

Kolbe Academy Home School

GRADE ELEVEN LITERATURE OF CHRISTENDOM

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Syllabus	2
A. Course Texts	2
B. Diploma Requirements	3
C. Quarterly Reporting Requirements	4
D. Scope and Sequence	5
E. Course Plan Methodology	7
II. Course Plan	
A. Quarter 1	8
B. Quarter 2	25
C. Quarter 3	41
D. Quarter 4	56
III. Paper Topic Answer Guide	
A. Quarter 1	71
B. Quarter 2	73
C. Quarter 3	76
D. Quarter 4	79
IV. Quarterly Exams	
V. Quarterly Exam Answer Keys	

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COURSE TITLE: Literature of Christendom

COURSE TEXTS:

- DREAM** ❖ Anonymous. Trans. James M. Garnett, M.A., LL.D. Gutenberg Press: 1911. (*The Dream of the Rood* is incorporated into T3702)
- BEOWULF** ❖ Anonymous, *Beowulf*. Trans. David Wright. Penguin Books: London, 1951. (T3700)
- SONG** ❖ Anonymous, *Song of Roland*. Trans. Dorothy Sayers. Penguin Books: New York, 1957. (T3701)
- GAWAIN** ❖ Anonymous, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Trans. J.R.R. Tolkien. Ballantine books: New York, 1980. (T3703)
- DANTE-HELL** ❖ Alighieri, Dante. *The Divine Comedy: Hell*. Dorothy Sayers, Trans. Penguin books: New York, 1959. (T3751)
- DANTE-PURG** ❖ Alighieri, Dante. *The Divine Comedy: Purgatory*. Dorothy Sayers, Trans. Penguin books: New York, 1959. (T3752)
- DANTE-PARA** ❖ Alighieri, Dante. *The Divine Comedy: Paradise*. Dorothy Sayers, Trans. Penguin Books: New York, 1959. (T3753)
- CANTERBURY** ❖ Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Canterbury Tales*. Nevill Coghill, Trans. Penguin Books: New York, 1977. (T3771)
- RICHARD III** ❖ Shakespeare, William. *Richard III*. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine, Eds. Washington Square Press: New York, 1996 for The Folger Shakespeare Library. (T3733)
- MACBETH** ❖ Shakespeare, William. *Macbeth*. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine, Eds. Washington Square Press: New York, 1992 for The Folger Shakespeare Library. (T3732)
- TEMPEST** ❖ Shakespeare, William. *The Tempest*. Peter Holland, Ed. Penguin Books: New York, 1999. (T3717)
- HAMLET** ❖ Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*. A.R. Braunmuller, Ed. Penguin Books: New York, 2001. (T3726)
- MIDSUMMER** ❖ Shakespeare, William. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Russ McDonald, Ed. Penguin Books: New York, 2000. (T3715)
- PARADISE** ❖ Milton, John. *Paradise Lost & Paradise Regained*. Christopher Ricks, Ed. Penguin Books: New York, 1968. (T3776)
- Dream* ❖ Kolbe Academy *The Dream of the Rood and Study Guide* including the poem. Kolbe Academy Press: Napa, 2008. (T3702)
- Beowulf* ❖ Kolbe Academy *Study Guide to Beowulf*. Kolbe Academy Press: Napa, 2008. (T3701A)
- Song* ❖ Kolbe Academy *Study Guide to Song of Roland*. Kolbe Academy Press: Napa, 2008. (T3701A)
- Gawain* ❖ Kolbe Academy *Study Guide to Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Kolbe Academy Press: Napa, 2008. (T3703A)
- Dante* ❖ Kolbe Academy *Study Guide to The Divine Comedy: Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise*. Kolbe Academy Press: Napa, 2008. (T3753)
- Canterbury* ❖ Kolbe Academy *Study Guide to The Canterbury Tales*. Kolbe Academy Press: Napa, 2008. (T3771A)

- Shakespeare** ❖ Kolbe Academy *Shakespeare Medieval Study Guide*. Kolbe Academy Press: Napa, 2008. (T3733A)
- Paradise** ❖ Kolbe Academy Study Guide to *Paradise Lost*. Kolbe Academy Press: Napa, 2008. (T3776A)
- CD** ❖ Kolbe Academy 11th grade Literature presents: Keep the Faith Lectures by Dr. David White and Dr. John C. Rao. Optional, (K2670)

