

British

LITERATURE

Cultural Influences of Early to Contemporary Voices



James P. Stobaugh

HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL
STUDENT

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Dedication

This Book is gratefully dedicated to Karen and our four children: Rachel, Jessica, Timothy, and Peter.

He has given us a ministry of reconciliation . . . (2 Corinthians 5:18).



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Beowulf (Author Unknown)

The Ecclesiastical History of the English People by Venerable Bede

“The Pardoner’s Tale” and “The Nun’s Priest’s Tale” from *Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (Author Unknown)

The Fairie Queene by Edmund Spenser

“Macbeth” by William Shakespeare

“Dr. Faustus” by Christopher Marlowe

“Holy Sonnet XIV” by John Donne

“Silex” by Henry Vaughan

Paradise Lost by John Milton

“An Essay of Dramatic Poesy” by John Dryden

Eveline or *Cecilia* by Frances Burney d’Arblay

Robinson Crusoe by Daniel Defoe

Gulliver’s Travels by Jonathan Swift

The Vicar of Wakefield by Oliver Goldsmith

The Rivals by Richard Brimsley Sheridan

“The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” by Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Jane Eyre by Charlotte Brontë

Frankenstein by Mary Shelley

A Tale of Two Cities by Charles Dickens

Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde by Robert Louis Stevenson

“The Witch” by Mary Elizabeth Coleridge

The Mayor of Casterbridge by Thomas Hardy

Lord Jim by Joseph Conrad

“Are Women Human?” and “The Human-Not-Quite” by Dorothy Sayers

“Terence, This is Stupid Stuff,” “Loveliest of Trees,” and “Be Still my Soul,” by A.E. Housman

“An Irish Airman Foresees His Death,” “When You are Old,” “The Second Coming,” “The White Swans at Coole,” and “Bazantium” by William Butler Yeats

Mere Christianity by C.S. Lewis

The Lord of the Rings by J.R.R. Tolkien

“Murder in the Cathedral” by T.S. Eliot

Using Your Student Textbook

How this course has been developed:

1. **Chapters:** This course has 34 chapters (representing 34 weeks of study) to earn two full credits; writing and literature.
2. **Lessons:** Each chapter has five lessons, taking approximately 45 to 60 minutes each.
3. **Student responsibility:** Responsibility to complete this course is on the student. Students must read ahead in order to stay on schedule with the readings. Independence is strongly encouraged in this course, which was designed for the student to practice independent learning.
4. **Grading:** Depending on the grading option chosen, the parent/educator will grade the daily concept builders, and the weekly tests and essays. (See pages 7 and 8.)
5. **Additional books and texts:** A list of outside reading is provided after the table of contents. Students should try and read ahead whenever possible. Most readings are available free online or at a local library.

Throughout this book you will find the following:

1. **Chapter Learning Objectives:** Always read the “First Thoughts” and “Chapter Learning Objectives” in order to comprehend the scope of the material to be covered in a particular week.
2. **Daily warm-ups:** You should write or give oral responses for the daily warm-ups to your educator/parent. These are not necessarily meant to be evaluated, but should stimulate discussion.
3. **Concept builders:** You should complete a daily concept builder. These activities take 15 minutes or less and emphasize a particular concept that is vital to that particular chapter topic. These will relate to a subject covered in the chapter, though not necessarily in that days lesson.
4. **Assigned readings:** Remember to read ahead on the required literary material for this course. Students should plan to read some of the required literature the summer before the course.
5. **Weekly essays:** You will be writing at least one essay per week, depending on the level of accomplishment you and your parent/educator decide upon. These are available in the teacher guide and online.
6. **Weekly tests:** These are available in the teacher guide and online.

Earn a bonus credit!

Easily integrate related history curriculum for an additional credit, a combination study done in less than two hours daily! History Connections are shown on the chapter introduction page in order to help a student study these texts consecutively, exploring literature and history in unison. (*The American, British, and World History* curriculum is also written by James Stobaugh and published by Master Books®.)

What the student will need each day:

1. Notepad/computer: for writing assignments.
2. Pen/pencil: for taking notes and for essays.
3. A prayer journal. As often as you can — hopefully daily — keep a prayer journal.
4. Daily concept builders, weekly essay options, and weekly tests are available in the teacher guide and as free downloads at: nlpg.com/WorldLitAids

Increasing your vocabulary:

Part of the reason for reading so many challenging literary works is for you to increase your functional vocabulary. Your best means of increasing vocabulary is through reading a vast amount of classical, well-written literary works. While reading these works, you should harvest as many unknown words as you can, and try to use five new words in each essay you write.

Create 3x5 Vocabulary Cards

FRONT	BACK
Adversity	Harmful, Evil
	Adversity is a Noun
	The adverse effects of smoking are great.

