

British Literature

A Survey Course

English 4
Third Edition

Janice Campbell

Excellence in Literature: Reading and Writing through the Classics

Introduction to Literature (English I)

Literature and Composition (English II)

American Literature: A Survey Course (English III)

British Literature: A Survey Course (English IV)

World Literature: A Survey Course (English V)

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1. Literature—Explication. 2. Literature—History and Criticism. 3. Books and reading. I. Title.

Contents

Introduction	7
Overview and Objectives	9
How to Benefit from This Guide	10
Getting Started	18
Frequently Asked Questions	22
How to Read a Book	28
Questions to Consider as You Read	33
How to Write an Essay	34
The Writing Process	35
Topic Sentence Outline	38
Discerning Worldview through Literary Periods	41
Using EIL in a Classroom	45
<i>Beowulf</i>	49
Context Resources	51
Assignment Schedule	54
<i>Canterbury Tales</i> by Chaucer (1343–1400)	57
Context Resources	59
Assignment Schedule	64
Spenser, <i>Gawain</i>, and the Arthurian Legend	66
Context Resources	69
Assignment Schedule	74
<i>King Lear</i> by William Shakespeare (1564–1616)	76
Context Resources	77
Assignment Schedule	82
<i>Paradise Lost</i> by John Milton (1608–1674)	84
Context Resources	85
Assignment Schedule	90
<i>Pride and Prejudice</i> by Jane Austen (1775–1817)	93
Context Resources	94

Assignment Schedule	99
<i>Great Expectations</i> by Charles Dickens (1812–1870)	101
Context Resources	102
Assignment Schedule	107
<i>Wuthering Heights</i> by Emily Brontë (1818–1848)	109
Context Resources	110
Assignment Schedule	116
<i>To the Lighthouse</i> by Virginia Woolf (1882–1941)	118
Context Resources	119
Assignment Schedule	124
Formats and Models	126
Approach Paper Format	127
Approach Paper Model	128
Historical Approach Paper Format	130
Historical Approach Paper Model	131
Author Profile Format	133
Author Profile Model	133
Literature Summary Format	134
Literature Summary Model	134
Literary Analysis Model	135
Sample Poetry Analysis Model	137
MLA Format Model	140
Honors	143
Excellence in Literature: Assignment Checklist	145
Excellence in Literature: Student Evaluation Summary	146
How to Evaluate Writing	148
How to Use a Writer’s Handbook for Instructive Evaluation	148
Excellence in Literature Evaluation Rubric	150
Glossary	151
Selected Resources	160

*Note: Week 3 assignments and those marked with an asterisk have instructions and a model for imitation. See Formats and Models chapter for details.

Excellence in Literature Pacing Chart

Suggested Pacing of Modules: Move through all nine modules every year, adapting your pace as needed.										
WEEK	What to Read	What to Write	Module Focus	Optional Honors Reading	Optional Honors Writing					
1	Module 4.1 Introduction, <i>Beowulf</i> , and Context Resources	Copy and define kennings.	Epic poetry; heroic ideal							
2		Historical Period/Event Approach Paper* on Anglo-Saxon England								
3	Write a first draft and turn in for feedback.									
4	Edit and revise assignment; turn in.									
5	Module 4.2 Introduction, Selections from <i>Canterbury Tales</i> , and Context Resources	Author Profile*	Framed narrative; Middle English							
6		Letter from one of the pilgrims to a friend								
7	Write a first draft and turn in for feedback.									
8	Edit and revise assignment; turn in.									
9	Module 4.3 Introduction, <i>Sir Gawain</i> , selections from Spenser, and Context Resources	Author Profile*				Reuse of characters and motifs in literature; concepts of chivalry and honor	<i>Piers Plowman</i>	Approach Paper*		
10		Approach Paper* on <i>Gawain</i> ; copy epigraphs from <i>Faerie Queene</i> .								
11	Write a first draft and turn in for feedback.									
12	Edit and revise essay; turn in.									
13	Module 4.4 Introduction, <i>King Lear</i> , and Context Resources	Author Profile*	<i>Le Morte d'Arthur</i> by Malory		Approach Paper*					
14		Briefly summarize each scene.								
15	Write a first draft and turn in for feedback.									
16	Edit and revise essay; turn in.									
		Elements of tragedy; significance of Gloucester subplot							<i>Hamlet</i> by Shakespeare	Approach Paper*

*Note: Assignments marked with an asterisk have a model for imitation. See Formats and Models chapter for details..

