

Year 7 – Scholars OLD ENGLISH (Term 2)

600 – 1100 AD

Back then, human stories were passed from mouth to mouth—hopefully without spreading the Black Death, womp womp—before being written down in manuscript. That's how we got epics like Beowulf (& from that, The Hobbit!) The story of Beowulf existed for hundreds of years as a tale told by scops, who were like minstrels, only much beardier.

Literature?

What is the difference between a myth & a legend?

- A **legend** is a semi-true story, which has been passed on from person-to-person & has important meaning or symbolism for the culture in which it originates.
- A legend usually includes an element of truth, or is based on historic facts, but with 'mythical qualities'.
- Legends usually involve heroic characters or fantasy.

Examples: Loch Ness Monster, Jack of the Green

- A **myth** is a story based on tradition or legend, which has a deep symbolic meaning.
- A myth 'conveys a truth' to those who tell it & hear it, rather than necessarily recording a true event & involve supernatural beings.

Examples: Welsh Dragon, Faerie, Gremlins.

Why was there a clash between paganism & Christianity?

- Religion is a touchy issue in *Beowulf*, because the story is told in late medieval Anglo-Saxon Britain, which has been Christianised, but it's about early medieval Scandinavia, which is pagan.
- The narrator of the poem compromises by making constant references to God's decrees in general terms, but never discussing Jesus or the specific tenets of Christianity.

What is a hero?

The Hero: The hero is always the protagonist (though the protagonist is not always a hero). Traditionally, the hero has been male, although this is changing. The hero is after an objective & must overcome obstacles along the way. He/she is usually morally good, though that goodness will likely be challenged.

What is the 'oral tradition' & why is it so important?

- It is transmitted by word of mouth & consists of both prose & verse narratives, poems & songs, myths, dramas, rituals, proverbs, riddles etc. Nearly all known peoples, now and in the past, have produced it.
- Until about 4000 BC all literature was oral, but, beginning in the years between 4000 & 3000 BC, writing. From that time on there are records not only of practical matters such as law & business but increasingly of written literature.

What is a bildungsroman?

- A story about a journey or process in which the protagonist develops and grows up.

How has the English language changed since its origins?

What are the different time periods of the English Language?

- Arrival of Germanic tribes (Angles, Saxons & Jutes) who invaded Britain during the 5th century AD.
- At that time, Britain spoke a Celtic language. But most of the Celtic speakers were pushed out by the invaders into Wales, Scotland & Ireland.
- The Angles came from "Englaland" & their language was called "Englisc". This developed into what we now call **Old English (450-1100AD)**.
- In 1066 William the Conqueror, (from France), conquered England. The new conquerors (called the Normans) brought with them a kind of French, which became the language of the Royal Court. The lower classes spoke English & the upper classes spoke French.
- In the 14th century English became dominant in Britain again, but with many French words added. This language is called **Middle English (1100-1500AD)**.
- From the 16th century the British had contact with many peoples from around the world which meant many new phrases entered the language. This phase was called **Early Modern English (1500-1800AD)**. The invention of printing also meant that there was now a common language in print.
- The main difference between Early Modern English & **Late Modern English (1800-present)** is vocabulary. Late Modern English has many more words, arising from 2 main factors: firstly, the Industrial Revolution & technology; secondly, the British Empire covered ¼ of the earth, & English adopted foreign words.

Hobbit Key Themes

- The danger of excessive greed
- Heroism (parable for WWI?)
- Bravery
- Good vs Evil
- Quest
- Hospitality
- Luck

Features of fantasy genre

Outside ordinary laws of the universe

Magic is central

Journeys & quests

Setting – fantasy worlds

Portals (doors)

Hobbit Characters

Bilbo Baggins	Reluctant protagonist of the story. Starts the book as a home-loving, respectable hobbit, fond of food and tea. At the end of the novel, he returns home a wiser and more confident hobbit after his adventures.
Gandalf	A wise (if sometimes mischievous) old wizard who helps the dwarves. His name comes from the Old Norse for 'magic elf.'
Thorin Oakenshield	Mighty warrior and proud and pompous leader of the group of dwarves. Heir to the destroyed dwarvish kingdom under the Lonely Mountain.
Gollum	A 'small, slimy creature' who lives in a lake under the Misty Mountains. Possibly inspired by the monster Grendel from Beowulf.
Smaug	A powerful and intelligent dragon, inspired by the dragon in Beowulf. Stole the dwarves' mountain and treasure 150 years ago.

