

# British



*Literature*



**From Prehistory through the Seventeenth Century**



*Fifth Edition*

 The Center for Learning

# British Literature 1

From Prehistory through the Seventeenth Century

**Fifth Edition**

Mary Anne Kovacs

**Fourth Edition**

Ann S. Brant-Kemezis

Mary Enda Costello

Robert Miltner

Daniel Moran

Brigid O'Donoghue

Jodi Rzeszutarski

Delano Wilhite





## Author

Mary Anne Kovacs, who earned her M.A. at the Bread Loaf School of English at Middlebury College, Vermont, is an experienced high school English teacher. She is also the author and coauthor of numerous curriculum units for The Center for Learning, including those about *Macbeth*, *Frankenstein*, and *To the Lighthouse*.

Editorial Assistant: Manasi Patel  
Graphic Designer: Linda Deverich  
Cover Design: Mark Gutierrez  
Editorial Director: Dawn P. Dawson

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10200 Jefferson Boulevard, P.O. Box 802  
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United States of America

(310) 839-2436  
(800) 421-4246

[www.centerforlearning.org](http://www.centerforlearning.org)  
[access@socialstudies.com](mailto:access@socialstudies.com)

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# Introduction

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From Stone Age culture to the complexities of Elizabethan drama and the elaborate conceits of the Metaphysical poets, this unit introduces students to the beginnings of British literature and culture. *Beowulf*, the great Anglo-Saxon epic, epitomizes values of the culture from which it sprang: bravery, physical strength, loyalty, fame, and acceptance of fate. The work, born in the oral tradition, paints a dualistic picture of good pitted against evil and makes it clear that heroes are not born every day.

Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* presents a microcosm of medieval England. The colorful gallery of characters displays a wide range: a knight who is a paragon of chivalry; an earthy and oft-married woman from Bath; clergy, both dedicated and self-serving; a brawling miller who also plays a bagpipe; and a sometime pirate. Society was no longer divided into two extremes, as the middle class had begun to emerge quite distinctly. Chaucer's genius is evident in the way the stories reflect the personalities and motives of the characters telling them.

William Shakespeare, of course, epitomizes the Elizabethan period. The product of the middle class from the country town Stratford-upon-Avon, he became a poet, actor, playwright, and director. His best works sparkle today as they did centuries ago and continue to draw theater and movie directors around the world. In both quantity and quality, few writers could hope to compete with Shakespeare.

The tumultuous seventeenth century saw a monarchy toppled and restored and brought forth the poetry of the Cavaliers and the Metaphysicals, as well as John Milton's magnum opus *Paradise Lost* and John Bunyan's allegory *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

A study of British literature is in some ways like a cruise through time. You and your students will be able to enjoy the various port stops along the way and appreciate how works penned long ago still connect with life today.



# Teacher Notes

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This unit deals with English literature from the beginnings through the seventeenth century and focuses on works generally taught in high school British literature courses. Lessons cover historical background, which invariably affects the development of literature. The first settlers in England were Stone Age people about whom little is known but much is guessed, based on artifacts like stone circles and barrows. Knowledge of English history and literature begins with the Anglo-Saxons and the Old English era. The invasion of William of Normandy in 1066 began the transformation to the Middle English period, leading to the development of modern English (although it looks quite different from the language we use today) as the fifteenth century drew to an end under a restored monarchy.

The table of contents provides a general overview of lesson content. The first half of the unit deals with writings from the beginnings through the medieval period. Three lessons deal with *Beowulf*, and two with Chaucer. Lesson 10 is intended to culminate this opening study and provide assessment materials. The second half deals with the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, including Shakespeare, the Cavaliers, Metaphysical poetry, and other writings.

If you are working with a British literature anthology, you will find many selections gathered together for you and your students. The works are also readily available on the Internet. You may want to consider having your class read *Beowulf* in its entirety; it is not terribly long, and students usually experience it as an adventure story. You may also want to assign one or more of Shakespeare's plays. *Macbeth*, for example, is frequently included in high school texts.

Lessons emphasize the use of textual evidence to support generalization, as well as analysis of structure, characters, themes, and diction/syntax. Writing is incorporated in all of the lessons, as are small group collaborations and efforts to forge connections to life in the twenty-first century. Many lessons include Internet research as well, since the web abounds with sites that can enhance your study of these early writings.

Sometimes students question why they have to study British literature. One reason is that the English literary tradition includes some of the greatest writers the world has ever known, and those writers continue to influence life and literature today. Students may also question why they have to study works that are centuries old. On one level, this is a matter of cultural literacy; on another, a study of works written before the eighteenth century intensifies an understanding that, although society is much changed, human nature, with both its strengths and its weaknesses, is fairly constant.





## Lesson 1

# Britain's Earliest Beginnings

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### Objectives

- To understand the origins of what is now England
- To acquire background for the study of *Beowulf*

### Notes to the Teacher

Today tourists in England often enjoy visiting Stonehenge and speculating about the culture that erected the giant structures, probably around 2500 BCE. Geological signs indicate that Paleolithic humans arrived before the polar ice cap severed Britain from the European continent hundreds of thousands of years ago. By 5000 BCE, Neolithic humans had wandered into what is now England from the Mediterranean area, as is evidenced by remains of weapons and tools. One of the earliest westward migrations was made by people whose descendants are now centered in the Scottish highlands, Wales, and Ireland: the Celts. All of this is frequently referred to as prehistory, and we know little about the earliest natives of the British Isles.

Early Britain was a frequent target for invasion. The Roman commander Julius Caesar and his legions invaded in 55 BCE, and the Roman legions withdrew around 410 CE with the collapse of the empire. Although the Romans established some settlements and built roads, they did not displace the native Celtic residents, and there was never a big tide of immigration from Rome.

The Celts were displaced by invading Germanic tribes. According to their own record of events, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, in 449 CE the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes sailed across the North Sea from Denmark and Germany and overwhelmed the country. The extent to which the incomers displaced the previous residents is evidenced by the fact that the Celtic language exerted almost no impact on Anglo-Saxon (Old English), which we would expect if the cultures existed side by side for any length of time.

Fierce as they were, the Anglo-Saxons were not immune to invasions. Some came from the South across the English Channel, and Vikings attacked the eastern coastline. The English Isles would remain subject to raids until one final invasion, led by William of Normandy, culminated in the Battle of Hastings in 1066 and ushered in a brand new era often referred to as the Middle English period.

In this lesson students focus on these early foundations of English history and culture and lay the groundwork for an approach to *Beowulf*. To begin the lesson, you will need a map of Europe and photographs of Stonehenge, both

of which are readily available on the Internet. You may also want to show the class a video about Stonehenge; several are available on the Internet, including productions from *NOVA* and *National Geographic*.

### Procedure

1. Ask students what is meant by the terms *Paleolithic* and *Neolithic*. (The terms relate to the Stone Age, a phase of prehistory that we learn about through artifacts, during which humans created tools from stone.)
2. Show students a map of Europe and have them focus on the positions of England and Ireland. Point out the similarity of the geography to puzzle pieces and explain that scientists believe that long ago the British Isles were connected to each other and to the European continent, but geologic events forced them apart.
3. Explain that there is ample evidence that Stone Age humans lived in England. Show students pictures of Stonehenge and explain that today tourists from all over the world marvel at the ancient monument, which is in the Salisbury Plain in the southwestern section of England. It is estimated that Stonehenge was completed around 2500 BCE, and no one has been able to determine how the people managed to construct it or what its exact purpose was. It seems to have had some relationship with the equinoxes and was the site of many burials.
4. Explain that there are many prehistoric sites in England, including stone circles, barrows, and rock carvings. Ask students to work in small groups to find one that interests them and to prepare to share pictures and commentaries with the class. (Try to make sure that the sites chosen include Avebury in Wiltshire, which some see as even more impressive than Stonehenge. Another interesting example with not one but three circles is at Stanton Drew in Avon. You may also want to highlight Boscawen-Un in Cornwall, a very large stone circle with a spire in the middle.) After groups have finished their research, have them share results, including pictures, with the class as a whole.
5. Explain that archaeologists remain fascinated by these ancient sites. Ask students to think of themselves as armchair archaeologists and to respond in writing to the following prompt:

*Based on what you have seen of some of the ancient sites in England, what hypotheses would you make about the people who created them? Give reasons for your ideas.*

When students have finished, collect the writings.

6. Use the map to stress the proximity of England to Europe, and point out that it was not difficult to travel back and forth. Perhaps for this reason, England has faced invaders many times.

7. Explain that the first inhabitants of England we know of were the Celts—the forerunners of natives of Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, who, at one time, lived across the British Isles. Representing the Roman Empire, Julius Caesar and his legions invaded England in 55 BCE. The Romans built forts and roads but did not bring masses of civilians to live on the island. They were forced to withdraw when the Roman Empire collapsed during the fifth century, which left the island vulnerable to attacks from what are now France, Scandinavia, and Germany. Barbarian invasions by Germanic tribes mark the beginning of the written history of England. The invaders uprooted the Celts and pushed them west and north. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* was begun during the ninth century rule of King Alfred the Great and recorded, year by year, what was known or believed about the history of England.
8. Distribute **Handout 1** and have small groups complete the exercise.

#### ***Suggested Responses***

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1. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* mentions three tribes by name: the Angles, the Saxons, and the Jutes. The culture that resulted from the invasion and from the language spoken by the people is referred to as Anglo-Saxon or Old English.
  2. The name comes from “Angles” (as in “Angle-land”), eventually evolving into “England.”
  3. Anglo-Saxon culture was centered on warfare and battles. Life was often brutal, violent, and short. There was a kind of warrior code of conduct. The social structure consisted of numerous little kingdoms; each king had his own loyal retainers. The epithet “ring-giver” derives from the custom of the king giving each retainer a gold ring as a sign of mutual loyalty.
9. Distribute **Handout 2**, and use it to demonstrate the contrast between Old English (Anglo-Saxon) and the language we speak today. To us, Old English is a foreign language; if we want to read it, we need a translation. Clarify that during that time very few people were literate. The exceptions were Christian monks, and so monasteries were often repositories of learning. Stories and poems for the masses were part of the oral tradition. Only a few recorded works have survived the centuries to the present time.

## A Message from the Past: The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*

**Directions:** During the ninth century, when Alfred the Great was king, a project was initiated to record a year-by-year history of England. Once the original was completed, copies were sent to monasteries, and scribes appended additional information in the coming years. Read the excerpt, and answer the questions.

A.D. 449. This year Marcian and Valentinian assumed the empire, and reigned seven winters. In their days Hengest and Horsa, invited by Wurtgern, king of the Britons to his assistance, landed in Britain in a place that is called Ipwinesfleet; first of all to support the Britons, but they afterwards fought against them. The king directed them to fight against the Picts; and they did so; and obtained the victory wheresoever they came. They then sent to the Angles, and desired them to send more assistance. They described the worthlessness of the Britons, and the richness of the land. They then sent them greater support. Then came the men from three powers of Germany; the Old Saxons, the Angles, and the Jutes. From the Jutes are descended the men of Kent, the Wightwarians (that is, the tribe that now dwelleth in the Isle of Wight), and that kindred in Wessex that men yet call the kindred of the Jutes. From the Old Saxons came the people of Essex and Sussex and Wessex. From Anglia, which has ever since remained waste between the Jutes and the Saxons, came the East Angles, the Middle Angles, the Mercians, and all of those north of the Humber. Their leaders were two brothers, Hengest and Horsa; who were the sons of Wihtgils; Wihtgils was the son of Witta, Witta of Wecta, Wecta of Woden. From this Woden arose all our royal kindred, and that of the Southumbrians also.

A.D. 449. And in their days Vortigern invited the Angles thither, and they came to Britain in three ceols, at the place called Wippidsfleet.

A.D. 455. This year Hengest and Horsa fought with Wurtgern the king on the spot that is called Aylesford. His brother Horsa being there slain, Hengest afterwards took to the kingdom with his son Esc.

A.D. 457. This year Hengest and Esc fought with the Britons on the spot that is called Crayford, and there slew four thousand men. The Britons then forsook the land of Kent, and in great consternation fled to London.

A.D. 465. This year Hengest and Esc fought with the Welsh, nigh Wippedfleet; and there slew twelve leaders, all Welsh. On their side a thane was there slain, whose name was Wipped.

A.D. 473. This year Hengest and Esc fought with the Welsh, and took immense Booty. And the Welsh fled from the English like fire.

A.D. 477. This year came Ella to Britain, with his three sons, Cymen, and Wlenking, and Cissa, in three ships; landing at a place that is called Cymenshore. There they slew many of the Welsh; and some in flight they drove into the wood that is called Andred'sley.



## The Anglo-Saxon Language

**Directions:** The Angles and Saxons were Germanic tribes, and the language they spoke was an early form of German which today is also called Old English. To us, it is a foreign language with very little similarity to the English we know. Read the following versions of the Lord's Prayer, the first one in Old English, the second in the language of King James I's seventeenth-century England.

### The Lord's Prayer in Anglo-Saxon

Fæder ure þu þe eart on heofonum;  
Si þin nama gehalgod  
to becume þin rice  
gewurþe ðin willa  
on eorðan swa swa on heofonum.  
urne gedæghwamlican hlaf syle us todæg  
and forgyf us ure gyltas  
swa swa we forgyfað urum gyltendum  
and ne gelæd þu us on costnunge  
ac alys us of yfele soþlice

### Version in the King James Bible

Our Father  
Which art in Heaven  
Hallowed be thy name.  
Thy Kingdom come,  
Thy will be done,  
As in Heaven, so in earth.  
Give us day by day our daily bread,  
And forgive us our sins, for we also  
Forgive everyone that is indebted to us.  
And lead us not into temptation  
But deliver us from evil.

## Lesson 2

# ***Beowulf*: The Story of a Hero**

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### Objectives

- To understand the story line of the Anglo-Saxon epic
- To refine understanding of the nature of a hero

### Notes to the Teacher

*Beowulf* is not a lengthy story, and many students are easily caught up in the action-filled plot. Your students may be reading the entire epic, or simply be studying excerpts in a textbook. These usually include the situation in Hrothgar's kingdom, the arrival of Beowulf to fight Grendel, the subsequent fight with Grendel's mother, and, many years later, the fight with the dragon, which leads to Beowulf's death.

Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* and other studies of archetypes point out commonalities in the views virtually all cultures have of true heroes and heroic journeys. *Beowulf* represents Anglo-Saxon values and beliefs, with an overlay of Christianity, no doubt added by monks who recorded the old epic. As a protagonist, Beowulf shares amazing similarities with Odysseus, Aeneas, Roland, Superman, and other cultural heroes.

Beowulf seeks immortality through fame in the tribal group. He may die, but the group will be saved; his honor is preserved, and that honor strengthens the people. Because of these and other qualities, he naturally draws followers. The stature of the hero is frequently measured by the formidable qualities of the adversaries. Beowulf's foes combine monstrous repulsiveness with almost invincible preternatural power. Animal and spirit, they can be seen as humanity depraved and allied with evil or, in the Christian perception, as descendants from Cain and the serpent, archetypes of temptation and testing that either prove people's mettle or expose their weakness.

Prior to this lesson, students need to complete the reading you have chosen to assign. Many translations of *Beowulf* are available, including the very readable one by Burton Raffel that is often included in high school texts.

### Procedure

1. Point out that *Beowulf* is the story of a hero. Ask students how they would define the word "hero."

**Example:** *A hero is a larger-than-life person who uses might for right. When other people are in danger or in trouble, a hero jumps in to save them.*

2. Distribute **Handout 3**, and have small groups answer the questions.



### ***Suggested Responses***

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1. For years a bloodthirsty monster has been preying on the kingdom, breaking into the king's home at night and killing his warriors. The people have been powerless against the creature.
  2. The epic does not provide a lot of physical details. Obviously Grendel is very large—able to grab and eat handfuls of men at a time. He also has claws.
  3. Beowulf has had some experience fighting evil creatures, and he wants to volunteer his help in getting rid of the evil monster. He also seeks fame.
  4. Beowulf decides to combat Grendel with his bare hands. At the end of a fierce fight, Beowulf prevails by ripping Grendel's arm off and hanging it in the rafters for all to see.
  5. Grendel's mother, furious over her son's death, has taken over terrorizing the kingdom. Hrothgar begs for Beowulf's help.
  6. Beowulf is a little tired, and the battle takes place in an underwater hall. He uses a sword to kill Grendel's mother and then lugs Grendel's head back to the surface, where Beowulf's men are full of fear that their leader has been killed.
  7. Eventually he becomes king and rules for many years.
  8. Beowulf is by now too old to take on monsters in battle. But he tries anyway and is mortally wounded. Before he dies, with some help, he also kills the dragon.
  9. Most of the men are too frightened to come to Beowulf's assistance, but there is one person who steps forward to use might for right. That is Wiglaf, a new hero.
3. Distribute **Handout 4**, and use it to explain the archetype of the heroic journey. Then ask students to complete the chart, and follow with whole-class discussion.

### ***Suggested Responses***

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1. Beowulf clearly feels the call to adventure, since he experiences many conflicts with evil creatures even before coming to Hrothgar's assistance.
2. Beowulf travels by ship from Geatland to Denmark.
3. Beowulf's trials are battles with monsters and other evil beings.
4. Until his encounter with the dragon, Beowulf experiences nothing but victories. Even though the monsters sometimes seem to have supernatural powers, Beowulf is victorious.
5. Here Beowulf differs from some other heroes. He is his own best advisor; he also knows that there is no guarantee of victory.
6. Hrothgar lavishly rewards Beowulf for the victories in Denmark.
7. The battle with Grendel's mother takes Beowulf deep underwater. (Note: This is a kind of parallel to Odysseus's journey to Hades and Dante's descent to Inferno.)
8. Beowulf does in fact return home, where he apparently resumes his position.

9. Beowulf becomes a wise and successful king.
  10. At home years later, Beowulf experiences the ordeal with the great dragon—a contest that leads to the hero's death.
  11. Beowulf is clearly the epitome of Anglo-Saxon manhood—skilled in battle, physically strong, loyal, and brave.
  12. Beowulf does not expect life after death; to him, fame is the only immortality available. He also reflects his culture's powerful belief in fate; no gods intervene to help him.
4. Point out that once we become aware of the hero archetype, we are likely to notice that it is prevalent in both literature and movies. For example, many critics note that part of the success of *The Lion King* is a result of its use of the idea of a heroic journey.
  5. Ask students to focus on the character of Grendel and to brainstorm words to describe him (cruel, alien, strong, bestial, alienated). Ask the following questions:
    1. What does the language used to present Grendel emphasize?
    2. What could have provoked Grendel to attack Hrothgar's people?

#### ***Suggested Responses***

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1. Grendel is pure evil. The epic has a dualistic view of good and evil.
  2. In the hall the men listened to stories and music and celebrated a kind of community, while Grendel was alone and alienated out in the dark. Being outcast can lead to sociopathic behavior.
6. Remind students of the old adage, "There are two (or more) sides to every story." Assign narrative writing assignments that tell part of the story in *Beowulf* from the point of view of Grendel, Grendel's mother, or the dragon.

#### **Optional Assignment**

Have students read John Gardner's *Grendel* and write essays in which they compare/contrast portraits of Grendel as protagonist and antagonist.

## What Happens in *Beowulf*?

**Directions:** Answer the following questions, and include textual evidence to support your responses.

1. At the beginning, what is the critical situation in Hrothgar's kingdom? How long has it lasted?
2. What does the epic reveal about Grendel's appearance and behavior?
3. Why does Beowulf come all the way from Geatland?
4. What weapons does Beowulf use in fighting Grendel? What is the outcome?
5. Why does Beowulf almost immediately become involved in another fight?
6. How does this battle compare and contrast with the one with Grendel?
7. What happens to Beowulf after he returns to his home in Geatland?
8. What happens when he decides to fight the evil dragon?
9. Is Beowulf the only heroic figure in the final part of the story?

## The Archetype of the Hero

**Directions:** Read the information below, and complete the chart to indicate specifically what happens in *Beowulf*.

The concept of archetypes came from psychiatrist Carl Jung, who observed patterns that seem to transcend all time and place divisions. He believed that these patterns of subconscious thought are shared by all humans and are reflected in myths and legends, as well as in dreams. Examples of archetypes include the wise advisor, the outcast, the sacred marriage, and the temptress.

One archetype that is so important it is sometimes referred to as the “monomyth” is the heroic journey. Typically the hero is an above-average person who experiences a call to adventure that requires a journey. Along the way, the hero encounters various tests and trials that culminate in a major ordeal. Sometimes this ordeal is an encounter with death or the underworld. Victorious, the hero is rewarded and returns home, often with insight and other gifts to share. Once home, the hero is likely to face another test.

Heroes are not all alike. They reflect the values characteristic of their cultures; however, they do seem to share an amazing number of traits that are part of the collective human psyche.

Heroic Archetype	What Happens in <i>Beowulf</i> ?
1. The hero experiences a call to leave ordinary life in pursuit of adventure.	
2. The hero embarks on a journey.	
3. The journey involves tests and trials.	
4. The hero experiences victory in contests with evil forces.	
5. Sometimes the hero has a wise advisor.	
6. The victorious hero receives rewards.	
7. Often the hero’s trials include a journey to some kind of underworld.	
8. The final part of the hero’s journey is often the road back home.	
9. The returning hero comes equipped with new wisdom and shares it with the community.	
10. The arrival home may involve yet another ordeal.	
11. The hero is always someone who is above average in just about every way.	
12. The hero embodies cultural values and beliefs.	