ADDITIONAL AUDIO SUPPLEMENTS:***Audio series by Henry Russell***

- ❖ ***The Catholic Shakespeare***
 - Macbeth-Tape (K2665)
 - The Tempest-CD (K2668)
 - Hamlet-Tape (K2667)
 - Midsummer Night's Dream-CD (K2666)
- ❖ Introduction to the Divine Comedies-CD (K2669)

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course is a companion to History of Christendom, introducing the student to the important works of the period, as well as to the literary styles and conventions developed in this period both those that it borrowed from previous times and those it expanded on or created.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- ❖ become familiar with the main examples of Medieval literature;
- ❖ identify and examine the inter-relationship between the Greek epic (the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*), the Roman epic (the *Aeneid*) and the Catholic epic (The *Divine Comedy*);
- ❖ identify the Christian virtue of chivalry and its role in Medieval society;
- ❖ identify the Christian virtue of courtesy and its role in Medieval society;
- ❖ identify the Christian metaphor of the spiritual quest to attain salvation;
- ❖ further the study and imitation of these genres: epic, tragedy, comedy, and rhetoric.
- ❖ learn to interpret and distinguish the fourfold senses of theological writings: the literal, the allegorical, the moral, and the eschatological;
- ❖ trace the effect of the Christian world on the development of Medieval literature.

WEEKLY COURSE WORK:

1. Readings: approximately 50 - 100 pages per week
2. Accompanying study guide questions
3. Weekly paper; topics are listed in the Course Plan. These papers should be 1- 2 pages typewritten, size 12 font, double-spaced or neatly handwritten in cursive. Each paper should be comprised of a strong introduction, body, and conclusion. See the *Weekly Paper Topics Answer Guide* for grading guidelines.
4. Audio lectures, as noted in the Course Plans
5. Key Points sections highlighting the most important concepts that the student should know and consider.

6. Three-Part Quarterly Exams: given at the end of each quarter in order to assess the student's understanding and retention of material and concepts. These tests along with the test answer keys are provided in the Course Plan packet.
7. Students seeking Honors for this course must complete the readings, weekly papers, assignments, and quarterly tests in their totality and as laid out in the course plan.

SKILLS TO BE DEVELOPED:

- Knowledge of the Literature of Christendom and its influence in the history of culture, thought, and belief
- Ability to formulate and effectively communicate a clear, logically-sound argument both in writing and speaking
- Ability to think for oneself

DIPLOMA REQUIREMENTS:

Summa Cum Laude students must complete the entire Kolbe Academy proposed curriculum as written. Summa students must fulfill the requirements for the Kolbe Core (K) or Kolbe Honors (H) course as outlined in this Literature course plan. In 9th grade, **Summa** students must pursue the (H) designation in at least one of the following courses: Theology, Literature, or History. In 10th grade, **Summa** students must pursue the (H) designation in at least two of the following courses: Theology, English, Literature, or History. In 11th grade, **Summa** students must pursue the (H) designation in at least three of the following courses: Theology, English, Literature, or History. In 12th grade, **Summa** students must pursue the (H) designation in all of the following courses: Theology, English, Literature, and History. **Magna Cum Laude** and **Standard** diploma candidates may choose to pursue the (H) or (K) designation, but are not required to do so. If not pursuing either of those designations the parent has the option of altering the course plan as desired. **Magna Cum Laude** students must include a combination of 5 years of English and Literature courses in high school, two of which must be Literature. **Standard** diploma students must include a combination of 3 years of English and Literature in high school.

KOLBE CORE (K) AND HONORS (H) COURSES:

- ❖ Students pursuing the **Kolbe Core (K)** designation should do the readings. **Kolbe Core students need to complete at least 1 or 2 of the 7 weekly papers each quarter;** they should have discussions or write informal essays in response to the rest of the weekly paper topics as these are major themes and will appear in some way on the final exam.
- ❖ Students pursuing the **Kolbe Honors (H)** designations must do all of the readings. **Honors students need to complete 5 of the 7 weekly papers each quarter;** they should have discussions or write informal essays in response to the rest of the weekly paper topics as these are major themes and will appear in some way on the final exam.
- ❖ For students who are not seeking the Kolbe Core (K) or Honors (H) designation for this course, parents may alter the course as they so desire.