When you meet a strange word for the first time,

- Do your best to figure out the word in context,
- Check your guess by looking in the dictionary,
- Write a sentence with the word in it.

Use the illustration above to formulate your vocabulary cards of new words.

About the Author

James P. Stobaugh and his wife, Karen, have four homeschooled adult children. They have a growing ministry, For Such a Time As This Ministries, committed to challenging this generation to change its world for Christ.

Dr. Stobaugh is an ordained pastor, a certified secondary teacher, and a SAT coach. His academic credentials include: BA, cum laude Vanderbilt University; Teacher Certification, Peabody College for Teachers; MA, Rutgers University; MDiv, Princeton Theological Seminary; Merrill Fellow, Harvard University; DMin Gordon Conwell Seminary.

Dr. Stobaugh has written articles for magazines: *Leadership*, *Presbyterian Survey*, *Princeton Spire*, *Ministries Today*, and *Pulpit Digest*. Dr. Stobaugh's books include the *SAT Preparation Course for the Christian Student*, the *ACT Preparation Course for the Christian Student*, the *Skills for Literary Analysis*, the *Christian Reading Companion for 50 Classics*, as well as the *American History*, *British History*, and *World History* high school curriculum.

Preface

British Literature is a rhetoric-level course. Two things are distinctive about rhetoric-level courses: they are content-driven and they presume higher-level thinking. In most cases, you are going to have to read in excess of 200 pages per lesson. Therefore, it is highly advisable that you read most of this material the summer before you begin this course.

To create a canon of British literature was a most challenging task. The choice of topics, styles, genres, and authors is overwhelming. From early epics about heroes and warriors to the winsome Hobbit, British literature satisfies almost all literary palates. In a real sense, then, British literature, in its breadth and quality, belongs to the whole world.

Literary analysis or criticism is a way to talk about literature. It is a way to understand literature better so that you can tell others about it. If one really wants to understand something, one needs to have a common language with everyone else. If one were talking about football, for instance, one would need to know about certain terminology and use it when describing the game. How lost one would be without knowing what a tackle is! Or how can a person enjoy watching a game without knowing what the referee means when he says, “First and Ten”?

Literary analysis employs a *common language* to take apart and to discuss literary pieces. You will learn these terms, that language, as this course progresses over the year. A list of literary terms is found in the glossary at the end of this book.

You also are going to be asked to do a lot of higher-level thinking and problem solving. Don’t say, “I don’t know” or “I can’t think” or “I don’t know how to do it.” Problem solved!

Young people, it is my strong belief that you are the generation God has called *for such a time as this* to bring a Spirit-inspired revival. At the beginning of this century God is stirring the water again. He is offering a new beginning for a new nation. I believe you are the personification of that new beginning.

To that end, this book is dedicated to the ambitious goal of preparing you to be 21st-century world changers for the Christ whom John Milton in *Paradise Lost* called “His countenance too severe to be beheld” (John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Vol. 6, line 825).

God is raising a mighty generation! You will be the culture-creators of the next century. You are a special generation, a special people. My prayer for each student who reads this course is:

I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge — that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen (Eph. 3:14–21).

The Anglo Saxon Age (Part 1)

First Thoughts It was in A.D. 449 that the Jutes, from Denmark, invaded land previously conquered by the Romans and earlier by the Britons, Celts, and Druids. Following the Jutes came the Anglos and Saxons. The origins of the Anglo-Saxon peoples are obscure. Scholars believe that they inhabited southern Sweden, the Danish peninsula, and northern Germany (between the Ems River on the west, the Oder River on the east, and the Harz Mountains on the south). The Anglo-Saxons created an English civilization that lasted until A.D. 1066, when William the Conqueror, from Normandy, France, conquered England at the Battle of Hastings. Who were the Anglo-Saxons? They were a Germanic people who loved epic legends and stories about the sea. They loved a good fight but also had a highly developed feeling for beauty. The Anglo-Saxons loved to describe rippling brooks and stunning sunsets. They dominated England's culture for almost a century.

Chapter Learning Objectives In chapter 1 we will look more closely at Anglo-Saxon poetry. We will be amazed at the depth of pathos that was so eloquently expressed by poets so long ago. We will examine the heroic epic genre and study its application to *Beowulf*.

As a result of this chapter study you will be able to . . .

1. Identify the speakers in "The Seafarers."
2. Compare and contrast the hero Beowulf with Jesus Christ. In your essay, give frequent references to the text and to Scripture.
3. Discuss how alliteration affects the author's meaning.
4. Define the word "kenning." Find several examples of this literary technique in "The Seafarer."
5. Compare *Beowulf* to narrative epics in the Old Testament.

