

# English Literature

## Study Guide

### For Units 2 and 3

## Unit 2 The Anglo-Saxon Period

### Historical Figures

- Alfred The Great, King of Wessex
- The Venerable Bede
- Caedmon
- King Edwin

### Beowulf Characters:

- Beowulf: *a warrior of the Geat people who killed Grendel, Grendel's mother for King Hrothgar and later defeated a dragon to save his own Danish kingdom.*
- The 3 monsters that Beowulf defeats: *Grendel, Grendel's mother, Dragon*
- King Hrothgar: *Danish Kings, whose land was troubled by the monster Grendel.*
- Aeschere: *A favorite retainer of Hrothgar – he is killed and carried off by Grendel's mother.*
- Wiglaf: *a young warrior who accompanies Beowulf to the dragon's lair and helped him kill the dragon.*
- Unferth: *Danish warrior who envies and disparages Beowulf. He comes to admire and respect Beowulf and gives him his own sword to fight Grendel's mother.*

### Plots, Themes, Settings:

- What is the setting of Beowulf? *Denmark; King Hrothgar's mead hall Heorot*
- What was Caedmon given in a dream? *a poet's ability*
- Why did King Edwin call a council of his chiefs and wise men? *to determine whether he and his people should adopt Christianity and discard their pagan religion*
- Relate the Analogy given by one of King Edwin's chiefs likening a man's life to the flight of a sparrow. *The analogy compares the brevity of man's life to the flight of a sparrow that flies in one door and immediately out the other. As the king in winter is safely within the hall at supper, he will also eventually have to face the dark winter of death*
- How does this analogy help King Edwin to embrace Christianity as the new religion for his people? *Christianity provides a future after death*

### Identify:

- The first type of Anglo-Saxon literature: *poetry*
- An Anglo-Saxon Poet: *scop*
- The greatest Anglo-Saxon poem and oldest Germanic epic: *Beowulf*
- The first Anglo-Saxon poet whose name we know: *Caedmon*
- The founder of English Prose: *Alfred the Great, King of Wessex*
- The founder of English History: *The Venerable Bede*
- The Title of the book from which we get our facts about early English History: *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*

### Define and Explain:

- Accent: *the emphasis on certain syllables or words*
- Alliteration: *the repetition of the same initial consonant sounds*
- Kenning: *a metaphorical compound word or phrase, Kennings are a characteristic of Anglo-Saxon poetry. Examples: "word-hoard" for language; "whale-road" for sea; "bone-cage" for body*

## Unit 3 The Medieval Period

### Plots, Themes, and Setting:

- In the Ballad of “Bonny Barbara Allan,” why does Sir John Graeme die? *He dies because Barbara Allan rejects his love.*
- Why does Barbara Allan die? *Because she realizes that Sir John loved her and she regrets her decision to reject him.*
- In “Get Up and Bar the Door,” what pact do the husband and wife make with each other? *Whoever speaks first must get up and bar the door.*
- Which biblical characters walk through an orchard in “The Cherry Tree Carol”? *Joseph and Mary*
- What happens when Mary wants a cherry and Joseph will not pluck one for her? *The tree bows down to her.*
- What happens after Sir Gawain beheads the Green Knight? *The headless Green Knight picks up his head, leaps into his saddle, and charges Gawain to keep the pact between them.*
- Who surprised Everyman by his sudden appearance? *Death*
- Who agrees to accompany Everyman to the throne of God? *Good-Deeds*
- In “The Pardoner’s Tale”
  - For whom are the three gamblers looking? *Death*
  - What do they find? *Gold*
  - How do they die? *Two of the gamblers attack and kill the third when he returns from town, but then they drink the poisoned wine he brought them.*
- According to Morte Darthur, what happens when Sir Bedivere casts the sword Excalibur into the lake? *A hand reaches up from the water, catches the sword, waves it three times and sinks beneath the water again.*

## Characters:

- Sir John Graeme – *a gentleman (knight) who dies for love of Barbara Allan*
- Barbara Allan – *a woman who spurn Sir John's love and leaves him on his deathbed, then dies or regret.*
- King Arthur – *the king of Camelot*
- Green Knight – *a mysterious green knight, mounted upon a green horse, who appears at Arthur's court on New Year's Day.*
- Sir Gawain – *knight and nephew of King Arthur who accepts the challenge of the Green Knight and beheads him.*
- Everyman – *an ordinary man who encounters Death and must prepare to meet his Maker*

## Identify:

- Two examples of Medieval romances: Morte Darthur and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.
- Author of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight – The Pearl Poet
- Father of English Prose – John Wycliffe
- The greatest prose writer of fourteenth-century England – John Wycliffe
- Make the scriptures available to English people in their own language – John Wycliffe
- Chaucer's masterpiece – The Canturbury Tales
- Author of Morte Darthur – Thomas Mallory
- Set up the printing press in England – William Caxton

## Define and Explain:

- *Ballad – a short, narrative folk song which tells of a single event in an objective manner.*
- *Ballad stanza – a four-line stanza written in iambic pentameter with a rhyme scheme of abcb.*
- *Carol – a popular song form that began in Medieval France -- any joyous (religious) song or hymn -- Now primarily associated with Christmas*
- *Medieval Romance – a narrative form popular during the medieval period; this form of writing is based primarily on the adventure of knights, kings, or distressed ladies. The themes include love, religious faith, adventure and the supernatural.*
- *Mystery play -- a medieval play based on Biblical history and Scriptural lessons*
- *Miracle play – a medieval play founded on the legend or miracles of a saint.*
- *Morality play – a dramatic allegory in which vices and virtues compete for the possession of a human soul. Morality plays became popular later in the 14<sup>th</sup> century (after Mystery and Miracle plays)*
- *Pageant – a movable stage, platform or scaffold upon which medieval dramas were performed.*
- *Exemplum – a short tale or anecdote told to teach a lesson*

*THERE WILL BE QUOTES TAKEN FROM LITERATURE IN UNIT 3 ONLY. YOU WILL BE REQUIRED TO IDENTIFY THE SELECTION EACH COMES FROM.*

*SHORT ESSAY – WILL BE FROM ONE SELECTION IN UNIT 3*