Excellence in Literature Pacing Chart					
Suggested Pacing of Modules: Move through nine modules each school year, adapting your pace as needed.					
WEEK	What to Read	What to Write	Module Focus	Optional Hon-ors Reading	Optional Hon-ors Writing
17	Module 4.5 Introduction, <i>Paradise Lost</i> , and Context Resources	Author Profile*	Differences between Medieval and Renaissance styles; consideration of Milton's goal		
18		Summarize and select an epigraph for each book.			
19		Write a first draft and turn in for feedback.		<i>Pilgrim's Progress</i> by Bunyan or <i>The Temple</i> by Herbert	Approach Paper*
20		Edit and revise assignment; turn in.			
21	Module 4.6 Introduction, <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> , and Context Resources	Author Profile*	The Romantic era in Regency England		
22		Write letters in the voice of a character.			
23		Write a first draft and turn in for feedback.		<i>Persuasion</i> by Austen or <i>Middlemarch</i> by Eliot	Approach Paper*
24		Edit and revise essay; turn in.			
25	Module 4.7 Introduction, <i>Great Expectations</i> , and Context Resources	Author Profile*	Movement from Romanticism to Realism; Dickens' characterizations		
26		Historical Period/Event Approach Paper* on the Industrial Revolution			
27		Write a first draft and turn in for feedback.		<i>Oliver Twist</i> or <i>David Copperfield</i> and <i>Van-ity Fair</i> by Thackeray	Approach Paper*
28		Edit and revise assignment; turn in.			
29	Module 4.8 Introduction, <i>Wuthering Heights</i> , and Context Resources	Author Profile*	Gothic genre; paired and circular elements in the plot		
30		Feature story on Hareton and Cathy's engagement			
31		Write a first draft and turn in for feedback.		<i>Tenant of Wildfell Hall</i> or <i>Jane Eyre</i> or <i>Jayber Crow</i>	Approach Paper*
32		Edit and revise assignment; turn in.			

33	Module 4.9 Introduction, <i>To the Lighthouse</i> , Context Resources	Author Profile*		Modernist worldview in literature, art, music	
34		Approach Paper* or retelling			
35		Write a first draft and turn in for feedback.			Space Trilogy by Lewis
36		Edit and revise assignment; turn in.			Approach Paper*

Quick Guide to Excellence in Literature Learning Tools

This handy chart will help you remember some EIL basics.

