

中国科学院规划教材

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◎主 编

# 英美文学教程

(英国卷)



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# 英美文学教程(英国卷)

**A Course of British and American Literature  
(British Literature)**

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## 内 容 简 介

本书运用学界最新的研究成果和观点,吸纳现代教学理论和方法,结合现代文学批评理论,将文学史、作品选读和文学知识纳入同一本书。本书按照文学式样的不同划分而采用了一种独特的编写体例,共包括四部分:按体裁划分:诗歌、小说、戏剧和散文。各部分均有发展脉络概说、作家生平与作品介绍、选文、注释和思考题。同一作家根据其作品分类出现在不同体裁部分,但讲解侧重点有所不同。本书按历史时期划分,其中文学史部分和作家生平部分文字浅显,易读易懂,可最大程度地帮助学生清晰文学发展的脉络,领悟文学作品的内涵,欣赏文学杰作的美韵。

本书既可作为高等院校或者自学考试英语专业学生的教材,也可供英语专业研究生和广大英语爱好者阅读参考。

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# 前言

近几十年来,我国的高等教育迅猛发展,英语专业的发展势如破竹,发展之快如雨后春笋。近千所大学都设有英语系。与此同时,与英语有关(或者说,脱胎于英语专业而另图发展)、更直接为社会经济发展服务的翻译专业或方向和商务英语专业也如火如荼。英语教学在中国的发展大有“前无古人,后无来者”之势。

近年来,相关部门和专家对专业建设和课程建设进行调查,发现一些学校在英语专业建设上仍存在差距。一些地方没有完全按教育部英语专业教学大纲规定开设一些专业知识必修课,如语言学和英美文学。有些地方削减文学必修课的课时、简化课程。一些学校的英语专业负责人认为:美国历史太短,美国文学没有必要;有些地方干脆不开这些课程。实际上,这一切现象都暴露出英美文学师资的短缺,师资短缺严重影响了课程建设和专业建设。

英美文学教学历来是我国英语教学的重要组成部分。过去,许多大学有“外文系”,而不是“外语系”,更不是现在统称的“外国语学院”。“外文系”这一名称充分体现了对文学的重视,至今,复旦大学仍保留“外文系”。有些学校的英语专业开设欧洲文学或欧洲文学史课程;有些学校的英语专业开设亚非文学讲座;有些学校的英语专业开设中国文学与文化大讲堂;有些学校的英语专业开设世界文学简史。我国老一辈英语专家们都是通过阅读文学原著掌握其精髓,都是在中西文学王国中自由“徜徉”的学者。今天,我们要追逐前辈之伟大,恐极为不易,但对优秀的文学作品,我们还是应当掌握。这是培养合格外语人才和建设者所必需的。因为文学作品提供了人类最美好的语言,提供了丰富多彩的世界,提供了多样的人文素养。这也是英语专业教学大纲中要求的重要板块。

可喜的是,越来越多的专家学者充分认识到英美文学课的重要性,呼吁并正在实现英语专业建设中传统课程的回归。我们欣喜地注意到,翻译专业和商务英语两个新建专业都把英美文学课程列入其中。这说明,无论是英语专业、翻译专业,还是商务英语专业,都意识到在培养合格专业人才中文学所起到的基础作用和高级功能。

近年来,英美文学教材建设也取得巨大成就,成果很多,甚至出现了细化到讲解英语诗歌知识的教材,如高等教育出版社出版的《英语诗歌教程》,还出版了多种诗歌注释和选读读本,各种戏剧选读读本和小说选读读本也纷纷涌现。据悉,英语散文方面的教材正在出版过程中。英美文学教材真是异彩纷呈,为学生们学习英美文学提供了丰盛的菜单和自由的选择。然而,由于学时有限,各地办学条件不一,学生家境不同,经济承受能力有别等原因,大量采购阅读英美文学图书是不现实的。因此,编者研究决定推出这一版本教材,旨在让学生在有限的学时内和经济能力能承受的情况下完成英美文学的学习。编者把文学史、作品选读和文学知识纳入同一本书,文学史部分和作家生平介绍部分文字浅显、易读易懂,学生