REQUIRED SAMPLE WORK:

Designation*		K	H
Course Title	Literature of Christendom	Literature of Christendom	Literature of Christendom
Quarter 1	1. Any written sample work	1. <i>Complete</i> Quarter 1 Exam	1. <i>Complete</i> Quarter 1 Exam 2. One Paper Topic Essays
Quarter 2	1. Any written sample work	1. <i>Complete</i> Quarter 2 Exam	1. <i>Complete</i> Quarter 2 Exam 2. One Paper Topic Essays
Quarter 3	1. Any written sample work	1. <i>Complete</i> Quarter 3 Exam	1. <i>Complete</i> Quarter 3 Exam 2. One Paper Topic Essays
Quarter 4	1. Any written sample work	1. <i>Complete</i> Quarter 4 Exam	1. <i>Complete</i> Quarter 4 Exam 2. One Paper Topic Essays

*Designation refers to designation type on transcript. K designates a Kolbe Academy Core course. H designates a Kolbe Academy Honors course.

The Kolbe academic advisor will verify that the required work was completed successfully and award the Kolbe Core (K) or Honors (H) designation. The Kolbe academic advisor has the final decision in awarding the designation for the course. **If no designation on the transcript is desired, parents may alter the lesson plan in any way they choose and any written sample work is acceptable to receive credit for the course each quarter.** If you have any questions regarding what is required for the (K) or (H) designations or diploma type status, please contact the academic advisory department at 707-255-6499 ext. 5 or by email at advisors@kolbe.org.

SCOPE AND SEQUENCE:**FIRST QUARTER**I. Anonymous. *The Dream of the Rood*

1. Religious Poem.
2. The finest religious poem in Old English, it depicts Christ as a warrior hero, an ideal of great importance to its audience. The Dreamer in the poem is relating a "vision" that while not necessarily based on an actual dream has the meditative quality and insights of true religious experience.

II. Anonymous. *Beowulf*

1. Epic Tragedy
2. The differences with *The Iliad* can be used to begin to define the differences between the Greek Tragic hero and the Christian Tragic Hero. Beowulf's status as a Christian hero is much debated, but can be viewed in light of the growing Christian influence of the time and the growing Christian ideals traceable in the poem's hero.

III. Anonymous, *The Song of Roland*

1. Epic Tragedy
2. The differences with *Beowulf* can be used to define the differences between the early Christian tragic hero and the later Christian tragic hero and his growth as a moral figure responsible to God. The Christian Hero rises to the test of putting Love of God before all other loves.

IV. Anonymous (The Pearl Poet), *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*

1. Epic Comedy

2. The poem is a story of King Arthur's Court and can be compared to more serious tales of the quest for the Holy Grail. It is best understood as a comedic treatment of a knight's often-contradictory two-fold vow to his Lord and to his Lord's Lady. It is a masterpiece, interweaving in singular episodes an air of moral gravity and comedy. In it the Christian knight faces a test of arms and of temptation.

SECOND QUARTER

V. Alighieri, Dante; *The Divine Comedy: Hell*

VI. *The Divine Comedy: Purgatory* (selections)

VII. *The Divine Comedy: Paradise* (selections)

1. Christian Epic
2. *The Divine Comedy* stands alone as the most complete poetic record of the journey of a soul on its way to God. It draws on the virtue of the pagan world and the truth of the Catholic Church, uniting in one vision the medieval idea of devotion to the Lady (Beatrice), of the solitary knight holding to an ideal in troubled times, and of a quest for redemption.

THIRD QUARTER

VIII. Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Canterbury Tales*

1. Chaucer's pilgrims reflect the growing awareness of personality and individual character in a world where we must remind ourselves that we are all on pilgrimage to the heavenly kingdom.

IX. Shakespeare, William. *Richard III*

1. This History play casts the usurping King Richard in the role of an arch villain.

X. Shakespeare, William. *Macbeth*.

1. Macbeth's blind pursuit of power ends in his ruin and that of his family.

XI. Shakespeare, William. *The Tempest*

1. Shakespeare's last play sets forth his belief in ultimate reconciliation and redemption

FOURTH QUARTER

XII. Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*.

1. Hamlet is a study of the hero not only torn by competing inner demands but also pressed on every side by treacherous foes.

XIII. Shakespeare, William. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

1. The changing fortunes of earthly lovers are told against the background of the warring rulers of the faerie realm.

XIV. Milton, John. *Paradise Lost*. (Selections)

1. John Milton set out in *Paradise Lost* to "justify the ways of God to man."

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS:

- Books on CD/tape. Many students especially those new to Kolbe Academy and/or to the medieval literature may find it difficult to follow some of the epic stories at first. A great way to help students get started is to listen to the beginning of the book on tape or CD from the library. This can help students pick up on the storyline and style a bit more easily. (Use the books on tape to help get started, not in lieu of reading. Make sure your student follows along with the book while making use of books on CD/tape, *the translation used is likely to be different than the school text* and therefore may differ

significantly making test and quizzes very confusing if students have not cross-referenced with course texts.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

- *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. Ed. M.H. Abrams. Third Edition
- *A Modern Reader's Guide to Dante's The Divine Comedy*. Joseph Gallagher
- *The Allegory of Love*. C.S. Lewis (For an understanding of Courtly Love)
- *The Quest for Shakespeare*. Joseph Pierce
- *Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics*. J.R.R. Tolkien
- *The Figure of Beatrice*. Charles Williams
- There are many other excellent translations of the works read in the first semester.

