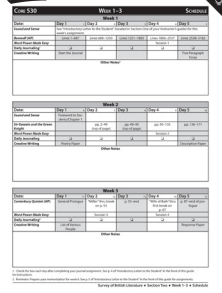# Quick Start Guide

Instructor's Guide: Core 530

1 Get to Know Your Instructor's Guide

Your Core 530 Instructor's Guide (IG) gives you the structure and flexibility to homeschool with confidence. This upper-level IG comes in two parts: a Parent Guide and a Student Guide. This helps your children guide their own day-to-day study and equips you to be their coach.

Note: The Parent Guide is formatted and numbered the same as the corresponding Student Guide. The only difference between them is that the Parent Guide has the answers written in and provides extra notes about books' plots and literary elements (e.g., themes and styles). This allows you to discuss the reading with your children and check their answers even if you haven't read the books yourself. Your students don't see these extra helps or answers unless you want them to.

Before you dive into your new Sonlight materials, familiarize yourself with these vital tools. Remember that you are in control of your homeschool; the wealth of information in your IG is here to help you.

2 Plan Your Schedule

The weekly schedules help you plan. You can follow them closely, reorganize them, or merely use them as a springboard for your own plans.

Please know you DO NOT have to do everything scheduled in your IG. Help your children find a rhythm that works for them.
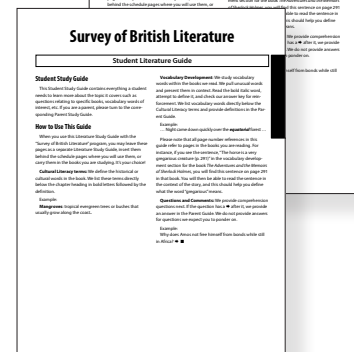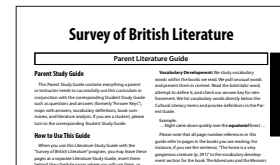
3 Follow Along with Study Guides

You have helpful Study Guides for most of the books you read. Find them behind your Schedule pages. The Study Guides feature vocabulary words, cultural literacy notes, and map and timeline activities to help solidify what your children are learning.

You can use the comprehension questions to be sure your children understand what they read. Find answers and learning objectives in your Parent Guide.

Especially if you're teaching more than one child this year, these Study Guides are indispensable.

4 Start Your Journey

Ready? Set? Go! Your Core IG lets you to teach well from the very first day. As you progress, you can easily adapt the curriculum to meet your needs. Need to go faster or slower? Need to use more/less than what we offer? Sonlight puts you in control of your homeschool journey and enables you to customize your children's educational experience. Our goal is to make your job easier, help you overcome obstacles, and protect your family's interests. Please contact us if we can help. Visit us at www.sonlight.com/help or call (303) 730-6292.

What will you study?

Core 530 is a complete, one-year "literature only" program. It is designed to help prepare your pre-college students for life as they evaluate a story's message from a biblical worldview.

Literary classics and more historical fiction add color and depth to your children's history study. Includes the best books that teach your children, stretch their thinking, prepare them for college and foster a true love of learning. Selections include comedy, tragedy, epic poetry, detective stories, historical fiction, satire, adventure, Arthurian (King Arthur) narratives, fantasy, travelogue, autobiography, Gothic horror, and Christian allegory.

Three options for teaching Core 530

- **Option 1, Hands-on Teaching:** Give your students the Student Guide and keep the Parent Guide yourself. You can do as much of the reading together as you want and give the scheduled assignments as you see fit. You and your students can follow along together each day. Using the extra notes in your Parent Guide, you can discuss the reading, comprehension questions and notes and enjoy the dialogue with your teen.

- **Option 2, Guided Independent Study:** Give your student the Student Guide and keep the Parent Guide yourself. As your students handle their own schedule and assignments, you can check their answers and discuss any points of interest. The extra notes in your Parent Guide help you discuss reading and ideas even if you haven't read the books yourself.

- **Option 3, Full Independent Study:** Give your student both the Parent and Student Guides. Your students can work independently from the Student Guide and then check their answers in the Parent Guide. You can check their progress and discuss their learning as you see fit.

