

Introduction to

LITERATURE

- The History of English
- The Historical and Literary Backgrounds of Literature
- Prepare you for Further Studies in literature

Asst. Prof. Dr. Nares Surasith

BA (English), MA (English)

PhD (English–Comparative Literature)

Introduction to Literature

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PREFACE

This book is designed for those who are interested in learning historical backgrounds and development of English, American and Thai literature. Moreover, the book concentrates on some significant literary writers and their works in those countries.

It is believed that learning to understand and appreciate literary works helps strengthen our critical faculties and other skills useful elsewhere in our lives. In addition, literature can also make us aware of the rich complexity of our own experience. It is no exaggeration to say that literature can make us more fully human.

In designing this book, I want not only to introduce students to the literary history in England, America and Thailand but also to introduce them to literary works. So, I have begun with the three major genres –fiction, poetry, and drama–and a detailed discussion of the elements of composition a reader must master to understand them. After studying these following chapters, the student should be able to approach a literary work on its own terms and obtain a greater understanding.

The book consists of 5 main chapters.

- 1) The History of English
- 2) Origins and Development of Literature
- 3) English Literature
- 4) American Literature
- 5) Thai Literature

The writer is confident that the book with its special features will benefit students as well as general readers.

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COURSE OUTLINE

COURSE TITLE: INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE

COURSE CODE: 302 316

INSTRUCTOR: Asst. Prof. Dr. Nares Surasith

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The course is designed to help students learn historical backgrounds of English, American and Thai literature. It covers the components of literary works, poems, novels, prose and drama. In addition, the significant literary writers and their works in each period are brought for discussion.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- 1) To learn and understand types of literature correctly
- 2) To be able to classify types of literature and understand the utility of learning literature
- 3) To encourage students for further studies

TEACHING METHOD:

The course emphasizes on lecturing, discussion and activities: role-play, information, and questions and answers.

TEACHING MATERIALS:

- 1) Introduction to Literature: Book
- 2) The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: novel
- 3) Handouts, Pictures, Maps, etc.

COURSE EVALUATION:

- | | |
|------------------|----------|
| 1) Activities | 20 marks |
| 2) Mid-term Test | 30 marks |
| 3) Final Test | 50 marks |

COURSE OUTLINE:

- | | |
|------------|---------------------------------------|
| Chapter 1: | The History of English |
| Chapter 2: | Origins and Development of Literature |
| Chapter 3: | English Literature |
| Chapter 4: | American Literature |
| Chapter 5: | Thai Literature |

Faculty of Humanities
Mahachular Buddhist University
Lesson Plan/ Undergraduate Program

Course Code: 302 316

Course Title: Introduction to Literature

1. Course Description:

The course is designed to help students learn historical and literary backgrounds of English, American and Thai literature. It covers the components of literary works, poems, novels, prose and drama. The significant literary writers and their works in each period are also brought for discussion.

2. Course Objectives:

2.1 To understand kinds of literature correctly

2.2 To be able to classify types of literature and understand the utility of learning literature

2.3 To encourage students for further studies

3. Contents:

Week	Titles/Topics	Objectives	Activities
1	-Introduction to the course -Chapter 1: The History of English -The Origins of English -The Names of the Language -Old English -Middle English	-To make students familiarize with the Background of English -To have students understand the Origins of English in each period	-Lecturing -Questions and Responses -Discussion -Match the sentences to the pictures
2	-Early Modern English -Chapter 2: Origins and Development of Literature -What is literature? -Fiction/Novel	-To get students to understand the characteristics of early modern English -To have students understand the origins and development of literature -To be able to identify novels and understand the characteristics of novel	-Lecturing -Questions and Responses -Discussion
	-Drama	-To be able to identify drama	-Lecturing