COURSE PLAN METHODOLOGY:

- Be sure to reference the introductory portion, glossaries, afterwards, timelines and notes of your textbooks. They are full of valuable information and helps for understanding the texts.
- Use the Study Guide questions to prime the day's reading. Quickly scan the day's questions before reading the passage to take in the range of ideas covered that day and to help the student recognize important facts and concepts as reading proceeds. Read. Answer the questions. Review answers before the start of the next day's reading. This is a good way to train the memory.
- Advise the student to read the first time through for the value of the story itself. Preparation including reviewing the course plan and study guide should help the student make connections between the story and the underlying ideas. However, such connections are made stronger on a second reading, either of portions or of the whole text. These books are classics because they invite multiple readings and further study.
- Use the Paper Topics Answer Key to guide discussion before writing papers. The idea is to ask questions that will lead your student to arrive at specific points on and perceptions of the work. Pre-writing and pre-testing discussions, without giving actual answers, are standard operating procedure.
- Family discussions on the materials and lessons are highly effective means to foster deeper considerations of the materials. Use the Key Points from the course plan, the paper topics and study guide questions as a basis to start these discussions at home with your students.

◆◆◆ FIRST QUARTER ◆◆◆

KOLBE ACADEMY WELCOME WEEK (OPTIONAL)

CD

Kolbe Academy 11th grade Literature presents: Keep the Faith Lectures by Dr. David White and John C. Rao. (The lectures included in the course plan are for educational use only.)

1-3. Medieval Literature: "Christianity in the High Middle Ages": Song of Roland; Chivalric Romance; The Divine Comedy (3 lectures);

4. "Dante's Guide to the Modern Church" (1 lecture);

5-7. Later Medieval Literature: "Christianity in the Late Middle Ages": Petrarch; Chaucer; The Early Renaissance and the English Drama (3 lectures); The above lectures are by Dr. David White.

8. Historical Background: "The Church in the Early Middle Ages" (1 lecture). Dr. John Rao.

9-11. Shakespeare in a divided Age: "Protestant Rebellion and Catholic Reform": (3 lectures)

12. The End of a Unified Religious Tradition: "Milton and Two Traditions" (1 lecture)

⇒ Key Points The Medieval Literature Lecture CDs, while optional, provide an excellent introduction to the study of the Medieval Literature. Important concepts laid out therein are the Medieval ideas of:

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| ⊕ The Christian understanding of the individual with personality, a transcendent fate and free will; | ⊕ The value of stories to entertain, to teach, to offer worship, to lead the soul to God; |
| ⊕ The Christian King served by knights who aid his establishment and defense of a moral order (a united front before the world and in service to God); | ⊕ The role of the poet, the singer of <i>Chansons du Geste</i> , the <i>jongleur</i> ; |
| ⊕ The Christian as part of a well-ordered world united in religion; | ⊕ The Christian Knight tested in tales of Chivalric Romance; |
| ⊕ The Chivalric Ideal on the field of battle (the emphasis on deeds and honour in battle, and of fairness to prisoners); | ⊕ The Christian Knight tested in tales of the Spiritual Quest; |
| ⊕ The Chivalric Ideal and life in Court (the virtues of humility, courtesy, and maintaining moral order in one's personal conduct); | ⊕ The Chivalric Ideal and Courtly Love (a vow of service to a lady, the art of poetry practiced as a means of winning the lady, the emphasis on elegance in speech and dress); |
| ⊕ The Chivalric Ideal and life in Society (service to God, kinsmen, the oppressed); | ⊕ The conflict between a vow made to a knight's Lord and to his Lord's Lady; |
| | ⊕ The effect of abandoning a Christian ideal of love and marriage; |

Key Points in the Lectures:

- *The Song of Roland* and the metaphor of the Crusade
- Charlemagne as the prototype of the good Christian king
- The high place of poetry in medieval society
- The high value placed on the ancient poets
- Rome as the center of the temporal and spiritual realms
- The duty of service to family, nation, guests (courtesy), one's temporal Lord and God (God as the highest)
- The Northern France Songs of Deeds and the Southern Courtly Love tradition
- The poet of love who focuses more on the lover than the beloved
- The individual knight in a fallen world on a quest to find redemption for himself and society
- The individual as a pilgrim and part of a pilgrim people
- The rise of the individual

PROSODY

Prosody means the form of versification used by a poet in any given work of poetry. The term covers rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, meter, the arrangement of stressed and unstressed syllables (that is of feet and the number of feet per line) and stanza form -- covering the whole range of sonic effects used in poetry. When we take account of these sonic devices, we are said to have scanned the poem. Poetry also operates on a visual level, which can range from the use of simple description and imagery to the use of sophisticated metaphors and similes. Each, in turn, may further serve as a symbol. A well-crafted poem illustrates beautifully the notion that "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts". In the end, all the component parts of a poem serve the idea the poet meant to convey to the reader. In the works read in this course the types of prosody include the following.

ALLITERATIVE MEASURE

The Old English form used in *Beowulf* (We are reading *Beowulf* in a prose translation). *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* uses the alliterative measure and the translation we are using in the course retains it. This form of poetry was used from the time of the invasion of England by the Germanic tribes until the time of the Norman Conquest or from ca. 400 to 1066 A.D. Alliteration is the repeating of consonant sounds at the beginning of a word such as in the common phrases "look before you leap" or "you can bet your bottom dollar". The alliterative measure creates cohesion in a line of poetry by alliterating on four stressed syllables per line. Two alliterations occur in the first half, and two in the second half. Each half of the line is called a hemistich. The line is broken by a natural *caesura* or pause. The number of unstressed syllables in a line could vary so that the number of syllables per line would not be the same. Generally, however, the total syllable count in any given line runs between 10-12. The alliteration is marked in the example below: *W'hen in this w'orld of change; of w'renching, w'oeful fortune/S'ome s'eed or s'park of hope can s'till the c'easeless pain.* The example holds strictly to the rule in both lines. Occasionally, the number of stressed or alliterated syllables varied. Sometimes the first hemistich carried three stressed syllables and sometimes the second hemistich carried only one stressed syllable. The end syllables are not rhymed.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight was written at a time when the alliterative measure was being revived. The translation we are reading has recreated the alliterative measure and retained the bob-and-wheel ending.

FRENCH ALLITERATIVE MEASURE

The Old French form used in *The Song of Roland* is called the French alliterative measure. The line lengths are usually of 10 syllables. One difference between the prosody used in the French *chansons du geste* (the genre of the *Song of Roland*) and that of the Old English is that the final syllables of the lines are assonanced together -- they use the same vowel-sound. English speakers are so used to rhymes made hard and crisp by consonants that we sometimes forget vowels are involved at all. However, if we take a poem such as *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* by Robert Frost we can learn how a poet uses vowel sounds to good effect. For example: "The woods are lovely, dark and deep./But I have promises to keep,/And miles to go before I sleep,/And miles to go before I sleep" recreates the effect of pausing hushed and quiet in the snow with rich vowels throughout, the repetition of the "s" sounds and the assonanced vowels in the end rhymes. This last is similar to what we will find in *The Song of Roland*. Keeping the poem's sonic devices in mind helps us gain more from reading the poem.

In the French alliterative measure each line is end-stopped, that is the thought in one line doesn't continue into

the next. Once again, a *caesura* divides each line. Like the Old English style, there are at least four stressed syllables per line. The first hemistich has two stressed syllables, but the second hemistich may have more. It is common in poems such as *The Song of Roland* for the form of words to be changed to fit the count of stressed syllables in the line or the assonance in of the word at the end of the line. That is why King Charlemagne may be referred to as Charles, Carlon, or Charlemagne throughout the poem. The stanzas or *laissez* do not have a set length. The stressed, alliterated syllables and the assonance that ends each line are marked in the following example taken from Laisse 66 from *The Song of Roland* as translated by Dorothy Sayers.