## Lesson 3

# *Beowulf* and the Epic Form

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### Objectives

- To understand the characteristics of an epic
- To identify those characteristics in *Beowulf*
- To recognize challenges involved in translations

### Notes to the Teacher

By definition, an epic is a long narrative about the heroic deeds accomplished by a hero, a person of above-average strength and ability. The hero usually undergoes perilous adventures for the sake of a tribe or nation. Sometimes heroes accomplish their tasks with little assistance. Other times—in classical epics, for instance—the hero is frequently frustrated by actions of hostile gods and aided by friendly ones.

Epics come from a rich and diverse oral tradition that includes both history and folklore. In the classical epic the narrative usually opens with a short invocation to the muse of epic poetry, which may include a statement of theme. This is followed immediately by a crucial moment of action *in medias res*. *The Aeneid*, for example, opens with a description of a storm that tosses half of Aeneas's fleet on the Carthaginian shore. Later, while attending a banquet, Aeneas speaks about what happened prior to the storm. Eventually, the story comes back to the present and moves on.

Characteristics of the epics of classical Greece and Rome also emerge in epics from other cultures, including *Beowulf*. *Beowulf* himself embodies the ideals of Anglo-Saxon culture in his physical strength, skill, and bravery. He also demonstrates a desire for fame and belief in the power of fate.

In this lesson students learn or review characteristics of the epic form and apply them to *Beowulf*. They then discuss the impact of translators on works like *Beowulf*.

### Procedure

1. Explain that *Beowulf* is an example of a literary form called an *epic* and that many cultures have national epics. Classical Greece produced *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, and ancient Rome followed suit with *The Aeneid*. France has *The Song of Roland*, and Spain has *El Cid*. These are all examples of folk epics, born in the oral tradition and later written down. Some epics, such as Dante's *Divine Comedy* and John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, are created by a single author and are known as literary epics.

2. Distribute **Handout 5**, and use it to clarify epic characteristics. Then ask students to complete the chart.

#### ***Suggested Responses***

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1. *Beowulf* tells the story of the hero's life, from young manhood to old age and death.
  2. It is relatively long, about the length of the typical novella, and takes more than a half hour to read.
  3. *Beowulf* was originally chanted by storytellers called *scops*; the epic itself is in verse and includes figures like these performing for the community. Poetic form contributes rhythm and facilitates memorization.
  4. Beowulf is capable of amazing feats, including defeating a gigantic monster with his bare hands and holding his breath for a very long time underwater in pursuit of another monster. Everything he does represents good fighting against evil.
  5. We see three epic battles and hear of other conflicts with evil forces.
  6. Beowulf is the Anglo-Saxon hero par excellence—fearless, highly skilled, powerful, committed to good, loyal.
2. Distribute **Handout 6**, and ask students to complete it individually. Follow with open-ended discussion. Then ask:
    - Is it possible for there to be a real hero in our society?
    - Are there people who still risk all in the battle of good against evil? Emphasize that heroes by definition are rare.
  3. Remind students that *Beowulf* was written in Anglo-Saxon, which to us is a foreign language, even though it is an ancient antecedent of modern English. It is necessary for us to read the epic in translation. The original Anglo-Saxons were illiterate and heard the story as *scops* rehearsed it aloud; moreover, when the epic finally was transcribed into written form, it did not appear in our alphabet. Emphasize that a translator exerts a big impression on readers' responses. Use a simple example. Someone could translate *amigo* as *friend*, *pal*, *buddy*, or *companion*. Although those words have similar denotations, they differ in their connotations.
  4. Distribute **Handout 7**, and ask students to complete the exercise.

#### ***Suggested Responses***

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1. The commonalities indicate that the original says that Grendel's forays occurred only after nightfall, not during the day.
2. Grendel is a creature associated with darkness and night, like many predators.
3. The translations differ in specific word choices, from referring to Grendel simply as "he" to using the strong word "fiend." They also differ in rhythm.

## What Is an Epic?

**Directions:** Read the description of an epic, and complete the exercise to show how *Beowulf* makes use of traditional epic devices.

An epic is a narrative, often in poem form, that describes the adventures of a hero. Epics have substantial length, and they are basically serious. Epic heroes reflect the values of their cultures and are involved in serious quests and conflicts; they exhibit humor or lightheartedness only rarely. To tell the story of the hero, an epic needs substantial length, more like a novel than like a short story. Traditional epics were created in poem form.

Epic Form	What Happens in <i>Beowulf</i> ?
1. Narrative: An epic tells a story; it is not an essay.	
2. Substantial length: It is more like a novel than like a short story.	
3. Poetic form: Traditional epics were poetry, not prose.	
4. Heroic protagonist: The main character is good and bigger than life.	
5. Series of adventures and triumphs: The protagonist experiences dangers and challenges.	
6. Cultural values: The protagonist is a role model of everything seen as good in the culture.	



## Planning the Great American Epic

**Directions:** Modern American culture is not the product of an ancient storytelling tradition, and so there is no national epic, although some people see Huckleberry Finn as an epic hero and others give that role to Superman. Create a plan for this long-missing national epic.

1. Where and when will your story occur? What events will it feature?
2. How long do you want it to be? How many chapters will it include?
3. Will you use poetic form? Has prose today for the most part replaced poetic expression and thus become acceptable in an epic? Or does verse have an effect on the way we perceive the importance of a story?
4. Give your protagonist a name, and describe him/her.
5. List a series of adventures to be included in your epic.
6. What American values will your protagonist embody?

## The Effects of Translations

**Directions:** Translators make choices regarding both diction and syntax. They have to think about words' denotations and connotations, as well as about sentence structures. They also have to be familiar with both the original language and the one into which they are translating. Read the following translations of a single line from *Beowulf*, and answer the questions.

"He went there to visit at the fall of night."  
—Edwin Morgan

"Then at the nightfall the fiend drew near."  
—Charles W. Kennedy

"When night descended, Grendel set out."  
—Stanley B. Greenfield

"When the sun was sunken, he set out to visit."  
—Lesslie Hall

"Then, when darkness had dropped, Grendel. . ."  
—Burton Raffel

"Went he forth to find at fall of night. . ."  
—Francis B. Gummere

1. What do the translations have in common? What do they all indicate about the original?

2. What does this single line show about Grendel?

3. How do the translators' interpretations differ?



## Lesson 4

# Literary Devices in *Beowulf*

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### Objectives

- To recognize the epic's use of sound devices such as alliteration and caesuras
- To identify kennings in the epic and create some for the present day

### Notes to the Teacher

In ancient times poetry had a public function: to entertain people according to agreed-upon conventions. One of Hrothgar's thanes fulfills this function and is described as a man who knows many ancient poems and songs and also is able to create his own poetry.

Often the method of composition was spontaneous oral performance, but the poet was well prepared for his role with many formula phrases. "Whale road," "swan road," and "sail road," for example, indicate the weather at sea as well as the sea itself. The poet also had a ready supply of folktales, battle sagas, historic events, and notable leaders, all of which provided variations on themes. Music from a small harp or lyre accompanied the presentation. Oral tradition controlled the length and arrangement of lines and some poetic devices.

Since the epic poem was meant for performance before a leader and followers gathered in a hall, the language demanded the use of certain devices to aid both teller and listener. Each poetic line is called a *stich*; the half line, a hemi-stich. Each half line has two stressed syllables and a varying number of unstressed syllables. Division into two parts gave the poet a *caesura*, a pause for breath at midpoint in each line. Lines sometimes end-stop and sometimes wrap, and alliteration highlights many of them.

Repetition of the same idea in successive lines, expressed in different words, gave the poet time to formulate the next step in the story. Compounding, a process familiar in modern English, abounds in the epic. People are seldom mentioned only by name; they usually are given an identifying epithet. Hrothgar is a ring-giver, a gold-friend; Beowulf is Edgtho's son. The *kenning*, or condensed metaphor, is symbolic: battle-light (sword); gem of heaven (sun); bone-chamber (body); heather-stepper (deer); great sea garment (sail); glory-reaper (hero). "Word-hoard" is a kenning to indicate the poet's available vocabulary and phrases.

Descriptive passages alternate with dialogue and lengthy speeches. *Beowulf* includes an unusually vivid description of the terrible mere (lake) where Grendel's mother dwells. Translators vary in the extent to which they attempt to replicate Anglo-Saxon devices.

In this lesson students first learn about frequently used devices in *Beowulf*. Students then create kennings we could or do find useful today. Finally, students receive a writing assignment to culminate their study of *Beowulf* and discuss the possibility of heroes in today's society.

### Procedure

1. Explain that the poetry used in *Beowulf* is characterized by several devices. There was, for example, frequent use of *alliteration*, the repetition of consonant sounds in neighboring words. Ask students to create original examples of alliteration. (The cat crept across the counter toward the mouse. The flower petals fell frozen to the floor.) Emphasize that the repetition involves sounds, not necessarily letters, and provide examples. (The phone feels sticky. The ceaseless rumble of the sea.)
2. Explain that another characteristic poetic device is the *caesura*, a pause near the middle of each line. Each side of the pause included two stressed syllables and various numbers of unstressed syllables. Thus each line is balanced somewhat like a seesaw in a playground.
3. Clarify that it is not easy to carry over these characteristics in translation, and translators vary in their attempts to do so. Ask students to examine the part of the epic that describes Beowulf entering the water in search of Grendel's mother up to his arrival in her hall. Direct them to look for examples of alliterations and caesuras.

*Example:* Answers will vary depending on the translation you are using. If the class is reading the one by Burton Raffel, which is often included in anthologies, they will note that commas and other punctuation marks sometimes indicate caesuras. While the translation is easy to read and seems uncontrived, it does include alliterations: "wet world . . . welcomed," "failed . . . fight," "swimmer . . . see," "tusks . . . teeth."

4. Explain that another common device characteristic of Anglo-Saxon poetry is called a *kenning*. A kenning is a descriptive phrase that is used to represent a noun. The whale-road was the sea; the ring-giver was the king; a sea-steed was a ship. Sometimes kennings involve more than two words. Ask students to look for kennings in the sections of *Beowulf* that deal with Grendel and with Grendel's mother.

*Example:* Using Burton Raffel, students will find examples such as "shepherd of evil," "guardian of crime," "Almighty's enemy," "mighty protector of men," and "mighty water witch.")

5. Distribute **Handout 8**, and ask small groups to complete the exercise. Follow with discussion.

### ***Suggested Responses***

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1. This will vary depending on the translator you are using. In many cases commas, semi-colons, or periods indicate caesuras.
  2. In many cases students will find two important words, not necessarily two important syllables, on each side of the caesura.
  3. Most translators avoid overuse of alliterations and kennings, which can sound contrived.
  4. The dignity of the story is more important than the devices, but using mid-line pauses, balanced stresses, alliterations, and kennings can help to convey some of the Anglo-Saxon feel of the poem.
5. Distribute **Handout 9**, and ask students to complete the exercise.

### ***Suggested Responses***

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1. exam-giver; order-keeper; classroom monarch
  2. path to adulthood; student-crusher; incubator for adolescents
  3. cholesterol-heaven; french-fry-king; golden arches
  4. cow juice; bone-builder; coffee embroidery
  5. puddle-jumper; road-gnat; two-seater
  6. mouse-hunter; lap-mat; cheese-lover
  7. word-mine; word-hoard; language cornucopia
  8. ticket to freedom; rite of passage; identity-proof
  9. louse house; legal bed-and-board; the big house
  10. time-keeper; towel-thrower; stadium zebra
7. Distribute **Handout 10**, and use it to explain an essay assignment to culminate students' study of *Beowulf*. Review the conventions regarding capitalization and punctuation in using quotations. Distribute **Handout 11**, and encourage students to use it as a tool in writing and revising their essays. Set a day for peer consultations and one for submission of final products.
8. Ask students if they believe there are any heroes like Beowulf in today's world. Lead them to see that heroes by their very nature are quite rare. For example, most people stand well back from a burning house; a hero rushes in to rescue children trapped inside. If a sniper is taking shots from a fifth floor window, most people take cover or escape the area; a hero takes the risks necessary to disarm the sniper.

### **Optional Assignment**

If you are working with an advanced placement or honors class, you may want to have the students do more extensive comparisons/contrasts of translations of *Beowulf*. Results can be shared in essays or presentations, and students can discuss which translations have the most potential appeal for twenty-first-century audiences.



## Kennings Today

**Directions:** Anglo-Saxon and Norse poets made extensive use of kennings, but these little phrases to replace nouns are just as useful today. Instead of referring to an “actor,” one could mention an “Oscar-winner”; one could identify a NASA spacecraft as a “planet-hopper”. Fill in the chart with interesting kennings.

Term	Kennings
1. Teacher	
2. High school	
3. McDonalds	
4. Milk	
5. Sports car	
6. Cat	
7. Dictionary	
8. Driver's license	
9. Prison	
10. Sports official	



## Critical Views of *Beowulf*

**Directions:** Scholars and critical readers have various opinions about the themes of *Beowulf*. Choose one statement with which you agree or disagree and argue your opinion with quotations, episodes, and examples from the text of the epic.

- *Beowulf* is steeped in a pagan tradition that shows nature as hostile and forces of death as uncontrollable. Blind fate picks random victims; people are never brought in harmony with the world. *Beowulf* ends a failure.
- *Beowulf* presents an ideal of loyalty. The failure to live up to this ideal on the part of some thanes points up the extraordinary faithfulness of *Beowulf*.
- *Beowulf* is a blending of Christian traditions with a folk story that praises loyalty and courage in the face of extreme danger and even death. It presents a model of a human being willing to die to deliver others from terrifying evil forces.
- *Beowulf* is the story of a dual ordeal: an external battle with vicious opponents and an internal battle with human tendencies of pride, greed, cowardice, betrayal, and self-concern.
- *Beowulf* is the universal story of life's journey from adolescence to adulthood to old age. The hero grows in wisdom about self and about the world through the pains and triumphs of personal experience.

## Evaluation Rubric for an Essay about *Beowulf*

**Directions:** Use the criteria listed below to assign points and identify areas for revision and editing.

Points	Central Claim	Organization	Supportive Content	Language	Closure
5	The essay takes a clear and convincing position regarding one of the prompts on <b>Handout 10</b> .	The essay is logically and effectively organized and makes use of effective transitions.	The writer uses abundant, clear, and convincing textual evidence, including correctly punctuated quotations, to support the central claim.	The essay uses academic diction and varies sentence structure correctly.	The conclusion is well phrased and establishes clear closure.
3	The essay deals with one of the prompts but could be more specific and convincing.	The content is adequately organized but seems a bit choppy in presentation.	The essay includes textual evidence in support of the central idea, but that evidence could be more convincing.	There are no serious language errors, but the level of diction and syntax tends to be somewhat elementary.	The essay seems to stop rather than to reach a conclusion.
1	The essay shows no awareness of the prompts or consists of random, unfocused comments.	The content lacks logical organization and seems haphazard.	The essay's generalizations remain vague and unsupported by specific textual evidence.	The essay is fraught with language errors.	The closing paragraph does not deal with the central topic.



## Lesson 5

# Medieval Chivalry and Arthurian Legends

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### Objectives

- To understand the evolution from the Anglo-Saxon warrior society to the ideals in the code of chivalry
- To appreciate the legend of King Arthur

### Notes to the Teacher

The English medieval period historically began with the Norman Conquest in 1066. The Norman French were superb soldiers, excellent administrators and lawyers, great borrowers and adapters, but lacked creativity and inventiveness. In systems of government and in artistic design, the Anglo-Saxons were more advanced than the Normans. William of Normandy introduced the feudal system, based on landholding by a great noble or king who rented the land out in return for allegiance and military service. This resulted in many property disputes. To alleviate the problem, in 1086 an inventory of all property was drawn up by the order of William and collected in the Domesday Book, which listed all landowners and their claims. This was used to settle disputes and to tax subjects. During William's reign, English common law evolved, and the medieval church spread its influence. From papal proclamation came the Crusades, which engendered the ideal of knightly behavior that we call chivalry.

From the rough-and-ready warrior of the Anglo-Saxon age evolved the courteous hero of the Middle Ages. The development of the chivalric code reflects several changes in society: spread of Christianity, rise in women's status, and refinement of loyalty. The mental picture evoked by the term *knight* is often that of a loyal, fearless, persevering, gentle, devout, and humble man. This romanticized view is most commonly portrayed in literature and films. Emerging from a glistening castle, wearing shiny armor, riding a powerful steed, the knight seeks honor. This, of course, was not always the true version. Some knights were traitorous, cowardly, vindictive men.

Legends of King Arthur were born during this time. Arthur's story started in the oral tradition, and authors since then have embellished it with their own imaginative details. King Arthur was the son of King Uther, but he was raised by Ector and was relatively unnoticed until he was able to pull out a sword embedded in a stone. He successfully fought off invaders and started the Round Table, a device that kept the knights from competing for the highest

seating. Some legends say that Arthur never died and will return. Merlin was a magician, prophet, sage, and advisor to King Arthur; some stories say that he eventually lost his powers because of his love for Vivien. Guinevere was Arthur's wife and reportedly the daughter of Roman nobility; the most famous legends tell of her adulterous love affair with Sir Lancelot, who was the first Round Table knight and a perfect model of chivalry. Galahad, Lancelot's son, was one of the knights chosen to pursue the Holy Grail. Mordred, Arthur's nephew, serves as the villain of the story; he attempted a coup when Arthur was away and was killed, although he also seriously wounded Arthur. Morgan le Fay, a powerful sorceress, appears in some of the legends as a half sister and implacable enemy of King Arthur.

In 1470 Sir Thomas Malory retold many of the Arthurian legends in his *Morte d'Arthur*. Tennyson later retold them in *The Idylls of the King*; T. H. White explored them in *The Once and Future King*; and Mary Stewart used them as a basis of a quartet of novels. There is some evidence of a historical basis for the stories about King Arthur, and the tales are so evocative that interest in them has never ended. Certainly Arthur embodies an ideal of a clear sense of right and wrong and the possibility of acting with courage, endurance, integrity, intelligence, and imagination.

Prior to the lesson, students should read *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, which is included or excerpted in many anthologies and can readily be found on the Internet. In the lesson students examine the nature of chivalry and learn about King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. They then discuss the story about Gawain. As a follow-up to the lesson, you may want to show your students the 2001 movie *A Knight's Tale*, which has elements of a lighthearted spoof but also reveals a lot about chivalry.

### Procedure

1. Explain that the dominance of the Anglo-Saxon culture represented by Beowulf ended in 1066 with an invasion by the Norman French under William of Normandy, and the Middle English period began. The language was impacted by an early form of French and changed dramatically. The rough-and-ready Anglo-Saxon warrior was replaced with the ideals of knighthood. Knights went on crusades to foreign lands, and at home they were meant to embody loyalty to the king and perfect courtesy.
2. Distribute **Handout 12**, and ask students to read John of Salisbury's description of knighthood in [Part A](#). Follow with discussion of his view of a true knight as one who defended the church, protected the poor, and displayed honor and valor in selfless service to God and the king.
3. Ask students to complete [Part B](#) of **Handout 12**, and follow with open-ended discussion. Emphasize the parallels among early heroes like Beowulf, medieval knights, and heroic behavior today.
4. Explain that stories about King Arthur and the Round Table exemplify the code of chivalry. These stories have been told countless times, first

in the oral tradition, then in written form by Sir Thomas Malory in the fifteenth century and later by others, and eventually in both movies and children's literature.

5. Divide the class into groups, and assign each group one of the following topics:

- King Arthur
- Merlin
- Guinevere
- Sir Lancelot
- Sir Galahad
- Mordred
- Morgan le Fay

Ask the groups to research information about these legendary figures and to prepare to report it to the rest of the class, using **Handout 13** for note-taking purposes.

6. Point out that Sir Gawain was one of the Knights of the Round Table, and the story about his encounters with the Green Knight is one of the most famous from the Middle English period. Distribute **Handout 14**, and ask small groups to discuss the questions.

#### ***Suggested Responses***

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1. The members of Arthur's court appear to be young, carefree, and playful in celebration of Yuletide.
  2. The Green Knight is green and immense, with long hair and a beard. His clothing is ornately decorated, and he is not wearing armor.
  3. There is a gruesome spilling of green blood, and the knights kick the head around the floor. Then, magically, the Green Knight picks up his head, addresses the group, and leaves.
  4. Gawain is a true knight, courteous, humble, and brave.
  5. We see the court in another Yuletide celebration, and there are many parallels. This court seems most interested in Gawain's social skills.
  6. The temptation is the alluring lady of the castle.
  7. The Green Knight seems to find Gawain's experience entertaining, like watching a game, and everyone laughs.
  8. Gawain is completely loyal to King Arthur, and he bravely approaches the castle of the Green Knight, where he demonstrates courtesy and skill and tries to resist the blandishments of the lady. Gawain is a young knight, not yet firmly formed in the ways of chivalry.
7. Ask students to select one character associated with Arthurian legends and to transpose that character to the twenty-first century. Assign short writings in which students describe the appearance and actions of the characters they chose.

# The Essence of Chivalry

## Part A

**Directions:** John of Salisbury was an important twelfth-century scholar, writer, churchman, and political figure. Read the following passage, which he wrote about knights and knighthood. Then identify what Salisbury thought were the qualities found in a good knight.

### The Function of Knighthood

But what is the office of the duly ordained soldiery? To defend the Church, to assail infidelity, to venerate the priesthood, to protect the poor from injuries, to pacify the province, to pour out their blood for their brothers (as the formula of their oath instructs them), and, if need be, to lay down their lives. The high praises of God are in their throat, and two-edge swords are in their hands to execute punishment on the nations and rebuke upon the peoples, and to bind their kings in chains and their nobles in links of iron. But to what end? To the end that they may serve madness, vanity, avarice, or their own private self-will? By no means. Rather to the end that they may execute the judgment that is committed to them to execute; wherein each follows not his own will but the deliberate decision of God, the angels, and men, in accordance with equity and the public utility. . . . For soldiers that do these things are “saints,” and are the more loyal to their prince in proportions as they more zealously keep the faith of God; and they advance the more successfully the honor of their own valour as they seek the more faithfully in all things the glory of their God.