<p>Writing Process 1. Read/Research 2. Think on Paper 3. Organize 4. Write 5. Revise p. 35</p>	<p>Formats and Models • Approach Paper Model • Historic/Event Approach Paper Model • Author Profile Model • Literature Summary Model • Literary Analysis Model • Poetry Analysis Model • MLA Format Model Model p. 126</p>	<p>Honors Texts • <i>The Dream of the Rood</i> and <i>Caedmon's Hymn</i> or <i>The Battle of Maldon</i> • <i>Piers Plowman</i> by Langland • <i>Le Morte d'Arthur</i> by Malory • <i>Hamlet</i> by Shakespeare • <i>Pilgrim's Progress</i> by Bunyan or <i>The Temple</i> by Herbert • <i>Pesuasione</i> by Austen or <i>Middlemarch</i> by Eliot • <i>Oliver Twist</i> or <i>David Copperfield</i> and <i>Vanity Fair</i> by Thackeray • <i>Frankenstein</i> by Shelley or choice of Brontë texts • <i>Space Trilogy</i> by Lewis</p>	<p>Focus Texts • <i>Beowulf</i> • <i>Canterbury Tales</i> by Chaucer • <i>Sir Gawain</i>, the Arthuri-an legend, and <i>The Faerie Queene</i> by Spenser • <i>King Lear</i> by Shakespeare • <i>Paradise Lost</i> by Milton • <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> by Austen • <i>Great Expectations</i> by Dickens • <i>Wuthering Heights</i> by Brontë • <i>To the Lighthouse</i> by Woolf</p>
<p>Basic Literary Periods • Medieval • Renaissance • Neoclassical • Romantic • Realist • Modernist p. 41</p>	<p>MLA Page Setup • 1" margins • Times New Roman or similar font • 12 point font size p. 140</p>	<p>Tip: Remember to space once, not twice, after terminal punctuation (periods, question marks, etc.).</p>	
<p>Pencil Annotations • Draw vertical line beside important paragraphs. • Underline important ideas or themes.</p>	<p>Learning Cycle Weeks 1 & 2 • Read text and context resources. • Do a short assignment each week. Week 3 • Write essay or creative assignment. • Turn in for evaluation of content and organization.</p>	<p>What to do for the optional Honors Track: • Read honors texts. • Do approach paper on one honors text. • Write research paper. • Take CLEP test (optional). p. 143</p>	<p>Necessary Resources • writer's handbook</p> <p>Optional Resources • dictionary • thesaurus • calendar for scheduling • English notebook to store your papers p. 18</p>
<p>Inside covers • List characters in order of appearance. • Make a timeline of events in the story. • Note context items to look up. p. 28</p>	<p>Week 4 • Revise assignment according to evaluation feedback. • Turn in for evaluation of all standards on rubric.</p>	<p>Prerequisites for Success • Have grade-level skills in language arts.</p> <p>Commitment to • read instructions; • refer to a writer's handbook as needed; • revise according to feedback. p. 9</p>	<p>Remember • Follow weekly schedule for each module. • Use the Formats and Models as a guide. • If you have questions about grammar, style, or mechanics, consult your writer's handbook.</p>
<p>Evaluation Criteria • Content · ideas/concepts · organization • Style · voice · sentence fluency · word choice • Mechanics · conventions · presentation p. 148</p>	<p>Word Count Equivalent • 250 words = one double-sided page typed in MLA format</p>		
<p>Websites to Remember • Context Resources: www.Excellence-in-Literature.com • Writing Reference at Purdue Online Lab: owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/</p>			

Module 4.1

Beowulf

Often, for undaunted courage, fate spares the man it has not already marked.

—Lines 572–573

Focus Text

Beowulf: A New Verse Translation by Seamus Heaney (or the version in your *Norton Anthology of English Literature*)

Honors Texts

The Dream of the Rood

Caedmon's Hymn or *The Battle of Maldon*

Good translations of both these poems are included in *The First Poems in English*, a Penguin Classics anthology linked from <http://excellence-in-literature.com/bookstore/honors-texts-for-british-literature>. They are also widely available online, but the quality of translations vary.

Literary Period

Medieval: Anglo-Saxon

Module Focus

We will look at the conventions of epic poetry and the concept of the heroic ideal in medieval literature.

Introduction

Beowulf has endured through the ages, not because it is a stuffy example of Anglo-Saxon epic poetry, but because it is a rollicking good tale of heroism with super-heros, battles, monsters, and a dragon. There is much to enjoy in *Beowulf*, and Seamus Heaney's poetic translation from the Old English brings the story to life. Be sure to listen to it as well as read it, so that you can fully appreciate the artistry of the writer and the translator.

Something to think about . . .

J.R.R. Tolkien, author of *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* among other works, was a professor of medieval literature. One of the works he studied was *Beowulf*, and he even wrote a prose translation of it. If you are familiar with *The Lord of the Rings*, you will be able to see how Tolkien's knowledge of Old English, the medieval era, and the conventions of the epic helped to shape the story of Middle Earth. If you have not read Tolkien's books, I highly recommend them.

Be sure to notice . . .

