

BRIT. LIT.

VOLUME 2

MIDDLE ENGLISH

MIDDLE ENGLISH

Selected and Edited by
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GEOFFREY OF MONMOUTH
HISTORY OF THE KINGS OF BRITAIN

SIR THOMAS MALORY
LE MORTE D'ARTHUR

THE PEARL POET
SIR GAWAIN AND THE GREEN KNIGHT

GEOFFREY CHAUCER
THE CANTERBURY TALES

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READING SCHEDULE

This Middle English segment should take you a grand total of twenty-five days, including the test. Here's the official schedule:

DAY 1:	Reading 1 in this volume	13
DAY 2:	Reading 2 in this volume	31
	<i>That Hideous Strength: Chapter 1</i>	
	<i>Poetry Workbook: Lesson 12</i>	
DAY 3:	Reading 3 in this volume	45
	<i>That Hideous Strength: Chapters 2</i>	
	<i>Poetry Workbook: Lesson 13</i>	
DAY 4:	Reading 4 in this volume	55
	<i>That Hideous Strength: Chapter 3</i>	
DAY 5:	Reading 5 in this volume	71
	<i>That Hideous Strength: Chapter 4</i>	
	<i>Poetry Workbook: Lesson 14</i>	
DAY 6:	Reading 6 in this volume	81
	<i>That Hideous Strength: Chapter 5</i>	
	<i>Poetry Workbook: Lesson 15</i>	
DAY 7:	Reading 7 in this volume	97
	<i>That Hideous Strength: Chapter 6</i>	
	<i>Poetry Workbook: Lesson 16</i>	
DAY 8:	Reading 8 in this volume	111
	<i>That Hideous Strength: Chapter 7</i>	
DAY 9:	Reading 9 in this volume	125
	<i>That Hideous Strength: Chapters 8</i>	
	<i>Poetry Workbook: Lesson 17</i>	
DAY 10:	Reading 10 in this volume	137
	<i>That Hideous Strength: Chapters 9</i>	

DAY 11:	Reading 11 in this volume <i>That Hideous Strength</i> : Chapters 10 <i>Poetry Workbook</i> : Lesson 18	153
DAY 12:	Reading 12 in this volume <i>That Hideous Strength</i> : Chapters 11 <i>Poetry Workbook</i> : Lesson 19	164
DAY 13:	Reading 13 in this volume <i>That Hideous Strength</i> : Chapters 12	175
DAY 14:	Reading 14 in this volume <i>That Hideous Strength</i> : Chapters 13 <i>Poetry Workbook</i> : Lesson 20	191
DAY 15:	Reading 15 in this volume <i>That Hideous Strength</i> : Chapter 14	209
DAY 16:	Reading 16 in this volume <i>That Hideous Strength</i> : Chapters 15 <i>Poetry Workbook</i> : Lesson 21	229
DAY 17:	Reading 17 in this volume <i>That Hideous Strength</i> : Chapters 16-17 <i>Poetry Workbook</i> : Lesson 22	243
DAY 18:	Reading 5 in this volume <i>Poetry Workbook</i> : Lesson 23	249
DAY 19:	Reading 19 in this volume <i>Poetry Workbook</i> : Lesson 24	283
DAY 20:	Reading 20 in this volume <i>Poetry Workbook</i> : Lesson 25	317
DAY 21:	Reading 21 in this volume <i>Poetry Workbook</i> : Lesson 26	357
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DAY 23:	Reading 23 in this volume	437
DAY 24:	Study for test	
DAY 25:	Test	

INTRODUCTION TO MIDDLE ENGLISH

Having finished the segment on Old English, you should now have a fairly solid grip on what Anglo-Saxon England would have been like. Hopefully kennings, mead-halls, scopes, and ring-givers are all nicely burned into your brain. The bad news, however, is that at this point we are zooming into the segment called Middle English, and everything is different now.