—John of Salisbury

## Part B

**Directions:** Chivalry represented medieval ideals rather than a description of the normal daily behavior of knights; there is no single list of the attributes of the truly chivalrous knight. Rather, the attributes are gleaned from medieval writings and from legends about people such as France’s Roland and England’s King Arthur. For each trait, list an example of a true knight’s behavior.

Trait	Example
Practical behavior	
Loyalty to church and king	
Protection of the defenseless	
Care for widows and orphans	
Pursuit of honor and glory	
Disregard for material rewards	
Perfect courtesy	
Avoidance of meanness, deceit, and lies	
Respect for women	
Willingness to face all challengers	
Never turning one’s back to an enemy	

## The Legend of King Arthur

**Directions:** Use the chart to record information and to list your responses and questions.

<b>Character</b>	<b>Information</b>	<b>Responses/Questions</b>
King Arthur		
Merlin		
Guinevere		
Sir Lancelot		
Sir Galahad		
Mordred		
Morgan le Fay		



## ***Sir Gawain and the Green Knight***

**Directions:** After you have read the medieval romance, answer the questions.

1. What impressions do you receive from the description of Arthur's court?
2. What physical details about the Green Knight does the story provide?
3. What happens when Sir Gawain beheads the Green Knight?
4. What first impressions of Gawain does the story provide?
5. How does the Green Knight's castle compare/contrast with Camelot?
6. What temptation does Gawain face? How does he react?
7. How does the Green Knight see Gawain's adventure? How does Gawain see it?
8. How does the romance illustrate the code of chivalry?

## Lesson 6

# Geoffrey Chaucer's Canterbury Pilgrims

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### Objectives

- To examine Chaucer's character portraits in the Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*
- To analyze clues that reveal the attitude of the narrative voice
- To examine the feudal class structure characteristic of medieval England and apply it to Chaucer's pilgrims

### Notes to the Teacher

Geoffrey Chaucer, born a member of the rising middle class in the fourteenth century, was trained for a career in the court of King Edward III. He served in the army, held several government positions, and married one of the ladies of the court. He is buried in Westminster Abbey in the Poet's Corner.

Chaucer's greatest work, *The Canterbury Tales*, was one of the first books printed by William Caxton, inventor of a printing press. Chaucer showed his wide knowledge of the literature of his age in his verbal portraits of pilgrims on their way to the shrine of Thomas Becket. Chaucer planned more than a hundred tales, two told by each pilgrim on the way to Canterbury and two told by each on the return trip. Before his death he completed twenty-two tales and two fragments. He presented his observations as a companion pilgrim, satirizing and commenting on the people and problems of his age.

Archbishop Becket was murdered in 1170 by four knights of Henry II. King Henry and Becket had a long-standing feud. According to some accounts, in a fit of passion the king said, "Is there not one who will deliver me from this low-born priest?" Thinking the king wished Becket dead, four knights went to Canterbury Cathedral to accomplish the deed. When the king realized what they were doing, he sent a messenger to stop them, but he was too late. Becket was canonized in 1174.

In the character portraits in the Prologue, Chaucer reveals the paradoxes of human life. He exposes the best and worst of human nature in both historical and personal contexts. Chaucer's Knight is a credible embodiment of the code of chivalry lived out in its letter and in its spirit. The other pilgrims, too, are intriguing portraits from medieval life, including the reality of a rising middle class.

In this lesson students discuss the Prologue and the descriptions of the pilgrims, learn about feudal social structure, and recognize Chaucer's portraits

of an entire society in miniature. Students need access to the Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*, which is included in most anthologies of British literature and is also readily available online.

### Procedure

1. Read aloud the first part of the Prologue, stopping just before the description of the knight. Then ask students to describe the general situation. (It is April, and people have gathered at an inn for a pilgrimage to Canterbury. The speaker, one of the pilgrims, and Chaucer's persona intends to describe all of them.)
2. Point out that, unlike Old English (Anglo-Saxon), Middle English has a substantial similarity to the English we speak today but it still poses quite a challenge. For this reason, most students meeting Chaucer for the first time read modernized versions, such as translations by Nerill Coghill or Sheila Fisher.
3. Read aloud the description of the Knight. Then ask students to describe the speaker's attitude toward the Knight (respect, approval, admiration). Ask students what we learn about the Knight. (He is a model of chivalry, one who has participated in many crusades and is characterized by courtesy and humility.) Ask why Chaucer chose to describe the Knight first (probably in deference to his social position and experience).
4. Ask students to read and take notes on the rest of the character descriptions, including both physical descriptions and character traits, as well as the narrator's attitudes. (Note: This will take a substantial amount of time, and you may want to provide individual assistance with decoding the text.)
5. Point out that some of the pilgrims seem more interesting than others. That was certainly the narrator's reaction, too, as the descriptions vary from many lines to only a few.
6. Distribute **Handout 15**, and have students complete the exercise.

### *Suggested Responses*

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1. the Oxford Scholar, a perpetual student
2. the Miller, all brawn and not much sense
3. the Squire, the knight's son, brightly dressed and friendly
4. the Parson, a really holy priest
5. the Prioress, with pretentious and amusing manners
6. the Pardoner, a swindler and a clergyman
7. the Yeoman, a talented woodsman
8. the Summoner, who traveled with the Pardoner
9. the Cook, about whom not much is said
10. the Plowman, a virtuous farmer and a brother to the Parson

11. the Doctor, skilled and shrewd
  12. the Franklin, lover of good food and other pleasures
  13. the Monk, a worldly head of a monastery
  14. the Wife of Bath, earthy and likable
  15. the Skipper, thief of wine and wielder of the plank
  16. the Friar, untrue to his vows
  17. the Guildsmen, skilled workers who are doing quite well financially
  18. the Merchant, well dressed but worried
7. Point out Chaucer's genius at description and ability to use only a few words to bring a character to life. Distribute **Handout 16**, and ask students to complete the exercise.

### ***Suggested Responses***

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- This is one of Chaucer's characteristic traits and a source of humor in the Prologue. For example, details about the Prioress are followed by a comment about her size. The Monk seems admirable until we find that he is a modern man because the modern way is the easy way.
  - We see the Miller's stiff red beard and the Yeoman's green attire, and we can almost smell the onions and garlic on the Summoner's breath.
  - Chaucer praises the authenticity of only a few pilgrims: the Knight, the Parson, and the Plowman. He says that the Knight is a perfect example of chivalry, and he admires the Parson and his brother.
  - The Squire is still a very young man who earns amusement rather than admiration. The Pardoner peddles false relics, and the Miller cheats in business.
  - For example, the Plowman is motivated by religious faith, and the Wife of Bath just likes to have a good time.
  - We hear about the Monk's intricate gold pin, the Prioress's fancy ring, and the sore on the Cook's leg.
  - Chaucer for the most part observes but does not condemn foibles. He seems vastly amused by humanity's penchant for foolishness—the Merchant, whose veneer of business success masks major financial worries, for example, and the Doctor, who is so fond of money.
  - Actual condemnation seems reserved to the Summoner and the Pardoner, church figures completely unfaithful to religious ideals.
8. Explain that the social structure in medieval England was hierarchical. Ask students how they would describe the social structure in our world today. Money often seems to be the key factor, and people can be classified as wealthy, middle class, or poor, with various gradations in between. In some contexts, the key criteria can be factors such as athletic skill, personal appearance, and level of education.

9. Distribute **Handout 17**, and use it to explain the social structure in Chaucer's England. Then have students fill in the pyramid.

***Example:** Chaucer's pilgrims do not include nobles, who would probably have journeyed to Canterbury by carriage rather than on horseback. The highest-ranking pilgrims are the Knight and his son. The clergy class had a high rank because of the power and wealth of the medieval church; among them, the Monk would outrank the Prioress, and the Parson would probably be at the bottom in terms of wealth and power. The middle class would include people like the Doctor, the Lawyer, and the Merchant, as well as the Wife of Bath. The trade class included skilled workers, who usually began in apprenticeships; members include the Guildsmen, the Manciple, and probably the Cook. Peasantry would include the Plowman and the Yeoman, as well as possibly the Miller and the Skipper.*

10. Emphasize that *The Canterbury Tales* is not only a literary work but also an important historical document that provides a cross section of medieval life from the point of view of someone who lived at that time.
11. Assign students to select one pilgrim about whom Chaucer provides a substantial amount of information and to write in their own words a description of the character and an explanation of Chaucer's attitude toward him/her. Point out the importance of textual evidence to support generalizations.

## The Canterbury Pilgrims

**Directions:** Identify the following characters described in the Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*.

1. This thin man rode a thin horse and loved learning above everything else.
2. This red-bearded person liked to wrestle and tell off-color jokes.
3. This young man liked to sing and flirt with girls.
4. This holy priest took good care of his parishioners.
5. This ample-figured woman was very sentimental about her little dogs.
6. This person sold objects that he claimed were relics of long-dead saints.
7. This well-armed man traveled in the company of the Knight and the Squire.
8. This person's appearance was enough to scare children, and he was often drunk.
9. Chaucer noticed that this person had an open sore on his leg.
10. This hardworking man was very religious and donated faithfully to his church.
11. This person was careful about his diet and loved money.
12. This person's home was always full of fine food and drinks.
13. This member of the clergy enjoyed hunting.
14. This amiable woman liked to laugh and talk and was married more than once.
15. This person seems to have been involved in piracy.
16. This clergy member spent a lot of time in taverns and was something of a womanizer.
17. This upwardly mobile group traveled together.
18. This prosperous looking businessman was actually in debt.

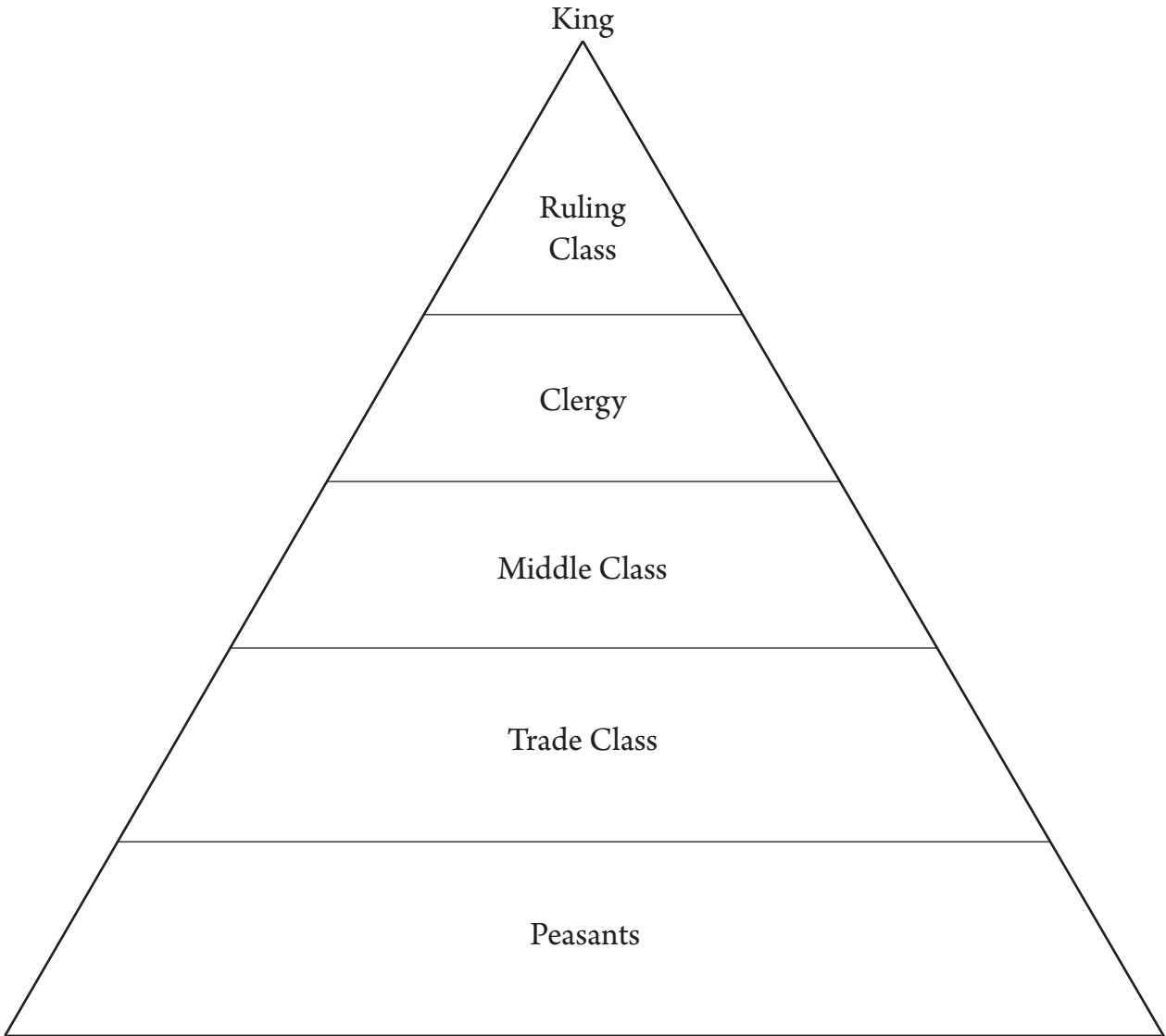
## Chaucer's Genius for Description

**Directions:** Chaucer's portraits deftly capture characteristics in one or two strokes. Using your text, quote lines that demonstrate the following characteristics.

Stylistic Element	Textual Example
Lines that build but lead to a put-down; an apparent compliment juxtaposed with a criticism	
Vivid physical description, including a variety of images	
Lines that show authenticity: recognition of sincerity	
Lines that expose lack of authenticity and reveal hypocrisy	
Lines that suggest motivation and express the narrator's conclusions about a character	
Lines that make implications by associations and by specific details	
Lines that indicate Chaucer's admiration, which is earned by only a few of the pilgrims	
Lines that indicate Chaucer's condemnation, also earned by only a few	
Lines that indicate Chaucer's tolerance, his response to most of the pilgrims	

## Medieval British Class Structure

**Directions:** Medieval England had a definite class system with a hierarchy of rights and responsibilities. This structure was based on feudalism, and it was gradually evolving, as the middle class—nonexistent early in the Middle Ages—became increasingly prominent. Examine the pyramid below, and assign Chaucer’s pilgrims to the appropriate social classes.







## Lesson 7

# Chaucer's Tales

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### Objectives

- To recognize *The Canterbury Tales* as a frame story
- To discuss the relationship connecting a pilgrim's personal characteristics with the type of story he/she would tell
- To read and respond to "The Pardoner's Tale"

### Notes to the Teacher

This lesson assumes that students have already read and discussed the part of the Prologue that describes the situation and introduces the pilgrims. Students begin by reading the rest of the Prologue and describing Chaucer's ambitious plan for the rest of *The Canterbury Tales*. With each pilgrim telling two stories on the way to Canterbury and two during the trip back to London, Chaucer anticipated writing well over a hundred tales. Though he never completed this project, he finished the prologue, twenty-two tales, two fragments, and transitional pieces. The challenge was enormous: to match the tales to the pilgrims telling them, through both content and language. The stories reflect types of stories popular during Chaucer's time.

The two most popular tales for use in high school classrooms are "The Nun's Priest's Tale" (a beast fable) and "The Pardoner's Tale" (an exemplum). This lesson focuses on the second of these, which is especially useful both because of its brevity and because of the story told.

Students need access to the Prologue and to either a printed copy or an audio recording of "The Pardoner's Tale."

### Procedure

1. Have students read aloud the section of the Prologue that comes after the description of the Pardoner. Ask students to describe the Innkeeper's suggestion to the pilgrims.

*Example:* He suggests a storytelling contest. Each pilgrim will tell four stories in all, and the Innkeeper will be the judge. The prize will be a free meal at the Tabard Inn when they return from Canterbury.

2. Ask students to put themselves in the place of the pilgrims. Where would they get ideas for stories to tell one another? What topics would they choose?

*Example:* Storytellers today might get their ideas from a favorite activity such as basketball or playing the piano. Other possible sources include television, movies, books, and family legends.

3. Distribute **Handout 18**. Have students read the information in Part A and complete the exercise.

***Suggested Responses***

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1. Any educated person, especially a clergy member, might choose to tell a beast fable.
  2. Exemplums were often included in sermons, so the clergy would be accustomed to this genre.
  3. We might expect a fabliau from the Miller, the Cook, or the Skipper.
  4. A fairy tale might be the choice of the Wife of Bath or the Prioress.
  5. We might expect a metrical romance from the Knight or perhaps the Squire.
  6. A miracle story might be appropriate for the Prioress, the Parson, the Oxford Scholar, and many of the other pilgrims.
  7. The mock epic is a sophisticated form that might be used by the Oxford Scholar or by one of the clergy.
4. Conduct a discussion based on the questions in Part B.

***Suggested Responses***

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1. Ideas will vary, of course. In fact, neither the Plowman nor the Knight's Yeoman tells a story.
  2. Students might expect an interesting story about the Crusades from the Knight or an amusing tale from the Wife of Bath. In fact, one of the most famous stories comes from the priest traveling with the Nun, and he is barely mentioned in the Prologue. The Pardoner is a disreputable character, but he tells a nice little exemplum.
  3. One can imagine the Prioress's discomfort with the Miller's choice of tale.
5. Distribute **Handout 19**, and ask small groups to complete the exercise. (Note: To complete the exercise, it is necessary to read "The Pardoner's Tale.")

***Suggested Responses***

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1. Chaucer plainly finds the Pardoner to be a distasteful person, and there is some mockery in the tone.
2. The Pardoner is a very effective liturgist.
3. Perhaps the clergy seemed to be a position of safety and security to him, and his use of the "relics" demonstrates his greed.
4. The theme of the story—that greed is the root of evil—contrasts vividly with the teller's own motivation.
5. The three men are drunk enough that they do not recognize the absurdity of their mission.
6. The treasure they find under the tree stimulates their greed and leads one to poison the other two, who have also plotted to kill him.
7. Perhaps the Pardoner hoped that the other pilgrims would purchase some of the relics.

8. Greed often motivates criminal behavior and causes conflict between individuals and groups.
6. Acquaint students with the concept of seven deadly sins: pride, greed, anger, lust, gluttony, sloth, and envy. They were called “deadly” because of their potential to lead to all kinds of awful behavior and consequences. In his tale the Pardoner worked with one of these. Assign students to select one of the deadly sins and to write short essays in which they explain why it can indeed be termed “deadly.”

### **Optional Assignment**

Assign students to read “The Nun’s Priest’s Tale” and to prepare to discuss its genre, theme, and purpose. It can be considered both a beast fable and a mock epic. The tale advises us to be wary of flattery and to be careful when we choose to open our mouths. It was intended to provide gentle amusement and to convey insight.

## Medieval Tales and the Canterbury Pilgrims

### Part A

**Directions:** *The Canterbury Tales* is an anthology of stories, and the tales told by the pilgrims reflect the types of stories that were popular during medieval times. Read the descriptions of some of the genres the pilgrims knew and utilized in creating stories for the trip to Canterbury. For each, identify a pilgrim that you think would be likely to tell that kind of a story.

Story type	Description	Pilgrim
1. Beast fable	A story in which anthropomorphized animals are used as characters in order to demonstrate a moral lesson	
2. Exemplum	A short story, often an allegory, that is intended to teach a lesson	
3. Fabliau	A short story characterized by humor, crudeness, and vulgarity	
4. Fairy tale	A fantasy involving supernatural characters and magical events	
5. Metrical romance	A long narrative poem filled with chivalry, adventure, and love	
6. Miracle story	A religious story based on scripture, stories of the saints, or imagined miraculous events	
7. Mock epic	An imitation of the epic form using trivial characters and events instead of heroic ones	

### Part B

**Directions:** Answer the following questions.

- Does any of the Canterbury pilgrims seem unlikely to be able to tell an entire story to the group? Explain your answer.
- Which pilgrims do you think would tell the best stories? Explain.
- Which pilgrims might tell stories that would be offensive to some of the listeners?

## The Pardoner: A Closer Look

**Directions:** Review Chaucer’s description of the Pardoner in the Prologue, and read the story he tells. Then answer the following questions.

1. What seems to be Chaucer’s attitude toward the Pardoner?
2. What is the Pardoner’s strongest skill?
3. What seems to be his main motivation?
4. Where is the irony in the theme of “The Pardoner’s Tale”?
5. What makes the three young men in the story think that they can kill Death?
6. How do the three men end up dead?
7. What might the Pardoner’s purpose have been in telling this story to his fellow pilgrims?
8. Is greed the root of evil today?



## Lesson 8

# Medieval Ballads and Lyrics

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### Objectives

- To introduce students to ballad and lyric poetry
- To understand the connection between literary genres and social structure

### Notes to the Teacher

Medieval aristocrats in royal courts composed metrical romances and discussed the nature of chivalry. Geoffrey Chaucer may have distributed copies of his *Canterbury Tales* to middle class, a feat later facilitated by the revolutionary new printing press when William Caxton published the first print edition in 1478. Meanwhile, the largest and poorest social class, the peasantry, perpetuated the oral tradition of Britain's earliest days through ballads and lyric poems. Often set to music and characterized by definite rhyme and stanza patterns, these poems celebrated and lamented both national events and everyday life.