可以自己读,教师亦可以适当讲解,教师应当重点讲解作品部分。本书所选作品如多于教学学时所要求的数量,教师则可以从众多作品中挑选自己认为最应该让学生学会的,学生也可以在有时间时自己多读一些作品,无须另外买书。

根据这一指导思想,本书的编写体例是:全书共四部分,分别是诗歌、小说、戏剧和散文。每种体裁均有发展脉络概说、作家生平与作品介绍,之后是选文、注释和思考题。同一作家根据其作品分类出现在不同体裁部分,讲解侧重点不一样。本书按历史时期划分,不按作品流派划分。

在编写本书时,编者充分采用学界最新的研究成果和一些新观点,诸如谁是英国第一个小说家等问题,还充分利用现代叙事学理论加强小说部分的选文、注释和思考题的设计。小说的节选最大限度地体现不同时期、不同作家的写作风格,体现英美小说叙事技巧的脉络流变,给学生提供多样的叙事审美体验。我们还吸收了许多知识讲解和文学批评常识。

在设计编写提纲时,本书吸收了一些现代教学理论和教学方法。编者认为,书中内容有一些应该是以多种形式留给学生去读,有一些应该让教师重点讲解,有一些应该在课堂上加强互动,有一些应该让学生课下掌握。本书既倡导拓宽视野,包括同一国家内作家间的比较,也倡导广大师生在使用本书时加强英美作家与世界作家的比较与分析。任何一个国家的文学,只有放在世界文学范围内才能独显其魅力,才能显示各国文学之间的相互交流、发展与繁荣。

本书集诗歌、小说、戏剧和散文为一书,但授课教师未必是同一教师,可以分成几个时段由不同教师共同承担此课,各自发挥特长,此建议仅供参考。本书入选作品较多,因为这些作品很优秀,不选太遗憾。对于有些作品,学生可以自己学习,遇到问题可以向教师请教,也可以上网或去图书馆查找译文、评论或赏析。

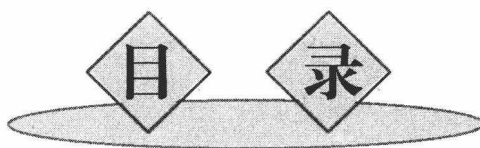
本书是学校统一规划教材,与科学出版社共同开发建设。它既是学校规划教材建设的重要组成部分,也是英美文学与文化教学团队的成果之一,还是对河北省精品课程“英美诗歌欣赏”的重要补充。本书由李正栓统一协调负责,英国卷由李正栓、姬生雷、冯梅主编,美国卷由冯梅、李正栓、姬生雷主编。在编写过程中,吸收了华北地区山西和内蒙古几所高校的教师参加编写,壮大了学术力量。

本书的编写得到科学出版社的大力支持,并且,在编写过程中,编者参考网上一些资料和一些学者的同类书籍以及一些学术观点,在此一并致谢。

由于水平和学识有限,纰漏之处在所难免,敬请指出,以便改正。

编 者

2009年7月



## 前言

### Poetry

<b>Part One Early and Medieval Period</b> .....	1
Chapter 1 Anglo-Saxon Poetry .....	2
Chapter 2 Anglo-Norman Poetry .....	5
Chapter 3 Poetry in the Age of Chaucer .....	7
Chapter 4 The Fifteenth Century Poetry .....	14
<b>Part Two The Sixteenth Century</b> .....	19
Chapter 1 The Renaissance in England .....	19
Chapter 2 Sir Thomas Wyatt .....	20
Chapter 3 Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey .....	22
Chapter 4 Sir Philip Sidney .....	24
Chapter 5 Edmund Spenser .....	26
Chapter 6 Sir Walter Raleigh .....	33
Chapter 7 Christopher Marlowe .....	35
Chapter 8 William Shakespeare .....	37
Chapter 9 Ben Jonson .....	39
<b>Part Three The Seventeenth Century</b> .....	42
Chapter 1 Revolution and Restoration .....	42
Chapter 2 Metaphysical Poets .....	43
Chapter 3 Cavalier Poets .....	51
Chapter 4 John Milton .....	56
<b>Part Four The Eighteenth Century</b> .....	62
Chapter 1 General View of the 18th-century English Poetry .....	62