The Middle English period really begins with the Norman Conquest at the Battle of Hastings in the year 1066. For hundreds of years before the Normans arrived, the Vikings had been a continual plague on England. The Saxons had been fighting them off with varying degrees of success, but never with a definitive end to the situation. In the year 1066, things had been going hard for the Saxons. They were being attacked by the Vikings in the far north, and of course their troops were up north as well, trying to attend to that situation. At this inopportune moment, William the Conqueror and his band of Normans came over from France and attacked, but unfortunately all the way down in the south. By the time the Saxons managed to regroup and get down there, they were already defeated. This time it was definitive. The Saxons had been so weakened by the constant onslaught of the Vikings that there was virtually no resistance and the Normans were utterly victorious. They completely took over England, and as you would expect, this changed everything. And by “everything” I mean language, lifestyle, literature, politics, social strata . . . in fact, everything.

Many Saxons remained in England, but they were the defeated and subdued, compelled to serve their Norman conquerors. They were forced out of their homes, their land was confiscated, and they were driven out of all areas of influence, including the church. Within ten years, every earldom in England was held by a Norman. Within twenty years, only 5% of English land was owned by Saxons. Within thirty years, every Saxon bishop in England had been replaced by a Norman. The Saxons were systematically forced into servitude, enough so that many of them got sick of it and migrated out of

England and over to the Byzantine Empire. Those who remained, remained as serfs.

The English language, oddly enough, still reflects this state of affairs. For instance, have you ever wondered why we say beef instead of simply cow? As in, “Shape the ground cow into patties and place on the grill.” We say cow while the animal is alive, we say beef once it becomes food. We say pig for the living creature, pork for the meat on the plate. This is because after the Norman Invasion, the Saxons were forced to serve the Normans. The animal “on the hoof” still retains its Saxon name, (because that’s when the Saxons dealt with it), and after it’s on the table, it takes the Norman name (because that’s when the Normans ate it).

This hybrid of the Norman language and the Saxon finally settled into an official language of its own, which we now know as Middle English. Middle English sounds much closer to our modern ears than the Old English of *Beowulf*. If you listen to someone speaking Middle English, it almost sounds as if you only need to turn the dial slightly and you would be able to understand it. It’s oddly familiar, and only slightly out of reach.

In this volume, you’re going to be reading a selection of works composed in this era of England’s history. The first thing you’ll be reading, however, has the potential to be slightly confusing as far as the chronology goes. Geoffrey of Monmouth lived roughly between 1100 and 1155, which of course puts him very shortly after the Norman Conquest. However, he is writing a history of England, and he begins this history much earlier than you would have expected, with the Trojan War. Starting with Aeneas, he makes his way forward through the millennia until he reaches King Arthur. This is where he spends the bulk of his time. As it turns out, Arthur was a king of the Britons who was fighting off the initial invasion of England by the Saxons, hundreds of years before Geoffrey of Monmouth was born. This means that you will be reading a history, written after the defeat of the Saxons, about the first invasions of England by the Saxons. Most of the story you’ll be reading would have occurred much closer to the time of *Beowulf* than to the time of William the Conqueror, so I know it seems odd to put it into the Middle English segment. The thing to keep in mind is that Geoffrey himself was

living in post-invasion England, but he's writing the history of something that happened much earlier.

As you are reading Geoffrey's version of the Arthurian story, you will also be reading C.S. Lewis's *That Hideous Strength*. The reason we are pairing these two is similar to our pairing of Tolkien and *Beowulf*. When you read them at the same time you can see what the modern author is borrowing from the ancient author. *That Hideous Strength* deals heavily with Arthurian myth, so you'll be reading the actual Arthurian myths at the same time. After you finish Geoffrey of Monmouth you'll read some selections from Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*, and finally finish with *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, another Arthurian story. This way you'll get a smattering of some of the various takes on the Arthurian legends and hopefully get a feel for the differences between them, while at the same time reading C.S. Lewis and seeing what he did with those legends as he weaves them into his own story.

After you finish both Lewis and the Arthurian segment, you'll read a selected group of stories from the *Canterbury Tales* by Chaucer, which will finish off this unit on Middle English.

There are a whole lot of things to look for as you read *That Hideous Strength*, besides just the Arthurian stuff. It's a truly fantastic book, in which Lewis weaves together an exciting story and profound social commentary. Throughout the book he teaches us about science, marriage, progress, history, literature, myth, and human nature. Try and notice what he's saying about each of these things as you read, and especially pay attention to the role that language plays in the story. How do the "good guys" use language? How do the "bad guys?" What does Lewis have to say about language itself?

On the cover page of the book, there is this quote, from which Lewis got his title.