Weekly Essay Options: Begin on page 259 of the Teacher Guide.



Anglo-Saxon Literature

“True is the tale that I tell of my travels . . .” is the beginning of one of the oldest pieces of literature in the English language (although one would not recognize the language — it is closer to contemporary German). “The Seafarer,” however, written by an unknown Anglo-Saxon, is quite contemporary in its magnitude of feeling. It is an elegy. Elegies are common in Old English poems. They lament the loss of worldly goods, glory, or human companionship. A contemporary elegy, for instance, might be a story-song performed by the contemporary Christian musician Carmen. One Anglo-Saxon poem, “The Wanderer,” is narrated by a man, deprived of lord and kinsmen, whose

journeys lead him to the realization that there is stability and hope only in the afterlife. “The Seafarer” is similar, but its journey motif more explicitly symbolizes the speaker’s spiritual yearnings. In this sense it is Judeo-Christian: Moses and the Children of Israel wander in the wilderness, too. The journey motif is common in Western literature.

A motif is a recurring literary theme. It assumes a central part of the literary piece.

The Seafarer

This tale is true, and mine. It tells
 How the sea took me, swept me back
 And forth in sorrow and fear and pain,
 Showed me suffering in a hundred ships,
 In a thousand ports, and in me. It tells
 Of smashing surf when I sweated in the cold
 Of an anxious watch, perched in the bow
 As it dashed under cliffs. My feet were cast
 In icy bands, bound with frost,
 With frozen chains, and hardship groaned
 Around my heart. Hunger tore
 At my sea-weary soul. No man sheltered
 On the quiet fairness of earth can feel
 how wretched I was, drifting through winter
 On an ice-cold sea, whirled in sorrow,
 Alone in a world blown clear of love,

Hung with icicles. The hail storms flew.
 The only sound was the roaring sea,
 the freezing waves. The song of the swan
 Might serve for pleasure, the cry of the sea-fowl,
 The death-noise of birds instead of laughter,
 The mewing of gulls instead of mead.
 Storms beat on the rocky cliffs and were echoed
 By icy-feathered terns and the eagle’s screams;
 No kinsmen could offer comfort there,
 To a soul left drowning in desolation.
 And who could believe, knowing but
 The passion of cities, swelled proud with wine
 And no taste of misfortune, how often, how wearily
 I put myself back on the paths of the sea.
 Night would blacken; it would snow from the north.
 Frost bound the earth and hail would fall,

The coldest seeds. And how my heart
Would begin to beat, knowing once more
The salt waves tossing and the towering sea!
The time for journeys would come and my soul
Called me eagerly out, sent me over
The horizon, seeking foreigner's homes.
But there isn't a man on earth so proud,
So born to greatness, so bold with his youth,
Grown so brave, or so graced by God,
That he feels no fear as the sails unfurl,
Wondering what Fate has willed and will do.
No harps ring in his heart, no rewards,
No passion for women, no worldly pleasures,
Nothing, only the ocean's heave;
But longing wraps itself around him.
Orchards blossom, the towns bloom,
Fields grow lovely as the world springs fresh,
And all these admonish that willing mind
Leaping to journeys, always set
In thoughts traveling on a quickening tide.
So summer's sentinel, the cuckoo, sings
In his murmuring voice, and our hearts mourn
As he urges. Who could understand,
In ignorant ease, what we others suffer
As the paths of exile stretch endlessly on?
And yet my heart wanders away,
My soul roams with the sea, the whales'
Home, wandering to the widest corners
Of the world, returning ravenous with desire,
Flying solitary, screaming, exciting me
To the open ocean, breaking oaths
On the curve of a wave.
Thus the joys of God
Are fervent with life, where life itself
Fades quickly into the earth. The wealth
Of the world neither reaches to Heaven nor remains.

No man has ever faced the dawn
Certain which of Fate's three threats
Would fall: illness, or age, or an enemy's
Sword, snatching the life from his soul.
The praise the living pour on the dead
Flowers from reputation: plant
An earthly life of profit reaped
Even from hatred and rancor, of bravery
Flung in the devil's face, and death
Can only bring you earthly praise
And a song to celebrate a place
with the angels, life eternally blessed
In the hosts of Heaven.
The days are gone
When the kingdoms of earth flourished in glory;
Now there are no rulers, no emperors,
No givers of gold, as once there were,
When wonderful things were worked among them
And they lived in lordly magnificence.
Those powers have vanished, those pleasures are
dead.
The weakest survives and the world continues,
Kept spinning by toil. All glory is tarnished.
The world's honor ages and shrinks,
Bent like the men who mold it. Their faces
Blanch as time advances, their beards
Wither and they mourn the memory of friends.
The sons of princes, sown in the dust.
The soul stripped of its flesh knows nothing
Of sweetness or sour, feels no pain,
Bends neither its hand nor its brain. A brother
Opens his palms and pours down gold
On his kinsmen's grave, strewing his coffin
With treasures intended for Heaven, but nothing
Golden shakes the wrath of God
For a soul overflowing with sin, and nothing