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Chapter 2 Alexander Pope .....	64
Chapter 3 Thomas Gray .....	69
Chapter 4 William Collins .....	70
Chapter 5 Oliver Goldsmith .....	72
Chapter 6 William Blake .....	75
Chapter 7 Robert Burns .....	79
<b>Part Five The Romantic Period .....</b>	<b>85</b>
Chapter 1 The English Romantic Movement .....	85
Chapter 2 William Wordsworth .....	87
Chapter 3 Samuel Taylor Coleridge .....	90
Chapter 4 George Gordon Byron .....	96
Chapter 5 Percy Bysshe Shelley .....	101
Chapter 6 John Keats .....	110
<b>Part Six The Victorian Age .....</b>	<b>117</b>
Chapter 1 General View of the English Poetry .....	117
Chapter 2 Elizabeth Barrett Browning .....	119
Chapter 3 Alfred Tennyson .....	121
Chapter 4 Robert Browning .....	125
Chapter 5 Matthew Arnold .....	133
Chapter 6 Dante Gabriel Rossetti .....	135
<b>Part seven The Twentieth Century .....</b>	<b>137</b>
Chapter 1 General View of the English Poetry .....	137
Chapter 2 Thomas Hardy .....	141
Chapter 3 Gerard Manley Hopkins .....	144
Chapter 4 A. E. Housman .....	145
Chapter 5 William Butler Yeats .....	147
Chapter 6 Thomas Stearns Eliot .....	150
Chapter 7 Rupert Brooke .....	159
Chapter 8 Robert Graves .....	160

Chapter 9	Wystan Hugh Auden .....	162
Chapter 10	Philip Larkin .....	165
Chapter 11	Dylan Thomas .....	166
Chapter 12	Ted Hughes .....	168
Chapter 13	Seamus Heaney .....	171

## Novel

<b>Part Eight</b>	<b>Evolution of the English Novel .....</b>	<b>177</b>
Chapter 1	The Rise of the English Novel .....	177
Chapter 2	Aphra Behn .....	181
<b>Part Nine</b>	<b>The Eighteenth Century English Novel .....</b>	<b>189</b>
Chapter 1	The Rapid Growth of the English Novel .....	189
Chapter 2	Daniel Defoe .....	191
Chapter 3	Jonathan Swift .....	200
Chapter 4	Samuel Richardson .....	202
Chapter 5	Henry Fielding .....	207
Chapter 6	Oliver Goldsmith .....	210
<b>Part Ten</b>	<b>The Nineteenth Century .....</b>	<b>215</b>
Chapter 1	The Prosperous Period in Novel Writing .....	215
Chapter 2	Jane Austen .....	217
Chapter 3	Walter Scott .....	221
Chapter 4	Charles Dickens .....	229
Chapter 5	William Makepeace Thackeray .....	233
Chapter 6	Charlotte Bronte .....	239
Chapter 7	Emily Bronte .....	241
Chapter 8	George Eliot .....	243
Chapter 9	Thomas Hardy .....	251
<b>Part Eleven</b>	<b>The Twentieth Century .....</b>	<b>254</b>
Chapter 1	The Development of the English Novel .....	254
Chapter 2	John Galsworthy .....	257



Chapter 3 Joseph Conrad .....	265
Chapter 4 E. M. Forster .....	273
Chapter 5 Virginia Woolf .....	275
Chapter 6 James Joyce .....	280
Chapter 7 D. H. Lawrence .....	292
Chapter 8 George or Well .....	293

## Drama

<b>Part Twelve Major English Dramatists and Selected Plays .....</b>	<b>303</b>
Chapter 1 General view of the English Drama .....	303
Chapter 2 Major English Dramatists .....	313
Chapter 3 Selected Plays William Shakespeare .....	333

## Essay

<b>Part Thirteen Major Essayists and Selected Essays .....</b>	<b>348</b>
Chapter 1 General view of the English Essay .....	348
Chapter 2 Major Essayists .....	354
Chapter 3 Selected Essays .....	362

# Poetry

# Part One

## Early and Medieval Period

(to 1485)

The medieval period in English literature covers more than 800 years, beginning from Caedmon's *Hymn* at the end of the 7th century to *Everyman* at the end of the 15th century. The English Medieval Ages embraced the Old English (or Anglo-Saxon) and the Middle English, sharply divided by the Norman's conquest in 1066. Both English culture and the English language changed radically in the years following this event, and English literature embodied a new spirit. The medieval period covers the following periods: Anglo-Saxon, Anglo-Norman, the 14th century and the 15th century.

