The fact should not be forgotten that for over three hundred years, from the first century A. D. to the beginning of the fifth, the island was a Roman province, with Latin as the language of the ruling class of Roman immigrants, who introduced Roman civilization and later on Christianity, to the Britons of the towns and plains. But the interest of the Romans in the island was centered on other things than writing, and the great bulk of the Britons themselves seem to have been only superficially affected by the Roman supremacy. At the end of the Roman rule, as at its beginning, they appear divided into mutually jealous tribes, still largely barbarous and primitive.

Medieval English

- Old English, which has an almost entirely Germanic vocabulary, is a heavily inflected language. Its words change form to indicate changes in function, such as person, number, tense, case, mood, and so forth.
- The introduction in the anthology gives detailed rules for pronouncing Middle English: in general, sound aloud all consonants except h; sound aloud the final "e"; sound double vowels as long; and pronounce short vowels as in modern English and long vowels as in modern European languages other than English.

Old and Middle English prosody

- The verse form of all Old English poetry is the same: the verse unit is the single line. Rhyme is not often used to link lines in Old English.
- Alliteration, or beginning several words with the same sound, is the organizing principle of Old English poetry.
- A consonant alliterates with its match or with another consonant that makes the same sound; a vowel alliterates with any other vowel.
- An Old English alliterative line contains four principal stresses, and is divided by a caesura (a pause) into two half-lines, each containing two stresses. At least one (and sometimes both) of the stressed words in the first half-line begins with the same sound as the first stressed word of the second half-line. The last stressed word often is non-alliterative.
- Middle English verse can be alliterative (as above, though sometimes increasing the number of alliterative or stressed words); or, influenced by Old French, it can be in the form of alternately stressed rhyming verse lines.
- Chaucer's *Canterbury Talesare* mainly in rhymed couplets, with five-stress lines.

The Norman-French Period (1066 TO ABOUT 1350 A.D.)

The Normans

The Normans who conquered England were originally members of the same stock as the 'Danes' who had harried and conquered it in the preceding centuries-the ancestors of both were bands of Baltic and North Sea pirates who merely happened to emigrate in different directions; and a little farther back the Normans were close cousins, in the general Germanic family, of the Anglo-Saxons themselves. The exploits of this whole race of Norse sea-kings make one of the most remarkable chapters in the history of medieval Europe.

Example1: **In the year 1066, England was invaded by:**

1) The French 2) The Normans 3) The Romans 4) The Anglo - Saxons

Answer: **Choice "2"**

England was conquered in 1066 by the Norman French under the leadership of William the Conqueror.

Social Results of the Conquest

In most respects, or all, the Norman Conquest accomplished precisely that racial rejuvenation of which, as we have seen, Anglo-Saxon England stood in need. For the Normans brought with them from France the zest for joy and beauty and stately ceremony in which the Anglo-Saxon temperament was poor-they brought the love of light-hearted song and chivalrous sports, of rich clothing, of finely-painted manuscripts, of noble architecture in cathedrals and palaces, of formal religious ritual, and of the pomp and display of all elaborate pageantry. For the Anglo-Saxons themselves, however, the Conquest meant at first little else than that bitterest and most complete of all national disasters, hopeless subjection to a tyrannical and contemptuous foe. What sufferings, at the worst, the Normans inflicted on the Saxons is indicated in a famous passage of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,* an entry seventy years subsequent to the Conquest, of which the least distressing part may be thus paraphrased:

"They filled the land full of castles. They compelled the wretched men of the land to build their castles and wore them out with hard labor. When the castles were made they filled them with devils and evil men. Then they took all

those whom they thought to have any property, both by night and by day, both men and women, and put them in prison for gold and silver, and tormented them with tortures that cannot be told; for never were any martyrs so tormented as these were."