H'igh are the h'ills, the valleys d'ark and d'eep, (notice the alliterated letter changes in the second half)
Gr'isly the r'ocks, and wondr'ous gr'im the steeps. (notice the "r"s are not the first letter in the word)
The French p'ass through that day with p'ain and grief; (only two true alliterations, but repeated "r's")
The bruit of' them was heard f'ull f'ifteen leagues. (Slight alliteration. Some near assonance in bruit/full)
But when at l'ength their fathers' l'and they see, (Only two alliterations)
Their own l'ord's l'and, the l'and of Gascony, (Three alliterations)
Th'en th'ey remember th'eir honours and th'eir fiefs, (Four, truest conformity to the alliterative measure)
Sw'eethearts and w'ives wh'om they are fain to greet. (fain could be marked as near alliteration with w's)

Notice that the translator's art is not exact. But by using assonance (repeating vowel sounds) or near assonance (the repetition of close vowel sounds), the translator can lend fullness and cohesion to the line. Notice how the translator never compromises on the assonantal sounds of the end words. The lines are alliterated and end-asonanced to help in reciting the poem. The poem is much more easily memorized when a strong pattern has been established. Note also, to avoid confusion, that Dr. White puts more stress on the assonance in the line rather than on the alliteration. Either way, the goal is to make a long poem easy to memorize for recitation.

TERZA RIMA

The Old Italian form used by Dante Alighieri in *The Divine Comedy*. *Terza rima* uses a three-line stanza as the name implies; the stanza itself is called a *terzain*. It uses a rhyme scheme that links up to the next *terzain* in a tight aba, bcb, cdc, ded pattern. The interlinking of the rhyme by repeating the rhyme of the second line in the first and third line of the following stanza weaves the *terzain* together. The example below is taken from *The Divine Comedy: Hell, Canto II. ll. 73-78*. Virgil is recounting the words Beatrice spoke to him when she first asked him to accompany Dante on a journey through Hell and Purgatory.

Beatrice am I, who thy good speed beseech; (a)
Love that first moved me from the blissful place (b)
Whither I'd fain return, now moves my speech. (a)

'Lo! When I stand before my Lord's bright face (b)
I'll praise thee many a time to Him.' Thereon (c)
She fell on silence; I replied apace. (b)

The line length used with *terza rima* is the hendecasyllable or a line of eleven syllables. It has five stressed syllables placed so that the accent falls on every other one. It's similar in rhythm to the iamb in English. The iamb is a foot in English poetry that is made up of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable. Think of the line "the "ra'in was so'ft and lig'ht and swe'et" with the stresses put in. In the example taken from *The Divine Comedy* above, you can see that the translator sometimes used 10 syllables per line, and

sometimes 11. Several English poets have written using *terza rima*. One famous example is that of Percy Bysshe Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind*.

IAMBIC PENTAMETER AND THE HEROIC COUPLET

The heroic couplet is based on **iambic pentameter**. The iamb is the basic unit consisting of a two-syllable foot made up of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable. The iamb is said to be based on the human heartbeat. It is a fundamental measure in English poetry and can be adapted to many purposes.

When it is used in a short line, of say 4 feet, it can have a comical or dramatic feel. Lewis Carroll's *Jabberwocky* uses iambic tetrameter (4 feet per line) to create a mock epic. When it is used five feet per line as in **iambic pentameter** it can have an elevated feeling and is well suited to epic and dramatic poetry. John Milton used iambic pentameter in *Paradise Lost*, as did Shakespeare in his plays (though he played with forms of poetry within a single play). If we scan a portion of Polonius' famous speech of advice to Laertes in *Hamlet* it looks like this:

Th'is a'bove a'll: to th'ine own se'lf be tr'ue, (Notice how the first foot is a spondee, 2 stressed syllables)
And i't must fol'low, a's the ni'ght the d'ay, (true iambic pentameter)
Thou ca'nst not th'en be fa'lse to a'ny m'an. (true iambic pentameter)

Iambic pentameter is used down to the present age. It is not a favorite in our era of free verse, but is rediscovered by poets and playwrights from time to time. Robert Frost used iambic pentameter in his poem *Mending Wall*. "Something there is that doesn't love a wall" the poem begins. Once again, the first foot is a spondee as in Polonius' speech above. Now, we've come to the heart of the matter. A spondee leads off Romeo's line, "Oh she doth teach the torches to burn bright", spoken on catching his first glimpse of Juliet. The spondee is especially well suited to beginning a line, especially when the work is meant to be recited or performed. All poetry is meant to be recited or performed. It is impossible to get the full effect of poetry unless it is read aloud. Poetic devices are not just handy terms teachers love to pass on for the sake of testing students. They are very real devices developed to convey a message to the ear of the listener. The sonic effects they create can stir one's emotions, create tension and suspense, capture the essence of a character, comment ironically on the literal words in the poem, speed the story along, create mood or take the reader to the heights or depths of a human experience. The works read in this course must be read aloud to be fully appreciated. Whenever you find yourself losing the meaning of a few lines, try reading it aloud. The effort will pay off in increased comprehension and enjoyment.