### Chapter 1 Anglo-Saxon Poetry

The ancestors of today's Englishmen are Anglo-Saxons. Their conquest of Britain in the 5th century marks the beginning of the history of English literature. The Anglo-Saxon invaders who occupied Britain actually consisted of three Germanic tribes, the Angles, the Saxons, and the Jutes, coming from the northern part of the European continent. The Anglo-Saxons lived a stern barbarous life, characterized by power of endurance, seriousness of thought, and belief in fatalism. They showed their heroic ideals in love of glory, allegiance to lord or king, reverence for womanhood, love of personal freedom, open-handed hospitality of lord to squires, honoring of truth, and repression of sentiment. All these things can be seen clearly in the literature of Anglo-Saxon period. The Anglo-Saxons were heathen people, believing in the old mythology of northern Europe. They were Christianized in the 7th century. The introduction of Christianity exerted a great influence upon the English literature, not only enriching the language with many ecclesiastical terms, but also stimulating contacts with a richer culture and providing a haven for literary composition as well as for the copying of manuscripts.

**Anglo-Saxon Poetry.** Anglo-Saxon Poetry falls into two groups: Pagan and Christian. Before the Anglo-Saxons were converted, the Anglo-Saxon literature had experienced a Bookless Age. English Literature of that period was almost exclusively a verse literature in oral form. The literary survivals from that period are only specimens of poetry, whose origin was in the Germanic legends. The former was the marker of the poetry while the

latter was the reciter of poetry. The English poetry produced before the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons was pagan poetry. The good examples of pagan poetry are *Beowulf*, the greatest of Germanic epics and some other poems such as *Widsith*, *The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer*, *Deor's Lament* and *The Battle of Maldon*.

Christian poetry came into being after the Anglo-Saxons became Christians. The vast bulk of Anglo-Saxon poetry is specifically Christian, devoted to religious subjects. Among the old English poets (most of whom are nameless), Caedmon and Cynewulf towered above the rest.

**Beowulf.** Beowulf is the most important example of Anglo-Saxon literature and the oldest surviving epic of any Germanic people. It was composed by the Anglo-Saxons before they invaded England. They brought it to their new home. It had been passed from mouth to mouth hundreds of years before it was written down by an unknown religious scholar. The long epic consists of more than 3000 lines. Its stories come from the folk legends of the primitive Germanic tribes. The scenes of the stories are descriptive of Denmark and South Sweden, not of England. The participating figures are Danes, Geats, Franks, and Frisians, not Britons. The whole poem is essentially pagan in spirit and matter, but has biblical elements and Christian reflections provided by the Christian author.

**The Story of Beowulf.** The whole poem falls into two parts. The first part deals with Beowulf's victory over the monster Grendel and his slaying of Grendel's mother in her lair. The second part describes Beowulf's victory-in-death, fifty years later, over the Firedrake.

Hrothgar, king of the Danes, has built a splendid hall named Heorot near the sea. Every night, the king and his thanes (squires) come to the hall to feast and listen to the songs of his gleemen. One night, misfortune befalls them. A frightful monster called Grendel breaks into the hall and kills thirty warriors. The appalling visit repeats for 12 years. Fear and death reign in the hall, and "becomes deserted and silent." Beowulf is the nephew of Hygelac, king of the Geats. When the sad news of the Danes comes to him, he offers to rid Hrothgar of the monster. So he sails to Denmark with 14 warriors. After a feast of welcome, Beowulf and his companions lie down in the hall for the night. Then Grendel comes and devours one of Beowulf's companions. When he is going to attack Beowulf, Beowulf has a hand-to-hand fight with him. Finally, with his big strength, Beowulf wrenches off one of Grendel's arms. Then Grendel runs back to his den to die. The next night, Grendel's mother descends upon the hall to avenge her son's death and carries away Hrothgar's dearest friend. Beowulf and his companions follow the bloody trail of the she-monster to the edge of a lake. Beowulf plunges into the water, finds the she-monster and follows her into her lair under the waves. In the desperate struggle with the she-monster, he happens to find a big sword wrought by the ancient giants, with which he slays her. There, too, he finds Grendel's corpse. Then he cuts off Grendel's head and the head of his mother, and comes back triumphantly. Loaded with treasures given by the