Schedule

Week 1

Date:	Day 1	1	Day 2	2	Day 3	3	Day 4	4	Day 5	5
Sound and Sense	See "Introductory Letter to the Student" (located in Section One of your Instructor's guide) for this week's assignment.									
Beowulf (AP)	lines 1–687		lines 688–1250		lines 1251–1865		lines 1866–2537		lines 2538–3182	
Word Power Made Easy							Session 1			
Daily Journaling[1]	❑		❑		❑		❑		❑	
Creative Writing	Start the Journal [N]								Five Paragraph Essay [N]	

Other Notes[2]

Week 2

Date:	Day 1	6	Day 2	7	Day 3	8	Day 4	9	Day 5	10
Sound and Sense	Foreword to Students/Chapter 1									
Sir Gawain and the Green Knight			pp. 2–49 (top of page)		pp. 49–95 (top of page)		pp. 95–135		pp. 136–171	
Word Power Made Easy							Session 2			
Daily Journaling	❑		❑		❑		❑		❑	
Creative Writing	Poetry Paper [N]								Description Paper [N]	

Other Notes

Week 3

Date:	Day 1	11	Day 2	12	Day 3	13	Day 4	14	Day 5	15
Canterbury Tales: A Quintet (AP)	General Prologue		"The Miller's Tale"– line 3398 (p. 88)		lines 3399–end		"The Wife of Bath's Prologue"– line 451 (p. 125)		line 452– end of prologue	
Word Power Made Easy			Session 3				Session 4			
Daily Journaling[2]	❑		❑		❑		❑		❑	
Creative Writing	List of Various People [N]								Response Paper [N]	

Other Notes

1. Check the box each day after completing your journal assignment. See p. 4 of "Introductory Letter to the Student" in the front of this guide for instructions.

2. Reminder: Prepare your memorization for week 6. See p. 5 of "Introductory Letter to the Student" in the front of this guide for assignments.

Creative Writing

Week 1, Day 1

Start of Journal

For today, start your literature journal. Include information about Beowulf, any reminders you may need about literary terms, what you think about Beowulf so far, and your favorite lines from today's reading. Remember to do this every day for the rest of the week!

Week 1, Day 5

Five Paragraph Essay

I would like you to write a five paragraph essay about *Beowulf*. This is generally the most generic essay you can write, but, as a form, you should practice it. This form is very straight-forward. Some books advise that you use this form on essay tests (such as the AP exam).

How do you start the essay? First think of something that you enjoyed in the text (see my suggestions below). If you enjoyed several things, write them all down. This brainstorming process is quite helpful. For example, I think the comparison between King David and Beowulf deserves a closer look. I make a David column and a Beowulf column and draw comparisons: David fought a giant, Beowulf fought a monster; Goliath defied God and the armies of Israel, Grendel defied the Danes, and not God so much; David was a youth when he fought and not terribly fearsome, Beowulf was unimpressive and unproven (lines 2183–2189); David went on to become a war hero and then king, and Beowulf followed the same pattern. Based on this brainstorming, I think about what I can prove with what I have. In this example, I think I want to prove first of all that the poet wanted to establish a parallel between the heroes, and then that both characters point to another savior, Christ.

Next I should make an outline. Here, though, my plan falls apart a bit. A five paragraph essay should have three main points, so if I prove first that the parallel exists and then that the parallel points to Christ, that is only two points. So I re-think a bit and decide that David and Beowulf both point to Christ, that they foreshadow or echo why He came to earth. I will seek to prove this point based on the similarities between the three before the fight, during the fight, and after the fight. I still need to think of a hook—in this case perhaps a generic retelling of the fight ("The young, untried boy looked up at the monster. He was ready to stamp out the taunts and defiance")—and a conclusion.

The five paragraph essay starts with an introductory paragraph. Make sure you include the author's name and the title of the work. Most students are not required to use hooks, but, for the sake of good writing, you should.

You will have three main points. Prove each point in each paragraph of the body. Include the three main points in your introductory paragraph. For my example, I might say, "David and Beowulf, both unimpressive characters as youths, each conquer the biggest threat that faces their people. Later, they go on to become kings." Close the paragraph with your thesis statement, what you are trying to prove: "The *Beowulf* poet draws parallels between Beowulf and David in order to point the readers to another savior, Christ."

The next three paragraphs, the body paragraphs, focus on your points. Start each paragraph with a summary of what you intend to prove in that paragraph. The introduction to my first paragraph could be, "As youths, David and Beowulf both were unimpressive, not characters one would guess would conquer a nation's enemy single-handedly." Then I could use quotes from *Beowulf* about how he was taken as less than he was worth, from the Bible about David being small and young. To tie this in with Christ, I could use the verse from Isaiah 53 that he had no form or comeliness that we should look at him, or the verses from the New Testament when Christ's neighbors wondered, "Isn't this just Jesus, son of Joseph? And isn't his mother Mary?" All were (or seemed to be) just average people.