Initially, lyrics were often religious, derivations of chants, hymns, and church stories. Later, folk ballads began to detail secular occurrences. They expanded characterization and narration through dialogue and were often highly dramatic. Folk ballads have several recurring themes: heroism, historical events, love, and death. They can be both serious and satiric.

Early ballads were first put into written form almost randomly and then were collected to keep them from fading from memory. Although the English ballad can be traced to the thirteenth century, the first significant collection was published in 1765 by Bishop Thomas Percy, who stumbled upon a collection of medieval ballads. Later Sir Walter Scott collected ballads along the Scottish border. Literary ballads, intended to be read rather than sung, developed into a separate genre.

The ballads are of note because they provide insight into the tastes and interests of ordinary people far from the sophistication of court and the scholars of Oxford. For Procedure #1, you will want students to bring to class recordings of songs they like that tell a story. You will definitely want to preview these before playing them for the class as a whole to make sure that they are appropriate for your school setting. For the final procedure students will need access to medieval ballads and lyrics on the Internet.

### Procedure

1. Play an assortment of songs that students bring to class, and ask students why they like these selections. Note recurring topics: love, death, sorrow, joy, family, etc.



2. Explain that music was also important to people in the medieval period—not just to nobility, but also to ordinary people, who often were not literate. Their music was part of the oral tradition, which means that it constantly evolved, resulting in diverse versions.
3. Distribute **Handout 22**, and explain that it is a translation of a medieval poem that exists in manuscript form in several libraries. Ask students to read the poem and to answer the questions.

***Suggested Responses***

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1. The speaker laments a mysterious journey and the necessity of going away from where he/she is right now.
  2. The journey seems to represent death, with all of its uncertainties.
  3. The speaker enumerates three things with a simple rhyme scheme.
  4. The mood is plaintive, so appropriate sounds might come from wind or string instruments.
4. Distribute **Handout 23**, and ask students to complete the exercise.

***Suggested Responses***

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1. The poem is mysterious and ambiguous. The interrupted thoughts represented by the dashes leave the reader uncertain but suspicious about the situation of the young woman.
  2. The stanzas have similar patterns of structure and repetitions of phrases.
  3. Note, for example, the “well was. . .what was” construction and the broken lines.
  4. The poem includes alliteration, repetition, rhyme, and metrical arrangement.
5. Divide the class into small groups, and assign each group one of the following poems/songs (note that all of these are readily available on the Internet):

“Fair Margaret and Sweet William”

“Get Up and Bar the Door”

“Barbara Allen”

“The Twa Corbies”

Ask students to read the poems, to summarize the stories, and to put all or part of the lyrics to music for performance for the class as a whole. After students have sufficient time, follow with presentations and discussion. Point out that all four poems were popular enough during the medieval period that they have managed to survive until the present day.

6. Assign a short writing assignment in which students select one of the poems and explain the reasons for its popularity and the extent to which people today can enjoy it.

### ***Suggested Responses***

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1. Although Margaret and William were a romantic pair, he married someone else. Margaret killed herself over this, and her ghost haunted William to the point that he, too, committed suicide. Their union in death is symbolized by the fact that roses have thorns. Unfortunately, in the poem, the parish clerk cuts the rose bush down. This is a poem about lost love and ruined lives.
2. “Get Up and Bar the Door” is a humorous poem about a husband and wife so stubbornly bent on a domestic spat that they end up as victims of robbers and bullies. Each wants the other to lock the door, with catastrophic results for the couple. There is a kind of rollicking rhythm to the refrain: “Get up and bar the door!” Martinmas, a day dedicated to St. Martin of Tours, occurs on November 11.
3. “Barbara Allen” comes with many variations, including different names for the young man in the story. What they have in common is the story of a man who once slighted Barbara Allen and later fell in love with her but was rejected because of her lasting resentment. The young man pines to death, and in many versions, Barbara Allen, realizing her cruelty, also dies.
4. “The Twa Corbies” presents a dialogue between two ravens or crows; both types of birds eat carrion. They plan to dine on the body of a dead knight and reveal that no one will ever know where the body is. His dog, falcon, and girlfriend have all gone on about their own lives and forgotten him. (Note: In another poem, “The Three Corbies,” the body is guarded by the knight’s dogs, falcon, and wife.)

## A Medieval Poem about Death

**Directions:** Read the translation of a short Middle English poem, and answer the questions.

### **Three Sorrowful Things**

When I think about things three,  
Ne'er may I happy be.  
The one is that I must away;  
Another, I know not that day;  
The third one is my greatest care  
I know not whither I must fare.

1. What is the speaker lamenting?
2. Where is he or she going?
3. What structural devices help you follow the speaker's ideas?
4. What musical instruments would enhance the lyrics?

## “Maiden in the Moor”

**Directions:** Read the following version of a medieval lyric, and answer the questions.

### **Maiden in the Moor**

Maiden in the moor lay—  
In the moor lay  
Seven nights full, seven nights full,  
Maiden in the moor lay—  
In the moor lay—  
Seven nights full and a day.

Well was her drink.  
What was her drink?  
The chilled waters of the—  
The chilled water of the—  
Well was her drink.  
What was her drink?  
The chilled water of the well-spring.

Well was her bower.  
What was her bower?  
The red rose and the—  
The red rose and the—  
Well was her bower.  
What was her bower?  
The red rose and the lily flower.

1. Is this poem a celebration or a lament? Explain.
2. Cite some parts of the lyric that are similar.
3. Cite other examples of structural elements.
4. What musical qualities does this lyric have?



## Lesson 9

# Early English Drama and *Everyman*

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### Objectives

- To understand the origins and nature of medieval drama
- To appreciate the themes and conventions in *Everyman*

### Notes to the Teacher

Even though classical Greek theater was largely unstudied in early Renaissance England, English drama shared many of the characteristics of its forgotten roots. Classical drama was born in worship of Dionysus; English drama was born in the medieval church. In a time in which illiteracy was nearly universal, drama was a practical and entertaining way to educate people about biblical narratives. Mini-plays, performed by the clergy in ecclesiastical Latin, celebrated Christmas and Easter. The plays proved so popular that Pope Urban IV established Corpus Christi festivals, moving the plays outside the physical confines of churches into villages and allowing lay people to perform in them.

Acting guilds began circulating the countryside in wagons, arriving in villages in liturgical cycles and on feast days to present plays about moral decision making and religious mysteries. Like the Greek dramas, the Christian theater employed its own heavenly beings and heroic figures, and the chorus was modified into a set of personified vices and virtues that would try to steer a play's characters toward hell or heaven. Through witnessing the debate between characters and qualities, the audience learned to recognize the effect of moral qualities on a person's life. Later, with the Renaissance, the focus of interest shifted from heaven to life here and now, and drama loosened its close ties with the church.

Early English drama first emphasized *mystery plays*, which depicted stories from the Bible and events from lives of the saints. Just as teachers today frequently have young students reenact events from the first Thanksgiving, churchmen of the early Renaissance Era taught their congregations by presenting short dramas. Later the plays evolved into *morality plays*, which were allegorical in nature. The most famous of these is *Everyman*, which remains an influential and frequently staged drama to this day.

In this lesson students learn about early Renaissance drama and encounter *Everyman*. The play is excerpted in many British literature textbooks, and the entire script is readily available on the Internet. For Procedure #2, students will need access to Bibles. You will want to emphasize that they are not studying religion; they are looking at both the play and the Bible as pieces of literature, which they are.

## Procedure

1. Ask students what they think the most powerful institution in the medieval world was. Coming from a culture with complete separation of church and state, they may be surprised to hear that it was the church, headed by the pope in Rome. Once the Anglo-Saxons were converted to Christianity, England, like most of Europe, became a Catholic country. At that time Catholicism was the dominant form of Christianity in Western Europe. People were not necessarily any more moral than they are today, but they believed in God and in life after death and were eager to gain Heaven and avoid Hell. Explain the context of the development of medieval English drama. (See “Notes to the Teachers.”)
2. Clarify that mystery plays were often derived from the Bible, which provides many stories that lend themselves to dramatization. Divide the class into small groups, and have them select a story from either the Old Testament or the New Testament and prepare it for dramatization. (Note: If your students seem to have trouble with this, suggest stories such as those about creation, Noah, the parting of the Red Sea, the good Samaritan, and the conversion of St. Paul.) As students present dramatizations, ask the class to discuss what audiences were supposed to learn from the stories. (For example: willful disobedience leads to sorrow; creation got a second chance; miracles helped save the Chosen People; we are all neighbors; people can be surprised by God.)
3. Explain that later morality plays became very popular. These plays were allegories in which actors played the roles of abstractions such as death, friendship, and good deeds. Have students read *Everyman* or the excerpts from it that you have chosen to assign.
4. Distribute **Handout 20**, and ask small groups to answer the questions.

### ***Suggested Responses***

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1. Until this moment, Death was about the last thing on Everyman’s mind. He feels totally unprepared for it and desperately hopes for a reprieve.
2. The cousin, like most of the other people Everyman invites on the journey, is understandably unwilling to accompany Everyman.
3. As the old sayings go, “You can’t take it with you,” and “I never saw a hearse with a luggage rack.”
4. During his lifetime Everyman has spent almost no energy on Good Deeds; personified, she is frail to the point of death.
5. As Everyman nears death, all of the things he most valued in life leave him, including physical attractiveness and strength. Good Deeds, bolstered by Everyman’s last-minute change of heart, and Knowledge accompany Everyman to death.

5. Distribute **Handout 21**, and ask students to complete the exercise individually. Follow with whole-class discussion.

***Suggested Responses***

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1. Denial and Anger: Everyman at first tries to turn his back on Death.
  2. Bargaining: He then begs for time and attempts bribery; he even hopes for reincarnation.
  3. Depression: He has the saddening experience of rejection by friends and relatives.
  4. Acceptance: Ultimately, he is sorry for the bad things with which he filled his life and goes peacefully to death.
5. Point out that in some ways *Everyman* is depressing, but it is also realistic. Most of us do not like to think about it, but mortality is a fact, and people have a variety of beliefs about what it means. Ask the class to discuss how they could stage the play to appeal to modern audiences. How would they handle the roles of God and Death? How would they costume Everyman and the supportive characters? What music might be used? The play includes an angel welcoming Everyman to heaven. How would they handle that for modern audiences? After a few minutes of brainstorming, have partners collaborate to write thumbnail sketches of plans for twenty-first-century productions of *Everyman* that could result in rave reviews and standing-room-only audiences. Collect the papers as tickets out of class.



## A Look at *Everyman*

**Directions:** Use the exercise to understand the medieval drama.

1. Death says that Everyman must go on a journey (a metaphor for death), and Everyman voices a number of responses, including the following:

“To give a reckoning longer leisure I crave.”

“Full unready I am such a reckoning to give.”

“O Death, thou comest when I had thee least in mind.”

How would you describe Everyman’s responses? Are they unusual?

2. Everyman seems desperate for companionship on his journey, but his cousin responds this way:

“Cousin Everyman, farewell now, lo!  
For verily, I will not with thee go  
Also of mine own an unready reckoning,  
I have to give account of, therefore I make tarrying.  
Now god Keep thee, for now I go!”

What does the cousin mean?

3. Everyman also says the following lines:

“All my life I have loved riches.  
If that my Goods now help me might,  
He would make my heart full light.”

What does Everyman want?

4. Finally Everyman turns to Good Deeds.

“I think that I shall never speed  
Till I go to my Good Deeds.  
But alas! She is so weak  
That she can neither move nor speak.  
Yet will I venture on her now.  
My Good Deeds, where be you?”

Good Deeds feebly answers:

Here I lie, cold in the ground.  
Thy sins surely have me bound  
That I cannot stir.”

What is wrong with Everyman’s Good Deeds?

5. What happens to Beauty, Strength, and Five Wits? Does Everyman have companionship on his journey to death?

## Realistic Psychology in *Everyman*

**Directions:** Read the information, and answer the questions.

One constant for humanity, regardless of time, place, and belief system, is death. In the middle of the fourteenth century, an epidemic of bubonic plague began a sweep across England and much of Europe; death was an imminent possibility for everyone. The anonymous author of *Everyman* was motivated by religious zeal, but the play also suggests knowledge about death.

During the twentieth century, psychiatrist Elizabeth Kübler-Ross did an extensive study of people's responses to impending death. She discovered that most people go through five stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.

To what extent does *Everyman*, composed long before the birth of psychiatry, mirror this pattern?

Stage and Description	<i>Everyman</i>
Denial: The person refuses to admit the idea of death.	
Anger: An emotional response occurs as the person wants to strike out at death.	
Bargaining: For example, "I will never smoke again if this lung cancer will just go away."	
Depression: The person is overwhelmed with sadness and resentment.	
Acceptance: The dying person is at peace with his/her life and death.	

## Lesson 10

# Looking Backward: England before the Renaissance

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### Objectives

- To synthesize an overview of England's history and literature before the Renaissance
- To discuss the evolution of the English language

### Notes to the Teacher

This lesson assumes that students have encountered some of England's long literary history through discussion of works such as *Beowulf*, *The Canterbury Tales*, and *Everyman*, as well as through stories of legendary figures such as King Arthur. For students, who often think of the landing of the *Mayflower* as ancient history, it can be quite amazing that the Tower of London was under construction by 1078 CE, Oxford University was functioning by 1200, and the Magna Carta was signed in 1215. This lesson leads to an overview of English history before the Tudor monarchs and the period variously referred to as the English Renaissance, the Elizabethan Age, and the Shakespearean Era.

Students are undoubtedly aware that *Beowulf* was written in Old English, which to us is a foreign language. *The Canterbury Tales* was written in Middle English, which is less foreign but still quite a challenge for today's readers. In this lesson students also consider word etymology and ways the Norman Conquest led to changes in the English language.

### Procedure

1. Distribute **Handout 24**, and review the time line in Part A. Ask students to complete Part B.

#### ***Suggested Responses***

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1. London was founded by 50 BCE. Some legends place its origins much earlier. London is in the southeast corner of the island.
2. Edward the Confessor was the second-to-last Anglo-Saxon king and reigned from 1042 to 1066, the year of the Norman Conquest. He was known for his piety and died in 1066.
3. The Tower of London is a Norman construction that started in 1078. It began as a fortress and later was used as a prison.
4. Becket was killed in 1170 in the cathedral at Canterbury, where he presided as archbishop. By 1174 he had been declared a saint.

5. Oxford University does not claim a precise founding date; by 1200 it was operating as a university with a liberal arts curriculum to prepare young men for careers in the church or other professions.
  6. *Beowulf* comes from the oral tradition, so no one knows how old the epic is. Only one manuscript is known to have survived, and it is estimated that it was handwritten about one thousand years ago.
  7. Chaucer began *The Canterbury Tales* in the early 1380s.
2. If you wish, use **Handout 25** as a test or as a review tool.

***Suggested Responses***

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**Part A**

1. a
2. b
3. c
4. d
5. d
6. c
7. c

8. b
9. b
10. a
11. a
12. d
13. a
14. c
15. b

**Part B**

1. false
2. true
3. false
4. false
5. true

6. false
7. true
8. true
9. true
10. true

3. Explain that Anglo-Saxon had the harsh and sometimes guttural sounds we associate with Germanic languages, while Norman French is more musical. With the Norman Conquest in 1066, these two languages came into close proximity and Middle English was born, later to evolve into Modern English. Distribute **Handout 26**, and review the information with the class.
4. Explain that a good dictionary includes the etymology of words. The English we speak today is a language that has absorbed influences from many languages from all around the world. Ask students to work in small groups to locate five words with interesting origins, and to prepare to share those words, their etymologies, and sentences using them with the rest of the class.

## Early English History

### Part A

**Directions:** Examine the dates and important events in the history of England before the Renaissance.

<b>Prehistory</b>	
<b>c. 8000 BCE</b>	Hunters and gatherers live in what is now known as England. England becomes an island, separated from the European continent.
<b>c. 2000 BCE</b>	The Stone Age ends as people begin to create bronze and use it for making tools and weapons.
<b>c. 750 BCE</b>	Iron replaces bronze as the metal of choice.
<b>c. 500 BCE</b>	The Celts arrive, later to become the dominant people on the island.
<b>55 BCE</b>	Julius Caesar leads the first Roman invasion of England; England is part of the Roman Empire for about four centuries until the Romans withdraw at the beginning of the fifth century CE.
<b>450–750 CE</b>	Germanic tribes invade England, oust the Celts, and divide the island into seven kingdoms.
<b>c. 800 CE</b>	Viking invasions begin.
<b>c. 700–1000 CE</b>	<i>Beowulf</i> is composed.
<b>1066 CE</b>	The Norman Conquest makes William the Conqueror king of England.
<b>1215 CE</b>	The Magna Carta is signed.
<b>1348 CE</b>	The Black Death (bubonic plague) descends on England.
<b>c. 1350–1400 CE</b>	<i>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</i> appears.
<b>c. 1470 CE</b>	Chaucer completes <i>The Canterbury Tales</i> .
<b>c. 1470 CE</b>	Sir Thomas Malory writes <i>Le Morte d'Arthur</i> .
<b>1478 CE</b>	William Caxton publishes the first edition of <i>The Canterbury Tales</i> .
<b>1485 CE</b>	The War of the Roses ends and Henry VII becomes the first Tudor king of England.

## Part B

**Directions:** Use the Internet to find the information and add to the time line in Part A.

1. When and where was London established?
2. Who was Edward the Confessor? When did he rule?
3. When was the Tower of London built?
4. When was Thomas Becket murdered?
5. When did Oxford University begin? What sort of curriculum did it teach?
6. When was *Beowulf* recorded in manuscript?
7. When did Geoffrey Chaucer write *The Canterbury Tales*?

## English History and Literature through the Medieval Period

### Part A

**Directions:** Choose the best answers.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Great Britain was first inhabited by
  - a. Stone Age people
  - b. Gypsies
  - c. Celts
  - d. Roman soldiers who invaded under the leadership of Julius Caesar
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Stone circles are
  - a. imitations of King Arthur's Round Table
  - b. evidence of ancient rituals associated with the equinox
  - c. the remains of Roman forts
  - d. the creations of the Christian monks who converted the Anglo-Saxons
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Heorot is
  - a. Hrothgar's sword
  - b. a young man killed by Grendel
  - c. mead hall
  - d. the name of a dragon's cave
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The pause in the middle of a line of Anglo-Saxon poetry is called a
  - a. kenning
  - b. alliteration
  - c. conundrum
  - d. caesura
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Beowulf was king for
  - a. twenty years
  - b. thirty years
  - c. forty years
  - d. fifty years
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. In the battle with the dragon, Beowulf is helped by
  - a. no one
  - b. all of his followers
  - c. Wiglaf
  - d. Unferth



- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. The medieval period in England began with the impact of
- the withdrawal of Roman soldiers
  - the establishment of Oxford
  - an invasion of Normans led by William the Conqueror
  - the birth of King Arthur
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. The knight who had an affair with Queen Guinevere was
- Sir Galahad
  - Sir Lancelot
  - Sir Tristan
  - Sir Gawain
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Which of the following is not characteristic of the code of chivalry?
- respect for women
  - belief in fate
  - unflinching bravery
  - loyalty to the church
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. English drama began in
- church services
  - celebrations around maypoles
  - King Arthur's court
  - trials in courtrooms
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. The first pilgrim described in the Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales* is
- the Knight
  - the Miller
  - the Innkeeper
  - the Yeoman
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Chaucer expresses genuine dislike for
- the Skipper
  - the Friar
  - the Oxford Scholar
  - the Summoner
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. The Squire is traveling with
- his father
  - his uncle
  - his brother
  - his wife

- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. The pilgrims agree to pass the time on the trip by
- a. singing
  - b. praying
  - c. storytelling
  - d. listening to bagpipe music
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. “The Pardoner’s Tale” warns against the negative effects of
- a. pride
  - b. greed
  - c. anger
  - d. sloth

### Part B

**Directions:** Identify each statement as true or false.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Hrothgar sends word to Beowulf requesting help to eliminate the threat of Grendel.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Epics describe the adventures of cultural heroes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Beowulf uses his sword in the fight against Grendel.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Beowulf approaches the fight with Grendel with complete confidence of victory.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Germanic invaders forced the Celts to areas such as Scotland and Wales.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Once the Anglo-Saxons took over, there were no further invasions from other countries.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Sir Gawain cuts off the Green Knight’s head.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Everyman’s companion Good Deeds accompanies him to death and salvation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Chaucer’s pilgrims first gather at an inn called the Tabard.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Two brothers traveling together to Canterbury are the Parson and the Plowman.

## The Changing English Language

**Directions:** When the Normans conquered the Anglo-Saxons in 1066, William the Conqueror became king and all of the royalty spoke Norman French. The peasants, on the other hand, continued to speak Anglo-Saxon. Over time people heard both languages, and Old English evolved into Middle English with its less harsh sounds. Many words we use today can be traced through this evolution. Examine the chart.

Today's English	Middle English	Old English
Abie	Abide	Abidan
Blithe	Blithe	Blithe
Dreary	Drery	Dreorig
Forlorn	Forloren	Forleosan
Gospel	Gospel	Godspel
Keen	Kene	Cene
Mongrel	Mong	Gemong
Mermaid	Mermayde	Mere-mayde
Nightingale	Nightingale	Nihtgale
Nostril	Nosethirl	Nosthyrl
Paddock	Parrok	Pearoc
Quell	Quell	Cwellan

## Lesson 11

# The Spirit of the English Renaissance

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### Objectives

- To understand factors that led to a true renaissance in England in the sixteenth century
- To compare and contrast the “Passionate Shepherd” poems

### Notes to the Teacher

The year 1485 and the end of the War of the Roses saw the end of French rule in England and the beginning of the Tudor dynasty. Henry VII may have been an unlikely King of England, but he was a successful one. Henry VIII brought the English Reformation and separation from Rome’s authority and influence. The Age of Exploration was in full swing. Power struggles after the death of Henry VIII in 1547 were resolved with the long and stabilizing reign of Elizabeth I from 1558 to 1603. Her reign saw the defeat of the mighty Spanish Armada and made England the most powerful country in Europe.