"The shadow of that hyddeous strength sax myle and more it is of length."

The line is from *Ane Dialog*, written in the sixteenth century by Sir David Lyndsay, and it is a description of the tower of Babel. Obviously, language was a major feature in the story of Babel, and this is a theme that Lewis will work with quite a lot. But pay attention to how he incorporates other parts of the Babel story as well, notably the moment where the people are attempting

to, “reach into the heavens.” There are quite profound connections that Lewis is making, so do try and pay close attention to those things as you read.

GEOFFREY OF MONMOUTH *HISTORY OF THE KINGS OF BRITAIN*

Poor Geoffrey is not taken very seriously these days. He set out to give us a history of Britain, and nowadays no self respecting academic will even deign to call his work an actual history. Generally you’ll see it referred to as a “pseudo-hisotry,” along with many scathing remarks about what a pinhead Geoffrey was.

This is because Geoffrey’s history is, to put it frankly, quite a bit more interesting than any “histories” those academics would write themselves. There are giants. There are dragons. Merlin shows up. Not only does he show up, he also steals Stonehenge. This is embarrassing to any sensible historian, and so they are all very quick to distance themselves from Geoffrey.

The whole situation calls to mind H.L. Mencken’s definition of mythology from *The Devil’s Dictionary*:

“MYTHOLOGY, n. The body of a primitive people’s beliefs concerning its origin, early history, heroes, deities and so forth, as distinguished from the true accounts which it invents later.”

Geoffrey of Monmouth is today considered to be far closer to mythology than to history, but with one important distinction. The *History of the Kings of Britain* isn’t even quite treated as mythology - because most people assume that Geoffrey just made it all up. They don’t believe that even Geoffrey himself ever believed these stories.

I happen to disagree . . . but you’ll have to read it and see what you think. As you read, ask yourself if Geoffrey writes like a man who is inventing a story, or like a man who actually believes what he’s writing.

(Whether the story is true or not . . . well, that's a separate question. It's entirely possible to have someone believe they're passing along credible information when in fact they are not. But that's not the same thing as inventing the story.)

In Geoffrey's work, we encounter the same problem that we faced with *Beowulf*. We may decide not to believe the story, but we can't do it for the same reasons that a materialist does. For a modernist, it's the easiest thing in the world to dismiss Geoffrey of Monmouth, for the simple reason that his story is full of "fantastic" elements which just don't fit into the modernist worldview. We Christians may decide not to believe him, but not because he talks about giants. We, after all, believe in giants too.

BOOK I

CHAPTER I.

THE EPISTLE DEDICATORY TO ROBERT EARL OF GLOUCESTER.

Whilst occupied on many and various studies, I happened to light upon the History of the Kings of Britain, and wondered that in the account which Gildas and Bede, in their elegant treatises, had given of them, I found nothing said of those kings who lived here before the Incarnation of Christ, nor of Arthur, and many others who succeeded after the Incarnation, though their actions both deserved immortal fame, and were also celebrated by many people in a pleasant manner and by heart, as if they had been written. Whilst I was intent upon these and such like thoughts, Walter, archdeacon of Oxford, a man of great eloquence, and learned in foreign histories, offered me a very ancient book in the British tongue, which, in a continued regular story and elegant style, related the actions of them all from Brutus the first king of the Britons, down to Cadwallader the son of Cadwallo. At his request, therefore, though I had not made fine language my study, by collecting florid expressions from other authors, yet contented with my own homely style, I undertook the translation of that book into Latin. For if I had swelled the pages with rhetorical flourishes, I most have tired my readers, by employing their attention more upon my words than upon the history'. To you, therefore, Robert Earl of Gloucester, this work humbly sues for

the favor of being so corrected by your advice, that it may not be thought to be the poor offering of Geoffrey of Monmouth, but when polished by your refined wit and judgment, the production of him who had Henry the glorious king of England for his father, and whom we see an accomplished scholar and philosopher, as well as a brave soldier and expert commander, so that Britain with joy acknowledges, that in you she possesses another Henry.

CHAPTER II.
THE FIRST INHABITANTS OF BRITAIN.