I would then write a similar paragraph about the fight: Goliath and all the people did not expect David to win; no one expected Beowulf to win (lines 691–693); when Christ died, everyone thought that was the end, and the Savior could not save. In my last body paragraph I would talk about the outcome: all did triumph, two became kings already and Christ will yet come and rule the world (again, using Scriptures and quotes from *Beowulf* to back my points).

Anytime you include quotes from the book, make sure you talk about them—don't just use the quote and assume your reader concludes what you did: you are the expert, and you want to make things as easy as possible for your reader. Also, make sure you use connective words! Since all your body paragraphs are about your thesis, these paragraphs should flow from one to the next, which means you can start the paragraph with connectives such as also, therefore, moreover, because, etc.

The fifth paragraph sums up your points and draws a further conclusion from them. Why is this paper important? What difference do your findings make? I might conclude that the story of Beowulf, though unfamiliar, seems quite familiar because of the echoes of the familiar story of King David. Better yet, I might conclude that the poet wanted to show off Christ as much as possible, because the society was just becoming Christianized. This could have been an evangelistic tool: Beowulf, a hero the people know and identify with, points the way to Christ.

I hope this example helps you as you write both this essay and other essays to come.

Here are some ideas you may consider. Feel free to choose a different one if something else has interested you as you read.

The first woman does not appear in this poem until line 612. What is the role of women in this story?

How does Heremod, mentioned in the second half of the Sigemund song (lines 897–914) and again when Beowulf returns from killing Grendel's mother (lines 1709–1724) figure into this story? What is his purpose here (why did the poet include him)?

Talk about the opening of this poem, or the ending, or compare the two.

Is Wiglaf a foil of Beowulf? If so, how? If not, what is his role in the text?

Week 2, Day 1

Poetry Paper

Find a topic for your Creative Writing Poetry Essay at the end of the chapter in Sound and Sense. Suggested topics are labeled "Suggestions for Writing."

Week 2, Day 5

Description Paper

This text has some wonderful step-by-step detailed instructions. One example is Gawain's dressing, found, among other places, in lines 568–591. In my mind, the most stand-out example is the deer butchering, lines 1325–1364. Describe an event or a ritual that you do, using as precise descriptive words as possible. Do you make bagels? Play golf? Brush your teeth a particular way? When you are finished, have someone else read the description. Can they duplicate your actions? (Meaning, you probably wouldn't want to cut up a deer based solely on the *Sir Gawain* description, but you might be able to in a pinch!) Have fun!

Week 3, Day 1

List of Various People

To understand more wholly how amazing Chaucer's list of characters is, spend some time making a list of the varied people you know. Do you know any very poor, or very rich? Do you know widows and newly-weds, bachelors and students, people of different ages, jobs, areas of the country (or of different countries)? Write down brief descriptions of twenty-nine varied people. For example: Nicole, a young newlywed who works in a coffee shop and Wanda, an elderly widow who gardens. After you make your list, choose three and write a paragraph description. Try to include details about their appearance, their personality, and their profession. (I did this and was shocked to find most of the people I know are middle or upper middle class, and most have standard jobs. Chaucer's realistic portrait of so many varied individuals is phenomenal—I couldn't do it!)

Week 3, Day 5

Response Paper

Read the following quote: "A comic treatment of adultery or sodomy in a funny story or a bawdy piece of literature is most likely to be thoroughly moral; for the force of humour is frequently dependent upon stirring our sense of the incongruity between what people do and what they ought to do. Humour can rarely afford to dispense with the yardstick of traditional morality."[1]

Part of my hope for you this year is that you will be able to understand commentary about various texts, as well as the texts themselves. Apply this quote to the Miller's Tale and the Wife of Bath's Prologue. Have you enjoyed these readings? If you were immoral, would you still find these stories humorous?

What about your own emotions? Do you feel sinful reading these stories? Should you? (After all, Jesus does not laugh at sin.[2]) Write down your reactions. ■

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1. Ryken, *ibid.*, p. 60, quote of Harry Blamires, *The Christian Mind* (London: S.P.C.K., 1963), p. 99.