The Union of the Races and Languages (Latin, French, and English)

In language and literature the most general immediate result of the Conquest was to make of England a trilingual country, where Latin, French, and Anglo-Saxon were spoken separately side by side. With Latin, the tongue of the Church and of scholars, the Norman clergy were much more thoroughly familiar than the Saxon priests had been; and the introduction of the richer Latin culture resulted, in the latter half of the twelfth century, at the court of Henry II, in a brilliant outburst of Latin literature. In England, as well as in the rest of Western Europe, Latin long continued to be the language of religious and learned writing-down to the sixteenth century or even later. French, that dialect of it which was spoken by the Normans-Anglo-French (English-French) it has naturally come to be called-was of course introduced by the Conquest as the language of the governing and upper social class. Anglo-Saxon, which we may now term English, remained inevitably as the language of the subject race, but their literature was at first crushed down into insignificance. Ballads celebrating the resistance of scattered Saxons to their oppressors no doubt circulated widely on the lips of the people, but English writing of the more formal sorts, almost absolutely ceased for more than a century, to make a new beginning about the year 1200.

It must not be supposed, notwithstanding, that the Normans, however much they despised the English language and literature, made any effort to destroy it. On the other hand, gradual union of the two languages was no less inevitable than that of the races themselves. The use of French continued in the upper strata of society, but the pressure of English was increasingly strong, and by the end of the fourteenth century and of Chaucer's life French had chiefly given way to it even at Court. However, the English which triumphed was in fact English-French-English was enabled to triumph partly because it had now largely absorbed the French.

For poetry the fusion meant even more than for prose. The metrical system, which begins to appear in the thirteenth century and comes to perfection a century and a half later in Chaucer's poems, combined what may fairly be called the better features of both the systems from which it was compounded. We have seen that Anglo-Saxon verse depended on regular stress of a definite number of quantitatively long syllables in each line and on alliteration; that it allowed much variation in the number of unstressed syllables; and that it was without rime. French verse, on the other hand, had rime (or assonance) and carefully preserved identity in the total number of syllables in corresponding lines, but it was uncertain as regarded the number of clearly stressed ones. The derived English system adopted from the French (1) rhyme and (2) identical line-length, and retained from the Anglo-Saxon (3) regularity of stress. (4) It largely abandoned the Anglo-Saxon regard for quantity and (5) it retained alliteration not as a basic principle but as an (extremely useful) subordinate device. This metrical system, thus shaped, has provided the indispensable formal basis for making English poetry admittedly the greatest in the modern world.

We 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.

Religious Literature

We may virtually divide all 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 was 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 Holy 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 works. 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 (Milton's *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; (Miracle plays, Mystery plays, Morality 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.

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. 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.

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 to the accompaniment of occasional strains on their harps. 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.

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 "Havelock", 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. 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. For three hundred years longer the traditions about Arthur continued to develop among the Welsh people. 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 someday 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 King of Britain* 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. He also 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. 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. Greatest of the additions to the substance of the cycle was the story of the Holy Grail, originally an altogether independent legend.

Layamon's "Brut"

Thus it had come about that Arthur 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, Layamon paraphrased Wace's paraphrase of Geoffrey.

Layamon 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, Layamon 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 another romance, 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 Layamon and probably a little earlier than Chaucer. The story consists of two old folk-tales, (two plots, common in folk-lone romance: 1- the beheading contest, 2- the temptation, an attempted seduction of the hero by a lady) and 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 Layamon, a region where Saxon and Norman elements were mingled with Celtic fancy and delicacy of temperament. The meter, also, is interesting; the Anglo-Saxon unrhymed alliterative verse.

✍ ***Example2: Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,*** **written by an anonymous poet, is the best of the English metrical …… about an Arthurian knight.**

1) epic 2) elegy 3) romance 4) tragedy

Answer: **Choice "3"**

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, composed in fourteenth-century England, is a metrical romance (that is, a romance written in verse) about an Arthurian knight.