The medieval focus on the church and life after death shifted as the main concern became life here and now. With the middle class now a solid fact, society was no longer divided between royalty and peasantry. Toward the end of the 1500s, buildings were erected for the sole purpose of putting on plays, and poetry was thriving.

In this lesson, students learn a little about the factors that gave rise to the English Renaissance. They then read and discuss both Christopher Marlowe’s “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love” and Sir Walter Raleigh’s response, “The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd.” These poems are often included in high school texts, but here they are reprinted on handouts so that students can make annotations.

### Procedure

1. Explain that the early medieval period is often referred to as the Dark Ages, and what came next is often called the Renaissance. Ask the class to unpack the significance of the names.

*Example: The terms suggest emergence from darkness, superstition, and a sense of powerlessness into light, rebirth, and energy.*

2. Explain some of the developments that led to entirely new attitudes:
  - The Age of Exploration took brave men out on ships to travel the globe and discover new lands and potential new wealth. The world was clearly not flat, and the explorers saw themselves as vastly superior to the indigenous people of far-off places.

- The separation of the Church of England from Rome was part of the Protestant Reformation. A positive result in England was a sense of freedom from papal interference and control.
  - English, not French, was once again the language of the royal family and the court.
  - The English navy defeated the Spanish Armada in 1588, making England the most powerful country in Europe.
  - The middle class was thriving. Society was no longer clearly divided between royalty and knights, on one hand, and peasants, on the other.
3. Explain that one of the great writers of the English Renaissance was Christopher Marlowe (1564–1593), a writer many think would have out-classed even Shakespeare if it were not for Marlowe’s early death.
  4. Distribute **Handout 27**, and ask students to read the poem and to record observations in the margins. Point out that the title includes both the speaker and the addressee. A shepherd is talking to a woman he loves. Ask students to jot down responses to the questions on the handout, and follow with whole-class discussion.

#### ***Suggested Responses***

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1. The speaker is a passionate man with strong emotions, and he is totally preoccupied with his desire to be with the lady to whom he is speaking. He has no desire for anything other than the simple life of a shepherd. He may be a little naïve.
  2. He wants the woman to marry or at least live with him, and to this end he offers her lovely sights and a few nice things to wear. He must think that her future goals are as simple as his.
  3. The positive images are associated with nature, especially in springtime, and with the gifts he envisions.
  4. Romantic perspectives will envision a positive response from the girl, unless she has another beau in mind. Realistically speaking, the woman needs more than bucolic experiences and nice clothing. It is not always spring.
5. Ask students how the poem differs in both tone and form from works representative of the Old English and medieval periods. (The central figure is a shepherd, not a knight or a great hero; there is no mention of religion, death, or an afterlife; it focuses on romantic love and on natural beauty.)
  6. Explain that Sir Walter Raleigh was an adventurer and a courtier who found favor with Queen Elizabeth I. He later got in trouble with King James I, was imprisoned in the Tower of London, and eventually was executed. A few years after Christopher Marlowe wrote the “Passionate Shepherd” poem, Raleigh wrote his own poem in response. Distribute **Handout 28**, and ask students to complete the exercise.

### ***Suggested Responses***

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1. While the shepherd speaking in Marlowe's poem is ardent and perhaps naïve, the girl's response is realistic and even cynical. Her voice is witty and a bit sarcastic.
  2. The "no" that seems implied throughout the poem is modified to a "maybe" by the end—but only if impossibilities (such as "lasting youth") become possible.
  3. The poems follow the same rhyme and rhythm patterns, and the stanzas' contents reflect one another. The voice in Raleigh's poem seems to respond stanza by stanza to the pleas of the shepherd, as if the two are engaging in a dialogue.
  4. While Raleigh's poem is an amusing reply, it is more a parody than an original work of genius. He simply examined Marlowe's poem and mimicked its structures to produce this work.
7. Have students complete short writings in response to the following prompt: Which speaker do you find more appealing—the earnest passionate shepherd who is thoroughly in love or the witty and realistic young woman who replies to him? Give reasons for your choice.

## Christopher Marlowe's Passionate Shepherd

**Directions:** Read the poem, and answer the questions.

### **The Passionate Shepherd to His Love**

Come live with me and be my Love,  
And we will all the pleasures prove  
That hills and valleys, dale and field,  
And all the craggy mountains yield.

There will we sit upon the rocks  
And see the shepherds feed their flocks,  
By shallow rivers, to whose falls  
Melodious birds sing madrigals.

There will I make thee beds of roses  
And a thousand fragrant posies,  
A cap of flowers, and a kirtle  
Embroider'd all with leaves of myrtle.

A gown made of the finest wool  
Which from our pretty lambs we pull,  
Fair lined slippers for the cold,  
With buckles of the purest gold.

A belt of straw and ivy buds  
With coral clasps and amber studs:  
And if these pleasures may thee move,  
Come live with me and be my Love.

Thy silver dishes for thy meat  
As precious as the gods do eat,  
Shall on an ivory table be  
Prepared each day for thee and me.

The shepherd swains shall dance and sing  
For thy delight each May-morning:  
If these delights thy mind may move,  
Then live with me and be my Love.

—Christopher Marlowe





## Sir Walter Raleigh's Response to Marlowe

**Directions:** Read the poem, make marginal annotations, and answer the questions.

### The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd

IF all the world and love were young,  
And truth in every shepherd's tongue,  
These pretty pleasures might me move  
To live with thee and be thy Love.

But Time drives flocks from field to fold;  
When rivers rage and rocks grow cold;  
And Philomel becometh dumb;  
The rest complains of cares to come.

The flowers do fade, and wanton fields  
To wayward Winter reckoning yields:  
A honey tongue, a heart of gall,  
Is fancy's spring, but sorrow's fall.

Thy gowns, thy shoes, thy beds of roses,  
Thy cap, thy kirtle, and thy posies,  
Soon break, soon wither—soon forgotten,  
In folly ripe, in reason rotten.

Thy belt of straw and ivy-buds,  
Thy coral clasps and amber studs,—  
All these in me no means can move  
To come to thee and be thy Love.

But could youth last, and love still breed,  
Had joys no date, nor age no need,  
Then these delights my mind might move  
To live with thee and be thy Love.

—Sir Walter Raleigh

1. How is the tone different from the attitude evident in Marlowe's poem?
2. What, according to Raleigh, is the girl's answer to the shepherd?
3. How does Raleigh's poem resemble Marlowe's?
4. Which work is the superior poetic achievement?

## Lesson 12

# Christopher Marlowe's *Faustus*

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### Objectives

- To become acquainted with Marlowe's *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* through key excerpts from the play
- To recognize the play's central theme

### Notes to the Teacher

A contemporary of the greatest writer of the English Renaissance, William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe was immensely talented, but his flamboyant lifestyle led to an early death. His plays enjoyed considerable popularity in the London theater world; today, *Doctor Faustus* is often considered his greatest work.

There probably was a historical basis for *Faustus*, but rumors and legends added overlays of imagination so that the resulting story is a fiction. The story originated in Germany. In Marlowe's play, *Faustus* serves as a warning not to presume to seek beyond the limits of divinely sanctioned knowledge. Marlowe incorporated elements of the medieval morality play into *Doctor Faustus*, particularly the personification of Conscience and the Seven Vices.

Many of today's British literature texts do not cover *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*. This lesson enables you to acquaint students with Marlowe's play, as well as with a legend of considerable importance in world literature.

### Procedure

1. Point out that the Elizabethan era was a great age of theater. While William Shakespeare was its greatest playwright, he was by no means the only one in this age of accomplished dramatists. Briefly introduce Christopher Marlowe and *Doctor Faustus*. Explain that the play is the story of a man who sells his soul as the price for transcending human limitations.
2. To enable students to understand the play's central situation, have them think about situations in which a person wants something that seems unattainable. If that thing comes within reach, with a warning that there will be a very large price to pay but not until the far distant future, it could seem worth the risk. For example, a high school senior might want to attend New York University, one of the most expensive in the nation. Someone offers to pay all expenses with no need for reimbursement for forty years—although then a failure to make the repayment could result in death. The high school student might accept. After all, forty years is a long

time; the student cannot imagine being nearly sixty years old; and the next four years could be spent at a great university in a great city.

3. Distribute **Handout 29**, and have small groups complete it. Then conduct a discussion based on their answers.

### ***Suggested Responses***

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1. Faustus wants to excel at his profession and exceed all previous limitations. He wants to go beyond the limits of human power and knowledge.
  2. Good Angel appeals to religious motivation of fear of God's wrath. Evil Angel appeals to ambition. Evil Angel's appeal seems more immediate and forceful.
  3. His choices seem motivated by excitement, desire for power and for Helen, curiosity, and nervous energy.
  4. Gluttony, for example, could be greasy-mouthed, pot-bellied, and food-stained, carrying a drumstick and flagon of wine.
  5. Possessing Helen would confer on Faustus equal or greater power than that of the legendary Greek heroes.
  6. The play warns against efforts to exceed human limitations and to assume the power of divinity. It points out that sometimes humans are their own worst enemies. The years of power for which Doctor Faustus bargained pass quickly, and at the end he regrets his choices, but he cannot evade the consequences of his agreement with Mephistopheles.
4. Ask students why *Doctor Faustus* was popular among Elizabethan audiences.

**Example:** *While not as preoccupied with death and afterlife as medieval people, most Elizabethans saw the subject of life, heaven, and hell as significant. The play's presentation of supernatural beings would have been eerie and mesmerizing, and most people would identify with struggles that seem to involve both a good angel and a bad angel competing for influence.*

5. Ask students why the play can appeal to audiences today.

**Example:** *Fascination with the play's images is still prevalent; so is the idea of living in a way that leads us, at death, to feel satisfaction rather than regret. Many people who live their lives filled with hubris end their lives in unhappiness.*

6. Distribute **Handout 30**, and ask students to complete it individually. Follow with open-ended discussion in which, when necessary, you function as a devil's advocate.
7. Follow with an in-class writing in response to the following prompt: To what extent could it be said that the play is actually not at all religious, and that it is as relevant today as it was during Christopher's Marlowe's time?

## Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus

**Directions:** Read the excerpts from *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*, and answer the questions.

In 1587, a young British playwright named Christopher Marlowe produced the play *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*. The opening speech of the Chorus reveals that Faustus is fully educated in the academic pursuits of divinity, logic, philosophy, law, Greek, Latin, and medicine. He has earned the title of doctor. Still, he is restless and dissatisfied, desirous of complete control over life and death. He says ironically to himself:

Yet art thou still but Faustus, and a man,  
Wouldst thou make men to live eternally,  
Or, being dead, raise them to life again,  
Then this profession were to be esteemed,  
Physic, farewell!

Disillusioned by academic and scientific pursuits and obsessed with a desire to break through earth-bound limits, he decides to dabble in the occult. As soon as he begins to peruse the lines, circles, scenes, letters, and characters of necromantic spell books, the conflicts in his conscience materialize like characters in a morality play. Good Angel and Evil Angel attempt to persuade him.

*Good Angel:* O Faustus, lay thy damned book aside,  
And gaze not on it, lest it tempt thy soul,  
And heap God's heavy wrath upon thy head!  
Read, read the scriptures: That is blasphemy.

*Evil Angel:* Go forward, Faustus, in that famous art  
Wherein all Nature's tres'ry is contained:  
Be thou on earth as Jove is in the sky,  
Lord and commander of these elements.

Succumbing to curiosity, Faustus invites himself to begin an incantation:

Faustus, begin thine incantations,  
And try if devils will obey thy hest,  
Seeing thou last prayed and sacrificed to them  
Within this circle is Jehovah's name,  
Forward and backward anagrammatized,  
Th' abbreviated names of holy saints,  
Figures of every adjunct to the heavens,  
And characters of signs and erring stars,  
By which the spirits are enforced to rise:  
Then fear not, Faustus, but be resolute,  
And try the uttermost magic can perform.

Faustus continues a chant in Latin, the liturgical language, and calls forth Mephistopheles, who appears in a hideous form that repulses Faustus. In feigned obedience, Mephistopheles transforms into a Franciscan Friar. He warns Faustus that he has appeared not to obey Faustus but to get his soul. Deadly serious and starkly truthful, Satan's messenger warns Faustus that aspiring pride leads to perdition. Nonetheless, Faustus seals the bargain. He will exchange his immortal soul for

twenty years of magical power. As a warning, Mephistopheles presents a grotesque parade of the Seven Deadly Sins: Pride, Covetousness, Envy, Wrath, Gluttony, Sloth, and Lechery.

Then Mephistopheles produces the most beautiful woman that ever lived, Helen of Troy. Faustus debates with himself:

“I do repent, and yet I do despair.”

Helen’s entrance distracts Faustus from soul-searching and misgivings.

Was this the face that launched a thousand ships,  
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?  
Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.

[*kisses her.*]

Her lips suck forth my soul, see where it flies!  
Come, Helen, come, give me my soul again.  
Here will I dwell, for heaven is in these lips,  
And all is dross that is not Helena.  
I will be Paris and for love of thee,  
Instead of Troy, shall Wittenberg be sacked;  
And I will combat with weak Menelaus,  
And wear thy colors on my plumed crest;  
Yes, I will wound Achilles in the heel,  
And then return to Helen for a kiss.  
Oh, thou art fairer than the evening air  
Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars;  
Brighter art thou than flaming Jupiter  
When he appeared to hapless Semele;  
More lovely than the monarch of the sky  
In wanton Arethusa’s azured arms;  
And none but thou shalt be my paramour!

During the events of the play, Faustus vacillates like a pendulum from desire for repentance to immersion in guilt. As midnight approaches on his final night, he expresses regret. The clock strikes 11:00, punctuating with finality Faustus’ remorse. He alternates between hope and despair in a series of pathetic pleas and desperate bargains as the quarter hours strike. At the stroke of midnight, devils appear to carry Faustus to hell.

1. According to the first excerpt from Doctor Faustus, what causes his frustrations?

2. How do Good Angel and Evil Angel try to motivate Faustus? Which is more convincing? Explain your answer.

3. What motives seem to affect Faustus in the third excerpt?

4. What costumes and props would be appropriate for the parade of the Seven Deadly Sins?

Pride:

Gluttony:

Covetousness:

Sloth:

Envy:

Lechery:

Wrath:

5. Is Faustus' response to Helen of Troy motivated by love or by the desire for power? Explain your answer.

6. What warnings are implied by the play as a whole, especially by its conclusion?

## Responding to *Doctor Faustus*

**Directions:** Indicate whether you agree (A) or disagree (D) with each of the following statements about Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*. Be ready to give reasons for your opinions.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The play's main appeal comes from its demonic elements; everyone, even those with no religion, is fascinated by the concept of pure evil.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. At the end of the play, Faustus gets exactly what he so richly deserves.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. The play could easily be transformed into a comedy.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. By the end the audience's main feeling for Faust is pity.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. It is unlikely that any modern production of the play would draw substantial audiences.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Anyone who ever played with a Ouija board would find it hard to resist a production of this play.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Faustus's main problem is his arrogant attitude regarding his own abilities.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. The best thing about the play is Marlowe's use of allegorical figures.

## Lesson 13

# William Shakespeare's Sonnets

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### Objectives

- To understand the structure of the Shakespearean sonnet
- To read and respond to selected sonnets by Shakespeare

### Notes to the Teacher

Sonnets (“little songs”) originated with the poet Petrarch during the Italian Renaissance. The popularity of this poetic form spread into France and Spain and finally across the Channel to England. Sonnets were typically parts of sonnet cycles, groups of 100 to 150 short poems. Each poem consists of fourteen lines of rhymed iambic pentameter. Unlike plays, which were written for public entertainment and profit, sonnets were a private matter. English writers modified the Petrarchan form slightly to produce what is now known as the Shakespearean sonnet, consisting of four quatrains and a couplet. The sonnet cycle we have from Shakespeare includes 154 poems.

The tight and carefully structured sonnet form differs dramatically from the poetry of the epic, the metrical romance, and *The Canterbury Tales*. In this lesson students first learn the general form of a sonnet. They then examine Shakespeare’s Sonnets 18, 73, and 130, which appear in the lesson’s handouts. Finally, students select an additional sonnet for analysis.

### Procedure

1. Point out that *Beowulf*, *The Canterbury Tales*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and *Everyman* are in essence lengthy poems—long narratives in verse. Explain that during the Renaissance an extremely short form of poetry became popular.
2. Distribute **Handout 31** and use [Part A](#) to explain the sonnet form.
3. Read aloud the sonnet in [Part B](#) and lead the students through the questions.

### ***Suggested Responses***

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1. Throughout the poem the speaker emphasizes feeling old and near the end of life.
2. Alternating lines rhyme until the concluding couplet. There are ten syllables, or five iambs, in each line (Tell students that some pronunciations have changed a bit since Shakespeare’s time, resulting in additional or fewer syllables.)
3. The comparison in the first quatrain likens the speaker to foliage in autumn, yellowing and gradually stripped from branches.



4. The second quatrain shifts the comparison to the span of a day, and the speaker feels himself to be in the evening of life, nearing the sleep that is death.
  5. The third quatrain compares his life to ashes after a fire is nearly extinguished.
  6. The speaker feels that his loved one will cherish him even more, recognizing the imminence of death. The tone is accepting—a little regretful, but not at all bitter.
4. Distribute **Handout 32**. Ask students to read the poems and to record annotations. Then have small groups assemble to answer the questions.

### ***Suggested Responses***

1. Sonnet 18 has a serious and admiring tone, while Sonnet 130 is both teasing and wry in its expression of affection.
  2. Sonnet 18 is less a love poem than one of admiration. The speaker suggests a comparison of the person to a summer day but concludes that summer can be too hot and sometimes is stormy. The person is lovelier than a day in June.
  3. The speaker suggests that the person is beautiful and temperate, possessing qualities that are not likely to fade as years pass. The poet is confident that his poem of tribute will give the other person a kind of immortality.
  4. Students often note the references to the woman's reeking breath, out-of-control hair, and heavy steps.
  5. The speaker reverses all of the clichés of love poems, which tend to idealize the beloved's physical perfection. Few people would choose to have this poem read at their weddings! Nonetheless, it is both humorous and affectionate. The speaker's purpose seems to be to tease.
5. Point out that both Sonnet 18 and Sonnet 130 demonstrate the sonnet form described in **Handout 31**: fourteen lines, iambic pentameter, rhyme pattern, and structural divisions.
6. Direct students, working with partners, to select any additional sonnet by Shakespeare for reading and analysis of both form and content. Results can be communicated either in writing or in presentations to the class as a whole. As students work, circulate around the class to make sure diverse sonnets have been chosen and to discourage use of Internet sources instead of original thinking.

**Example:** *Sonnet 116 focuses on love from a philosophical point of view. The first quatrain says that nothing gets in the way of real love, which is unconditional and eternal. In the second quatrain, a metaphor compares love to the North Star, which was vitally important to mariners. Like the star, love can view turbulence without becoming troubled and can guide individuals--like little boats--to safe harbor. The third stanza says that love does not depend on youth and beauty, but lasts through the losses that come with age, all the way "to the edge of doom." Finally, in the couplet, we hear Shakespeare the poet, who is completely sure of his ideas.*

## What Is a Sonnet?

### Part A

**Directions:** Carefully read the information, and highlight the main points.

The type of poem we call a sonnet originated with an Italian poet named Petrarch who wrote numerous short poems in honor of a woman named Laura. The word *sonnet* comes from an Italian word meaning “little song.” The form spread from Italy through France and Spain and into England, where it was eventually modified slightly to produce the English or Shakespearean sonnet. When you read a sonnet by Shakespeare or other English sonneteers, look for the following characteristics:

- A sonnet must have fourteen lines. It can be neither shorter nor longer than that.
- Each line has ten syllables consisting of five iambs. An *iamb* (or *iambic foot*) consists of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable. The following words exemplify the iamb: *around, abstain, debate, believe*. (In contrast, the following words are not iambic: *system, bother, mountain, jewel*.)
- The contents of the sonnet divide neatly into three quatrains and a concluding couplet.
- The lines have a pattern of end rhymes. The rhyming pattern in the quatrains is *abab*.

### Part B

**Directions:** Read Shakespeare’s Sonnet 73 and answer the questions.

#### Sonnet 73

That time of year thou mayst in me behold  
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang  
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,  
Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.

In me thou see’st the twilight of such day  
As after sunset fadeth in the west;  
Which by and by black night doth take away,  
Death’s second self, that seals up all in rest.

In me thou see’st the glowing of such fire,  
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,  
As the death-bed, whereon it must expire,  
Consumed with that which it was nourish’d by.

This thou perceiv’st, which makes thy love more strong,  
To love that well, which thou must leave ere long.

—William Shakespeare

1. Throughout the poem, what does the speaker emphasize about himself?
2. Verify the specifics of the sonnet form. Does this poem match the criteria?
3. To what does the speaker compare himself in the first quatrain?
4. How does the metaphor change in the second quatrain?
5. What is the comparison in the third quatrain?
6. How does the poem close? Is the ending optimistic or pessimistic?

## Two Contrasting Shakespearean Sonnets

**Directions:** Read the poems, and record your observations in the margins before you respond to the questions.

### Sonnet 18

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?  
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:  
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,  
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:

Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,  
And often is his gold complexion dimmed,  
And every fair from fair sometime declines,  
By chance, or nature's changing course untrimmed:

But thy eternal summer shall not fade,  
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,  
Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade,  
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st,

So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,  
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

—William Shakespeare

### Sonnet 130

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;  
Coral is far more red, than her lips red:  
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;  
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.