2. Keep in mind, however, what Chaucer's perspective is. Do you think he advocates sexually voracious wives, or adultery? As Ryken points out, what is a matter of taste is not necessarily a matter of morality. If you are offended by the stories, your taste in literature does not prefer bawdy tales. The morality of the work, though, is not necessarily compromised through bawdy stories.

Introductory Comments

Please read the "Old English" section in Appendix 1.

An unknown *scop*, or court poet, wrote *Beowulf* between the mid seventh and late tenth centuries (some place the date more precisely between AD 700 and 750). He did not invent the poem entirely himself, but synthesized earlier, oral poetry into the first English **epic**, similar to Homer's synthesis of oral poems into the great epics *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. The actual date of the events of the poem may be set in the mid-500s, since one historical raid mentioned in *Beowulf* occurred in AD 520 (while Beowulf was still a young man). This was also the first European epic written in the vernacular, or common language).

An epic poem is a **narrative poem**, or a poem that tells a story. C. S. Lewis, in his excellent text *A Preface to Paradise Lost*, differentiates between two types of epics. The following notes concerning epics are a summary of Lewis's definition of primary epic.[1]

Beowulf—like Homer's works—is an example of the first type of primary epic, and *Paradise Lost*, which we will read later this year, is an example of the second.

In order to be an epic, the poem should be, in some measure, tragic and true, although today we would not consider *Beowulf* "true." The tone of the poem must be serious: we would not consider ribald poetry or comedy, no matter how sad the ending, an epic. The seriousness of *Beowulf* is not exactly "solemn," though, in the modern sense of the term. The Middle English had the word "solempne," that encapsulates the meaning of epic. Think of a graduation ceremony: it is the opposite of an ordinary school day, and is not relaxed and familiar. It is serious, but it is not sad or gloomy (as today we think of solemn). It is a celebration, but a celebration with pomp. Or, as Lewis says, "Easter is *solempne*, Good Friday is not" (p. 17). This is the style of an epic: elevated language, while somewhat unfamiliar to the reader, wholly appropriate to its subject.

The epic poems *The Aeneid* and *Paradise Lost* have "greatness of subject"—they cover the past and look ahead to the future, of either the Roman race or the human race. The Homeric poems and that of *Beowulf* are different. These epics focus instead on individuals. Odysseus' trials as he returns home and Beowulf's fights with monsters are personal struggles, and what makes these protagonists commendable are their efforts to live wise, heroic lives in times of uncertainty and constant change. Beowulf and Odysseus, in the end, do not change history. They live good lives like the Judges in the Bible, but, after their deaths, their peoples are captured or killed—until (or unless) another hero comes along. Their lives make no

difference in the end—Beowulf's existence, for example, merely forestalls his nation's coming destruction.[2]

Poetry in the Middle Ages had a very different rhythm than what we are used to today. We are used to poems that sound like da DUM da DUM da DUM (my MIStress EYES are NOthing LIKE the SUN, to quote from Shakespeare). In the original *Beowulf*, each line has a **caesura**, or break. Look at p. 2 and notice the space in each line that marks the caesura. Each half of the caesura had two emphasized (or **stressed**) syllables, so four emphasized syllables per line. The first of the two emphasized syllables after the break should have the same sound as at least one of the emphasized syllables before the break. When initial consonants sound the same, this is called **alliteration**. In Heaney's translation, look at line 25: "is the path to power among people everywhere." Or, to show the stressed syllables, the caesura, and the alliteration: "is the **PATH** to **POW**er among **PEO**ple **E**verywhere."

As with many of the texts we will read this year, *Beowulf* has an obvious sequence of events, or **plot**. (This comment may seem obvious, but some books, especially in the 20th century, try to eliminate plot and focus on the lead character's thoughts. Another type of book that would not have a plot is a travel narrative, in which the character describes the things and people he sees on his journeys.) **Exposition** is the first part of a plot. To take the familiar example of Beauty and the Beast, the exposition tells how the Beast became a beast, and why Beauty has to come to the Beast's castle. If the reader began the story with Beauty and the Beast's initial clashes, the story would not make much sense, so the author needs to fill in the reader. **Rising action** increases the excitement in a plot. In Beauty and the Beast, the rising action begins when the two initially dislike each other and fight, then gradually come to enjoy each other's company, and finally become friends enough that Beauty is free to leave. The **climax** (or **crisis**) is the high point in the excitement, and often comes near the end of the action. When Beauty searches for the Beast and cannot find him, the dread and excitement reach their peak. When she finds him, she realizes she loves him, and this decision is the **falling action.** This moment releases all the tension the reader feels from the climax. After this decision, everything else is included in the **resolution**, or **denouement** (day new ma). She kisses the Beast, he transforms into a prince, and they get married and live happily ever after. Some people, to get a better grasp of the plot, will draw a **plot line** that sketches the plot. Flat for the exposition, mountain peaks for the rising action (since each specific episode or complication has its