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3	-Poetry/Poem	and poetry and understand the characteristics of drama and poetry	-Questions and Responses -Discussion
4	-Poetry/Poem -Ballad, -Epic -Lyric Poetry, -Sonnet -Narrative Poetry, -Prose	-To make students understand types of poetry -To be able to differentiate types of poetry	-Lecturing -Questions and Responses -Discussion
5	-Chapter 3: English Literature -Historical Background of Earliest England -The Literature of Earliest England -Historical Background of Medieval England	-To make students understand English literature and the development of English literature	-Lecturing -Questions and Responses -Discussion -Paper presentation
6	-The Literature of Medieval Period -The Elizabethans	-To make students understand English literature and the development of English literature in the periods	-Lecturing -Questions and Responses -Paper presentation
7	-The Puritans -The Classicists -Summing Up	-To make students understand English literature and the development of English literature in each period	-Lecturing -Questions and Responses -Paper presentation
8	Mid-term Test		
9	-The Romanticists -Victorians -Twentieth Century England	-To make students understand English literature and the development of it in the periods	-Lecturing -Questions and Responses -Discussion
10	-Activities: Exhibition	-Let students present their assigned works in exhibition form -Presenting their works in	-Exhibited in entrusted topics by students -Inviting teachers

		English	and students to participate
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Chapter 4: American Literature -American Literary Background 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -To make students understand American literature and the development of American literature, selected writers in American literary history 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lecturing -Questions and Responses -Discussion -Paper presentation
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The Central Period -Transcendentalism -Abolitionists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -To make students understand American literature in particular period including the development of literature in America 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lecturing -Questions and Responses -Discussion -Paper presentation
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Chapter 5: Thai Literature -General Social and Cultural Background of Thailand -Short History of Thailand -Thai Literary Background -The Sukhothai Period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -To educate students in historical and development of Thai literature, selected writers in Thai literary history 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lecturing -Questions and Responses -Discussion -Paper presentation
14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The Ayutthaya Period -The Early Period -The Late Ayutthaya Period -The Thonburi Period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -To make students understand Thai literature and the significant literary works in the Ayutthaya and the Thonburi periods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lecturing -Questions and Responses -Discussion -Paper presentation
15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The Bangkok Period -The Early Bangkok Period -Types of Novels -The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Novel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -To educate students in Thai literature and the development of literature in the Bangkok period, including the significant literary works in this period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lecturing -Questions and Responses -Discussion -Paper presentation
16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Novel -Summary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Study the novel: The adventures of Huckleberry Finn: main idea, etc. -summary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lecturing -Questions and Responses -Discussion

1

The History of English

The history of English is a fascinating field of study in its own right, but it also provides a valuable perspective for the contemporary study of the language. The historical account promotes a sense of identity and continuity and enables us to find coherence in many of the fluctuations and conflicts of present-day English language use.

We begin as close to the beginning as we can get, using the summary accounts of early chronicles to determine the language's continental origins. The Anglo-Saxon corpus of poetry and prose, dating from around the 7th century, provides the first opportunity to examine the linguistic evidence. A similar account is given of the Middle English period, beginning with the effects on the language of the French invasion and concluding with a discussion of the origins of Standard English. At all points, special attention is paid to the historical and cultural setting to which texts relate, and to the character of the leading literary works, such as *Beowulf* and *The Canterbury Tales*.

The Early Modern English period begins with the English of **Caxton** and the **Renaissance**, continues with that of Shakespeare and the King James Bible, and ends with the landmark publication of Johnson's *Dictionary*.

The Origins of English

According to the Anglo-Saxon historian, the Venerable Bede, began the letter written to the Roman consul by some of the Celtic people who had survived the ferocious invasions of the Scots and Picts in the early decades of the 5th century. 'The barbarians drive us to the sea. The sea drives us back

towards the barbarians. Between them we are exposed to two sorts of death: we are either slain or drowned.’

The plea fell on deaf ears. Although the Romans had sent assistance in the past, they were now fully occupied by their own wars with Bledla and Attila, kings of the Huns. The attacks from the north continued, and the British were forced to look elsewhere for help. Bede gave a succinct and sober account of what then took place.