Britain, the best of islands, is situated in the Western Ocean, between France and Ireland, being eight hundred miles long, and two hundred broad. It produces everything that is useful to man, with a plenty that never fails. It abounds with all kinds of metals, and has plains of large extent, and hills fit for the finest tillage, the richness of whose soil affords variety of fruits in their proper seasons. It has also forests well stored with all kinds of wild beasts; in its lawns cattle find good change of pasture, and bees variety of flowers for honey. Under its lofty mountains lie green meadows pleasantly situated, in which the gentle murmurs of crystal springs gliding along clear channels, give those that pass an agreeable invitation to lie down on their banks and slumber. It is likewise well watered with lakes and rivers abounding with fish, and besides the narrow sea which is on the Southern coast towards France, there are three noble rivers, stretching out like three arms, namely, the Thames, the Severn, and the Humber, by which foreign commodities from all countries are brought

See map.

into it. It was formerly adorned with eight and twenty cities, of which some are in ruins and desolate, others are still standing, beautified with lofty church-towers, wherein religious worship is performed according to the Christian institution. It is lastly inhabited by five different nations, the Britons, Romans, Saxons, Picts and Scots, whereof the Britons before the rest did formerly possess the whole island from sea to sea, till divine vengeance punishing them for their pride, made them give way to the Picts and Saxons. But in what manner, and from whence, they first arrived here, remains now to be related in what follows.

CHAPTER III
BRUTUS, BEING BANISHED AFTER THE
KILLING OF HIS PARENTS, GOES INTO
GREECE.

After the Trojan war, Aeneas, flying with Ascanius from the destruction of their city, sailed to Italy. There he was honorably received by King Latinus, which raised against him the envy of Turnus, king of the Rutuli, who thereupon made war against him. Upon their engaging in battle, Aeneas got the victory, and having killed Turnus, obtained the kingdom of Italy, and with it Lavinia the daughter of Latinus. After his death, Ascanius, succeeding in the kingdom, built Alba upon the Tiber, and begat a son named Sylvius, who, in pursuit of a private amour, took to wife a niece of Lavinia. The damsel soon after conceived, and the father, Ascanius, coming to the knowledge of it, commanded his magicians to consult of what sex the child should be.

Aeneas was a Trojan hero and a son of Venus. After the Greeks sacked Troy, Aeneas escaped with his father, Anchises, and his son, Ascanius. After an extended period of wandering, he landed in Italy. He eventually married an Italian princess named Lavinia, and became the father of Rome. His complete story is found in Virgil's Aeneid.

When they had satisfied themselves in the matter, they told him she would give birth to a boy, who would kill his father and mother, and after travelling over many countries in banishment, would at last arrive at the highest pitch of glory. Nor were they mistaken in their prediction, for at the proper time the woman brought forth a son, and died of his birth, but the child was delivered to a nurse and called Brutus.

At length, after fifteen years were expired, the youth accompanied his father in hunting, and killed him undesignedly by the shot of an arrow. For, as the servants were driving up the deer towards them, Brutus, in shooting at them, smote his father under the breast. Upon his death, he was expelled from Italy, his kinsmen being enraged at him for so heinous a deed. Thus banished he went into Greece, where he found the posterity of Helenus, son of Priamus, kept in slavery by Pandrasus, king of the Greeks. For, after the destruction of Troy, Pyrrhus, the son of Achilles, had brought hither in chains Helenus and many others and, to revenge on them the death of his father, had given command that they should be held in captivity. Brutus, finding they were by descent his old countrymen, took up his abode among them, and began to distinguish himself by his conduct and bravery in war, so as to gain the affection of kings and commanders, and above all the young men of the country. For he was esteemed a person of great capacity both in council and war, and signalized his generosity to his soldiers, by bestowing among them all the money and spoil he got. His fame, therefore, spreading over all countries, the Trojans from all parts began to flock to him, desiring under his command to be freed from subjection to the Greeks, which they assured him might

easily be done, considering how much their number was now increased in the country, being seven thousand strong, besides women and children. There was likewise then in Greece a noble youth named Assaracus, a favorer of their cause. For he was descended on his mother's side from the Trojans, and placed great confidence in them, that he might be able by their assistance to oppose the designs of the Greeks. For his brother had a quarrel with him for attempting to deprive him of three castles which his father had given him at his death, on account of his being only the son of a concubine, but as the brother was a Greek, both by his father's and mother's side, he had prevailed with the king and the rest of the Greeks to espouse his cause. Brutus, having taken a view of the number of his men, and seen how Assaracus's castles lay open to him, complied with their request.