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1. Lewis, C. S. *A Preface to Paradise Lost*. London: Oxford University Press, 1942, pp. 13–32.

2. The other type of epic is different—the characters in these poems do make a difference to history. Adam and Eve's sin affects all people that only Christ's incarnation will change. This type of epic has a view of all of history, and the effects one man can have on that history. The first type of epic is like the book of Judges, while the second type is like the person with the whole Bible, who sees how the Old Testament always points ahead to Christ, and the New Testament also points to him. The second type of epic has historical perspective, which the first type lacks.

own climax), the tallest peak for the climax, followed by a swift drop (the falling action) to the denouement. (*Writers Inc.* has an example on p. 239.) As you read *Beowulf*, I'd like you to make a plot line.

I would also like you to underline the references to God and to fate. Some commentators believe that the *scop* (the poet) was a Christian, although he wrote about the past, in a time when the warriors did not yet know Christ. The *scop* also does not make any references to the New Testament or the atoning work Christ did on the cross. The interplay between Christianity, the warrior, and the fatalistic society enhances the beauty of the work.

This poem is beautiful in translation. Frequently works lose much of their beauty in translation, since different languages do not have the same rhyme or meter or double meanings of the words. *Beowulf*, though, avoids some of this loss as it incorporates **parallelism**. In parallelism, the same phrase is repeated in a slightly different way. The Psalms are full of examples, such as this from Psalm 100:1–2: "Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the lands! Serve the LORD with gladness! Come into his presence with singing! Know that the LORD is God! It is he that made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture." Notice how the same basic idea is expressed two (or even three) times.

Beowulf frequently uses the same technique. In lines 4–5, we read of Shield Sheafson, "scourge of many tribes / a wrecker of mead-benches, rampaging among foes." The basic meaning of this is that Shield Sheafson was a hero to his people, but how much more wonderful is the elaborated version with its parallelism. Notice examples of this as you read—the text is full of them.

Note: This excellent translation (done by a Nobel Prize winner) includes the Old English text opposite the modern English—notice how different the two are! I encourage you to note the word "gold" in the translation, and compare it to the Old English.

The translator does not shy away from using **archaic diction**, words that are not part of today's regular vocabulary; I include definitions at the beginning of each day's reading for some of the more obscure words.

The Geats lived in Southern Sweden, and Beowulf came from Denmark. You can reference the family trees on p. 217. Please check the family tree as you read the poem. It helps keep the unfamiliar names in order.

You might be interested in the notes on p. xxx in the Introduction and "A Note on Names" immediately following.

Lines 1–687

Note: As you read today, underline all the references to Beowulf. Put a box around the first use of his name.

Vocabulary Development

(line 7) A ***foundling*** to start with, he would flourish later on …

(line 14) … by God to that nation. He knew what they had ***tholed***, …

(line 140) … to bed in the ***bothies***, for who could be blind …

(line 163) … where these ***reavers*** from hell roam on their errands.

(line 194) When he heard about Grendel, Hygelac's ***thane*** …

(line 324) … in their grim war-***graith*** and gear at the hall, …

(line 419) They had seen me ***boltered*** in the blood of enemies …

(line 596) … of your blade making a ***mizzle*** of his blood …

Questions and Comments

1. Why does Beowulf come to Heorot? ➡

2. What is the exposition in today's reading? ➡

3. What rising action occurs? ➡

4. (lines 20–25) Compare Luke 16:1–13 to *Beowulf*. ➡

5. (lines 28–50) Shield's funeral sounds very similar to Viking funerals. Research a Viking funeral and compare the two.