The **heroic couplet** takes iambic pentameter one-step farther. It end rhymes the lines in pairs. It was the favorite meter of Chaucer and is used in *The Canterbury Tales*. In these lines from *The Knight's Tale* we can feel the triumph of Theseus in battle: "Now when Duke Theseus worthily had **done**/Justice on Creon and when Thebes was **won**,/That night, camped in the field, he took his **rest**,/Having disposed the land as he thought **best**". Of course, the word "best" in the last line finishes off the sequence with more power than if Chaucer had switched the third and fourth line and had ended the sequence with the word "rest". Poets pay attention to such things. Chaucer used the form to both grand and comic effect. As a master, he also used iambic pentameter with every other line rhyming. Here is an example from *The Man of Law's Tale*: "I do not choose to stuff with chaff and **straw**/My lengthy tale, I rather seek the **corn**. /Why then relate the majesty and **awe**/Of course on course upon the marriage **morn**?" In these lines the Man of Law is telling the reader that he won't fill his story with unnecessary details of his heroine's wedding day. The every-other-line rhyme

scheme lends a down-to-earth flavor to his tale; and in general, it has a less elevated feel than *The Knight's Tale*. The heroic couplet was later developed into the two-line aphorism during the neo-classical period. Alexander Pope brought this art form to its peak with such lines as "A little learning is a dangerous thing; drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring: there shallow draughts intoxicate the brain, and drinking largely sobers us again". In order for students to drink deeply of the full meaning of poetry and to avoid intoxicating their brains they will have to learn prosody well.

THE GROWTH OF THE VERNACULAR

The Medieval period is a fascinating one in terms of language. Latin was the *lingua franca* of the period, uniting the world. At the same time great writers were arguing for the use of the vernacular in literature and creating classic works that proved their point. The works read in this course were first written in Old English (*Beowulf*, *The Dream of the Rood*), a West Midlands English dialect (*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*), Middle English (*The Canterbury Tales*), Old French (*The Song of Roland*), and Old Italian (*The Divine Comedy*). The course finishes up with Shakespeare and Milton, writers who brought us into the modern era. The student who compares a page of Old English with a page of Shakespeare can get a glimpse of the changes that occurred in the English language.

Notes

WEEK 1, DAYS 1 & 2

READING	DREAM	<i>The Dream of the Rood</i> (<i>The Dream of the Rood</i> Poem and <i>Dream of the Rood</i> Study Guide Questions are printed in the same booklet, T3702).
Study Guide	<i>Dream</i>	Answer the Study Guide questions. (<i>The Dream of the Rood</i> Poem and Study Guide Questions are printed in the same booklet, T3702).
Assignment	<p>Write a catalog poem based on <i>The Dream of the Rood</i>. Keep a list of all the names by which the Rood is called. For example, Glory Tree. Use that list as a source for writing a catalog poem. A catalog poem uses a list of names or items and enlarges upon each by making a special point or insight based on that name. The poem is written with each new item introduced flush left at the margin. A catalog poem on the names of the Holy Mother follows. The art of the catalog poem is in placement of the lines and in giving a clear and justified insight in each. Notice that rhyme is not used.</p> <p>Example:</p> <p>Queen of Heaven who reigns with her Son. Mother of Good Counsel; guide us through our days. Mother of Mercy; remember us in our weakness. Seat of Wisdom; teach us to love God's law. Arc of the Covenant; pray we grow in holiness. Tower of Ivory; grant us strength in time of need. Star of the Sea; greet us with your radiance upon our entrance to heaven.</p>	

Introduction - 8th Century

The Dream of the Rood is the finest religious poem in Old English. In it a dreamer experiences a vision of the Holy Rood, the cross of Christ. The poem is in three parts. The dreamer first alerts us to the nature of his dream and the beauty of the Rood; then, in the longest and most notable section the dreamer tells us how the Holy Rood itself addressed him, relating the events the rood was witness to on the day of our Lord's Passion; finally, the dreamer accepts the charge to tell others what he has seen and to live with unwavering faith throughout the rest of his life so that he might become a saint ready for heaven.