CHAPTER IV
BRUTUS' LETTER TO PANDRASUS.

Being, therefore, chosen their commander, he assembled the Trojans from all parts, and fortified the towns belonging to Assaracus. But he himself, with Assaracus and the whole body of men and women that adhered to him, retired to the woods and hills, and then sent a letter to the king in these words:

“Brutus, general of the remainder of the Trojans, to Pandrasus, king of the Greeks, sends greeting. As it was beneath the dignity of a nation descended from the illustrious race of Dardanus, to be treated in your kingdom otherwise than the nobility of their birth required, they have betaken themselves to the protection

of the woods. For they have preferred living after the manner of wild beasts, upon flesh and herbs, with the enjoyment of liberty, to continuing longer in the greatest luxury under the yoke of slavery. If this gives your Majesty any offence, impute it not to them, but pardon it, since it is the common sentiment of every captive to be desirous of regaining his former dignity. Let pity therefore move you to bestow on them freely their lost liberty, and permit them to inhabit the thickets of the woods, to which they have retired to avoid slavery. But if you deny them this favor, then by your permission and assistance let them depart into some foreign country.”

CHAPTER V.
BRUTUS FALLING UPON THE FORCES OF
PANDRASUS BY SURPRISE, ROUTS THEM, AND
TAKES ANTIGONUS, BROTHER OF
PANDRASUS, WITH ANACLETUS, PRISONER.

Pandrasus, perceiving the purport of the letter, was beyond measure surprised at the boldness of such a message from those whom he had kept in slavery and having called a council of his nobles, he determined to raise an army in order to pursue them. But while he was upon his march to the deserts, where he thought they were, and to the town of Sparatinum, Brutus made a sally with three thousand men, and fell upon him unawares. For having intelligence of his coming, he had got into the town the night before, with a design to break forth upon them unexpectedly, while unarmed and marching without order. The sally being made, the Trojans briskly attack them, and endeavor to make a great slaughter. The

Greeks, astonished, immediately give way on all sides, and, with the king at their head, hasten to pass the river Akalon, which runs near the place, but in passing are in great danger from the rapidity of the stream. Brutus galls them in their flight, and kills some of them in the stream, and some upon the banks, and running to and fro, rejoice to see them in both places exposed to ruin. But Antigonus, the brother of Pandrasus, grieved at this sight, rallied his scattered troops, and made a quick return upon the furious Trojans, for he rather chose to die making a brave resistance, than to be discovered in a muddy pool in a shameful flight. Thus attended with a close body of men, he encouraged them to stand their ground, and employed his whole force against the enemy with great vigor, but to little or no purpose, for the Trojans had arms, but the others none and from this advantage they were more eager in the pursuit, and made a miserable slaughter, nor did they give over the assault till they had made near a total destruction, and taken Antigonus, and Anacletus his companion, prisoners.

In these intervening chapters which we are not reading, Brutus and company go through a period of wandering and are directed by the goddess Diana to settle on an island in the Western Ocean.

So without further delay, with the consent of his company, he repaired to the fleet, and loading it with the riches and spoils he had taken, set sail with a fair wind towards the promised island, and arrived on the coast of Totness.

See F, V on the map.

CHAPTER XVI.
ALBION DIVIDED BETWEEN BRUTUS AND
CORINEUS

The island was then called Albion, and was inhabited by none but a few giants. Notwithstanding this, the pleasant situation of the places, the plenty of rivers abounding with fish, and the engaging prospect of its woods, made Brutus and his company very desirous to fix their habitation in it. They therefore passed through all the provinces, forced the giants to fly into the caves of the mountains, and divided the country among them according to the directions of their commander. After this they began to till the ground and build houses, so that in a little time the country looked like a place that had been long inhabited. At last Brutus called the island after his own name Britain, and his companions Britons; for by these means he desired to perpetuate the memory of his name. From whence afterwards the language of the nation, which at first bore the name of Trojan, or rough Greek, was called British. But Corineus, in imitation of his leader, called that part of the island which fell to his share, Corinea, and his people, Corineans, after his name, and though he had his choice of the provinces before all the rest, yet he preferred this country, which is now called in Latin Cornubia, either from its being in shape of a horn (in Latin Cornu) or from the corruption of the said name. For it was a diversion to him to encounter the giants, which were in greater numbers there than in all the other provinces that fell to the share of his companions. Among the rest was one detestable monster, named Goëmagot, in stature twelve cubits, and of such prodigious strength,

