

English Literature from a Christian Worldview

This course is a survey of English literature. With the Fall of Rome in AD 476, the so-called Dark Ages settled down upon the world. With the firm, unifying hand of their Roman masters gone, the world moved away from cities and into the countryside, where monks and missionaries found fertile ground for the gospel. Men like Saint Augustine would transport us through the ancient barriers, when Christianity was on the defense, to the threshold of medieval times, when the Great Commission was revered. Monks, with a veneration of anything ancient, had preserved Hebrew, Christian, and classical literature at a great cost to themselves.

The great Heroic Age of *Beowulf* fell to the simple gospel of grace in the form of self-sacrificing men and women who devoted their lives to converting pagans. The Norman Conquest of 1066 brought about changes that would turn Northumbria into European civilization as we know it today. Great thinkers, like Thomas Aquinas, addressed the spirituality of the learned, who had **blended their Christianity in a marriage to the Greco-Roman world**; while the illiterate masses heard the gospel through traveling miracle and morality plays, such as *Everyman*. In the ancient and medieval world, the miraculous – the persistent recurrent intervention of God or gods and goddesses – was almost universally accepted as indisputable. Saint Francis of Assisi was busy narrowing the cultural gap between the conquered and the conquerors, encouraging an end to the feudal system. Soon, Marco Polo was exploring the Far East. His written account, when published, would inspire Christian men like Christopher Columbus to seek out new worlds, in an effort to fulfill the Great Commission.

Students move on to study Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, a microcosm of the age. During the same period, John Wyclif was translating the gospels into the lives and language of the English people. Wyclif and Chaucer would unwittingly establish a vernacular language to aid in the spread of both Christian and classical thought. Students read selections from Dante's monumental work, then move on to Milton's *Paradise Lost* with a complimentary study of Pope's *Essay on Man*. The English romanticists provide fodder for another in-depth study of romanticism. Finishing the year are studies of modern and postmodern works.

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For an overview of romanticism, see American Literature