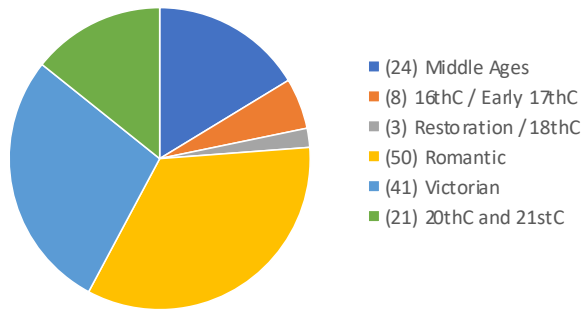


Attendance Question

Which of the following time periods interests you the most?



The Middle Ages (to ca. 1485)

- spans from the collapse of the Western Roman Empire (early 5th Century) to the European Renaissance and Reformation (16th Century)
- derives retrospectively from the Latin adjective *mediaeval*, meaning "middle" (*medium*) and "age" (*aevum*)
- can be conceived as three distinct periods: *Old English* (late 10th and 11th Centuries), *Anglo-Norman* (12th and 13th Centuries), and *Middle English* (14th and 15th Centuries)
- despite its reputation for primitiveness, was the originating era of key social institutions such as parliament and the university
- book production was accomplished by hand by scribes, usually ecclesiastic but later artisanal, and was thus expensive and time consuming (NAEL A3-26)



The Middle Ages (to ca. 1485)

Period Name	Old English	Anglo-Norman	Middle English
Broad Time Span	late 10th and 11th Centuries	12th and 13th Centuries	14th and 15th Centuries
Historical Touchstone	displacement of Celts by Angles, Saxons, Jutes	The Norman Conquest (1066)	The Hundred Years' War (1336-1453)
Centres of Literary Production	royal courts, monasteries	royal courts, feudal castles, ecclesiastics	courts, nobles, ecclesiastics, gentry, guilds
Sample Work	"Beowulf" (ca. 8th-10th Century)	Layamon, <i>Brut</i> (ca. 1190)	"Sir Gawain and the Green Knight" (ca. 1375-1400)

The Four Manuscripts of Old English Poetry

Manuscript	<i>The Vercelli Book</i>	<i>The Nowell Codex</i>	<i>The Exeter Book</i>	<i>The Junius Manuscript</i>
Date	Late 10th Century	ca. 1000	ca. 975	ca. 1000
Present Location	Vercelli, Italy	British Library	Exeter Cathedral	Bodleian Library
Sample Contents Anthologized in NAEL A	"The Dream of the Rood" (33-37)	"Beowulf," "Judith" (37-118)	"The Wanderer," "The Wife's Lament," "The Ruin" (121-29)	[poems mis-attributed to Caedmon by Bede]

“Beowulf” (ca. 8th-10th Century)



Old English Original

Sæge se þe cuþe
 frumsceaft fira | feorran reccan,
 cwæð þæt se Ælmihtiga | ƿorðan worhte,
 wlite-beorhtne wang, | swa wæter bebugeð
 geǣtte gige-hreþig | sunnan ond monan,
 ðeoman to ðeohte | ðandbuendum,
 ond gefrætwide | foldan sceatas
 ðeomum one leafum, | ðif eac gesceop
 cwnna gehwylcum þara ðe | cwide hwyrfaþ.

Modern Translation

and the clear song of a skilled poet
 telling with mastery of man’s beginnings,
 how the Almighty had made the earth
 a gleaming plain girdled with waters;
 in His splendour He set sun and moon
 to be earth’s lamplight, lanterns for men,
 and filled the broad lap of the world
 with branches and leaves; and quickened life
 in every other thing that moved. (90-98)

Layamon, Brut (ca. 1190)



Middle English Original

Arður wæs for-wunded | wunder ane
 swiðe.
 þer to him com a cnaue | þe wes of his
 gunne.
 he wes Cadores sune | þe eorles of Corwaile.
 Constantin hehte þe cnaue | he wes þan kinge
 deore.
 Arður him Jokede on | þer he Jai on
 folden.
 and þas word geide | mid sorhfulle
 heorte.
 Costæntin þu art wilcume | þu weore
 Cadores sone.
 Ich þe bitache here | mine kineriche.

Modern Translation

Arthur was mortally wounded, grievously
 badly;
 To him there came a young lad who was
 from his clan,
 He was Cador the Earl of Cornwall’s son;
 The boy was called Constantine; the king
 loved him very much.
 Arthur gazed up at him, as he lay there on
 the ground,
 And uttered these words with a sorrowing
 heart:
 “Welcome, Constantine; you were Cador’s
 son;
 Here I bequeath to you all of my
 kingdom....” (14266-72)

alliteration

examples

Fair is Foul, and Foul is Fair
 —Shakespeare, *Macbeth* (1606)

Landscape-lover, lord of language
 —Tennyson, “To Virgil” (1882)

His soul swooned slowly as he heard
 the snow falling faintly
 —Joyce, “The Dead” (1914)

- the repetition of the same sounds in a sequence of neighbouring words
- usually initial consonants of words or of stressed syllables
- now an optional and incidental decorative effect in poetry, prose
- was once a required element in Old English, Old Norse, etc.
- **alliterative verse**: poetry in which alliteration, not rhyme, is the chief principle of repetition (Baldick 9)

vernacular

Geoffrey of Monmouth	Wace	Layamon
<i>History of the Kings of Britain</i>	<i>Roman de Brut</i>	<i>Brut</i>
ca. 1136-38	1155	ca. 1190
Latin	Anglo-Norman	Middle English
religious audience	noble audience	common audience

- a local language or a dialect of common speech
- distinguishes “living” languages (e.g., English) from “dead” languages (e.g., Latin)
- distinguishes the language of the colonized (e.g., Middle English) from the language of colonizers (e.g., Anglo-Norman French)
- a dialect other than the “standard” form of the language; a colloquial style (Baldick 376)

“Sir Gawain and the Green Knight” (ca. 1375-1400)



Middle English Original	Modern Translation
Sithen the sege and the assaut was cesed at Troye,	Once the siege and assault of Troy had ceased,
The borgh brittened and brent to brondes and askes,	with the city a smoke-heap of cinders and ash,
The tulk that the trammes of tresoun ther wroght	the traitor who contrived such betrayal there
Was tried for his tricherie, the trewest on erthe.	was tried for his treachery, the truest on earth;
Hit was Ennias the athel and his highe kynde	Aeneas, it was, with his noble warriors
That sithen depreced provinces, and patrounes bicom	who went conquering abroad, laying claim to the crowns
Welneghe of al the wele in the west illes.	of the wealthiest kingdoms in the western world. (1-7)

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