Hidden on earth rises to Heaven.
We all fear God. He turns the earth,
He set it swinging firmly in space,
Gave life to the world and light to the sky.
Death leaps at the fools who forget their God.
He who lives humbly has angels from Heaven
To carry him courage and strength and belief.
A man must conquer pride, not kill it,
Be firm with his fellows, chaste for himself,
Treat all the world as the world deserves,
With love or with hate but never with harm,
Though an enemy seek to scorch him in hell,

Or set the flames of a funeral pyre
Under his lord. Fate is stronger
And God mightier than any man's mind.
Our thoughts should turn to where our home is,
Consider the ways of coming there,
Then strive for sure permission for us
To rise to that eternal joy,
That life born in the love of God
And the hope of Heaven. Praise the Holy
Grace of Him who honored us,
Eternal, unchanging creator of earth. Amen.

Assignments

- Warm-up: Anglo-Saxons love meter and rhythm. What are the meter and rhythm of this narrative poem? Meter is the pattern of accented syllables in writing. For instance, notice how this phrase is accented: This is ' the day' that God' has made. '
- Students should complete Concept Builder 1-A.
- Students should review the required reading(s) *before* the assigned chapter begins.
- Teachers shall assign the required essay. The rest of the essays can be outlined, answered with shorter answers, or skipped.

CONCEPT BUILDER 1-A
Active Reading

Read "The Seafarer" (author unknown) and respond to the following:

1	Predict how will this poem end.
2	Who is the narrator (i.e., speaker)?
3	Does he work in a city?
4	Is he a Christian believer?
5	Personification is "A person or thing typifying a certain quality or idea." In what way is this line personification? "The only sound was the roaring sea?"
6	Note one more example of personification from the poem.
7	How does the narrator handle bad things in his life?
8	What is one theme in this poem (i.e., the central meaning)?
9	What do these lines mean? "Death leaps at the fools who forget their God. He who lives humbly has angels from Heaven To carry him courage and strength and belief"

Beowulf

Author unknown

Background If few Anglo-Saxon poems can be dated accurately, still fewer can be attributed to particular poets. The most important author from whom a considerable body of work survives is Cynewulf, who wove his writings into the epilogues of four poems. Aside from his name, little is known of him; he probably lived in the ninth century in Mercia.

Beowulf, the oldest of the famous Old English long poems, was written over 12 centuries ago by a native of West Mercia, the West Midlands of England today. The long narrative poem was probably performed orally by the poet before a “live” audience — like the contemporary *Tonight Show* — and in that sense the story had to be embellished and full of action or the author would lose his audience fast. Most scholars, therefore, conclude that *Beowulf* was recited from memory by a “scop,” a traveling entertainer who went from court to court, singing songs and telling stories, until it was finally written down at the request of a king who wanted to hear it again.

Imagine that you are a scop. As you read the poem, try to imagine yourself in the banquet hall of a large castle, eating and drinking with your friends. You, the court entertainer — much like a stand-up comedian — begin telling your story. Your audience is full of food and mead, and they will demand a lively presentation. Your presence in the hall means that you’re probably a member of the aristocratic class.

There is, of course, no extant, original copy of *Beowulf*. This first great English epic is known only from a single 11th-century manuscript, which was badly damaged by fire in 1731. Transcriptions made in the late 18th century show that many hundreds of words and letters then visible along the charred edges subsequently crumbled away.

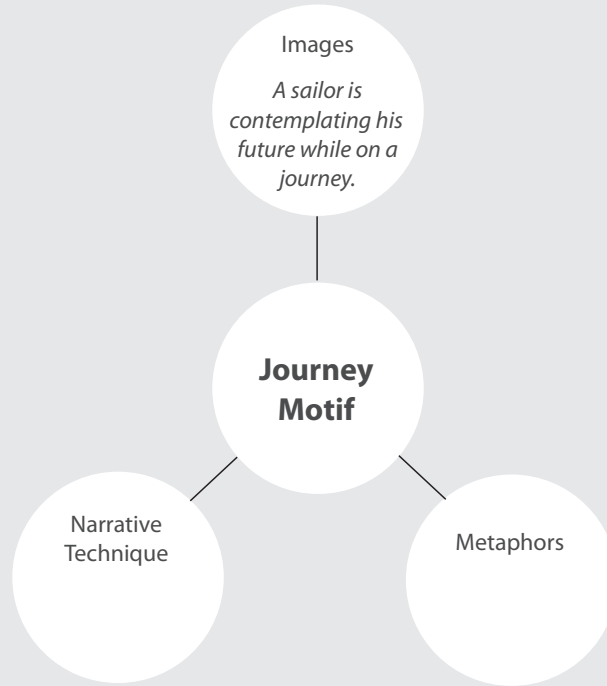
Beowulf, as you will see, gives us little information about the life of the average person in Anglo-Saxon society; instead, it concerns itself exclusively with life in the court and on the battlefield.

