



Otázka: English literature till 1603

Jazyk: Angličtina

Přidal(a): Žaneta

The development of English literature can be divided into 3 periods

- **1) Old English literature**
- **2) Middle-English literature**
- 3) Modern English literature

During **the Roman occupation** there's no recorded literature, but many stories were probably **passed down by word of mouth**.

1) Old English literature

Literature of this period was **influenced by pagan tradition**, magic, problem of life at the time, as well as Christian ideas. The oldest literature monument of the Anglo-Saxon period is the old **Germanic legend** about strong hero **Beowulf** who kills frightening creatures Grendel was written by unknown Author in the 8th century. The story takes place in Denmark where King Hrothgar rules. Frightening monster called Grendel scares all the country. Fortunately, Beowulf succeeded in killing him and later also his mother who decides to avenge her son and became king. The most important king of this period, Alfred the Great was also a writer. He supported Anglo-Saxons chronicle describing the life of this time

2) Middle-English literature

This period follows the **Norman conquest** of Britain after the William the Conqueror's victory in the battle **of Hastings** in 1066. The strong **feudal system** is established and also the **Church** held a strong influence. The Norman invasion brought the **French language**, which influenced the English literature. This time is also called Medieval Ages.

The main representative of religious literature is John Wycliffe, a priest, who criticized the Church for its greed for property. With his students he translated the whole **Bible into English**. He influenced Master John Huss and our Hussite movement very much. Although, the most significant writer of the 14 century is Geoffrey Chaucer (1340 – 1400), who is often called the **Farther of English poetry**. He came from rich family and for a while he worked as a page. One of his friends was Petrarch (Italian poet in Renaissance). He wrote The *Canterbury Tales* – a rude, funny collection of stories of a party of pilgrims from different social groups (nun, priest, business man ...) travelling from London to Canterbury to visit the tomb of Saint Thomas Becket (archbishop of Canterbury stood against king Henry, was murdered). It might be inspired by Decameron (Giovanni Boccaccio 1348) as they tell stories each other to pass the time on their way. The book is satiric portrait of medieval England and is still read today for its universe topics such as greed, jealousy, envy, revenge... (one of the stories is called Pardoner's tale).

In **Medieval Ages** many Legends spread across country. *The legends of King Arthur and Knight of Round Table* continue to be retold in new ways. The real king Arthur lived in 5/6th century. He was a Celtic warrior chief who fought against Anglo-Saxons. Stories about him and other character associated with Arthur (Tristan, Lancelot...) were collected in 12th century celebrate Age of chivalry. Knight aimed to live according Christian principles, they fought against monsters and defending their romantic love, love affairs were part of courtly love. At a young age Arthur was put under a spell by magician Merlin so he grew up not knowing that he was heir of the English throne. But he pulled the magic sword Excalibur out of stone when others had failed and became king. He gathered round him the worthiest knight and established his court of Camelot. (Sat around round table- nobody at the head). They went off searching of the Holy Grail, the wine cup, used to catch Christ blood at Crucifixion. Another legend tells story about outlaw Robin Hood. He was highly skilled archer and swordsman. He is often portrayed as robbing from rich and giving to the poor alongside with his group of Merch. There are connected with real places – Sherwood, Nottingham. He was driven to outlawry during the misrule of Richard's brother John