I have seen roses damasked, red and white,  
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;  
And in some perfumes is there more delight  
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.

I love to hear her speak, yet well I know  
That music hath a far more pleasing sound:  
I grant I never saw a goddess go,  
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground:

And yet by heaven, I think my love as rare,  
As any she belied with false compare.

—William Shakespeare

1. How do the two poems differ in tone? (Remember that *tone* always refers to attitude.) How do the tones affect readers' responses?
2. Sonnet 18 is based on one central comparison. What is it? How does it function?
3. What does sonnet 18 say about the person it describes? What does it reveal about the poet?
4. What images in sonnet 130 are particularly amusing?
5. What is the speaker's purpose in Sonnet 130?

## Lesson 14

# Shakespeare as Playwright

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### Objectives

- To acquire facility in reading and understanding the language in Shakespeare's plays
- To recognize the diversity of his dramatic accomplishments

### Notes to the Teacher

The language in Shakespeare's plays can provide quite a hurdle for today's students, who sometimes back away and claim inability to decipher the text. While Shakespeare spoke "modern English," the language has evolved considerably in the four centuries since his death. You will want to point out that just as we use contractions such as "didn't," Shakespeare's plays use contractions common in his time (for example, 't for "it" and o' for "of"). You will also want to emphasize the search for overall meaning rather than emphasis on each word and phrase.

This lesson works well as a bridge to the class studying an entire play or, if you have time, several plays. Of the four great tragedies (*Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, and *Othello*), *Macbeth* is often the best choice for its simplicity of structure. *Romeo and Juliet* has nearly universal appeal. Of the comedies, *Twelfth Night*, *The Tempest*, and *The Merchant of Venice* are often good choices for both literary and dramatic elements. *The Taming of the Shrew* makes the nature of farce abundantly clear.

The lesson begins with five short quotations from selected plays. Students then focus on soliloquies from *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth*, and *Hamlet*.

### Procedure

1. Explain that Shakespeare's plays incorporate both prose and poetry, and they reflect the English familiar to audiences of the time. The plays also make superb use of imagery and figurative language. Clarify that some of the plays, for example *Julius Caesar* and *Richard II*, have historical bases (and therefore are called "history plays"). Some are identified as tragedies, which have a noble protagonist with a character flaw that leads to conflict and a fatal conclusion; one of these is *Macbeth*, which also has a historical base. Some of the other titles present comedies; an example is *Much Ado About Nothing*. The comedies end with the resolution of conflict and often a wedding.
2. Explain that before beginning to collaborate in the study of the play you have selected, the class will do a little work with reading and understand-

ing Shakespeare's language. Distribute **Handout 33**, and ask the class to complete Part A.

#### ***Suggested Responses***

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1. This metaphor describes acute mental discomfort. Scorpion stings are painful, and the speaker's brain has more than one scorpion plaguing it.
  2. The quote suggests that music nourishes a romantic atmosphere.
  3. The quote compares mercy to rain falling gently to earth. Rain makes it possible for crops to grow. Mercy keeps life from being like a barren desert.
  4. The speaker will use no weapons except words; his plan is to use some very harsh and hurtful language.
  5. The quote emphasizes how seriously wounded parents feel if their children express no gratitude.
3. Explain that Shakespeare often used a device called a *soliloquy*—a monologue in which a character voices thoughts and feelings aloud so that only the audience can hear. Read aloud the excerpt in Part B of **Handout 33** and conduct a discussion based on the questions.

#### ***Suggested Responses***

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1. To Romeo, Juliet is light in the darkness. She emits radiance.
  2. Compared to Juliet (the beautiful dove) all of the other girls are crows (ugly). For Romeo, Juliet is the only girl worth a second look.
  3. Romeo plans to find Juliet so that he can approach and touch her. He sees her as something holy; touching her might reflect some of her goodness back onto him.
  4. Romeo feels that, for the first time in his life, he actually knows what love is.
4. Ask students if they would describe Romeo's soliloquy as positive or negative in attitude.
5. Distribute **Handout 34**, and ask students to complete the exercise.

#### ***Suggested Responses***

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1. The soliloquy is an expression of despair and depression. The speaker perceives no hope, love, or meaning in life.
2. Life seems dull, repetitive, petty, and plodding. The first line could simply be paraphrased, "Forever."
3. Life is no more real than a play on a stage; the actor lacks talent and will not be remembered.
4. Life is the idiotic tale—noisy but meaningless.
5. It is evident that this tragic hero is ending in complete misery.

6. Distribute **Handout 35**, and have students complete it individually. Follow with discussion based on these questions:
1. What action is the speaker considering?
  2. What causes him to hesitate to bring about his own death?
  3. What does Hamlet expect to keep him from suicide?
  4. The issue really bothering Hamlet comes up at the very end. What is it?

***Suggested Responses***

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1. Hamlet is pondering the possibility of suicide. Life seems to be just one burden after another, so he thinks it might be a good idea to end everything immediately.
  2. There is the unanswered question of what really comes after death. Once we die, we cannot come back.
  3. He expects that his conscience and his doubts will hold him back.
  4. The problem is an inability to act, something that torments Hamlet through most of the play.
7. Reaffirm that Shakespeare's plays are often classified in three types: tragedies, histories, and comedies. They are not all equally great, and they were not actually collected in written form until the 1620s, when some of his friends and colleagues gathered works they could find for publication in what is usually called the First Folio. To Shakespeare, the plays were meant more for stage than for page.
8. Assign groups to research story lines in some of the more popular plays and to write summaries to share with the rest of the class. Avoid titles you plan to teach. Suggestions include the following:

*King Lear*  
*Othello*  
*The Tempest*  
*The Taming of the Shrew*  
*The Merchant of Venice*  
*Julius Caesar*

After students share information, close by emphasizing the diversity of Shakespeare's work. He was not a writer who simply reworked the same story line over and over, and he seems to have gotten his ideas everywhere—from books, from observation, and from other playwrights.



## Encountering the Language of Shakespeare's Plays

### Part A

**Directions:** Read and explain each of the following short quotes.

1. *Macbeth*: "O, full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife!"
2. *Twelfth Night*: "If music be the food of love, play on."
3. *The Merchant of Venice*: "The quality of mercy is not strained;  
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven  
Upon the place beneath."
4. *Hamlet*: "I will speak daggers to her, but use none."
5. *King Lear*: "How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is  
To have a thankless child!"

## Part B

**Directions:** In *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo sees Juliet for the first time at a party given in her father’s house. In the following soliloquy he talks about his reaction. Read it carefully, and answer the questions.

O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!  
It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night  
Like a rich jewel in an Ethiop’s ear—  
Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear!  
So shows a snowy dove trooping with crows,  
As yonder lady o’er her fellows shows.  
The measure done, I’ll watch her place of stand,  
And, touching hers, make blessed my rude hand.  
Did my heart love till now? forswear it, sight!  
For I ne’er saw true beauty till this night.

1. What does Romeo mean by the first three lines?
2. Explain the reference to a dove among crows.
3. “The measure” refers to music. What does Romeo plan to do?
4. Before the party, Romeo thought he was in love with a girl named Rosaline. What just happened?

## Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow

**Directions:** The following soliloquy is spoken by Macbeth near the end of *The Tragedy of Macbeth*. Read it carefully, and answer the questions.

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day  
To the last syllable of recorded time,  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!  
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage  
And then is heard no more. It is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing.

1. How would you describe the speaker's mental attitude?
2. What impression do the first three lines give the audience?
3. The word "player" in line 6 refers to a member of an acting company. What does Macbeth mean by equating life with this actor?
4. What is the "tale told by an idiot"?
5. In a tragedy the tragic hero characteristically journeys from happiness to misery. Does that seem to be true of Macbeth?

## Hamlet's Eternal Question

**Direction:** The following soliloquy, spoken by Hamlet in *The Tragedy of Hamlet*, is one of the most famous ever written. Read it, and make marginal annotation in preparation for discussion.

To be, or not to be, that is the question:  
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles  
And by opposing end them. To die—to sleep,  
No more; and by a sleep to say we end  
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks  
That flesh is heir to: 'tis a consummation  
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep;  
To sleep, perchance to dream—ay, there's the rub:  
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,  
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,  
Must give us pause—there's the respect  
That makes calamity of so long life.  
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,  
Th'oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,  
The pangs of dispriz'd love, the law's delay,  
The insolence of office, and the spurns  
That patient merit of th'unworthy takes,  
When he himself might his quietus make  
With a bare bodkin? Who would fardels bear,  
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,  
But that the dread of something after death,  
The undiscover'd country, from whose bourn  
No traveller returns, puzzles the will,  
And makes us rather bear those ills we have  
Than fly to others that we know not of?  
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,  
And thus the native hue of resolution  
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,  
And enterprises of great pitch and moment  
With this regard their currents turn awry  
And lose the name of action.



## Lesson 15

# Essays of Sir Francis Bacon

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### Objectives

- To examine Sir Francis Bacon's essays
- To expand knowledge of the essay as a literary genre

### Notes to the Teacher

Sir Francis Bacon (1561–1626) was born in London. He attended Trinity College, Cambridge, at the age of twelve and later entered legal training at Gray's Inn. Ambitious by nature, Bacon was called to the bar and became a member of Parliament, where he served for almost four decades. He attached himself to the Earl of Essex, and they used each other to climb the political ladder. Ultimately, they fell into disfavor with Queen Elizabeth. Essex was charged with treasonous offenses, and Bacon played a role in the trial and condemnation of his former friend. Bacon regained political power under James I and even became Lord Chancellor, but again fell from favor after being charged with accepting bribes. He was fined, imprisoned, and barred from holding office. The last years of his life were spent writing and pursuing scientific knowledge.

Bacon is given credit for being the father of the English essay. The word *essay* is derived from the French verb *essayer*, meaning “to try.” Michel de Montaigne, the sixteenth-century French writer, devised the essay form as a means of explaining ideas. His essays revolve around individual opinions.

Bacon was concerned mainly with science and ethics and focused on the well-being of his target audience: young men of his own class and traditions. He explained how to be efficient, how to gain power through knowledge, and how to master and control nature. Under Bacon, English prose advanced into a number of areas previously ruled by poetry. He was a master of parallel structure, a technique that aids in achieving verbal economy. In addition, he used rhythm and rich imagery. Bacon is also responsible for popularizing the inductive method of reasoning.

In this lesson students consider the nature of nonfiction writing and discuss Francis Bacon's essay “Of Studies.” They then read and report on several additional essays by Bacon and write brief synopses.

### Procedure

1. Discuss the importance of audience, purpose, and tone in writing. Ask students to give examples of how an audience can affect a writer's word choice or a speaker's diction (For example, speaking to toddlers requires

different language from that used when speaking to teenagers.) Ask students to discuss how genre can also affect tone and diction. (For example, a technical instruction manual uses a style far different from that of a love letter.)

2. Distribute **Handout 36**, and have students read it. Point out that modern editorials and newspaper columns have their roots in the essay and that punctuation (esp. commas, semicolons) was based less on convention than on rhythm.
3. Use information from “Notes to the Teacher” to provide background on Francis Bacon. Point out that the same era that produced remarkable poems and dramas also led to new developments in prose expository writing. Emphasize that Bacon was deeply involved in politics, but he was also a scientist and a philosopher with a deep interest in ethics. Explain that Bacon wrote short essays on many topics, including adversity, atheism, friendship, and relationships between parents and their children.
4. Distribute **Handout 37**, and read the essay aloud. Conduct a discussion based on the questions.

#### ***Suggested Responses***

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1. Study is an important part of the well-lived life; study and personal experience should be related; study improves a person’s mind.
  2. Through reading, people gain valuable information. Discussion teaches us to think on our feet; writing perfects and clarifies thought.
  3. Bacon was a man of both action and thought; he seems to mean that over-studying can be an excuse for not acting.
  4. For example, history imparts the wisdom of a long perspective; poetry fosters wit; mathematics teaches careful thinking; rhetoric helps us to state and support a point of view.
  5. Perhaps a student was compelled to take lessons on a musical instrument and came to value it only much later; someone who once disliked studying poetry might come to an appreciation of its ability to convey meanings difficult to express in ordinary language.
5. Introduce the following rhetorical devices:
- Parallel words and phrases
  - Verbal economy
  - Similes and metaphors
  - Synecdoche

Ask students to find examples in the essay—for example, the “some books” repetition in the third paragraph, as well as other parallel phrasings. Bacon compares people’s abilities to plants and books to water, and he uses the metaphor of “tasting” books.

6. Divide the class into groups, and assign each group to read one of the following essays by Bacon:

“Of Revenge”

“Of Travel”

“Of Parents and Children”

“Of Followers and Friends”

Direct the groups to prepare to summarize the essays’ main points and to share rhetorical devices used in them. When groups present information, expand the discussion to include the extent to which Bacon’s ideas are still relevant today.

### ***Suggested Responses***

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1. “Of Revenge”: Bacon warns against revenge in private matters and says that revenge is characterized by a focus on the past, whereas it is more important to be attentive to the present and the future. He is especially opposed to secret revenge, which he compares to an arrow shot in the darkness. Another metaphor compares the desire for revenge to a festering wound.
2. “Of Travel”: The essay begins by saying that travel helps to educate young people and provides experience for those who are older. Bacon stresses the need to learn the languages spoken in the countries one visits and to acquire a knowledgeable guide. He uses a metaphor saying that traveling without a knowledgeable guide is like traveling with a hood over one’s head. He also advises travelers to keep diaries of their journeys. He advocates making lasting friendships with natives of countries visited, and he cautions against becoming involved in conflicts.
3. “Of Parents and Children”: Bacon states that children are sources of both sorrow and joy, and he holds that, in general, people without biological children make the greatest contributions to society. He does not approve of parental favoritism, and he warns against spoiling children with too many material advantages. Parallel structures are important—for example, “Children *sweeten* labors, but they make misfortune more *bitter*.”
4. “Of Followers and Friends”: This essay admits that friendship is a rare thing but says more about followers, who may appear to be friends but are really opportunists. Bacon warns against favoritism and distinguishes various types of followers: the ordinary, the quarrelsome, the flattering, and those who are spies and gossips. The first sentence includes interesting figurative language, comparing followers to a train dragging a person down and thereby implying that friends foster freedom rather than bondage.



7. Point out that Bacon's essays read almost like journal entries and pay little attention to paragraph structure. The essays reflect his efforts to think through various topics. Have students follow his example and write short essays on one of the topics discussed in this lesson (studies, revenge, travel, parents and children, followers and friends). The essays should reflect twenty-first-century perspectives, should include concrete supportive evidence, and should employ several rhetorical devices.

## How to Read an Essay

**Directions:** An essay is a prose composition in which a writer discusses a subject with a particular end in mind. Several types of essays, along with strategies for reading them, are listed below. In approaching an essay, you should first read it for your own understanding and pleasure, then reread it to apply the appropriate strategies for the type of essay you are reading. Be aware that many essays combine types.

### **Persuasion/Argumentation**

Read analytically. Identify the author's thesis (the point he is arguing for), and examine how he has arranged the argument. Consider each component of the argument, particularly analogies and assertions, for accuracy and relevance. Recognize assumptions required by these assertions or analogies. Are you willing to grant these assumptions? Consider the personality of the essayist (often suggested by tone) and the role the writer invites you to play. How does your perception of the essayist's personality affect your responses to the essay's ideas? Formulate your responses to the view presented.

### **Narration**

Pay attention to the events of the narratives. Try to divide the narrative into meaningful parts, and consider the way description, dialogue, and commentary contribute to the events being narrated. Look for passages of special thematic importance in which the author steps back from narration to comment on something's significance or to offer an interpretation. Consider the persuasive force of the narrative in supporting the author's ideas. Consider the implied personality of the essayist in both the narrative sections and the interpretive parts. How does the narrative affect your responses to the essay as a whole? Finally, ask yourself if you find the essay convincing.

### **Meditation/Reflection**

Pay especially close attention to the associations made with words, images, and ideas. Consider how one detail suggests another, and explore the process that leads the author from one detail or idea to the next. This sort of examination, which we often think is appropriate for poetry, is applicable to the meditative essay as well. Note tone and imagery. Only after you have made an investigation of this kind should you begin to ask questions about any persuasive dimensions of the essay.

### **Dramatic Elements**

Concentrate on the dramatic elements of the essay—character, setting, and plot. Consider whether any one character seems to speak with the writer's authority. If you feel this to be the case, investigate details to determine whether the evidence for this is sufficient. The descriptions of scenes and settings can also voice the author's feelings on a subject. Finally, look for dramatic movement toward a climax. Determine the relationship between dramatic form and persuasive purpose.

### **Persona/Point of View**

Pay close attention to the character of the speaker. Determine how your impression of the speaker's character is influenced by style. Consider how the speaker's ideas shape your impressions. Once you have established the speaker's character and ideas, figure out what you believe to be the author's opinions. The author's ideas may be directly stated in the essay itself, but you may also have to deduce them on your own.

## “Of Studies”: Bacon’s Method for Perfecting Nature

**Directions:** Read Sir Francis Bacon’s essay on the value of studying various subjects, and answer the questions. Paragraph breaks have been added in order to facilitate easier reading.

### Of Studies

Studies serve for delight, for ornament, and for ability. Their chief use for delight is in privateness and retiring; for ornament, is in discourse; and for ability, is in the judgment and disposition of business. For expert men can execute and perhaps judge of particulars, one by one; but the general counsels, and the plots and marshaling of affairs, come best, from those that are learned. To spend too much time in studies is sloth; to use them too much for ornament is affectation; to make judgment wholly by their rules is the humor of a scholar.

They perfect nature, and are perfected by experience: for natural abilities are like natural plants, that need pruning, by study; and studies themselves do give forth directions too much at large, except they be bounded in by experience.

Crafty men contemn studies, simple men admire them, and wise men use them; for they teach not their own use; but that is a wisdom without them and above them, won by observation. Read not to contradict and confute; nor to believe and take for granted; nor to find talk and discourse; but to weigh and consider. Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested; that is, some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read, but not curiously; and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention. Some books also may be read by deputy, and extracts made of them by others; but that would be only in the less important arguments, and the meaner sort of books; else distilled books are like common distilled waters, flashy things. Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man. And therefore, if a man write little, he had need have a great memory; if he confer little, he had need have a present wit; and if he read little, he had need have much cunning, to seem to know, that he doth not.

Histories make men wise; poets witty; the mathematics subtle; natural philosophy deep; moral grave; logic and rhetoric able to contend. *Abeunt studia in mores*. Nay, there is no stound or impediment in the wit, but may be wrought out by fit studies; like as diseases of the body, may have appropriate exercises. Bowling is good for the stone and reins, shooting for the lungs and breast; gentle walking for the stomach; riding for the head; and the like. So if a man’s wit be wandering, let him study the mathematics; for in demonstrations, if his wit be called away never so little, he must begin again. If his wit be not apt to distinguish or find differences, let him study the Schoolmen, for they are *cumini sectores*. If he be not apt to beat over matters, and to call one thing to prove and illustrate another, let him study the lawyers’ cases. So every defect of the mind may have a special receipt.

—Sir Francis Bacon





## Lesson 16

# England during the Seventeenth Century

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### Objectives

- To understand the atmosphere of stress, violence, and danger that characterized much of seventeenth-century England
- To describe the poetry of the Metaphysical and Cavalier poets

### Notes to the Teacher

After the long and stabilizing rule of Queen Elizabeth I, England experienced a century of conflict and confusion. The Gunpowder Plot in 1605 was an unsuccessful attempt to blow up Parliament and assassinate King James I. There was constant conflict between Parliament and the monarchy and between Catholics and Protestants, resulting in civil wars. In 1649 the Catholic-leaning King Charles I was beheaded and England became a republic; by 1653 the Protestant Oliver Cromwell was functioning as a dictator. In 1660 the monarchy was restored, but 1665 brought a devastating siege of bubonic plague, and the following year the Great Fire of London occurred. Not until near the end of the century, with the monarchy of William and Mary, was an atmosphere of order and calm restored.

We usually associate two types of poets with this period—the Metaphysicals and the Cavaliers. The first tended to be scholars, often Anglican ministers. The second were often courtiers with heavy political involvement. The towering figure of John Milton was also part of this century, during which Samuel Pepys wrote his famous diary and John Bunyan produced *The Pilgrim's Progress*, an influential Christian allegory.

In this lesson students learn about this period in England, and they read, analyze, and respond to two poems, one from John Milton, the other from Richard Lovelace.

### Procedure

1. Divide the class into five groups, and assign each one of the following topics:
  - Gunpowder Plot
  - King Charles I of England
  - Oliver Cromwell
  - Plague of 1665
  - Great Fire of London

Ask students to use the Internet to research the topics and to prepare reports for the rest of the class.