6. Hrothgar gave gifts to people that served him. What did he give to people who built his hall and how does that differ from a lord in the feudal system? ➡

7. An **allusion** refers (or alludes) to a familiar thing, event, or person. The key to allusions is to draw on all of your knowledge, since the author expects the reader to know about the referred to thing. For example, in his poem "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," T. S. Eliot wrote, "No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be; / Am an attendant lord, one that will do / To swell a progress, start a scene or two, / Advise the prince; …" Eliot alludes to *Hamlet*, but does not offer specifics. Eliot expects the reader to think, "Okay; Prufrock is saying that he is not the star of the show, with all its attendant drama, passion, and questioning; instead he is like Horatio, willing to offer advice, show up on occasion, not be the center of attention, nor really have a life of his own. Prufrock thinks of himself as flat and only vaguely interesting." Do you see how, though, with the allusion, Eliot was able to express his meaning swiftly and compactly? What allusion can you find in lines 100–115, and what information do you know that helps you understand this allusion? ➡

8. Can you think of an Old Testament character who, like Grendel, lived or ruled "in defiance of right, / one against all" (lines 144–145)? ➡

9. Grendel takes over Heorot. Is his triumph and conquest complete? Can Grendel go wherever he wants to? Why or why not? ➡

10. When is Beowulf's name first used? ➡

11. What is Beowulf called before this, and why might his name be kept "secret" as long as it is? ➡

12. Is Beowulf a really strong man or more like a super-hero? Prove your view from the passage. ➡

13. **Diction** is the author's choice of words. When Unferth speaks, the *Beowulf* poet uses inflammatory or sneering words. Find three examples in lines 506–512. ➡

14. The poet says, "The King of Glory / (as people learned) had posted a lookout / who was a match for Grendel, a guard against monsters" (lines 665–667). Look at the context around these lines. Do you think the poet refers to Hrothgar or God? ➡

Lines 688–1250

Note: As you read, be on the lookout for examples of Beowulf as a savior or Christ-like figure.

The text in italic type is separate from the story. The minstrel sings songs about other heroes.

Vocabulary Development

(line 688) Then down the brave man lay with his **bolster** …

(line 819) … under the **fen**-banks, fatally hurt, …

(line 845) … hauling his doom to the demon's **mere**.

(line 965) … in my bare hands, his body in **thrall**.

(line 975) He is **hasped** and **hooped** and hirpling with pain, …

(line 1119) … and sang **keens**, the warrior went up.

Questions and Comments

15. What was the climax of today's reading? ➡

16. What is the falling action? ➡

17. What is the resolution? ➡

Keep in mind that, in perspective of the whole book, all of this is just rising action.

18. (lines 690–700) When an author gives a nonhuman item (a dog) or a thing (the wind) human character-istics we say the author uses **personification**. For example, "When I came home, my dog smiled" or "The wind ran through the treetops and bit into my skin." Find an example of personification. ➡

19. In yesterday's reading, Beowulf says the following: "I can show the wise Hrothgar a way / to defeat his enemy and find respite—/ if any respite is to reach him, ever. / I can calm the turmoil and terror in his mind. / Otherwise, he must endure woes / and live with grief for as long as his hall / stands at the horizon, on its high ground" (lines 279–285). Notice how similar this sounds to the words of Christ: I am the way, the truth, and the life; Come to me and you shall find rest for your soul; Peace, be still. Find at least one example from today's reading in which Beowulf, either in words or actions, is a savior-figure. ➡

20. Christ often ends his parables like this: "cast the worth-less servant into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth" (Matthew 25:30). I think the *Beowulf* poet does an amazing job describing what this might sound like. Can you find the description? ➡

At an evangelistic retreat, my friends were challenged to think about a close friend of theirs who was not a Christian, then to think of this friend crying, then weeping uncontrollably. This is a part of hell. They were asked, "Is this what you want for this friend?" If you try this exercise, or even read this description in *Beowulf*, I hope that you, too, will be spurred to spread the gospel.

21. What is the one way Grendel can be killed? ➡

22. Why does the poem do this? ➡

23. (lines 814*ff*) Why do you think the poet decided to have Grendel's arm torn off? In terms of fatal wounds with the hands, Beowulf could perhaps have choked the monster, snapped his neck, or broken his back. A torn off arm, though, as far as I can tell, is a wound unique in literature. Why this wound? ➡