They consulted what was to be done, and where they should seek assistance to prevent or repel the cruel and frequent incursions of the northern nations; and they all agree with their King Vortigern to call over to their aid, from parts beyond the sea, the Saxon nation. . .

In the year of our Lord 449 . . . the nation of the Angles, or Saxons, being invited by the aforesaid king, arrived in Britain with three long ships, and had a place assigned them to reside in by the same king, in the eastern part of the island, that they might thus appear to be fighting for their country, whilst their real intentions were to enslave it. Accordingly they engaged with the enemy, who were come from the north to give battle, and obtained the victory; which, being known at home in their own country, as also the fertility of the country, and the cowardice of the Britons, a more considerable fleet was quickly sent over, bringing a still greater number of men, which, being added to the former, made up an invincible army. . .

Bede describes the invaders as belonging to the three most powerful nations of Germany—the Saxons, the Angles, and the Jutes. The first group to arrive came from Jutland, in the northern part of modern Denmark, and were led, according to the chroniclers, by two Jutish brothers, Hengist and Horsa. They landed at Ebbsfleet in the Isle of Thanet, and settled in the areas now known as Kent, the Isle of Wight, and parts of Hampshire. The Angles came from the south of the Danish peninsula, and entered Britain much later, along the eastern coast, settling in parts of Mercia, Northumbria (the land to the north of the Humber, where in 547 they established a kingdom), and what is now East Anglia. The Saxons came from an area further south and west, along the coast of the North Sea, and from 477 settled in various parts of southern

and south-eastern Britain. The chroniclers talk about groups of East, West, and South Saxons—distinctions which are reflected in the later names of Essex, Wessex, and Sussex. The name Middlesex suggests that there were Middle Saxons too. Bede's account takes up the story:

In a short time, swarms of the aforesaid nations came over the island, and they began to increase so much that they became terrible to the natives themselves who had invited them. Then, having on a sudden entered into league with the Picts, whom they had by this time expelled by the force of their arms, they began to turn their weapons against their confederates.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle compiles over a century later than Bede under Alfred the Great, gives a grim catalogue of disasters for the Britons.

457 In this year Hengest and Aesc fought against the Britons at a place which called Crecganford (Crayford, Kent) and there slew four thousand men; and the Britons then forsook Kent and fled to London in great terror.

465 In this year Hengest and Aesc fought against Welsh near Wippedesfleot and there slew twelve Welsh nobles; and one of the thanes, whose name was Wipped, was lain there.

473 In this year Hengest and Aesc fought against the Welsh and captured innumerable spoils, and the Welsh fled from the English as one flies from fire.

The fighting went on for several decades, but the imposition of Anglo-Saxon power was never in doubt. Over a period of about a hundred years, further bands of immigrants continued to arrive, and Anglo-Saxon settlements spread to all areas apart from the highlands of the west and north. By the end of the 5th century, the foundation was established for the emergence of the English language.

The Name of the Language

With scant respect for priorities, the Germanic invaders called the native Celts *wealas* ('foreigners'), from which the name Welsh is derived. The Celts called the invaders 'Saxons', regardless of their tribe, and this practice

was followed by the early Latin writers. By the end of the 6th century, however, the term *Angli* ('Angles') was in use—as early as 601, a king of Kent, Aethelbert, is called *rex Anglorum* ('King of the Angles')—and during the 7th century *Angli* or *Anglia* (for the country) became the usual Latin names. Old English *Engle* derives from this usage, and the name of the language found in Old English texts is from the outset referred to as *Englisc* (the *sc* spelling representing the sound *sh*). References to the name of the country as *Englaland* ('land of the Angles'), from which came *England*, do not appear until c. 1000.