Assignments

- Warm-up: Brave, dependable, loyal, and strong, Beowulf is the quintessential hero. Find evidence from the text to support this description. Given the above description, compare Beowulf to a modern media hero/heroine.
- Students should complete Concept Builder 1-B.
- Students should review reading(s) from next chapter.
- Students should outline essay due at the end of the week.
- Per teacher instructions, students may answer orally, in a group setting, some of the essays that are not assigned as formal essays.

CONCEPT BUILDER 1-B
Motif

A motif is a recurring literary theme. It assumes a central part of the literary piece. Show how the journey motif is developed in the Anglo-Saxon poem "The Seafarer."



The Epic Poem

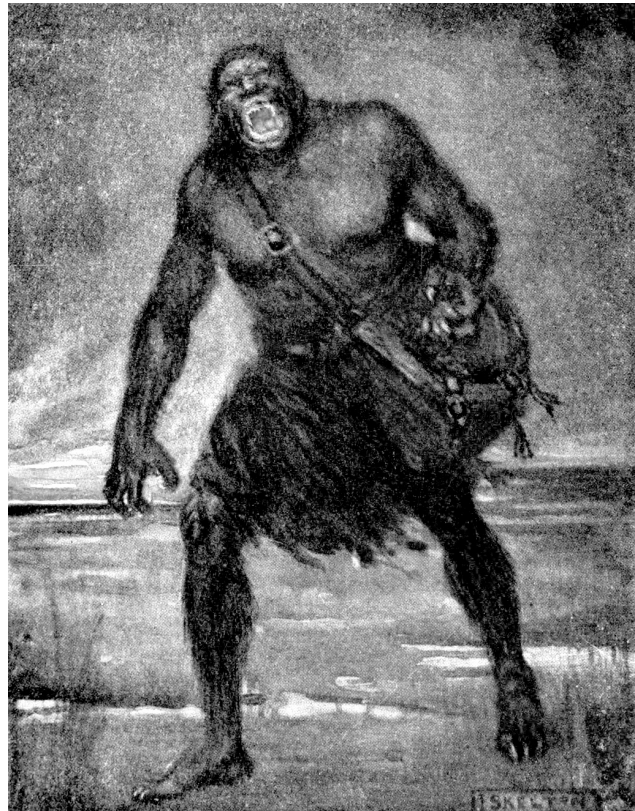
Some of you read a prose version of *Beowulf* but really it is an epic poem, a long narrative poem about a central heroic figure. This tradition began with the poems of Homer — *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* — and with Virgil’s *Aeneid*. Perhaps the author of *Beowulf* was familiar himself with these epics. An epic poem is not a biography, it makes no attempt to portray a whole life chronologically from beginning to end.

The detail in the epic poem is quite realistic and to some readers shocking. An epic poem presents characters as they are, with all their foibles, but it also presents them as they ought to be. The redactor, or author of the epic, will even offer moral sidebars on how the hero should act.

Epic poems are full of moral advice. Achilles in *The Iliad* is proud and haughty and that flaw ultimately undoes him. On the other hand, Achilles is very brave and his Greeks allies extol his virtues. *Beowulf* kills Grendel and is duly rewarded by the approbation of his community. The epic poet is concerned with human values and moral choices.

The heroes are bigger than life. They are courageous and bold.

As critic Lewis Walsh explains, “Some of you will feel that *Beowulf* is a mixture of both tragedy and comedy, and that its hero is ultimately a tragic figure. . . . The epic poet also functions as a historian, blending past, present, and future in a unique, all-encompassing way. His pace is leisurely, and allows him to include as many different stories as possible. Remember that the scop’s success as an entertainer depended on his ability to re-create these stories in a new way. In *Beowulf*, the poet is both telling a story and connecting it to events that have taken place in the past. *Beowulf* is not just a simple tale about a man who kills monsters and dragons, but a large-scale vision of human history.”



An illustration of Grendel by J.R. Skelton from *Stories of Beowulf*, 1908 (PD-Art).