Epic Characteristics:

- Long narrative poem (tells a story)
- Vast setting
- Develops episodes important to history of a nation, state, people
- Didactic, giving lessons on appropriate action for the audience
- Great deeds by a hero of mythical, legendary, or historical significance; a person of heroic proportions, high position
- Supernatural forces intervene
- Elevated style, reflected in formal speeches by main characters

Epic Conventions:

- Poet states theme at opening
- Invokes muse
- Begins *in medias res*—exposition comes later
- Catalogues of warriors, ships, armies, weapons
- Extended formal speeches
- Frequent use of epic similes—formal and sustained; an epic simile is an extended comparison using figurative language

Context Resources

Readings

If you are a little intimidated at the thought of tackling medieval poetry, you may want to read through this very useful *Beowulf for Beginners* site, complete with entertaining illustrations.

<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/english/beowulf/>

If your version of the poem does not have the Old English original, you may want to view a hypertext version with helpful annotations and other good information.

<http://www.humanities.mcmaster.ca/~beowulf/>

If your library has the prose translation by J.R.R. Tolkien, it is well worth reading.

Tolkien also wrote a significant essay, “Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics,” which can be helpful in understanding the ideas that shaped the story.

<http://teacherweb.com/NJ/DeptfordTownshipHighSchool/MrMosiondz/Tolkien-Beowulf-the-Monsters-amp-the-Critics.pdf>

Professor Sara Selby’s brief history of the English language may help you understand the story behind the Anglo-Saxon language of *Beowulf*:

<http://excellence-in-literature.com/resources-for-teaching/a-micro-history-of-the-english-language>

The British Library, which holds the first known *Beowulf* manuscript, has an excellent site on how language changes. It explores the development of English from the earliest Anglo-Saxon to contemporary prose. To gain a better understanding of *Beowulf* and its context, I recommend reading the *Changing Language* homepage, the Language Timeline, Language and the Written Word, and the *Beowulf* related Activities.

<http://www.bl.uk/learning/langlit/changlang/language.html>

The Seamus Heaney translation has a good family tree in the back of the book, but you will need to keep track of minor characters as well. I suggest printing out the character list at the site below.

<http://csis.pace.edu/grendel/projib/names.html>

The Author's Life

Because this poem is so very old, we know nothing concrete of the author. You may read of the poem's fascinating history in this essay by Robert F. Yeager.

<http://excellence-in-literature.com/excellence-in-lit/british-lit/e4-resources/why-read-beowulf-by-robert-f-yeager>

Poetry

At *The Complete Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, you will find links to many interesting poems, riddles, and prose pieces, including translations of Genesis, Exodus, and Daniel.

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/ascp/>

Audio

In order to appreciate the poem, you need to hear it. You can hear some wonderful recordings of significant passages by Seamus Heaney at the Norton Anthology site. Do not miss this!

<http://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/noa/audio.htm>

There are additional audio recordings available by different readers. It is interesting to hear the different translations and interpretations, because they can give you a better picture of the world of *Beowulf*.

<http://faculty.virginia.edu/OldEnglish/Beowulf.Readings/Beowulf.Readings.html>

Librivox has an amateur reading of the entire poem, but I do not recommend it unless you cannot find a more professional recording (check your library or Audible.com).

<http://librivox.org/beowulf/>

Music

Musician Benjamin Bagby performs a stunning version of *Beowulf*, using the Anglo-Saxon harp and his dramatically resonant voice. You may listen to an interview with him at the first link, and read more about him and see a video clip of

the *Beowulf* performance at the second. This DVD would be worth looking for at your library or at Amazon.com.

<http://www.wnyc.org/story/46300-ear-to-ear-benjamin-bagby/>

<http://www.bagbybeowulf.com/index.html>

Regia Anglorum offers a nicely illustrated overview of the music and instruments of the Anglo-Saxon era.

<http://www.regia.org/music.htm>

If you would like to listen to medieval music as you study, look for a CD of Gregorian chant at your local library, or visit Pandora.com and enter “Thomas Tallis” in the search box to create a new station focused on plainchant and Renaissance polyphony.

You can hear samples of the *Beowulf* movie soundtrack at Amazon.com. It is a very modern interpretation, so do not expect a medieval sound.

<http://goo.gl/O1qwbs>

Video

There are several movie versions of *Beowulf*, but I have not seen any of them, so I cannot make a recommendation. You may view some clips and reviews that will help you decide if you are interested in seeing one.

