

Appreciating English Literature

Part Two

Appreciating English Literature

Anglo-Saxon to Middle English

Appreciating English Literature

We're going to look at three major influences:

- **Beowulf**
- **William Caxton**
- **Geoffrey Chaucer**

Beowulf

Hwæt. We Gardena in geardagum,
þeodcyninga, þrym gefrunon,
hu ða æþelingas ellen fremedon.

Lo, praise of the prowess of people-kings
of spear-armed Danes, in days long sped,
we have heard, and what honor the athelings won!

Caxton

And that comyn Englysshe that is spoken in one shyre varyeth from a-nother, in so moche that in my dayes happened that certayn marchauntes were in a ship in Tamyse for to have sayled over the see into Zelande, and, for lacke of wynde, thei taryed atte Forlond, and wente to lande for to refreshe them. And one of theym named Sheffelde, a mercer, cam in to an hows and axed for mete and specyally he axyd after eggys, and the goode wyf answerde that she could speke no Frenshe. And the marchaunt was angry, for he also coude speke no Frenshe, but wolde have hadde egges; and she understode hym not. And thenne at laste a-nother sayd that he wolde have eyren. Then the good wyf sayd that she understod hym wel. Loo, what sholde a man in thyse dayes now wryte, egges, or eyren? Certaynly it is hard to playse every man, by-cause of dyversite and chaunge of langage.

Chaucer

Whan that April with his showres sote
The droghte of Marche hath perced to the rote,
And bathed every veine in swich licour,
Of which vertu engendred is the flowr;
Whan Zephyrus eek with his swete brethe
Inspired hath in every holt and hethe
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
Hath in the Ram his halve cours yronne,
And smale fowles maken melodye
That sleepen al the night with open ey