Ultimately, the epic hero, is involved in an epic struggle. In most cases, the conflict between good and evil is the poem’s most important theme. But as Hrothgar points out to Beowulf, he must not be prideful about his fighting gifts.

In this case, Beowulf is a Christ-like figure. *Beowulf* obviously is a theistic book. Beowulf is motivated by a code of ethics. The most valued part of this code of ethics is filial loyalty to one’s king. When Beowulf’s warrior friends refuse to protect their king out of fear of Grendel, society is in jeopardy of collapsing. That tension is at the heart of this great epic.

Assignments

- Warm-up: *Beowulf* takes a serious look at the problem of evil. Evaluate the veracity of this early view of evil in light of the Word of God.
- Students should complete Concept Builder 1-C.
- Students should write rough drafts of assigned essay.
- The teacher may correct rough drafts.

CONCEPT BUILDER 1-C
Foil

A foil is a character used by the author to reveal important characteristics about the protagonist (main character) and to further the action. In what ways are the following characters foils?

Hrothgar
The old, wise king is contrasted with the brash, young warrior. Hrothgar represents a mirror image, or model, of what Beowulf's own future might be.

Queen Welthow

Unferth

Wiglaf

Higlac

**Protagonist
Beowulf**

Language

Like “The Seafarer,” the English in this ancient narrative poem would have appeared much different from contemporary English.

Because there were sounds in Old English (A.D. 600–1100) that were not thought to be represented by the Roman alphabet, Old English used runic characters for those sounds. The runes were “asc” (pronounced “ash”) (æ), “eth” (ð), “thorn” (þ), and “wen” (looks similar to a “p” but with a smaller curved bow). Here is the first line and a half from the first leaf of the manuscript of *Beowulf*, followed by a translation into modern English:

HWÆT WE GARDE / na in geardagum þeodcyninga

Lo! we [have heard] about the might of the Spear-Danes’ kings in the early days.

The following are some more examples of Old English:

Nu sculon herigean

Now we must praise

ece Drihten

eternal Lord

Scolde Grendel thonen

Should Grendel thence

Wiste the geornor

Knew he more surely

Can you recognize any Old English words? Read the Old English phrases aloud.

Beowulf is the most famous and no doubt the greatest literary work that we have inherited from the Anglo-Saxons. This epic poem is a Christian poem — at least in the form we have it; however, there are clearly some pagan elements. Ergo, notice the Anglo-Saxon concept of Wyrð, or fate. It dominates the poem and in many cases seems to be a stronger influence for the individuals than God Himself. As you read this poem, find examples of how fate has a ubiquitous presence.

Assignments

- Warm-up: Psychoanalysis (a way of treating emotional disorders by encouraging conscious discussions of traumatic problems with another person) is the therapy of choice for many Americans. While there are some very good things in psychoanalysis, as Dr. Karl Menninger argues, psychoanalysis invites its participants to ignore evil and sin — they are counted merely as emotional disorders. What happens to a culture that minimizes the importance of evil? Can a person really be healed if he is living in sin?
- Students should complete Concept Builder 1-D.
- Students will re-write corrected copies of essay due tomorrow.

CONCEPT BUILDER 1-D The Epic Christian Hero	An epic poem is a long poem that honors a particular hero. Beowulf is clearly a Christian hero. Using the following categories, compare the life of Beowulf to the life of Christ.		
		Beowulf Narrative	
		Beowulf	Jesus Christ
	Faith	Beowulf exhibits the highest moral behavior.	Jesus Christ is without sin.
	Character		
	Love		
Strength			

What the Critics Say

Beowulf is essentially a balance, an opposition of ends and beginnings. In its simplest terms it is a contrasted description of two moments in a great life, rising and setting; an elaboration of the ancient and intensely moving contrast between youth and age, first achievement and final death.

— J.R.R. Tolkien (*Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics*, addressed to the British Academy in 1936).

We have in *Beowulf* a story of giant-killing and dragon-slaying. Why should we construct a legend of the gods or a nature-myth to account for these tales? Why must Grendel or his mother represent the tempest, or the malaria, or the drear long winter nights? We know that tales of giant-killers and dragon-slayers have been current among the people of Europe for thousands of years. Is it not far more easy to regard the story of the fight between Beowulf and Grendel merely as a fairy tale, glorified into an epic?

— R.W. Chambers (*Beowulf: An Introduction to the Study of the Poem*, Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1959).

The poet's consistency of tone reveals his mastery of texture and structure, mostly in the handling of digressions of various length. A long one, such as the Finnsburg episode, can set the grim past of the Danes into an atmosphere of treachery in Hrothgar's court. The over-whelming tension of that long Frisian winter with its resolution by slaughter is emblematic and prophetic of the impending horrors of Hrothulf's revolt and the Hathobard feud.

