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## BRITISH LITERATURE

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Anglo-Saxon

Norman conquest

Black Death - Plague in the Age of  
Chaucer (1348)

Anglo-Saxon were the people those who were living in old Britain which is also called the great Britain. These were the tribals from different tribes they were Romans, Vikings, Jutes, Normans Anglo and Saxons. They would have regular fight in between, regular scuffle and their history is not important.

Anglo-Saxon (450 - 1340)

accurate study (450 - 1066)

In 1066, Normans attacked England and they conquered England. Introduced a new generation and new race (Norman race) and after 1066 - 1340 this timing is called Anglo-Normans.

In Anglo-Saxon they used to speak the old English which is heavily inspired by Latin language but after 1066 when Normans attacked they introduced French language and after 1066-1340 French language influence has been seen. In the literature of Normans are the Anglo-Saxon the literature was completely Medieval. They were having the blind faith, believing in the God, demons, devils, fairy tales. There we have certain epics but we don't have the authentication of the writers.

The most important famous work is Beowulf. 'Beowulf'. It is the classical epic of Anglo-Saxons and Beowulf is a warrior who is a mercenary hired by the kings to solve their problems. One day a king hires him to solve his problem because a king and his people were regularly getting troubled by a demon called Grendel. Beowulf comes he fights with Grendel and he kills him

## Anglo-Saxon through

So, The literature gives an idealistic approach in every sector of life. Then another work we have is 'Pearl'.

'Pearl' is a long poem collection (30-40 thousand lines in octo-syllabic couplet) Another long poem 'Wedseth'.

There is one book which is registered and authenticated which is written by Geoffrey of Monmouth it is 'History of the Britons Or Historia Regum Britannia (1147)

In Anglo-Saxon the whole lit. was written in octo-syllabic and in the iambic pentameter style but iambic pentameter not the conventional iambic pentameter of Shakespeare but it was the old style which was called deca-syllabic couplets.

In short these were old style and there were no language called English. There were lots of tribal languages by these people. When Normans came and attacked

England and the Age started Anglo-Normans It is the famous date, 1066

Battle of Iclastings or Normans Conquest after this they kept on influencing the Anglo-Saxon literature by the in a Norman way, the whole literature becomes Anglo-Normans and Saxons.

When Chaucer comes he had a base of Latin and French language already which was prevailing in the society and he started developing his own literature own culture on the basis of very new invented language called 'English'.

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In Anglo-Saxon age -

Anglo - Saxon (450 - 1066)

Anglo - Normans (1066 - 1340)

Important Book "Beowulf"

Language <sup>has</sup> heavily inspired or influenced our English language.

Latin (Anglos and Saxons)

French (Anglo-Normans)

# "Beowulf"

Beowulf is an Old English epic poem consisting of 3,182 alliterative lines. It may be the oldest surviving long poem in Old English and is commonly cited as one of the most important works of Old English literature. A date of composition is a matter of contention among scholars; the only certain dating pertains to the manuscript which was produced between 975 and 1025. The author was an anonymous Anglo-Saxon poet, referred to by scholars as the "Beowulf poet".

Language West Saxon dialect of Old English

First Printed edition Thorpekin (1815)

Genre Epic heroic poetry

Subject The battles of Beowulf, the Geatish hero, in youth and old age

Personages Beowulf, Idgela, Idrothgar, Wealhpeow, Idrothulf, Aeschere, Unferth, Grendel, Grendel's mother, Wiglaf, Hildeburh.

The protagonist Beowulf, a hero of the Geats, comes to the aid of Hrothgar, 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 giant's sword that he found in her lair.

Later in his life, Beowulf becomes king of the Geats, and finds his realm terrorized by a dragon, some of whose treasure had been stolen from his hoard in a burial mound. He attacks the dragon with the help of his thanes or servants, but they do not succeed. Beowulf decides to follow the dragon to its lair at Earnanæs, but only his young Swedish relative Wiglaf, whose name means "remnant of valour", dares to join him. Beowulf finally slays the dragon, but is mortally wounded in the struggle. He is cremated and a burial mound by the sea is erected in his honour.



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 or simply, "in the middle of things", 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 valour. The warriors form a kind of brotherhood linked by loyalty to their lord. What is unique about "Beowulf" is that the poem actually begins and ends with a funeral. At the beginning of the poem, the King, hero, Shield Sheafson dies (26-45) and there is a huge funeral for him. At the end of the poem when Beowulf dies, there is also a massive funeral for Beowulf (3140-3170).

## First battle : Srendel

Beowulf begins with the story of Idrothgar, who constructed the great hall Ideorot for himself and his warriors. In it, he, his wife Wealththeow, and his warriors spend their time singing and celebrating. Srendel, a troll-like monster said to be descended from the biblical Cain, is pained by the sounds of joy. Srendel attacks the hall and kills and devours many of Idrothgar's warriors while they sleep. Idrothgar and his people, helpless against Srendel, abandon Ideorot.