To be given a vision of the Rood is a rare and a good thing. The dreamer, in a sense, is being given a glimpse of the Cross of Christ, as it will appear shortly before His coming in judgment. "...then will appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." (Matthew 24: 30)

We have no exact date for *The Dream of the Rood*. It exists in a 10th-Century manuscript found in Vercelli, Italy; its author too is unknown. Parts of the Rood's speech were carved on a stone cross from the 8th Century, the Ruthwell Cross, now in Scotland. *The Dream of the Rood* belongs to an age that produced religious poetry in abundance, but its wondrous vision and fine language have made it memorable. In it Christ is pictured as a young conqueror, a warrior who endured suffering and pain as He triumphed over sin and death. The Rood too has suffered, and will share in Christ's victory. At the end of the poem we see that the victory of Christ included his descent into hell to redeem those who died before Calvary. Redemption is the theme of the poem through the transformation of mankind and of creation.

↔ Key Points**Consider:**

- ❖ **Note lines 1-24 form an invocation**
- ❖ Images of light
- ❖ The different names given the Rood
- ❖ The presence of the angels, holy spirits, men and all creation acknowledging the cross of Christ
- ❖ Redemption and honor through suffering both in the transformation of the rood and the observer
- ❖ **Note lines 25-120 form the Rood's address**
- ❖ The human participants in the passion who are referred to as strong foes
- ❖ The presence of fiends acting their part in heavenly warfare
- ❖ The degradation of the rood as it shares in the suffering of Christ
- ❖ Christ as a bold Hero
- ❖ The removal of Christ's body by His followers
- ❖ Echoes of the pieta
- ❖ Christ's burial amid mourning
- ❖ The Rood's felling
- ❖ The recovery of the Rood by Christ's followers (relics) and its adornment by them
- ❖ The Rood's elevation as a beacon of redemption and healing
- ❖ The crowning of Mary (lines 91-94)
- ❖ His words on the Last Judgment
- ❖ Mercy for those who seek God's kingdom through the Cross
- ❖ **Note lines 121-155 form the Dreamer's response**
- ❖ The Dreamer's desire to seek the Rood and honor it
- ❖ His reflection on friends who preceded him to Heaven
- ❖ His hope of Heaven

- ❖ Christ’s victorious journey into Hell to open Heaven to the just
- ❖ Christ’s entry into Heaven
- ❖ The Communion of Saints

Discuss:

- ❖ The poem as a vision
- ❖ The contrasting images of the Rood as splendid and degraded
- ❖ The contrast between the magnificence of the Rood and the dreamer’s sinful state
- ❖ The nature of Christ as a warrior as pictured in the poem
- ❖ The sense of a glimpse of heaven and of how all things are being redeemed
- ❖ The receptivity of the dreamer to the message of the Rood
- ❖ The Catholic doctrines regarding the Crowning of Mary, Holy Relics, the Communion of Saints, the Harrowing of Hell, the Last Judgment.

Notes

WEEK 1: DAY 3 - DAY 5

READING	BEOWULF	Beowulf: Read the “Introduction”, “A Note on the Translation”, “Sutton Hoo and Beowulf”, Genealogical Tables and Section 1 to Section 18 of the book. Refer to the tables to keep the familial relationships straight. Optional: Read “The Author, Manuscript, and Bibliography of Beowulf.”
Study Guide	<i>Beowulf</i>	Do question for Section 1 – Section 18
Paper Topic	<i>Discuss the virtues of King Hrothgar. State why or why not you think he is a worthy king. Use examples from the book to support your answer.</i>	
Summary	<i>Beowulf</i> begins and ends with the burial of a king. The poem is divided into two parts. In the first Beowulf delivers the Danish kingdom from the murderous rampages of Grendel. In it we are introduced to the life of the Danish aristocracy, to the tradition of the great hall, to the scop who sings of the mighty deeds of men and to the bonds of duty that call a man to sacrifice or to vengeance. Pay attention to the great king Hrothgar, to his Queen, and to his relationships with Beowulf and his other retainers. Note the divisions based on rivalry and old feuds. The foreshadowing of the coming rebellion and destruction of Heorot are also to be noted.	

Introduction to Beowulf

8th Century (700 A.D.)

Beowulf has fascinated the English-speaking world, fostering debate of one kind or another since its first publication (1833) and later translation into modern English (1837). The many scholars who undertook its translation and interpretation over the next century advanced many conflicting theories about its meaning and authorship, turning the poem into a treasure trove for philologists, historians, and mythologists – few of whom ever discussed it for the power of its poetry. But it is the power of its poetry and of its story that has kept it as a standard text in the Western Tradition; and it was a devout Catholic scholar, J.R.R. Tolkien, who helped the academic world see *Beowulf* for the beautiful poem it is. *Beowulf* is a much-imitated poem, influencing contemporary westerns, science fiction, fantasy and film. Some of its themes include the man who fights for