24. **Foreshadowing** hints at what is to come later. The Old Testament, with its promise of a redeemer, is an ex-ample. When Isaiah states, "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth" (53:7, RSV), the ancient Israelite would not know this text relates to Jesus. The ancient could guess that a Messiah would come, and that this Messiah would suffer wordlessly, but nothing more exact. We, though, who have the New Testament as well, know that this passage refers to Jesus, and specifically to his suffering before and on the cross. Thus, you will not always rec-ognize foreshadowing (you might miss it completely), or you will not understand foreshadowing (the author probably included this for some reason, but you do not know why). Later, though, when you are finished read-ing a text, you can see how foreshadowing enhanced the work. With all of this said, read the back cover of *Beowulf* (if you haven't already). Then find the foreshad-owing in lines 880–900. ➡

25. After Sigemund kills the dragon, "He loaded a boat: / Waels's son weighted her hold / with dazzling spoils" (lines 894–896). Based on other boats we've seen so far in this text (lines 28–52, 210–216), is this good or bad? (Presuming this is foreshadowing, is the hint positive or negative?) ➡

26. Hrothgar (like other lords) is called the "ring-giver" (see line 1011 et al.). This strikes me because rings still have significance. Can you think of at least three examples,

whether in literature or in life, that a ring means something? ➡

27. (lines 1070–1158) What do you think is the purpose of the Finn story? ➡

28. When Grendel approaches Hrothgar, we read of Beowulf, "One man, however, was in fighting mood, /awake and on edge, spoiling for action" (lines 708–709). These lines hint at glory to come. Late in today's reading, we read of a **foil**, or a contrast, to Beowulf, in the midst of lines that hint at misery to come. Can you find this foil? ➡

29. Notice the alliteration (or similar sounds) at the beginnings of words in lines 975–976. What gifts did King Hrothgar give Beowulf? ➡

30. Why did the King give Beowulf's men gifts? ➡

Lines 1251–1865

Vocabulary Development

(line 1283) … only by as much as an **amazon warrior's** …

(line 1304) … to the afflicted **bawn**. The bargain was hard, …

(line 1352) … in the shape of a man, moves **beyond the pale** …

(line 1359) … and treacherous **keshes**, where cold streams …

(line 1363) … above a **mere**; the overhanging bank …

(line 1374) … makes clouds **scud** and the skies weep, …

(line 1409) … up **fells** and **screes**, along narrow footpaths …

(line 1456) … the **brehon** handed him a hilted weapon, …

(line 1519) … the **tarn**-hag in all her terrible strength, …

(line 1641) … fourteen Geats in fine **fettle**, …

(line 1666) … the dwellers in that den. Next thing the **damascened** …

(line 1674) … for a single thane of your **sept** or nation, …

(line 1714) … killed his own comrades, a **pariah** king …

(line 1861) … the other with gifts; across the **gannet's** bath, …

Questions and Comments

31. I hope you are enjoying this poem! The language itself is gorgeous, and the relationships between characters subtle and powerful. Because this is a poem, so much lies beneath the surface, not stated directly. For example, who gave Beowulf his sword? ➡

32. Why is this shocking? ➡

33. Another example: does Hrothgar thank Beowulf for killing Grendel's mother? ➡

34. What does this say about them both? ➡

35. What is the rising action of this section? ➡

36. What is the climax? ➡

37. What is the falling action? ➡

38. What is the denouement? ➡

39. Beowulf claims, "It is always better / to avenge dear ones than to indulge in mourning" (lines 1384–1385). Do you agree with this statement? Look at this quote in context—does your opinion change? Beowulf encourages a king to stamp out Grendel's mother, who killed a member of, basically, the state department. Does your opinion change whether this quote is directed to you, personally, or to the government? (This has definite ramifications for today. Does Israel have the right to go to war with the Arabs who support suicide bombers? Does the United States have the right to go against terrorists who kill thousands of Americans in peacetime? Are these equivalent scenarios? Know what your opinions are and why!)

40. (lines 1450–1500) Remember the term foil? Who is a foil to Beowulf? ➡

41. In order for Beowulf to fight Grendel's mother, he "dived into the heaving / depths of the lake. It was the best part of a day / before he could see the solid bottom" (lines 1494–1496). What adventure before he came to Denmark prepared him for this feat (see lines 550–560)? ➡

42. What is this literary term, when the earlier episode reflects on the later? ➡

43. (lines 86–90) When Beowulf killed Grendel, was his action justified? ➡

44. When Beowulf killed Grendel's mother, was his action justified? (Be careful here. Remember this society operates on revenge, and that the proper way to revenge a murder was through either the man-price or a killing.) Support your answer with the text. ➡