<http://www.imdb.com/find?s=tt&q=beowulf>

Here is another, more exciting *Beowulf* battle scene clip from Benjamin Bagby’s performance:

<http://excellence-in-literature.com/british-lit/e4-resources/beowulf-battle-scene-performed-by-benjamin-bagby>

Visual Arts

View a map of the land of the Geats and Danes, with Beowulf’s voyage marked.

<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/english/beowulf/voyage.htm>

The Electronic Beowulf project website has digitized and annotated pages of an early handwritten *Beowulf* manuscript. Very interesting!

<http://www.uky.edu/~kiernan/welcome/1993.htm>

Pictorial Guide to Beowulf offers maps, photos of weapons and armor, and much more. Look at all that interests you, and do not miss the beautiful image of the reconstructed mead hall. Clicking on images will enlarge them.

<http://www.heorot.dk/beo-guide.html>

If you have an art history book or can get one from your local library, look at the section on medieval art. This will give you some insight into what the people of the Middle Ages found important, and you will see the kind of armor, ships, and castles that are mentioned in *Beowulf*.

You can view art from various editions of *Beowulf* and even download desktop wallpaper at this site. It is interesting to see the many vivid interpretations of the story.

http://www.jnanam.net/beowulf_art/

If you do not have an art history book, *Medieval Art and Architecture* is an interesting site with links to many medieval images. View at least a few links, so that you will have a clear vision of medieval priorities.

<http://www.medart.pitt.edu/>

Historic Context

Do not miss this splendidly illustrated BBC overview of Anglo-Saxon history.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/anglo_saxons/

Assignment Schedule

Week 1

Begin reading the context resources and the poem. As you read the poem, you will find compound descriptions, called “kennings,” that are often used in Anglo-Saxon poetry. Examples include “frothing wave-vat” for ocean, world-candle, bloody-toothed slayer, hoard-guard, and more. Copy each kenning you find, along with your interpretation of what it describes. If you enjoy kennings, you may like the extra definition and activity at the following link:

<http://mseffie.com/assignments/beowulf/kennings.html>

Week 2

When you finish the poem, write a historical approach paper on Anglo-Saxon England. You will find the format and a sample paper in the Formats and Models chapter. In addition to the context links I have provided, you may use other resources such as your encyclopedia, the library, and quality Internet resources to complete this assignment. Be sure to refer to your writer's handbook if you have questions about grammar, structure, or style.

Week 3

Begin drafting a 750-word paper on one of the topics below. I recommend that you follow the writing process outlined in the "How to Write an Essay" chapter, consulting the models in the Formats and Models chapter and your writer's handbook as needed.

1- Model: Literary Analysis Essay and MLA Format Model

Prompt: In *Beowulf*, you will find a blend of Christian and pagan beliefs, with the pagan belief in Wyrð, or Fate, contrasting with a Christian belief in a savior-God known as the Word. The poem praises heroic virtues such as courage, loyalty, and the willingness of a hero to die for his people. Draft a 750-word paper discussing ways in which *Beowulf* embodies virtues from both Christian and pagan cultures. Be sure to use quotes from the text to support your thesis.

2- Model: *Beowulf* and the MLA Format Model

Prompt: Retell *Beowulf* with a modern setting and characters, retaining the balanced tone and pacing of the original version. Remember that this is a classic story of good and evil, and in modern times an enemy may be vanquished by means other than death. Your story should be at least 750 words and may be as long as necessary to tell a good tale.

Turn in the draft at the end of the week, so your writing mentor can evaluate it using the Content standards (Ideas/Concepts and Organization) on the rubric.

Week 4

Use the feedback on the rubric along with the writing mentor's comments to revise your paper. Before turning in the final draft, be sure you have addressed any issues marked on the evaluation rubric, and verify that the thesis is clear and your essay is well-organized. Use your writer's handbook to check grammar or

punctuation so that your essay will be free from mechanical errors. Turn in the essay at the end of the week so that the writing mentor can use the evaluation rubric in the “How to Evaluate” chapter to check your work.

Sample