LITERATURE 12

## Bridge 06 - 2008/2009

## BRITISH LITERATUR

Britain's history has been a dramatic one. It has gone from an occupied land to a major colonial power. Throughout this time, its poets, dramatists and novelists have created an outstandingly rich body of work.

Ryan Scott (Australia)



100-400

400-1066

The Romans occupy England and Wales.

So far there's no recorded literature, but the very earliest Irish and Welsh texts, such as the Taliesin poems (containing the first reference to the wizard Merlin) and pagan Irish stories were probably being passed down by word of mouth.

Beowulf is written. It has all the necessary ingredients of war, women, wine and the supernatural.

Thousands of lines long, it is made up of a series of cliffhangers, the worst being the last one, because the end has been lost. The hero is actually Danish. It may have been composed in Denmark, the Netherlands or England, depending on which scholar you believe.





The Normans invade, bringing the French language with them, and introducing new words into English. 1066

1370s

The Anglo-Saxons also wrote a lot of poetry and religious texts, most of which survive only as tiny scraps of probably much longer works.



1347

The Black Death gruesomely kills a third of the population and the feudal system begins to break down as there are too few peasants.

Henry VIII declares himself head of the Church of England.

Dissolution of the monasteries

Libraries are burnt and destroyed. A lot of

Geoffrey Chaucer writes The Canterbury Tales, a rude,

funny collection of stories in verse that mock most

sections of medieval society, including the Church.

They're still read today. John Wycliffe, a Protestant, begins to preach mainly in English. His sermons are

medieval and Anglo-Saxon literature is lost.

William Shakespeare writes his plays and poems. This time is sometimes called 'The Golden Age of Poetry' as England produces a lot of brilliant poets and playwrights, such as Christopher Marlowe, Edmund Spenser and John

The Elizabethan era

England becomes wealthier, mainly due to the wool trade. There are probably more sheep than people. It's also a time of sea exploration and the start

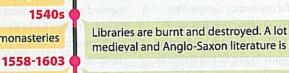
of colonies in the US. Britain established itself as a Naval power after defeating the Spanish navy.

1642-1651

The English Civil War The war between the Parliamentarians and the Royalists.

The Restoration The monarchy is restored under Charles II 1660 1667

> John Milton publishes Paradise Lost, an epic poem concerned with the early stories of the Book of Genesis.



written down.