Old English

The Early Period

Before the Anglo-Saxon invasions, the language (or languages) spoken by the native inhabitants of the British Isles belonged to the Celtic family, introduced by the people who had come to the islands around the middle of the first millennium BC. Many of these settlers were, in turn, eventually subjugated by the Romans, who arrived in 43 BC. But by 410 the Roman armies had gone, withdrawn to help defend their Empire in Europe. After a millennium of settlement by speakers of Celtic, and half a millennium by speakers of Latin, what effect did this have on the language spoken by the arriving Anglo-Saxons.

Celtic Borrowings

There is very little Celtic influence—or perhaps it is not so surprising, given the savage way in which the Celtic communities were destroyed or pushed back into the areas we now know as Cornwall, Wales, Cumbria, and the Scottish borders. Some Celts (or Romano-Celts) doubtless remained in the east and south, perhaps as slaves, perhaps intermarrying, but their identity would after a few generations have been lost within Anglo-Saxon society.

Whatever we might expect from such a period of cultural contact, the Celtic language of Roman Britain influenced Old English hardly at all.

Only a handful of Celtic words were borrowed at the time, and a few have survived into modern English, sometimes in regional dialect use: *crag*, *cumb* ‘deep valley’, *binn* ‘bin’, *carr* ‘rock’, *brock* ‘badger’ etc.

Latin Loans

Latin has been a major influence on English throughout its history and there is evidence of its role from the earliest moments of contact. The Roman army and merchants gave new names to many local objects and experiences and introduced several fresh concepts. About half of the new words were to do with plants, animals, food and drink, and household items. Old English *pise* ‘pea’, *plante* ‘plant’, *win* ‘wine’, etc.

Whether the Latin words were already used by the Anglo-Saxon tribes on the continent of Europe, or were introduced from within Britain, is not always clear (though a detailed analysis of the sound changes they display can help) but the total number of Latin words presented in English at the very beginning of the Anglo-Saxon period is not large—less some years after the Roman army left, for some reason it did not take root in Britain as it had so readily done in Continental Europe.

Remark: The name *Anglo-Saxon* came to refer in the 16th century to all aspects of the early period—people, culture, and language. It is still the usual way of talking about the people and the cultural history, but since the 19th century, when the history of languages came to be studied in detail, *Old English* has been the preferred name for the language. This name emphasizes the continuing development of English, from Anglo-Saxon times through ‘Middle English’ to the present day.

The Old English Corpus

There is a ‘dark age’ between the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons and the first Old English manuscripts. A few scattered inscriptions in the language date from the 5th and 6th centuries, written in the runic alphabet which the invaders

brought with them, but these give very little information about what the language was like. The literary age began only after the arrival of the Roman missionaries, led by Augustine, who came to Kent in AD 597. The rapid growth of monastic centers led to large numbers of Latin manuscripts being produced, especially of the Bible and other religious texts from other north European countries. The first texts, dating from around 700, are glossaries of Latin words translated into Old English, and a few early inscriptions and poems. But very little material remains from this period. Doubtless many manuscripts were burned during the 8th-century Viking invasions. The chief literary work of the period, the heroic poem **Beowulf**, survives in single copy, made around 1,000—possible some 250 years after it was composed (though the question of its composition date is highly controversial). There are a number of short poems, again almost entirely preserved in late manuscripts, over half of the saints, extracts from the Bible, and devotion, dealing with such topics as war, travelling patriotism, and celebration. Most extant Old English texts were written in the period following the reign to King Alfred (849–99), who arranged for many Latin works to be translated—including Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*.

The Earliest English Literature

As with foreign languages, there is never complete agreement about the best way of translating Old English texts; nor is there unanimity about the best way of editing them. The extracts on these and adjacent pages are here to illustrate the range and character of the literature of the period, but they also show the varied editorial practice which exists. Some editors have tried to make their text resemble to the original manuscript as closely as possible; others have produced a modernized version.

About the need for editing, there is no doubt. To print a facsimile of Old English texts would be to make them unreadable to all but the specialist. There is plenty of scope for editorial intervention. Scribal habits of