Timeline

The Middle Ages

Texts	Contexts
	43-ca. 420 Romans conquer Britons; Brittania a province of the Roman Empire
	307-37 Reign of Constantine the Great leads to adoption of Christianity as official religion of the Roman Empire
ca. 405 St. Jerome completes *Vulgate*, Latin translation of the Bible that becomes standard for the Roman Catholic Church	
	432 St. Patrick begins mission to convert Ireland
	ca. 450 Anglo-Saxon conquest of Britons begins
523 Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy* (Latin)	
	597 St. Augustine of Canterbury's mission to Kent begins conversion of Anglo-Saxons to Christianity
ca. 658-80 Caedmon's *Hymn*, earliest poem recorded in English	
731 Bede completes *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*	
? ca. 750 *Beowulf* composed	
	ca. 787 First Viking raids on England
871-99 Texts written or commissioned by Alfred	**871- 99** Reign of King Alfred
ca. 1000 Unique manuscript of *Beowulf* and *Judith*	
	1066 Norman Conquest by William I establishes French-speaking ruling class in England
	1095-1221 Crusades
ca. 1135-38 Geoffrey of Monmouth's Latin *History of the Kings of Britain* gives pseudohistorical status to Arthurian and other legends	
	1152 Future Henry II marries Eleanor of Aquitaine, bringing vast French territories to the English crown
1154 End of *Peterborough Chronicle*, last branch of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*	
? ca. 1165-80 Marie de France, *Lais* in Anglo-Norman French from Breton sources	

ca. 1170-91 Chrétien de Troyes, chivalric romances about knights of the Round Table	**1170** Archbishop Thomas Becket murdered in Canterbury Cathedral
? ca. 1200 Layamon's *Brut*	**1182** Birth of St. Francis of Assisi
? ca. 1215- 25 *Ancrene Wisse*	**1215** Fourth Lateran Council requires annual confession. English barons force King John to seal Magna Carta (the Great Charter) guaranteeing baronial rights
ca. 1304- 21 Dante Alighieri writing *Divine Comedy*	
ca. 1340- 1374 Giovanni Boccaccio active as writer in Naples and Florence	**ca. 1337- 1453** Hundred Years' War
	1348 Black Death ravages Eu rope
ca. 1340- 1374 Francis Petrarch active as writer	**1362** English first used in law courts and Parliament
1368 Chaucer, *Book of the Duchess*	
	1372 Chaucer's first journey to Italy
1373-93 Julian of Norwich, *Book of Showings*	
ca. 1375- 1400 *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*	
	1376 Earliest record of performance of cycle drama at York
1377-79 William Langland, *Piers Plowman* (B-Text)	
ca. 1380 Followers of John Wycliffe begin first complete translation of the Bible into English	**1381** People's uprising briefly takes control of London before being suppressed
ca. 1385- 87 Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*	
ca. 1387- 99 Chaucer working on *The Canterbury Tales*	
ca. 1390- 92 John Gower, *Confessio Amantis*	**1399** Richard II deposed by his cousin, who succeeds him as Henry IV
	1400 Richard II murdered
	1401 Execution of William Sawtre, first Lollard burned at the stake under new law against heresy
ca. 1410- 49 John Lydgate active	
ca. 1420 Thomas Hoccleve, *My Compleinte*	**1415** Henry V defeats French at Agincourt
ca. 1425 *York Play of the Crucifixion*	
	1431 English burn Joan of Arc at Rouen
ca. 1432- 38 Margery Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*	
ca. 1450- 75 Wakefield mystery cycle, *Second Shepherds' Play*	
	1455-85 Wars of the Roses
ca. 1470 Sir Thomas Malory in prison working on *Morte Darthur*	
ca. 1475 Robert Henryson active	
	1476 William Caxton sets up first printing press in England
1485 Caxton publishes *Morte Darthur*, one of the first books in English to be printed	**1485** The earl of Richmond defeats the Yorkist king, Richard III, at Bosworth Field and succeeds him as Henry VII, founder of the Tudor dynasty
ca. 1510 *Everyman*	
	1575 Last performance of mystery plays at Chester

The Medieval Period (500 AD - 1500)

The medieval period in English literature covers a span of approximately 800 years (Caedmon's *Hymn* at the end of the 7th century to *Everyman* at the end of 15th). The English Middle Ages embraced two quite different periods of literary history: the Old English (or Anglo-Saxon) and the Middle English, sharply divided from each other by the Norman duke William's conquest of the island in 1066.