2. Have groups share information, and distribute **Handout 38** for note-taking purposes.

### ***Suggested Responses***

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1. The Gunpowder Plot's name is based on the thirty-six barrels of gunpowder that conspirators cached in the basement beneath Parliament and planned to detonate with the primary goal of killing King James I. The plot failed because of information leaks, and the conspirators, including Guy Fawkes, were all either killed in battle or executed. The motivation behind the plot was based on resentment about religious discrimination against Catholics.
2. Charles I succeeded his father, James I, as king of England, and he inherited all of the problems his father had faced, including religious conflict and continuous tensions between Parliament and the monarchy. Like his father, he was committed to the notion of the divine right of kings. Charles dissolved parliaments that did not work with him. This eventually led to Puritans rallying against him and to a civil war, which Charles lost. He was charged with high treason and executed by beheading in January of 1649.
3. Oliver Cromwell was a leader in the forces opposed to Charles I during the civil war, and he advocated both the trial and the execution of the king. With the end of monarchy, Parliament seemed to rule, but not successfully. Cromwell dissolved Parliament and took over as Lord Protector, establishing a virtual dictatorship but refusing to become king. He was a staunch Puritan, but he encouraged an atmosphere of religious tolerance for Protestant sects. After his death in 1658, his son was unable to maintain control, and this led to the restoration of the monarchy and the rule of Charles II, who was later ousted by William of Orange.
4. Plague had afflicted Europe since medieval times, but the disease surged in 1665 in England, especially in the London area. Plague victims suffered painful swellings and sores, and medical care of the times was useless to save their lives. The summer had been unusually hot, and London was crowded, resulting in squalor and poverty in which rats, which carried the fleas responsible for transmitting plague, thrived. Wealthier people, including King Charles II, fled the city for greater safety in the countryside. The poor were trapped, and quarantines were imposed. Before it was over, London had lost about 15% of its population to plague—roughly one of every seven persons.
5. The Great Fire of London occurred the following year, 1666, and was partly responsible for ending the plague. The diarist Samuel Pepys described the conflagration, which was by no means the only fire in the city's history. Most of the buildings were made of wood, the weather had been dry, and there was quite a wind when the fire started very early one morning in a bakery. It spread quickly, and fire brigades were able to do little to control it. By the end, it is estimated that 80% of the city had been razed. The fire also destroyed the rat population, ending the plague epidemic.

3. Distribute **Handout 39**, and ask students to complete the exercise.

***Suggested Responses***

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1. Milton's poem is serious and religious, reflecting Puritan sympathies. His poem is a sonnet in the Petrarchan mode. Suckling's reflects the voice of a courtier, flirting with love. There is nothing religious about it.
2. Milton's poem is about work and dedication to the art of making poetry, despite his blindness; there is no hint of humor. Suckling's poem focuses on romance and one very pretty young woman of his acquaintance, as he marvels at his ability to stick with one girl for "three whole days."
3. Milton's light was certainly spent, as he completely lost his vision. This fact clarifies the title and explains the despondency in the beginning lines.
4. The title is ironic and humorous, as "three whole days" are hardly enough to signify a "constant lover." Suckling seems to be laughing at himself, as he invites the reader to join in the laughter.



## Facts of Life in Seventeenth-Century England

**Directions:** Fill in the chart with information about some key facts regarding life in England after the death of Queen Elizabeth I.

Topic	Facts	Causes/Effects
Gunpowder Plot		
King Charles I		
Oliver Cromwell		
Plague of 1665		
Great Fire of London		

## Contrasting Poems from the Seventeenth Century

**Directions:** Read the following two poems by writers from the 1600s and answer the questions.

### **On His Blindness**

When I consider how my light is spent,  
Ere half my days in this dark world and wide,  
And that one talent which is death to hide  
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent  
To serve therewith my Maker, and present  
My true account, lest He returning chide;  
“Doth God exact day-labor, light denied?”  
I fondly ask. But Patience, to prevent  
That murmur, soon replies, “God doth not need  
Either man’s work or His own gifts. Who best  
Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best. His state  
Is kingly: thousands at His bidding speed,  
And post o’er land and ocean without rest;  
They also serve who only stand and wait.”

—John Milton

### **The Constant Lover**

Out upon it, I have loved  
Three whole days together!  
And am like to love three more,  
If it prove fair weather.  
  
Time shall moult away his wings  
Ere he shall discover  
In the whole wide world again  
Such a constant lover.  
  
But the spite on ’t is, no praise  
Is due at all to me:  
Love with me had made no stays,  
Had it any been but she.  
  
Had it any been but she,  
And that very face,  
There had been at least ere this  
A dozen dozen in her place.

—Sir John Suckling

1. John Milton was born in 1608; John Suckling in 1609. Both attended university at Cambridge, although Suckling did not obtain a degree. During the civil war, Milton was pro-Cromwell, while Suckling was a royalist. Milton wanted to be a poet; Suckling chose to be a soldier and courtier. Do the poems in any ways reflect the poets' lives?
2. How do the poems differ in subject matter and tone?
3. Milton was completely blind by 1651. How does the poem reflect this fact?
4. Describe the tone of the title of Suckling's poem.

## Lesson 17

# The Tribe of Ben

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### Objectives

- To encounter ideas from Ben Jonson
- To understand the concept of *carpe diem* as a theme of the Cavalier poets
- To read, respond to, and analyze three Cavalier poems

### Notes to the Teacher

What the Stuart kings, the royal dynasty that reigned after Queen Elizabeth, lacked in political astuteness and understanding of the common people, they made up for in the elegance and sophisticated refinement of their courts. Young gallants gathered around court, where royal patronage of the arts encouraged their literary endeavors. The acknowledged literary leader was Ben Jonson (1572–1637), a brilliant classicist, versatile playwright, and composer of court masques, a man who insisted on craftsmanship as a hallmark of great poetry, following the Greek concept of poet as maker. Jonson and other poets—who often referred to themselves as the Tribe of Ben—met at London taverns such as The Mermaid and The Devil’s Head to share food, drinks, poetry, and witty discussion.

In this lesson students first encounter ideas from Ben Jonson. They discuss the *carpe diem* philosophy, and they read and discuss three Cavalier poems. Ben Jonson’s “Song: to Celia” is one of the most famous love poems ever written. Robert Herrick’s “To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time” perfectly articulates the *carpe diem* concept. In “To Lucasta, Going to the Wars,” Richard Lovelace deals with both love and a code of honor.

### Procedure

1. Write the phrase *carpe diem* on the board and give its literal definition, “seize the day.” State that this was a popular theme with a group of seventeenth-century poets often referred to as the Cavaliers because of their commitment to the king. Clarify its meaning by likening it to the saying, “Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow you will (or may) die.”
2. Explain that Ben Jonson was a leader of the Cavaliers, who admired him so much they even referred to themselves as the Tribe of Ben. Distribute **Handout 40**, and ask students to complete it.

### ***Suggested Response***

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The meetings were meant to be jovial, witty experiences, with good food and drinks. Seating was open, not hierarchical, and the service was expected to be efficient. The atmosphere was supposed to be good-natured and lighthearted, with no conflicts and certainly no brawls. Confidentiality was honored as well.

3. Distribute **Handout 41**, and ask students to complete it individually. Follow with discussion.

### ***Suggested Responses***

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1. Being understood requires communication; what people say and how they say it is very revealing. A person who refuses to enter into a conversation remains an enigma.
  2. Poetry is not just a matter of rational thought. Wanting to write a poem is not sufficient to actually produce a good one.
  3. As Emily Dickinson later wrote, “Much Madness is divinest Sense.” Works of genius always seem to involve a little craziness.
  4. Emotions are an important part of any endeavor. Without these feelings, all of our efforts seem somewhat cold and dry.
  5. Good writing requires hard work. If something is written very easily and quickly, perhaps it is not worth our attention.
  6. Poets should share and benefit from one another’s work. Ideas do not develop in a vacuum.
  7. Writers need to be both witty and articulate by nature.
  8. Writers need education, including wide reading and knowledge of history.
  9. Genius is rare, not an everyday occurrence.
  10. Ignorance is as deadly as any physical disease. For the spirit not to weaken and die, a person needs knowledge and insight.
4. Distribute **Handout 42**, and ask small groups to complete the exercise. Before discussing the questions with the class as a whole, ask for a show of hands regarding which of the three poems students like the most, and have volunteers share their reasoning. In leading the discussion, invite students to share observations and questions.

### ***Suggested Responses***

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#### **Part A: “Song to Celia”**

1. Students are usually quick to respond positively to the first stanza, which is about being so much in love that nothing else is necessary.
2. Ben Jonson himself titled the poem as a song, and there have been many attempts to put it to music, including versions by Johnny Cash and Paul Robeson. The imagery and sentiments match those characteristic of weddings.

3. In the first stanza the speaker says that he is so much in love with the beautiful woman in front of him that he has no need for wine. The second stanza, which students often find more difficult, is hyperbolic. He sent her roses, which she for some reason returned; he found that the flowers then smelled not like roses, but like her, and merely being in her presence invigorated the petals.

**Part B: “To the Virgins”**

1. The poem expresses the *carpe diem* philosophy in a nutshell. Herrick says that time passes very quickly, so people need to revel in youth for the short time they have it.
2. The speaker knows that roses do not last for long; their beauty is ephemeral. By implication, neither will the girls be for long in the garden picking flowers. Human life, too, passes quickly.
3. Time flies, and we should seize life while we still have youthful energy and beauty.

**Part C: “To Lucasta”**

1. Richard Lovelace went to war against the Puritans in support of the king, as other people over the ages have left loved ones behind because of the call to battle. The response occurs not because of blood-lust, but because of honor and a need to act on one’s convictions.
  2. The poem is a little, carefully crafted gem that deals with a timeless theme familiar to many families. There seems to be a kind of holiness to the love between the speaker and Lucasta. He compares the call to battle to a mistress, luring him away; then he asserts that he would not be the man she loves if he did not go to war, because he would not be himself.
5. Assign students to write essays in which they argue for the relevance of one of the three poems today. If necessary, review characteristics of an effective essay of argumentation:

A clear statement of central purpose

Logical and orderly presentation of information and opinions

Effective language choices

Clear closure

## The Philosophy of the Tribe of Ben

**Directions:** Ben Jonson presided over gatherings of poets at The Devil's Head Tavern in London, where he would hold forth on the making of poetry. In the lines below, Jonson describes the rules that governed gatherings. Read the rules and then express them in your own words.

Rules in Ben Jonson's Language	Rules in Modern Language
<p>Let none but Guests or Clubbers hither come, Let Dunces, Fools, sad, sordid men keep home; Let learned, civil, merry men b'invited, Let modest too; nor the choice Ladies slighted: Let nothing in the treatie offend the Guests, More for delight then cost prepare the feasts: The Cook and Purvey'r must our palats know; And None contend who shall sit high or low: The waiters must quick-sighted be and dumb, And let the drawers quickly hear and come: Let not our wine be mixt, but brisk and neat, Or else the drinkers may the Vintners beat. And let our only emulation be, Not drinking much, but talking wittily. Let it be voted lawful to stir up Each other with a moderate chirping cup. Let none of us be mute, or talk too much, On serious things or sacred, let's not touch With sated heads and bellies: Neither may Fiddlers unask'd obtrude themselves to play: With laughing, leaping, dancing, jests and songs, And what ere else to grateful mirth belongs; Let's celebrate our feasts; And let us see That all our jests without reflection be: Inspid Poems Let no man rehearse, Nor any be compell'd to write a verse. All noise of vain disputes must be forborne, And let no lover in a corner mourn: To fight and brawl (like Hectors) let none dare, Glasses or windows break, or hangings tare. Who ere shall publish what's here done or said, From our Society must be banished: Let none by drinking do or suffer harm, And while we stay, let us be alwaies warm.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">—Ben Jonson</p>	

## Words of Wisdom from Ben Jonson

**Directions:** Below are precepts which Ben Jonson thought could be used to judge poetry and poets. Read them and, for each one, offer a response and a real-life example that supports Jonson's idea.

1. Language shows a man: speak that I may see thee.
2. A poet in his senses knocks vainly at the gates of poetry.
3. There was never a great genius without a touch of madness.
4. The mind may never achieve or express anything great unless emotion plays a part.
5. Things wrote with labor deserve to be so read and will last their age.
6. A poet should be able to convert the substance, or riches of another poet to his own use.
7. A poet or "maker" must have a goodness of natural wit and be able by nature and instinct to pour out the treasure of his mind.
8. He cannot leap forth suddenly a poet without study, wide reading, and mastery of history and argument of the poem.
9. It is only a king or poet that is not born every year.
10. I know no disease of the soul, but ignorance.





**Part B: “To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time”**

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may.  
Old time is still a-flying;  
And this same flower that smiles today,  
Tomorrow will be dying.

The glorious lamp of heaven, the sun,  
The higher he’s a-getting,  
The sooner will his race be run,  
And nearer he’s to setting.

That age is best which is the first,  
When youth and blood are warmer,  
But being spent, the worse, and worst  
Times still succeed the former.

Then be not coy, but use your time,  
And while ye may, go marry;  
For having lost but once your prime,  
You may forever tarry.

—Robert Herrick

1. What is the writer’s main concern? How does the poem reflect the *carpe diem* philosophy?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. In the first stanza, the speaker seems to have come upon young women picking flowers. What does he advise them to do?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What is the poem’s theme? Do you agree?



## Lesson18

# The Metaphysical Writers

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### Objectives

- To understand characteristics of seventeenth-century metaphysical writers
- To read and analyze prose and poetry from John Donne
- To appreciate a concrete poem from George Herbert

### Notes to the Teacher

The term *metaphysical* was invented in the eighteenth century by Samuel Johnson in a critical commentary that was far from flattering. In fact, the Metaphysical poets, including John Donne, fell out of favor for two centuries, only to be resurrected to greatness in the twentieth century. Metaphysical poetry appeals primarily to the mind rather than to emotions. It speculates about philosophy. Poems from this group share several qualities. They are generally concise—short, but also dense with meaning. They make use of startling comparisons and *conceits*, extended metaphors relating things that may, at first, seem unlikely to be connected at all.

John Donne (1572–1631) is the most outstanding of the Metaphysical poets. He spent his early life as a man-about-town, seemed to be on his way to success, but then eloped with his patron's niece, derailing his career. In 1615 King James I persuaded him to join the Anglican ministry, and he became the royal chaplain. Six years later he became the dean of St. Paul's Cathedral. As a minister, he became well known for his powerful sermons. Donne's work is vivid and original in both subject and form. His language is often colloquial, and he is remarkable for inserting extraordinary thoughts into ordinary situations. His love poems, both secular and religious, are profound. In this lesson students study both Meditation 17 and Holy Sonnet 10.

Students also encounter the work of George Herbert, a more minor Metaphysical, who experimented with the genre known as “concrete poetry” or “shape poetry,” which uses the typographical layout to help convey the poem's meaning. Herbert was first an orator at Cambridge and then a minister, and his work is often intensely religious in focus, as is evident in “Easter Wings.”

### Procedure

1. Explain that in literary contexts a conceit is an elaborate and extended comparison. Many metaphors and similes are quite brief, but conceits are longer because they are fully developed.

**Example:** A conceit that a book is like a sandwich would go into detail about the process of eating, savoring, and digesting and ways the food benefits both body and spirit; the conceit would also apply those details to the book. It could point out that, like a sandwich, a book presents nourishment—in this case food for thought between two covers.

2. Ask students to brainstorm other possible subjects for conceits. (How is old age like winter? How is life like a flower? How is anger like fire? How is adolescence like a roller coaster?) If you wish, have students take time to write extended metaphors and to share results in small groups or with the class as a whole.
3. Explain that some seventeenth-century English poets are today often referred to as Metaphysical poets. They tended to be men associated with the university and/or the church. The most famous of these was John Donne.
4. Distribute **Handout 43**, and provide students with background on Donne from “Notes to the Teacher.” Have a volunteer read “Meditation 17” aloud. Conduct a discussion based on the questions.

#### ***Suggested Responses***

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1. The tolling of a bell is a somber sound associated with death and funerals.
2. Each person is like a chapter in the book of life. Thus we are all linked to one another. Death is translation, by one means or another, to a better life. In eternity we are reunited and open to one another—like a library of open books.
3. People are united as a continent in one cohesive landmass. We all need and are affected by one another; we share one another’s lives and deaths.
4. We cannot be detached from one another’s suffering; everyone dies sometime.
5. We talk about disasters and deaths, but we often allow our initial sorrow and sympathy to fade. Donne’s statement, “It tolls for thee,” suggests that we should respond to the deaths of strangers as if they were like our own; this would make us more sensitive to the plights of others and more willing to help those who suffer under great hardship or grief. Donne does not want us to live in a state of constant mourning; rather, he urges us to feel connected to others, which, in turn, would provoke us into helping others more readily in times of need. Students may be able to provide a variety of examples such as volunteer efforts to support others. Often when disasters occur, many ordinary citizens unite to support those in need. The Red Cross, Doctors without Borders, Amnesty International, Habitat for Humanity, and many other movements seek to improve the conditions of others.

5. Have small groups read Holy Sonnet 10 on **Handout 44** and discuss the questions.

***Suggested Responses***

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1. The poem uses apostrophe to address death: It compares death to a person; it also compares death to sleep.
  2. It is paradoxical to refer to the death of Death; Donne meant that eternal life would ensue.
  3. The sermon says that we should live our lives fully connected to one another and that we should view death as nothing worse than transformation to another life.
6. Explain that John Donne was not the only Metaphysical writer, just the one who is most famous and considered greatest. Another minister and poet, George Herbert, also wrote Metaphysical poetry, and he even experimented with a form we now refer to as concrete poetry.
  7. Distribute **Handout 45** and ask a volunteer to read the poem aloud. Then conduct a discussion based on the questions.

***Suggested Responses***

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1. The stanzas are shaped like the wings mentioned in the title. Each beginning speaks about human greed and sin, and the lines shrink to reflect decay; once the subject turns to God, the lines grow again, completing the flying shape.
  2. The soul provides the wings that enable a person to lift above life's afflictions.
8. Have students work individually or with partners to create concrete poems of their own. If necessary, suggest topics (e.g., butterfly, Halloween, hot air balloon, ice cream cone). Encourage careful selection of images and figures of speech. When students have finished, have them post results around the classroom and participate in a gallery walk.

## John Donne's Tolling Bell

**Directions:** Read the essay by John Donne, and answer the questions.

### Meditation 17

Per chance he for whom this bell tolls may be so ill as that he knows not it tolls for him. And perchance I may think myself so much better than I am as that they who are about me and see my state may have caused it to toll for me, and I know not that.

The Church is catholic, universal; so are all her actions. All that she does belongs to all. When she baptizes a child, that action concerns me; for that child is thereby connected to that Head which is my Head too, and engrafted into that body whereof I am a member. And when she buries a man, that action concerns me: all mankind is of one Author and is one volume. When one man dies, one chapter is not torn out of the book, but translated into a better language; and every chapter must be so translated. God employs several translators; some pieces are translated by age, some by sickness, some by war, some by justice; but God's hand is in every translation, and His hand shall bind up our scattered leaves again, for that library where every book shall lie open to one another.

Neither can we call this a begging of misery or a borrowing of misery, as though we were not miserable enough of ourselves but must fetch in more from the next house in taking upon us the misery of our neighbors. Truly it were an excusable covetousness if we did, for affliction is a treasure, and scarce any man hath enough of it. No man hath affliction enough that is not matured by it and made fit for God by that affliction.

As therefore the bell that rings to a sermon calls not upon the preacher only but upon the congregation to come, so this bell calls us all; but how much more me, who am brought so near the door by this sickness. . . . The bell doth toll for him that thinks it doth; and though it intermit again, yet from that minute that that occasion wrought upon him he is united to God.

Who casts not up his eye to the sun when it rises? but who takes off his eye from a comet when that breaks out? Who bends not his ear to any bell which upon any occasion rings? but who can remove it from that bell which is passing a piece of himself out of this world?

No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friends or of thine own were. Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind. And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.

—John Donne





## “Death, Be Not Proud”

**Directions:** Read the poem by John Donne, and answer the questions.

### Holy Sonnet 10

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee  
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;  
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow  
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.  
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,  
Much pleasure, then from thee much more must flow,  
And soonest our best men with thee do go,  
Rest of their bones, and souls' delivery.  
Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,  
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,  
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well,  
And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou, then?  
One short sleep past, we wake eternally,  
And Death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.

—John Donne

1. Explain the conceits that dominate the poem.
2. What is paradoxical about the last line?
3. What seems to have been Donne's view of death?





## Lesson 19

# John Milton's *Paradise Lost*

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### Objectives

- To understand Milton's use of the story at the beginning of Genesis
- To explore irony in Milton's epic poem

### Notes to the Teacher

John Milton is the greatest of the seventeenth-century British writers. His work reflects his Puritan beliefs, as well as his comprehensive grasp of classical literature and his finely honed ability as a poet. Scholar, traveler, political writer, activist, and staunch Puritan (even though he opposed some important Puritan doctrines), he wrote one of the greatest works in the English language. *Paradise Lost* is a literary epic partly based on the Book of Genesis but largely a product of Milton's imagination.

The epic in its entirety is beyond the capability and interest level of most high school students. Its basis in Judeo-Christian tradition can alienate some readers, and the fact that it is a very long poem can send many students running in the other direction. If you wish to introduce your students to this very advanced text, this lesson presents several excerpts. An acquaintance with *Paradise Lost* is especially useful if you plan to teach Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

### Procedure

1. Explain that John Milton is usually considered the greatest of the seventeenth-century writers, and his masterpiece is an epic entitled *Paradise Lost*. Milton was a Puritan and a very religious man, and he based the epic on the biblical story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The Bible story is quite brief; Milton's imagination added many details to compose a lengthy epic. Read aloud Genesis 2:15–3:24. Ask students to summarize the story.

*Example:* Adam and Eve lived in paradise with only one rule, not to eat the fruit of a specific tree, but Satan came along and tempted them, and they gave in. Their punishment for disobedience was expulsion from paradise.

2. Have students read **Handout 46, Part A**. Point out the movement from earth to heaven, from water to mountains, from temples to the soul, from time to eternity. The ascending and descending movement is a key kinetic image of the poem.
3. Discuss students' paraphrase of Milton's purpose: to help people understand why things are the way they are.

