PERIODS OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

Or 1,000 years of history in 20 minutes or less.
Original Text

Hwæt! Wé Gárdena in géardagum þéodcyninga þrym gefrúnōn. hú ðá æþelingas ellen fremedon.

Modern Translation

Listen! We --of the Spear-Danes in the days of yore, of those clan-kings-- heard of their glory. how those nobles performed courageous deeds.
1100-1350 → Anglo-Norman Period

Norman Invasion of Britain: French merges with “Old English”
Use of French remains with aristocracy

Original Text
Gododdin, gomynaf oth blegyt
yg gwyd cant en ayal en emwyty:
Er pan want maws mur trin,
er pan aeth daear ar Aneirin,
nu neut ysgaras nat a Gododin.

Modern Translation
Gododdin, I make claim on thy behalf
In the presence of the throng boldly in the court:
Since the gentle one, the wall of battle, was slain,
Since the earth covered Aneirin,
Poetry is now parted from the Gododdin.
Here bygynneth the Book
of the tales of Caunterbury

Whan that aprill with his shoures soote
The droghte of march hath perced to the roote,
And bathed every veyne in swich licour
Of which vertu engendred is the flour;

Here begins the Book
of the Tales of Canterbury

When April with his showers sweet with fruit
The drought of March has pierced unto the root
And bathed each vein with liquor that has power
To generate therein and sire the flower;
1500-1660 → Renaissance Period

Classical Learning + foreign influence + power of the church
Includes ‘Elizabethan Age’ in Britain (1558-1603)

*Macbeth*- Shakespeare

“Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,
that struts and frets his hour upon the
stage, and then is heard no more. It is a
tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
signifying nothing.”

*Doctor Faustus*- Marlowe

“All beasts are happy,
For, when they die,
Their souls are soon dissolv'd in elements;
But mine must live still to be plagu'd in hell.
Curs'd be the parents that engender'd me!
No, Faustus, curse thyself, curse Lucifer
That hath depriv'd thee of the joys of
heaven.”
1660-1798 → Neoclassic Period

Movement in conflict with Renaissance
Reaction against Idea of limitless human possibilities
Values order, logic, and restrained emotion

*Paradise Lost* - Milton

“The first sort by their own suggestions fell,
Self-tempted, self-depraved: man falls deceived
By the other first: man therefore shall find grace,
The other none.”

*A Modest Proposal* - Swift

I have been assured by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London, that a young healthy child well nursed, is, at a year old, a most delicious nourishing and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled; and I make no doubt that it will equally serve in a fricasie, or a ragoust.
1798-1870 ➔ Romantic Period

Reaction against formal structure of Neoclassicism
Values goodness of man, individualism, and nature

*The World is too Much with Us* - Wordsworth

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!

*Rime of the Ancient Mariner* - Coleridge

PART I

IT is an ancient Mariner,
And he stoppeth one of three.
'By thy long beard and glittering eye,
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?
1870-1915  ➔ Realistic Period

‘Fidelity to Actuality’
Providing the truth of a situation in writing
Reaction to age of science, imperialism, and middle class

The Picture of Dorian Gray - Wilde

"The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it. Resist it, and your soul grows sick with longing for the things it has forbidden to itself, with desire for what its monstrous laws have made monstrous and unlawful."

Heart of Darkness - Conrad

But his soul was mad. Being alone in the wilderness, it had looked within itself, and, by heavens! I tell you, it had gone mad. I had—for my sins, I suppose—to go through the ordeal of looking into it myself. No eloquence could have been so withering to one’s belief in mankind as his final burst of sincerity. He struggled with himself, too. I saw it—I heard it. I saw the inconceivable mystery of a soul that knew no restraint, no faith, and no fear, yet struggling blindly with itself.
1915-1965 → Modernist Period

Experimental examination of inner self and society
Conscious Break with tradition
War to War period

_Ulysses - Joyce_

“It soared, a bird, it held its flight, a swift pure cry, soar silver orb it leaped serene, speeding, sustained, to come, don't spin It out too long long breath he breath long life, soaring high, high resplendent, aflame, crowned, high in the effulgence symbolistic, high, of the ethereal bosom, high, of the high vast irradiation everywhere all soaring all around about the all, the endlessnessnessness…”

_The Wasteland - Eliot_

“A heap of broken images, where the sun beats, And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief, And the dry stone no sound of water. Only There is shadow under this red rock, (Come in under the shadow of this red rock), And I will show you something different from either Your shadow at morning striding behind you Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you; I will show you fear in a handful of dust.”
1965-Present

**Post-Modernist Period or Contemporary Period**

Denial of traditional forms

- Anti-Hero and use of Irony

- Manipulation of structure and chronology

  - Tom Stoppard - *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*
  
  - Graham Greene – *The Power and the Glory*
THE END