A coherent union of all England was not achieved until after the Norman Conquest. To the Germanic tribes the ideal of kingly behavior (heroic ideal) was very important; it was the chief spiritual force behind their civilization. The poetic form which primitive bards (poets of heroic life) evolved for their heroic narratives is called "**epic**"; it is characterized by a solemn dignity and elevation of style. Their poems were not written down, but recited aloud from memory. From Germanic culture the chief survivor is the Old English ***Beowulf***.

The making of written records was something they [Anglo-Saxons] learned only when they were converted to Christianity. The first written specimen of the Old English (Anglo-Saxon) language is a code of laws promulgated by the first English Christian king. The most important source of knowledge about the Anglo-Saxon period was *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* by **Bede**, a literate churchman. However, the greatest impetus on English culture came from **Alfred**, king of West Saxons. He himself translated Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* from Latin. Under his direction, Bede's *History* was translated into Old English and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* was begun.

Anglo-Saxons brought with them the genius for **heroic poetry** and also the **alliterative** form. Much of the greatest of Germanic epics, ***Beowulf***, is pre-Christian, even though its author was a Christian who refers to the Old Testament. Yet the vast bulk of Old English poetry is Christian, devoted to **religious** subjects, almost all in **heroic** mode (adapting Christianity to their own heroic ideal). It is visible in poems like *The Dream of the Rood*, Caedmon's *Hymn*, *The Wanderer*, and *The Seafarer*.

That the heroic ideal held its value down to the end of the Old English period is shown by ***The Battle of Maldon***. The world of Old English poetry is a dark one. Its poetry is marked by the frequent use of **ironic understatement.** Even the "**kenning"**, that highly formalized compound metaphor common to Old Germanic poetry, seems to suggest potentials ironically. The Old English alliterative line contains 4 principal stresses and is divided into 2 half-lines of 2 stresses, each by a strong medial pause or **caesura**.

In the year **1066** England was once more invaded and conquered by a Germanic people, the **Normans**, a highly adaptable nation. The immediate effect of the Norman Conquest upon English literature was to **remove** it from the care of the aristocracy. Men of education wrote either in Latin or in Anglo-Norman, a dialect of French spoken by the new rulers of England. Written English literature began to reappear at the end of the 12th century. Middle English literature is a **popular** literature, uttered by a medley of different voices in a great diversity of styles. At last, the perspective now included **women**. However, there are no arch-feminists in literature before Chaucer's **Wife of Bath**. The chief virtue of Middle English literature was **humor**. Modern reader is apt to get the impression that the Middle Ages was a period of intellectual and social stasis.

The first considerable Middle English poem is ***Brut*** by Layamon, written in **alliterative** prosody. Alliterative poetry never ceased to be composed; its reappearance later in written form was in the "alliterative revival" of the **14**th century which culminated in *Piers Plowman*, and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.* Layamon's source was a Norman work by the poet **Wace**, which was in turn based on the Englishman Geoffrey of Monmouth's Latin *History of the Kings of Britain.*

The genre so characteristic of the later Middle Ages was **romance**; it makes liberal use of the improbable and supernatural, involved with romantic love, its style is easy and colloquial, and its characterization is standardized. Chaucer and *Gawain*-poet wrote romance. The great age of medieval romance had been the 12th and early 13th centuries. Romance had been appealing for **non**-aristocratic audience. The larger proportion of surviving Middle English literature is **religious**: (*Ancrene Riwle, I Sing of a Maiden*, etc.).

The most original and Chaucer-like poem before Chaucer himself was ***Owl and the Nightingale*** which was a **secular** debate poem. The best romance of the entire period was *Sir Gawain*. Its author also wrote some religious poems such as ***Patience*** (the story of Jonah in alliterative verse) and ***Pearl*** (a combination of elegy and theology to produce the most moving religious poem of the era). Langland's *Piers Plowman* was an anti-ecclesiastical **satire** which played an important role in bringing on the reformation of the church. This sudden flowering of literature was partly due to its patronage by the well-off (e.g. Chaucer was a court poet). The poet John Gower wrote **3** works which **linguistically** summarized the English Middle Ages: one in Latin, one in Norman French, and one in English (*Confessio Amantis*). The most Chaucerian of Chaucer's followers are **Scotsmen** (Robert Henryson, William Dunbar, Gavin Douglas, and Sir David Lindsay) who belong to the Renaissance, not the medieval period.