— Donald K. Fry ("The Artistry of Beowulf," Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968).

The Christian influence in *Beowulf* is a matter of transforming spirit rather than of reference to dogma or doctrine. And it is, in the main, an influence reflecting the Old Testament rather than the New. The poem contains specific references to Cain's murder of Abel, and to the stories of the Creation, the giants and the Flood. But we find no such allusions to New Testament themes. . . . Indeed, considering the nature of the material with which the poet is working, we should hardly expect such references.

— Charles W. Kennedy (*Beowulf, The Oldest English Epic*, Oxford University Press, 1964).

In this work the poet was not much concerned with Christianity and paganism. Beowulf was a hero mainly because of his deeds. All his adventures come from pagan stories, and the pagan motives and actions persist. Hrothgar is made eminent by his speeches, which were not governed by pagan tradition. The Christian poet was free to mold them as he wished, and so to make belief in God a leading figure of the character. He was likely to make the most of it, since Hrothgar is not just the pathetic figure of a king incapable through old age of protecting his people: he is a famous hero, still great because of his wisdom and goodness.

— Kenneth Sisam (*The Structure of Beowulf*, Clarendon Press, 1965).

The most unexpected quality in Beowulf is its abiding communication of joy. In contrast with the Mediterranean glitter of the Odyssey . . . Beowulf takes place in an atmosphere of semi-darkness, the gloom of fire-lit halls, stormy wastelands, and underwater caverns. It is full of blood and fierceness. . . . Men exult in their conflict with each other and the elements. Even Grendel and his mother are serious in the way Greek demons never are. They may be horrors survived from the pagan Norse world of frost giants, wolf men, and dragons of the waters, but nobody would ever dream of calling them frivolous. They share Beowulf’s dogged earnestness; what they lack is his joy.

— Kenneth Rexroth (“Classics Revisited — IV: Beowulf,” Saturday Review, April 10, 1965).

Certain peculiarities in the structure of Beowulf can hardly fail to strike the reader. (1) The poem is not a biography of Beowulf, nor yet an episode in his life — it is 2 distinct episodes: The Grendel business and the dragon business, joined by a narrow bridge. (2) Both these stories are broken in upon by digressions: some of these concern Beowulf himself, so that we get a fairly complete idea of the life of our hero . . . (3) Even apart from these digressions, the narrative is often hampered: the poet begins his story, diverges and returns. (4) The traces of Christian thought and knowledge which meet us from time to time seem to belong to a different world from that of the Germanic life in which our poem has its roots.

— R.W. Chambers (*Beowulf: An Introduction to the Study of the Poem*, Cambridge, 1959).

Assignments

- Warm-up: Some scholars think that this poem’s oral tradition is much older than its present written form. In fact, they argue that the Christian additions to the poem are later redactions. Write a one-page essay describing how the poem sounded before its Christian influences.
- Student should complete Concept Builder 1-E.
- Essays are due. Students should take the chapter 1 test.

CONCEPT BUILDER 1-E Antagonist	Grendel and his mother are the perfect antagonists. Compare these villains with other antagonists.	
	Character	Behavior
	Grendel and his mother	Grendel and his mother are completely evil. The reader has no doubt that these are the bad guys!
	Darth Vader	
	Cinderella’s stepmother	
	Scar (in The Lion King)	
	Captain Hook (in Peter Pan)	

The Anglo Saxon Age (Part 2)

First Thoughts In the winter of 1976, I was sitting in a drafty Harvard Yard building listening to Dr. George Williams lecture on a miracle described by the Venerable Bede. Williams was notorious for his criticism of miracles — supernatural hocus-pocus, he called it. But Professor Williams was sick and needed a miracle. He knew it, too. As he lectured on the Venerable Bede, he reached a point in his lecture where he paused and looked out the window at Widener Library. We all sat and waited. “You know,” he finally said, still looking out the frosted window, “I used to laugh at people who believed in miracles.” In good nature, we all laughed with him. “But now, it is not funny. I need a miracle. I have cancer. And now, laugh at me, too, because now I believe in miracles, too.” Funny, isn’t it? We find it easier to believe in a miracle when things are bad. For most of us, the greatest miracle was the day Christ came into our hearts. The Venerable Bede thought that miracles were a natural part of history. Bede was not afraid to admit that he, himself, needed a miracle. Are you willing to admit to Him that you need a miracle?

Chapter Learning Objectives In chapter 2 we look at one of the great men of history. The Venerable Bede was not merely an insightful historian; he was also a very pious Christian. He was brilliant, but he was also a great man of God. Let him be a model for you as you look ahead to your vocational choices!