The land Corinea settled was Cornwall (thus the name) and it is the region out at the southwest tip of the island. See F, III - F, V on the map.

that at one shake he pulled up an oak, as if it had been a hazel wand. On a certain day, when Brutus was holding a solemn festival to the gods, in the port where they first landed, this giant with twenty more of his companions came upon the Britons, among whom he made a dreadful slaughter. But the Britons at last assembling together in a body, put them to the rout, and killed them every one but Goëmagot, Brutus had given orders to have him preserved alive, out of a desire to see a combat between him and Corineus, who took a great pleasure in such encounters. Corineus, overjoyed at this, prepared himself, and throwing aside his arms, challenged him to wrestle with him. At the beginning of the encounter, Corineus and the giant standing front to front, held each other strongly in their arms, and panted aloud for breath, but Goëmagot presently grasping Corineus with all his might, broke three of his ribs, two on his right aide and one on his left. At which Corineus, highly enraged, roused up his whole strength, and snatching him upon his shoulders, ran with him, as fast as the weight would allow him, to the next shore, and there getting upon the top of a high rock, hurled down the savage monster into the sea, where falling on the sides of craggy rocks, he was torn to pieces, and colored the waves with his blood. The place where he fell, taking its name from the giant's fall, is called Lam Goëmagot, that is, Goëmagot's Leap, to this day.

This giant is named "Gogmagog" which is quite enigmatic. Not only are Gog and Magog biblical names, the combination of the two appear throughout a lot of mythology. There's no settled idea of what (or who) Gog and Magog are - but in this case he's a giant.

Goëmagot's Leap is in modern Plymouth. See F, IV on the map.

CHAPTER XVII.
THE BUILDING OF NEW TROY BY BRUTUS,
UPON THE RIVER THAMES

New Troy is, of course, modern day London. See E, VIII on the map.

Brutus, having thus at last set eyes upon his kingdom, formed a design of building a city, and in order to it, travelled through the land to find out a convenient situation, and coming to the River Thames, he walked along the shore, and at last pitched upon a place very fit for his purpose. Here, therefore, he built a city, which he called New Troy, under which name it continued a long time after, till by the corruption of the original word, it came to be called Trinovantum. But afterwards when Lud, the brother of Cassibellaun, who made war against Julius Caesar, obtained the government of the kingdom, he surrounded it with stately walls and towers of admirable workmanship, and ordered it to be called after his name, Kaer-Lud, that is, the City of Lud. But this very thing became afterwards the occasion of a great quarrel between him and his brother Nennius, who took offence at his abolishing the name of Troy in this country. Of this quarrel Gildas the historian has given a full account, for which reason I pass it over, for fear of debasing, by my account of it, what so great a writer has so eloquently related.

CHAPTER XVIII.
NEW TROY BEING BUILT, AND LAWS MADE
FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF IT, IT IS EVEN TO
THE CITIZENS THAT WERE TO INHABIT IT.

After Brutus had finished the building of the city, he made choice of the citizens that were to inhabit it, and prescribed them laws for their peaceable government. At this time Eli the priest governed in Judaea, and the ark of the covenant was taken by the Philistines. At the same time, also, the sons of Hector, after the expulsion of the posterity of Antenor, reigned in Troy, as in Italy did Sylvius Aeneas, the son of Aeneas, the uncle of Brutus, and the third king of the Latins.

READING I
QUESTIONS

Make sure you double check your answers in the back of the book.

1. In the introduction, Geoffrey tells us his source for this history. What is it?
2. Modern scholarship tends to write Geoffrey off, referring to his work as “pseudo-history”, claiming that he invented the history from scratch and willfully fabricated nearly the entire thing. What do you think of him? Do you think he believed his own history or not? Why?
3. Who were the original inhabitants of Britain? Who replaced them? According to Geoffrey’s timeline, what is happening in Canaan at this time? Does this make Geoffrey’s story of what was happening in Britain more believable for a Christian? Why or why not?