The 15th century in England lacks great names; **Thomas Malory** alone enjoyed a high reputation. But it was a flourishing period for popular literature such as lyric and ballad. Malory's ***Morte Darthur*** was the last great medieval work of literature which is said to be written in prison and later in 1485 printed by **William Caxton**, who had introduced printing to England less than ten years earlier.

***Example3*: Chaucer's "The Pardoner's Tale" provides a proper example of …… .**

1) fable 2) parable 3) exemplum 4) political allegory

Answer: **Choice "3"**

An exemplum is a story told as a particular instance of the general text of a sermon. The device was very popular in the Middle Ages.

Example 4: **All of the following are characteristic elements of epics, EXCEPT**:

1) a vast scope
2) elevated language
3) full subjectivity
4) supernatural forces

Answer: **Choice "3"**

In his *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957) Northrop Frye asserts that Homer established for his successors the "demonstration that the fall of an enemy, no less than of a friend or leader, is tragic and not comic," and that with this "objective and disinterested element," the epic acquired an authority based "on the vision of nature as an impersonal order."

The Anglo-Saxons

Meanwhile across the North Sea the three Germanic tribes which were destined to form the main element in the English race were multiplying and unconsciously preparing to swarm to their new home. The Angles, Saxons, and Jutes occupied territories in the region which includes parts of the present Holland, of Germany about the mouth of the Elbe, and of Denmark. They were barbarians, living partly from piratical expeditions against the northern and eastern coasts of Europe, partly from their flocks and herds, and partly from a rude sort of agriculture. Strength, courage, and loyalty to king and comrades were the chief virtues that they admired; ferocity and cruelty, especially to other peoples, were necessarily among their prominent traits when their blood was up; though among themselves there was no doubt plenty of rough and ready companionable good-humor.

The process by which Britain became England was a part of the long agony which transformed the Roman Empire into modern Europe. In the fourth century A. D. the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes began to harry the southern and eastern shores of Britain, where the Romans were obliged to maintain a special military establishment against them. But early in the fifth century the Romans, hard-pressed even in Italy by other barbarian invaders, withdrew all their troops and completely abandoned Britain. Not long thereafter, and probably before the traditional date of 449, the Jutes, Angles, and Saxons began to come in large bands with the deliberate purpose of permanent settlement. Their

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EXAM (1)				
1- Choice "1"	2- Choice "2"	3- Choice "4"	4- Choice "3"	5- Choice "2"
6- Choice "4"	7- Choice "1"	8- Choice "1"	9- Choice "1"	10- Choice "4"
11- Choice "3"	12- Choice "3"	13- Choice "2"	14- Choice "2"	15- Choice "1"
16- Choice "3"	17- Choice "4"	18- Choice "4"	19- Choice "2"	20- Choice "1"
EXAM (2)				
1- Choice "1"	2- Choice "2"	3- Choice "2"	4- Choice "3"	5- Choice "3"
6- Choice "2"	7- Choice "3"	8- Choice "4"	9- Choice "1"	10- Choice "2"
11- Choice "2"	12- Choice "4"	13- Choice "1"	14- Choice "2"	15- Choice "3"
16- Choice "3"	17- Choice "2"	18- Choice "4"	19- Choice "4"	20- Choice "2"
EXAM (3)				
1- Choice "3"	2- Choice "4"	3- Choice "1"	4- Choice "4"	5- Choice "2"
6- Choice "2"	7- Choice "1"	8- Choice "1"	9- Choice "4"	10- Choice "1"
11- Choice "3"	12- Choice "2"	13- Choice "2"	14- Choice "3"	15- Choice "2"
16- Choice "2"	17- Choice "1"	18- Choice "4"	19- Choice "1"	20- Choice "4"