Danes, Beowulf and his companions return to their kingdom in glory. Later, Beowulf becomes king and has reigned for 50 years. Then a fire dragon begins to devastate the land, because he is robbed of a golden cup from an immense gold hoard which he has guarded for 300 years. The aged king goes to the dragon's barrow with 11 chosen warriors. The fighting is a hard one. All his companions seek for safety in flight except his nephew Wiglaf. With the aid of this kinsman, Beowulf kills the dragon at last. But he is fatally wounded. Before he dies, he names Wiglaf his successor. His body and the treasures are placed on a funeral pile, and twelve warriors ride around the great mount to show their love and respect for the bravest, gentlest and most generous king.

### Features of Beowulf

1. It emphasizes stress. Number of stresses, not number of syllables, is important. Normally, there are four stressed syllables in each line, and at least three of these syllables alliterate.

2. Each line is divided into two halves. Each half has two strongly accented syllables, at least one of the stressed syllables in the first half-line must alliterate with the first accented syllable in the second half-line.

3. A lot of metaphors and understatements are used in the poem, for example, the sea is referred to as the whale-road or the swan-road; the soldiers are described as the shield-men; the chieftains are named the treasure-keepers; human-body is portrayed as the bone-house; God is described as the wonder-wielder; the monster is called soul-destroyer. The epic presents an all-round picture of the tribal society. One can see the social conditions and customs of that period. In this sense, the epic is also a poem of great social significance.

**Christian Poetry.** Anglo-Saxon Christian poetry is represented by the religious poetry produced by Caedmon and Cynewulf.

Caedmon, the first English known poet, has been called the father of English songs. His life story and how he composed his first famous poem are vividly described in Venerable Bede's *Historic Ecclesiastica*. Caedmon is mainly famous for his first poem which is entitled *Hymn*. In the nine-line poem, he highly praises the Creator. Later on, by using the biblical material, he composed some other poems.

Cynewulf lived in the early 9th century. He was the greatest Anglo-Saxon poet and the expected composer of *Beowulf*. He was probably a Northumbrian ecclesiastic and scholar. His work was more lyrical and personal than Caedmon. It was not until 1840, more than a thousand of years after his death, that his name became known. The only signed poems by Cynewulf are *Christ*, *Juliana*, *the Fates of the Apostles* and *Elene*.

## Chapter 2 Anglo-Norman Poetry

**The Norman Conquest.** The Normans were originally a hardy race of sea rovers living in Scandinavia. In the 10th century, they conquered a part of Northern France, which has since been called Normandy, and settled down there. They adopted French as their language and believed in Christianity. They were renowned for their adaptability, martial spirit and organizing ability. The Duke of Normandy William was an able general and statesman. In 1066, he led the Norman army to invade England, defeated the English army at Hastings and became the King of England. After the conquest, the English social life greatly changed. Feudal system was established in England. The king became the supreme ruler and below him were his noblemen, such as barons and knights. The Anglo-Saxons sank to the position of slaves. The Norman Conquest brought a great change to the English language. For three hundred years after the conquest, three tongues were spoken in England: Norman-French, the official language of the Conquerors, Latin, the learned language of the clergy and English, and the tongue of the great mass of the people. The Conquest enriched the English vocabulary. French terms of warfare and chivalry, art and luxury, science and law began to enter the English language. After the Conquest, French culture dominated the English language and literature for three hundred years. With the Norman Conquest, the most cultured ways of Continental Europe were introduced into England. The body of customs and ideals known as chivalry, linked with feudal obligations, was introduced by the Normans. The knightly code, the romantic interest in women, a religious exaltation bordering on erotic mysticism, and a mingled tenderness and reverence paid to the Virgin Mary were reflected in the literature.