As a result of this chapter study you will be able to . . .

1. Compare poetry to prose
2. Explore whether the supernatural really exists
3. Analyze Caedmon’s Song

Weekly Essay Options: Begin on page 259 of the Teacher Guide.

Reading ahead: Students should review “Bonny Barbara Allan,” author unknown, “Get Up and Bar the Door,” author unknown (Scottish folk ballads); “The Prologue,” “The Pardoner’s Tale,” and “The Nun’s Priest’s Tale,” in *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer.



The Venerable Bede

Background The earliest and most important writer of prose was the Venerable Bede, a contemporary of the author of *Beowulf*. Bede (also spelled Baeda, or Beda; 672/673–735), Anglo-Saxon theologian, historian, and chronologist, is best known today for his *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* (*Ecclesiastical History of the English People*), a source vital to the history of the Anglo-Saxon people’s conversion to Christianity. A brilliant man and a devoted Christian, Bede wrote the first extant English history. Many students will find it difficult to read the entire history. Those who

persevere, however, will be blessed by the gentle, committed Christian who understood history better than many know.

Caedmon, the first Old English Christian poet, is known from Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, which tells how Caedmon, an illiterate herdsman, retired from company one night in shame because he could not comply with the demand made of each guest to sing. Then in a dream a stranger appeared, commanding him to sing of “the beginning of things,” and the herdsman found himself uttering “verses which he had never heard.”

Assignments

- Warm-up: Write a ballad/poem about your father (or significant adult). Then, rewrite the same piece in prose. Which do you like better? Why?
- Student should complete Concept Builder 2-A.
- Students should review the required reading(s) *before* the assigned chapter begins.
- Teachers may want to discuss assigned reading(s) with students.
- Teachers shall assign the required essay. The rest of the essays can be outlined, answered with shorter answers, or skipped.
- Students will review all readings for chapter 2.

CONCEPT BUILDER 2-A Active Reading	Read <i>Ecclesiastical History of the English People</i> by Venerable Bede, Book I, Chapter I, and respond to the following:	
	1	Why does Bede begin his history this way?
	2	Why doesn't Ireland have any snakes? Do you believe that this is true?
	3	In what language was this history written?
	4	According to Bede, why did the Picts invade Britain?

Autobiographical History

Herbert Thurston

In the last chapter of his great work on the *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, Bede told us something of his own life, and it is, practically speaking, all that we know. His words, written in 731, when death was not far off, not only show a simplicity and piety characteristic of the man, but they throw a light on the composition of the work through which he is best remembered by the world at large:

Thus much concerning the ecclesiastical history of Britain, and especially of the race of the English, I, Baeda, a servant of Christ and a priest of the monastery of the blessed apostles St. Peter and St. Paul, which is at Wearmouth and at Jarrow (in Northumberland), have with the Lord's help composed so far as I could gather it either from ancient documents or from the traditions of the elders, or from my own knowledge. I was born in the territory of the said monastery, and at the age of seven I was, by the care of my relations, given to the most reverend Abbot Benedict [St. Benedict Biscop], and afterwards to Ceolfrid, to be educated. From that time I have spent the whole of my life within that monastery, devoting all my pains to the study of the Scriptures, and amid the observance of monastic discipline and the daily charge of singing in the Church, it has been ever my delight to learn or teach or write. In my nineteenth year I was admitted to the diaconate, in my thirtieth to the priesthood, both by the hands of the most reverend Bishop John [St. John of Beverley], and at the bidding of Abbot Ceolfrid. From the time of my admission to the priesthood to my present fifty-ninth year, I have endeavored for my own use and that of my brethren, to make brief notes upon the holy Scripture, either out of the works of the venerable Fathers or in conformity with their meaning and interpretation. (Herbert Thurston, "The Venerable Bede," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 2, New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907; www.newadvent.org/cathen/02384a.htm, March 29, 2012).

Assignments

- Warm-up: Describe one event that changed your life.
- Students should complete Concept Builder 2-B.
- Students should review reading(s) from next chapter.
- Students should outline essay due at the end of the week.
- Per teacher instructions, students may answer orally, in a group setting, some of the essays that are not assigned as formal essays.

CONCEPT BUILDER 2-B
The First English Poem

CAEDMON'S SONG

Now let me praise the keeper of Heaven's kingdom,
the might of the Creator, and his thought,
the work of the Father of glory, how each of wonders
the Eternal Lord established in the beginning.
He first created for the sons of men
Heaven as a roof, the holy Creator,
then Middle-earth the keeper of mankind,
the Eternal Lord, afterwards made,
the earth for men, the Almighty Lord.

Rewrite this poem in prose:

Which form do you like better? Why?