Beowulf, a young warrior from Great land, hears of Idrothgar's troubles and with his king's permission leaves his homeland to assist Idrothgar.

Beowulf and his men spend the night in Ideorot. Beowulf refuses to use any weapon because he holds himself to be the equal of Srendel. When Srendel enters

the hall, Beowulf, who has been feigning sleep, leaps up to clench Grendel's hand. Grendel and Beowulf battle each other violently. Beowulf's retainers draw their swords and rush to his aid, but their blades can't pierce Grendel's skin. Finally, Beowulf tears Grendel's arm from his body at the shoulder and Grendel runs to his home in the marshes where he dies. Beowulf displays "the whole of Grendel's shoulder and arm, his awesome grasp" for all to see at Heorot. This display would fuel Grendel's mother's anger in revenge.

## Second battle: Grendel's mother

The next night, after celebrating Grendel's defeat, Hrothgar and his men sleep in Heorot. Grendel's mother, angry that her son has been killed, sets out to get revenge. "Beowulf was elsewhere. Earlier, after the award of treasure, the great had been given another lodging" his assistance would

be absent in this battle. Grendel's mother violently kills Aeschere, who is Frothgar's most loyal fighter and escapes

Frothgar, Beowulf and their men track Grendel's mother to her lair under a lake. Unferth, a warrior who had doubted him and wishes to make amends, presents Beowulf with his sword <sup>Sword</sup> Druunting. After stipulating a number of conditions to Frothgar in case of his death (including the taking in of his kinsmen and the inheritance by Unferth of Beowulf's estate) Beowulf jumps into the lake, at the bottom of which he finds a cavern containing Grendel's body and the remains of men that the two have killed. Grendel's mother and Beowulf engage in fierce combat.

At first, Grendel's mother appears to prevail. Beowulf finding that Druunting can't harm his foe, puts it aside in fury. Beowulf is again saved from his

opponent's attack by his armour. Beowulf takes another sword from Grendel's mother and slices her head off with it. Travelling further into Grendel's mother's lair, Beowulf discovers Grendel's corpse and severs his head. The blade of Beowulf's sword touches Grendel's toxic blood, and instantly dissolves so that only the hilt remains. Beowulf swims back up to the rim of the pond where his men wait in growing despair. Carrying the hilt of the sword and Grendel's head, he presents them to Hrothgar upon his return to Heorot. Hrothgar gives Beowulf many gifts, including the sword Nagling, his family's heirloom. The events prompt a long reflection by the king, sometimes referred to as "Hrothgar's sermon," in which he urges Beowulf to be wary of pride and to reward his thegns.

## Third Battle : The Dragon

Beowulf returns home and eventually becomes king of his own people. One day, fifty years after Beowulf's battle with Grendel's mother, a slave steals a golden cup from the lair of a dragon at Earnanes. When the dragon sees that the cup has been stolen, it leaves its cave in a rage, burning everything in sight. Beowulf and his warriors come to fight the dragon, but Beowulf tells his men that he will fight the dragon, but finds himself outmatched. His men, upon seeing this and fearing for their lives, retreat into the woods. One of his men, Wiglaf, however, in great distress at Beowulf's plight, comes to his aid. The two slay the dragon, but Beowulf is mortally wounded. After Beowulf dies, Wiglaf remains by his side, grief-stricken. When the rest of the men finally return, Wiglaf bitterly admonishes them, blaming their cowardice for Beowulf's death. Afterward

Beowulf is ritually burned on a great pyre in Geatland while his people wail and mourn him, fearing that without him, the Geats are defenceless against attacks from surrounding tribes. Afterwards, a barrow, visible from the sea, is built in his memory.

Age of Chaucer (1340 - 1400)

Birth date (1343 - 1400)

Chaucer was the only prominent writer in his age. This is the reason we call it Age of Chaucer, because Chaucer is the first story writer, grand father of English novel, first modern writer, the first Reformer and the first writer of Renaissance.

Wycliff is the first reformer in religious things. While the first reformer in Renaissance is Chaucer.



Anglo-Saxons and Anglo-Normans had already influenced English culture. A sudden plague of 1348, also called 'Black Death' a plague appeared and it killed around 33% population of England. Because of this great Plague in 1348 England lost 33% lives which were mostly from the rural class are the labour class. All of a sudden labour class totally collapsed and the demand of remaining labourers <sup>got</sup> raised. The demand was hiked and for the first time the labourers, they hiked their prices and they got lot of money. And this is how they became the part of the main stream of society. After this they realised that there were the lots of vices in society and in religion. Religion has been used as a tool to make a lot of money by lots of fake clergies.

Chaucer Age is also called the Age of Transition. Transition is when you move to another without leaving the first one. In Chaucer's Age which is also called the first