Beowulf Context

- Beowulf** - The oldest existing poem written in English. It's written in Old English, the language spoken in Britain before the [Norman Conquest](#) in 1066.
- Wyrd**, or fate - The idea is that your destiny is predetermined and you can't really change it. It's such a powerful force that sometimes in this poetry, it seems to be a stand-in for God.
- The death price** - *Beowulf* is set during a time when warring tribes populated England and Scandinavia. Violence was a part of life, but it wasn't a free-for-all. If you killed somebody, their relatives might demand reparation (i.e., payback) in the form of wealth—or your life.
- Christian and Pagan values, all mixed up** - The Anglo-Saxon poetry we have today was originally composed orally (spoken) during a time when the Anglo-Saxons were still pagan. But it was *written down* after they became Christian. So you'll see things like magical runic inscriptions sitting side-by-side with prayers to the Christian God.

Writing: descriptive 'rules'

No names for people

At least 5 zoom-ins

No person described for more than a paragraph

Minimum 5 senses

1-3 sentences of direct speech

3rd person

No thoughts

Present or past tense (not both)

Move the camera like a film

Writing to advise

- Write in present tense
- Be sympathetic
- Use weak modal verbs
- Write in 2nd person

Academic vocabulary

Evokes

Emphasises

Reinforces

Illustrates

Demonstrates

Indicates

Cements

Reveals

Infers

Conveys

Portrays

Letter layout

The use of addresses & date
Effectively/fluently sequenced paragraphs

A formal mode of address e.g. Dear Sir/Madam or a named recipient

Effectively/fluently sequenced paragraphs

An appropriate mode of signing off:
Yours sincerely/faithfully.

Beowulf Characters

King Hrothgar - The king of the Danes. Hrothgar enjoys military success and prosperity until Grendel terrorizes his realm. A wise and aged ruler, Hrothgar represents a different kind of leadership from that exhibited by the youthful warrior Beowulf. He is a father figure to Beowulf and a model for the kind of king that Beowulf becomes.

Grendel - A demon descended from Cain, Grendel preys on Hrothgar's warriors in the king's mead-hall, Heorot. Because his ruthless and miserable existence is part of the retribution exacted by God for Cain's murder of Abel, Grendel fits solidly within the ethos of vengeance that governs the world of the poem.

Beowulf - The protagonist of the epic, Beowulf is a Geatish hero who fights the monster Grendel, Grendel's mother, and a fire-breathing dragon. Beowulf's boasts and encounters reveal him to be the strongest, ablest warrior around. In his youth, he personifies all of the best values of the heroic culture. In his old age, he proves a wise and effective ruler.

Grendel's Mother - An unnamed swamp-hag, Grendel's mother seems to possess fewer human qualities than Grendel, although her terrorization of Heorot is explained by her desire for vengeance—a human motivation.

The Dragon - An ancient, powerful serpent, the dragon guards a horde of treasure in a hidden mound. Beowulf's fight with the dragon constitutes the third and final part of the epic.

<i>Vladimir Propp's Character Theory</i>	<i>Voluspa Poem</i>
<p>Vladimir Propp was a folklorist researcher interested in the relationship between characters and narrative. Propp argued that stories are character driven and that plots develop from the decisions and actions of characters and how they function in a story. He claimed characters could be classified into certain roles that progress a story. The roles include: the villain, the donor, the princess, the helper, the false hero, the dispatcher and the hero.</p>	<p>It tells the story of the creation of the world and its coming end, related to the audience by a volva (female shaman) addressing Odin. It is one of the most important primary sources for the study of Norse mythology. J.R.R Tolkien was influenced greatly by the saga, most obviously in the fact that most of the names of his Dwarves were drawn from it. Almost all of the names of the Dwarves of Middle-earth, as well as Gandalf's, are taken from a section of the Völuspá called the <i>Dvergatal</i> (the "Catalogue of Dwarves")</p>

<i>Grammar</i>		<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicles</i>
Simple past tense	The most common past tense. Usually takes an 'ed' ending, but some are irregular. e.g. I walked; she spoke; we played	<p>The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles are a collection of seven manuscripts written by monks living in England between the 9th and 12th centuries. The chronicles, written in Anglo-Saxon (Old English) in the form of a diary, tell the story of England, and cover a period of over a thousand years. In some cases the entries were made several years after the events took place. Some passages in the various manuscripts are identical suggesting that a certain amount of copying took place. There is also some evidence of bias in the Chronicles.</p>
Simple present tense	The most common present tense. e.g. I walk; she speaks; we play	
Simple future tense	The most common future tense. Uses 'will'. e.g. I will walk; she will speak; we will play	
Punctuating speech	Use a comma to introduce the speech, speech marks before and after, and punctuation inside the speech marks at the end. e.g. The teacher shouted, "Everybody stop!"	