**The Romance.** In the Anglo-Norman period, the feudal system promoted the growth of the romance of chivalry. So, Romance became the prevailing literary form and prospered for about three hundred years (1200—1500). The essential features of the Romance are as follows.

1. There is a lack of verisimilitude. For example, the lack of general resemblance to truth or reality is shown by an exaggeration of the vices of human nature and an idealization of virtues, or by an imagination of adventures more or less remote from ordinary life.
2. There is an emphasis upon supreme devotion to a fair lady. A sentimental woman-worship arises from the Virgin cult.
3. Scenes are laid in the past, with the manners and morals representing some aspect or aspects of the contemporary ideal of Chivalry.
4. There is a presence of a quest, in one form or another.
5. There is the appearance of either a religious or a supernatural element, or both.

6. The characters are analyzed according to the type, not to the individual.

**Three Matters of the Romance.** The Subject-matters of the Romance were drawn from the common stock of three main storehouses. They are The Matter of France, The Matter of Rome and The Matter of Britain.

1. The Matter of France.

This group of romances deals with the matter of France, centering around Charlemagne and his twelve peers. The oldest and most notable of the Romances in this group is *The Chanson de Roland* (11th-12th century).

2. The Matter of Rome.

This group of romances deals with the exploits of Alexander the Great (13th century), tales of Trojan War and tales of Thebes.

3. The Matter of Britain.

The legendary tales about King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table provide much material for this group of Romances. The important Characters in the stories are Guinevere, Sir Lancelot, Sir Kay, Sir Galahad, Tristram and Iseult, and Sir Gawain. The most notable romance in this group is *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

**Sir Gawain and the Green Knight** (c. 1370). A verse-romance of 2,530 lines, derived from Celtic legend. The story goes like this:

On New Year's day, King Arthur and his knights are holding a feast. A giant in green enters the banquet-hall on horseback with a battle-axe in his hand. The big man comes to challenge any knight of King Arthur to give him a blow with the battle-axe. The condition is that a return stroke be given a year later at the Green Chapel. At first no knight dares to accept the challenge. Seeing this, the king becomes angry and wants to accept the challenge himself. Just then, Arthur's nephew Gawain stands up and takes up the challenge. With one blow he sends the giant's head rolling through the hall. Then the green knight, who is evidently a terrible magician, picks up his head and mounts his horse. He holds out his head and the ghastly lips warn Gawain to be faithful to his promise and to come to see him next New Year's day at the Green Chapel, where he will return the blow.

The next year, before the New Year's day comes, Sir Gawain leaves Arthur's court to look for the Green Chapel and the green knight. He goes through a lot of adventures and dangers on his journey. But he cannot find the chapel and the knight. On Christmas eve, he is lost in a vast forest. Then he offers prayers to Mary. Suddenly a big green castle appears on the hill before him. He goes up and knocks the door. He is warmly received by the host and the hostess. He is told that the Green Chapel is not far away and he is asked to have a three-day rest in the castle.

Sir Gawain stays in the castle for three days. The host makes a compact with him. According to the compact, the host goes out hunting each day, while Gawain stays in the castle to entertain the beautiful hostess, and in the evening, they exchange what they have got during the day. On the first day, the host goes out hunting, and Gawain stays in the

castle. The beautiful hostess tries to seduce Gawain, but is refused. Finally, she gives her guest a kiss. In the evening, the host gives Sir Gawain the game he has killed, and Gawain gives him the kiss back which he has got from the hostess. On the second day, the same thing happens. Gawain gets a kiss from the lady, but in the evening, he returns the kiss to the host. On the third day, the hostess not only gives Sir Gawain a kiss but also gives him a ring and a magic girdle. She tells Gawain the green girdle will protect him from death if he wears it. Gawain rejects the ring, but accepts the girdle. He makes a promise to the lady that he will say nothing about the girdle to anybody. When the host comes back in the evening, Gawain returns the kiss, but says nothing about the girdle.