4. Read aloud the excerpt in Part B, and conduct a discussion based on the questions.

***Suggested Responses***

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1. Chained on a burning lake, Satan is an image of agony, debasement, and powerlessness.
2. God allows Satan's to continue to damn himself. The evil Satan causes humans is foiled by God's mercy.
3. Satan is defiant, proud, and determined to obtain power.
4. Light images reinforce his original role of Lucifer, or "light-bearer."
5. The irony in this depiction is that, even though Satan sought to make others evil, his "malice served but to bring forth infinite goodness, grace, and mercy . . ."

5. Ask small groups to complete the handout, Part C.

***Suggested Responses***

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1. Satan implies that God wishes to keep Adam and Eve ignorant and therefore weak. He appeals to Eve's desire for power.
2. The speaker is horrified at what Eve has done and feels the whole earth has reacted to her rash decision.

6. Point out famous lines from other passages in *Paradise Lost*, and have students discuss reasons why they remain familiar.

***Examples:*** "The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a Heaven of Hell, or Hell of Heaven." Or "Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven."

7. Explain that Milton, in working with the story from Genesis, was using an ancient myth from the Judeo-Christian tradition. Mythologists note that legends from many cultures deal with the same issues and attempt to explain what we could call "the human condition." For example, the classical story of Pandora is an attempt to explain people's capacity to maintain hope in a lifetime full of many evils.
8. Assign students to write short essays in which they use twenty-first-century terms to explain the reality that we do not live in paradise. Remind them that people sometimes make choices that are destructive to themselves and devastating to others; natural disasters occur; illness and death are not, in the end, avoidable. How do we explain these things to ourselves?

## Milton's *Paradise Lost*

### Part A

**Directions:** Read the opening lines of Milton's great epic, and identify the poet's purpose.

Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit  
Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste  
Brought death into the World, and all our woe,  
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man  
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,  
Sing, Heavenly Muse, that, on the secret top  
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire  
That shepherd who first taught the chosen seed  
In the beginning, how the heavens and earth  
Rose out of Chaos; or, if Sion hill  
Delight thee more, and Siloa's brook that flowed  
Fast by the oracle of God, I thence  
Invoke thy aid to my adventurous song,  
That with no middle flight intends to soar  
Above the Aontan mount, while it pursues  
Things unattempted yet in prose or rime.  
And chiefly thou, O spirit, that does prefer  
Before all temples the upright heart and pure,  
Instruct me, for thou know'st; thou from the first  
Wast present, and, with mighty wings outspread,  
Dove-like sat'st brooding on the vast Abyss.  
And mad'st it pregnant: what in me is dark  
Illumine, what is low raise and support:  
That to the heighth of this great argument,  
I may assert Eternal Providence,  
And justify the ways of God to men.

—I. 1–26

The last line states Milton's purpose. Rephrase it in your own words:

## Part B

**Directions:** Read Milton's descriptions of Satan, and answer the questions.

So stretched out huge in length the Arch-Fiend lay,  
Chained on the burning lake; nor ever thence  
Had risen, or heaved his head, but that the will  
And high permission of all-ruling Heaven  
Left him at large to his own dark designs.  
That with reiterated crimes he might  
Heap on himself damnation, while he sought  
Evil to others, and enraged might see  
How all his malice served but to bring forth  
Infinite goodness, grace, and mercy...

—I. 209–218

1. What does the grotesquery indicate about Satan's condition?
2. Why does God allow Satan a certain measure of freedom?
3. What are Satan's attitudes toward his banishment from heaven?
4. What images does Milton associate with Satan? Why?
5. What is ironic about this depiction?

### Part C

**Directions:** Read the following passages, in which Satan tries to convince Eve of the wonderful benefits she will reap from eating the forbidden fruit, and Eve succumbs. Then answer the question.

Why then was this forbid? Why but to awe,  
Why but to keep ye low and ignorant,  
His worshippers; he knows that in the day  
Ye Eat thereof; Eyes that seem so clear,  
yet are but dim, shall perfectly be then  
Op'n'd and clear'd, and ye shall be as Gods,  
Knowing both Good and Evil as they know.  
That ye should be as Gods, since I as Man,  
Internal Man, is but proportion meet,  
I of brute human, yee of human Gods.  
So ye shall die perhaps, by putting off  
Human, to put on Gods, death to be wisht,  
Though threat'n'd, which no worse than this can bring.  
And what are Gods that Man may not become  
As they, participating in God-like food?  
The Gods are first, and that advantage use  
On our belief, that all from them proceeds;  
I question it, for this fair Earth I see;  
Warm'd by the Sun, producing every kind,  
Them nothing: If they all things, who enclos'd  
Knowledge of Good and Evil in this Tree,  
That who so eats thereof, forthwith attains  
Wisdom without their leave? and wherein lies  
Th' offense, that Man should thus attain to know?  
What can your knowledge hurt him, or this Tree  
|Impart against his will if all be his?  
Or is it envy, and can envy dwell  
In heav'nly breasts? these, these and many more  
Causes import your need of this fair Fruit.  
Goddess humane, reach then, and freely taste.

—IX. 703–732





## Lesson 20

# The Diary of Samuel Pepys

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### Objective

- To understand the importance of diaries and journals as forms of nonfiction
- To use several excerpts from the diary of Samuel Pepys as sources of information about seventeenth-century life in London

### Notes to the Teacher

Samuel Pepys (1633–1703), a man of remarkable learning whose career led him to the position of Secretary of the Admiralty (Navy), knew most of the major political and social figures of his day. He is best known for his famous diary. Covering the period of 1660–1669, it records in minute detail many aspects of life during that period. Pepys describes not only major events—Charles II’s coronation, the Plague of 1665, and the Great Fire of 1666—but also minor ones such as quarrels with his wife, what he wore, and introspective searching. Pepys wrote the diary in shorthand, so what we read today is a transcription.

To scholars, diaries and journals are of immense importance, as they present firsthand views of people and events in history. Although Pepys does not seem to have intended his diaries for publication, he had them carefully bound and kept them among other books in his library. Those volumes are our main source for knowing about life in London after the restoration of the monarchy in 1660.

In this lesson students read several excerpts and discuss what the diary reveals about the man who wrote it and the time in which he lived.

### Procedure

1. Ask students to share what they know about diaries and journals. Use the following questions as a basis for discussion:
  - Why do diaries seem easy to write?
  - Who is the intended audience?
  - What kind of information do they contain?

Lead students to see that diaries are a private form of writing, usually to record events, reactions, and reflections. Most diarists do not anticipate publication.

2. Explain that it is very hard for us to imagine what life was like anywhere centuries ago. In London during the 1660s a businessman named Samuel Pepys kept a daily diary which gives us glimpses of life in that time and place. Make sure students know that the writer's last name is pronounced *peeps*.
3. Ask students to read the excerpts on **Handout 47**, but to ignore the questions for the moment. After sufficient time, ask what events are included in the diary excerpts.

***Example:** Pepys was present for the ceremony in which Charles II was crowned king and the monarchy returned to England. He was also in London during the devastating plague in 1665, and he reported on conflicts with the Dutch. He was present during the Great Fire in 1666. From his diary we acquire a firsthand account of some of the most important events of the decade.*

4. Ask small groups to answer the questions on the handout, and follow with class discussion.

#### ***Suggested Responses***

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1. Pepys went to Westminster Abbey hours before the ceremony to get a good place for viewing the ceremonies involved in the crowning of Charles II, and then he sat and waited, marveling all the while at the decorations.
2. This was a lavish ceremony, with all of the pomp and circumstance of the Church of England.
3. Pepys was a man who liked to be where the action was. He was willing to wait for hours so that he would have a good seat to view the coronation. He appreciated the spectacle before him.
4. The excerpt conveys a kind of excitement and enthusiasm about the return of the monarchy and the end of Puritan rule.
5. Pepys kept track of statistics and was aware of the magnitude of this attack of plague. (Elsewhere in the diary he indicates that he took care to update his will and organize his affairs, in case he should become a victim of plague.)
6. He was also aware of international events and business concerns. There was doubtless a sense that he could not control plague, so life for the most part had to go on as usual.
7. The entry focuses on the Great Fire in 1666, which virtually destroyed London. We can see that the city was crowded with poor people who were powerless against the fire and reluctant to lose their possessions.
8. Pepys was curious, amazed, awed, and saddened by the fire and so much destruction.
9. He was generous with friends left homeless by the fire, and he was very busy gathering valuables to be moved to safety. Pepys was a practical man.

5. Explain that much of Pepys's diary is filled with very ordinary events: getting up in the morning and going to bed at night, business meetings, conversations with his wife, comments on the weather and on social events. The same could be said about diaries by most people. Ask students to brainstorm a list of events in their own lives that might be included in diary entries that could be of interest to historians in the future. For example, someone keeping a diary or journal in 1941 might have entries that reflect grass-roots responses to the attack on Pearl Harbor. Entries from 1963 might show responses to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy and subsequent events. A journal from September 2001 would probably include reflections on the attacks on New York City and the Pentagon.
6. Assign students to write a journal including entries from at least four consecutive days in the next week or two. Clarify that these entries will be read by others. The writings can be diverse in subject matter: acing (or failing) an important test; attending a concert; quarreling with a sibling; an event in the news; a topic of personal interest. These are journal entries, so they need not involve extensive revision and editing; they can be word-processed or handwritten.

## Excerpts from the Diary of Samuel Pepys

**Directions:** Read the following excerpts from the seventeenth-century diary, and answer the questions.

**23 April 1661**

### Coronation Day

And with much ado, by the favour of Mr. Cooper, his man, did get up into a great scaffold across the North end of the Abbey, where with a great deal of patience I sat from past 4 till 11 before the King came in. And a great pleasure it was to see the Abbey raised in the middle, all covered with red, and a throne (that is a chair) and footstool on the top of it; and all the officers of all kinds, so much as the very fiddlers, in red vests. At last comes in the Dean and Prebends of Westminster, with the Bishops (many of them in cloth of gold copes), and after them the Nobility, all in their Parliament robes, which was a most magnificent sight. Then the Duke, and the King with a scepter (carried by my Lord Sandwich) and sword and mond before him, and the crown too. The King in his robes, bare-headed, which was very fine. And after all had placed themselves, there was a sermon and the service; and then in the Quire at the high altar, the King passed through all the ceremonies of the Coronacon, which to my great grief I and most in the Abbey could not see. The crown being put upon his head, a great shout begun, and he came forth to the throne, and there passed more ceremonies: as taking the oath, and having things read to him by the Bishop; and his lords (who put on their caps as soon as the King put on his crown) and bishops come, and kneeled before him. And three times the King at Arms went to the three open places on the scaffold, and proclaimed, that if any one could show any reason why Charles Stewart should not be King of England, that now he should come and speak. And a Generall Pardon also was read by the Lord Chancellor, and meddalls flung up and down by my Lord Cornwallis, of silver, but I could not come by any.

1. What did Pepys do on the day Charles II was crowned and the monarchy returned to England?
2. How would you describe the ceremony Pepys witnessed?
3. What does the passage reveal about the writer of the diary?
4. What does the excerpt reveal about London in 1661?



2 September, 1666

... About seven rose again to dress myself, and there looked out at the window, and saw the fire not so much as it was and further off. So to my closett to set things to rights after yesterday's cleaning. By and by Jane comes and tells me that she hears that above 300 houses have been burned down to-night by the fire we saw, and that it is now burning down all Fish-street, by London Bridge. So I made myself ready presently, and walked to the Tower, and there got up upon one of the high places, Sir J. Robinson's little son going up with me; and there I did see the houses at that end of the bridge all on fire, and an infinite great fire on this and the other side the end of the bridge; which, among other people, did trouble me for poor little Michell and our Sarah on the bridge. So down, with my heart full of trouble, to the Lieutenant of the Tower, who tells me that it begun this morning in the King's baker's house in Pudding-lane, and that it hath burned St. Magnus's Church and most part of Fish-street already. So I down to the water-side, and there got a boat and through bridge, and there saw a lamentable fire. Poor Michell's house, as far as the Old Swan, already burned that way, and the fire running further, that in a very little time it got as far as the Steeleyard, while I was there. Everybody endeavouring to remove their goods, and flinging into the river or bringing them into lighters that layoff; poor people staying in their houses as long as till the very fire touched them, and then running into boats, or clambering from one pair of stairs by the water-side to another. And among other things, the poor pigeons, I perceive, were loth to leave their houses, but hovered about the windows and balconys till they were, some of them burned, their wings, and fell down. . . Having seen as much as I could now, I away to White Hall by appointment, and there walked to St. James's Parks, and there met my wife and Creed and Wood and his wife, and walked to my boat; and there upon the water again, and to the fire up and down, it still encreasing, and the wind great. So near the fire as we could for smoke; and all over the Thames, with one's face in the wind, you were almost burned with a shower of firedrops. This is very true; so as houses were burned by these drops and flakes of fire, three or four, nay, five or six houses, one from another. When we could endure no more upon the water; we to a little ale-house on the Bankside, over against the "Three Cranes, and there staid till it was dark almost, and saw the fire grow; and, as it grew darker, appeared more and more, and in corners and upon steeples, and between churches and houses, as far as we could see up the hill of the City, in a most horrid malicious bloody flame, not like the fine flame of an ordinary fire. Barbary and her husband away before us. We staid till, it being darkish, we saw the fire as only one entire arch of fire from this to the other side the bridge, and in a bow up the hill for an arch of above a mile long: it made me weep to see it. The churches, houses, and all on fire and flaming at once; and a horrid noise the flames made, and the cracking of houses at their ruins. So home with a sad heart, and there find every body discoursing and lamenting the fire; and poor Tom Hater come with some few of his goods saved out of his house, which is burned upon Fish-streets Hall. I invited him to lie at my house, and did receive his goods, but was deceived in his lying there, the neues coming every moment of the growth of the fire; so as we were forced to begin to pack up our owne goods; and prepare for their removal; and did by moonshine (it being brave dry, and moon: shine, and warm weather) carry much of my goods into the garden, and Mr. Hater and I did remove my money and iron chests into my cellar, as thinking that the safest place. And got my bags of gold into my office, ready to carry away, and my chief papers of accounts also there, and my tallys into a box by themselves. So great was our fear, as Sir W. Batten hath carts come out of the country to fetch away his goods this night. We did put Mr. Hater, poor man, to bed a little; but he got but very little rest, so much noise being in my house, taking down of goods.

7. What does the excerpt show about London in 1666?

8. How did Pepys react to the fire?

9. What does the excerpt reveal about him?





## Lesson 21

# Allegory and *The Pilgrim's Progress*

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### Objectives

- To study the writing of John Bunyan
- To examine Bunyan's use of allegory

### Notes to the Teacher

The Separatist movement to purify the Anglican Church began during the reign of Elizabeth I. Its supporters were known as Puritans. By 1620, some frustrated English Puritans had immigrated to the American colony of Massachusetts Bay (Plymouth) because they could not practice their dissenting religious views at home. In England, Puritans temporarily gained the upper hand. In 1642, Charles I withdrew with his Cavalier forces to Nottingham for defense against Puritans growing in power in Parliament. Parliamentary forces, led by General Oliver Cromwell, started a civil war that ended with Charles' capture and beheading. Cromwell then established the Puritan Commonwealth, subdued Scotland and Wales, and invaded Ireland, where he deposed the Irish nobility.

England became a changed society. Class structure was transformed. The Puritans were sober, staunch members of the middle class. They considered the Anglican Church to be characterized by excesses. Puritan worship was subdued, with emphasis on individual study of the Bible as the source of guidance. Additionally, social life and styles of clothing were affected. The Puritans detested the flamboyance of the court, the bearbaiting, and the other blood sports that were popular forms of public entertainment.

The Puritans had no powerful successor when Cromwell died in 1658. In 1660 they gave in to popular demand for a monarch, and Charles II, son of Charles I, returned from exile, beginning a period known as the Restoration. Charles returned the theater to the life of the people, brought about reconciliation and acceptance of individual attitudes and religious beliefs, and lessened governmental authority.

One of the leading writers of the period was a tinker-turned-preacher named John Bunyan. He was associated with a variety of religious sects and was imprisoned almost a fifth of his life for preaching without a license. During his first (twelve-year) stay in prison, he wrote the opening section of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, one of the most widely translated books in the English language. The book falls into many genres. It is a dream narrative. It includes autobiographical details. It is also an allegory, devised from biblical parables

and from morality plays of the late medieval period. It is noted for sustained narrative, detailed descriptions, use of ordinary speech, and clever satiric passages. Bunyan takes the hero, Christian, through trials, discouragement, and temptations; Christian stays his course and gains the reward of the Celestial City.

John Bunyan was the first great writer in the English language from the lower middle class. He represented the common people's thoughts, aspirations, struggles, and goals. By using a common person as the hero, Bunyan brought other members of that social group into English literature and thought.

In this lesson students discuss the role of religion in seventeenth-century England. They review the nature of allegory, and they read and discuss an excerpt from *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

### Procedure

1. Explain that religion was an important issue in seventeenth-century England. The split from Rome engineered earlier by Henry VIII led to fierce hostilities between Catholics and Anglicans; further conflict was generated by the Puritans, who thought the English church overly ornate and in need of reform. John Bunyan, a tinker (a traveling fix-it man) who lived in this climate, was associated with various Christian sects and became a self-ordained preacher. Because he was not licensed, he spent years in prison for his religious activities. He was the author of a book entitled *The Pilgrim's Progress*, which was owned and read on a daily basis by Christian Protestants around the world for three centuries. Some scholars describe it as one of the most remarkable books every written.
2. Discuss the nature of allegory. If students read all or part of *Everyman*, use it as an example; abstractions such as Good Deeds and Knowledge are represented on stage as if they were individual people. The play as a whole does what allegories generally do: It reinforces the audience's system of beliefs. This is the role that *The Pilgrim's Progress* played in many families for centuries. Explain that the main character is named Christian and is clearly a kind of Everyman figure. The book includes many other figures, including Evangelista, Obstinate, Worldly Wiseman, and Giant Despair. Christian goes on a difficult journey meant to represent each individual's progress through life.
3. Distribute **Handout 48**, and have students read it and answer the questions.
4. Conduct a general discussion based on students' responses to the questions.

### ***Suggested Responses***

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1. The jurors' names depict human failings and vices. Some are ignorant (Mr. Blind-man), some malevolent (Mr. Cruelty), some selfish (Mr. Live-loose). The jurors are allegorical figures eager to destroy Faithful.
  2. The jurors' statements contrast or align with their names (which suggest the qualities they allegorically represent. Mr. Blind-man says, "I see clearly . . ." "Hang him," says Mr. Heady. "Hanging is too good for him," reflects Mr. Cruelty, and the means of death is savage. Mr. Implacable makes an implacable statement).
  3. Bunyan tells readers not to be surprised when evil and selfish persons/forces attempt to destroy the good and virtuous. Faithful Christians can expect to be persecuted and sometimes even hated on their journey through life.
  4. The book reinforced beliefs and offered encouragement to persist in faithfulness despite difficulties along life's journey; John Bunyan exhorted readers not to be misled by temptations along the way.
  5. Nobility, courtiers, and wealthy people were unlikely to find stern Puritan ways appealing. Bunyan's themes are the exact opposite of the *carpe diem* philosophy characteristic of the Cavalier poets. The book was popular with working-class families, which generally supported the Puritans against the Royalists (who were Catholic or Anglican).
5. Point out that although allegory is used less often by today's writers, it can be very effective. George Orwell, for example, used it for political commentary in *Animal Farm*. *Watership Down*, a book by Richard Adams, uses rabbits to create an allegory about human beings. Assign students to write original allegories about their families, friends, or other groups with which they are familiar. For example, an allegory could describe Thanksgiving dinner and include characters such as Patience, Gluttony, Piety, and Melancholy.

## The Trial of Faithful in *Pilgrim's Progress*

**Directions:** In John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Christian and his companion Faithful go on a journey to the Celestial City. Along the way, they visit the Slough of Despond, the Doubting Castle, Carnal City, and, in this excerpt, Vanity Fair. Because he refuses to purchase anything ("We come to buy the truth," says Faithful), Faithful is accused of being different by Envy and Suspicion. Read the following excerpt, which describes the trial and execution. Then answer the questions.

Then went the jury out, whose names were Mr. Blind-man, Mr. No-good, Mr. Malice, Mr. Love-lust, Mr. Live-loose, Mr. Heady, Mr. High-mind, Mr. Enmity, Mr. Liar, Mr. Cruelty, among themselves, and afterwards unanimously concluded to bring him in guilt before the Judge. And first, among themselves, Mr. Blind-man, the foreman, said, "I see clearly that this man is a heretic."

Then said Mr. No-good, "Away with such a fellow from the earth."

"Aye," said Mr. Malice, "for I hate the very looks of him."

Then said Mr. Love-lust, "I could never endure him."

"Nor I," said Mr. Live-loose, "for he would always be condemning my way."

"Hang him, hang him," said Mr. Heady.

"A sorry scrub," said Mr. High-mind.

"My heart riseth against him," said Mr. Enmity.

"He is a rogue," said Mr. Liar.

"Hanging is too good for him," said Mr. Cruelty.

"Let's dispatch him out of the way," said Mr. Hate-light.

Then said Mr. Implacable, "Might I have all the world given me, I could not be reconciled to him; therefore let us forthwith bring him in guilty of death."

And so they did; therefore he was presently condemned to be had from the place where he was to the place from whence he came, and there to be put to the most cruel death that could be invented.

They therefore brought him out to do with him according to their law, and, at first, they scourged him, then they buffeted him, then they lanced his flesh with knives; after that they stoned him with stones, then pricked him with their swords; and, last of all, they burned him to ashes at the stake. Thus came Faithful to his end.



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