On the fourth day, Gawain is taken to the Green Chapel by the host. As soon as they come before the chapel, the host disappears. Sir Gawain finds the chapel is a terrible place. When he approaches it, he hears a big sound. The Green Knight is sharpening his new axe. When the Knight comes out with an axe in his hand, Gawain offers his neck for the blow. Twice, he was not injured, and when the third blow falls upon his shoulder, he is slightly wounded. Then the Green Knight tells Gawain that he is the host of the Green Castle. He explains to Gawain that the first two swings have not inflicted any injury on him because he was true to the compact and twice he returned the kiss. The last blow has wounded him because he did not return the girdle. Full of shame, Gawain throws back the girdle to atone for his deception. But the Green Knight wants him to keep the girdle as a gift.

When Sir Gawain is back to his kingdom, his story becomes widely known. King Arthur orders that each of his knights wear a green girdle in order to keep Gawain's story in memory. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is the first great romance in English literature. In form, it is an interesting combination of French and Saxon elements. It is characterized by sophisticated and chivalrous emotion, delicate description of landscape, sympathetic understanding of human feeling. It is written in an elaborate stanza combining meter and alliteration. At the end of each stanza, there is a rhyming refrain.

## Chapter 3 Poetry in the Age of Chaucer

Geoffrey Chaucer (1340–1400) lived in the 14th century. His writings brought about the first harvest in English poetry. He towers above all the other writers of this century. So, the 14th century has been traditionally called the Age of Chaucer. English poetry flowered in the writings of three great poets: William Langland, Geoffrey Chaucer, and John Gower.

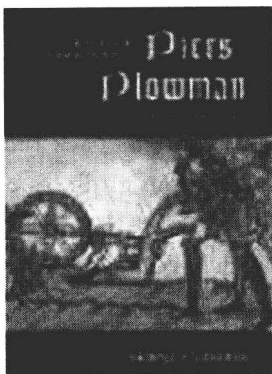
William Langland's achievement in *Piers Plowman* is important both in literature and in history, since he faced squarely the great religious and social issues of his day. It takes a



powerfully disciplined mind to comprehend infinite variety in a single artistic vision. Such a mind was Chaucer's. While he was entirely rooted in the soil of the Middle Ages and tried his hand at a large number of medieval genres, his art is so fully realized as to carry him out of the Middle Ages and make him one of the two or three greatest poets in English literature.

John Gower, one of Chaucer's friends, has not proved much of a threat to Chaucer's predominance. He seems a far more typical medieval writer than Chaucer. He wrote three works which summarized the English Middle Ages: one in Latin, one in Norman French, and one, *Confessio Amantis* (*The lover's Confession*), in English. Were it not for its proximity to Chaucer's, this last would probably be rated somewhat higher than it has been, for it is a work of considerable skill and interest. And it is certainly infinitely superior to anything produced by the English poets of the following century.

### William Langland and His *Piers Plowman*



**William Langland** (1330 — 1400) was probably born in the Western Midland and was educated in the school of a monastery at Malvern. Then he took minor orders, but never rose to a higher position in the church. Later, he moved to London and made a scanty living by singing for the masses, copying legal documents and doing some other odd jobs. Around 1362, he began writing his famous poem *Piers Plowman*. This poem was repeatedly revised. Now, it exists in three versions, which scholars refer to as the A, B, C Texts. The first, about 2,400 lines long, stops at a rather inconclusive point in the action; the

second (generally agreed to be the best form of the poem) is a revision of the first plus an extension of more than 4,000 lines; and the third is a revision of the second. The poem was avidly read and studied by a great many people, and enjoyed great popularity.

*Piers Plowman* has the form of a dream vision. It is perhaps the greatest of English allegories. It takes the form of a whole series of visions, separated by brief intervals when the narrator is awake. The first passage, which is the prologue to the poem, introduces the famous first vision of the Field of Folk. In this part, the narrator says that on a May morning on Malvern Hills, he fell asleep. Then he had a curious dream. He saw a fair field full of people from all walks of life, the poor and rich, working and wandering as the world requires. The laborers were working full hard, ploughing and sowing in the field, but their laboring fruit was taken away and wasted by the proud idlers. The corrupted bishops, deacons, cardinals, friars, monks, and hermits did nothing but cheat the poor. Yet, a lot of gold came into their pockets, while the laboring people lived in hunger and poverty.

In this part, one can see a satiric picture of the 14th-century England drawn in the heart of an individual 14th-century Christian. When he found that Christianity failed in