45. (lines 1497–1569) Besides a murkier motive, Beowulf's second fight is not as straight-forward, either. What makes the fight less black and white? (Remember, in the first, Beowulf maintained the upper hand—no pun intended—the whole time. The fight was hand-to-hand, which is most primitive and most simple. What is different this time?) ➡

46. (lines 1588–1590) How do you feel about Beowulf's "revenge," when he cuts off Grendel's head? ➡

47. This could be an allusion to what biblical character, and why might this character have done so? ➡

48. (lines 1600–1605) At "the ninth hour of the day," the cynical, disbelieving Danes return to their palace and

Beowulf's faithful retainers stay by the mere. Read Matthew 27:45–54 to find out what also happened at the ninth hour of the day. Draw some parallels. ➡

49. Hrothgar warns at one point that "the soul's guard, its sentry, drowses, / grown too distracted" (lines 1742–1743). What literary device is this? ➡

50. (line 1801) The men are awakened by what bird? ➡

Lines 1866–2537

Vocabulary Development

(line 1926) … **ensconced** in his hall; and although Hygd, his queen, …

(line 2085) … a strange **accoutrement**, intricately strung …

(line 2107) At times some hero made the **timbered** harp …

(line 2172) I heard he presented Hygd with a **gorget**, …

(line 2303) … hoard-watcher, waited for the **gloaming** …

(line 2321) He had **swinged** the land, swathed it in flame, …

(line 2529) "Men at arms, remain here on the **barrow**, …"

Questions and Comments

51. As you read, please underline the descriptive words the poet uses to describe the dragon. ➡

52. This section has several **anecdotes**, or short stories. Which anecdote is your favorite? ➡

53. (lines 1931–1941) Why does Great Queen Modthryth condemn men to death? ➡

54. What do you think is proper for looks? Obviously, this Queen's idea was too extreme, but ogling is not good, either. How should you look at people of the opposite sex? (How can you honor them and God in your sights?)

55. What does Beowulf mean when he says, "I have never seen mead enjoyed more / in any hall on earth" (lines 2015–2016)? ➡

56. (lines 2020–2069) Beowulf discusses at length Hrothgar's daughter and her upcoming marriage. Why does he think her marriage is doomed? ➡

57. What proof from earlier in the text can you find to support Beowulf's view? ➡

58. The man who died right before Beowulf killed Grendel is first named in line 2076 (he died in line 740). Why do you think the poet decided not to name him until Beowulf himself tells the story of his fight with Grendel? ➡

59. What do you think of this line: "each was concerned for the other's good" (line 2171)? How is it true? ➡

60. How many of Beowulf's gifts from Hrothgar did Beowulf keep? ➡

61. (lines 2210*ff*) Is the dragon justified in scorching and ruining the land? Why or why not? ➡

62. What do the following lines foreshadow? "The first to suffer / were the people on the land, but before long it was their treasure-giver who would come to grief" (lines 2309–2311). ➡

63. When Beowulf's hall burns, the text says this: "threw the hero / into deep anguish and darkened his mood: / the wise man thought he must have thwarted / ancient ordinance of the eternal Lord, / broken His commandment" (lines 2327–2331). Read Luke 13:1–5 and John 9:1–4. What does Christ say about Beowulf's idea? ➡

64. Write three such descriptive words for another animal: dog. ➡

Lines 2538–3182

Vocabulary Development

(line 2661) Then he waded the dangerous **reek** and went …

(line 2673) … charred it to the **boss**, and the body armour …

(line 2714) … deadly poison **suppurating** inside him, …

(line 2774) … plundered the hoard in that immemorial **howe**, …

(line 2988) "… and carried the **graith** to King Hygelac; …"

(line 3026) … tidings for the eagle of how he **hoked** and ate, …

(line 3073) … **hasped** in hell-bonds in heathen shrines.

Questions and Comments

65. How old is Beowulf as he fights the dragon (make an educated guess)? ➡

66. Does Beowulf seem this old as he fights? Why or why not? ➡

67. What rising action occurs in this section? ➡

68. What is the climax of this section (and, thus, of the book)? ➡

69. What is the falling action? ➡

70. What happens in the denouement? ➡

71. When he went into battle, did Beowulf want help? ➡

72. Because of this, should his comrades be chastened as they are? Why or why not? ➡

73. What are the larger repercussions in the future for the Geat nation of their actions? ➡

74. How does the dragon kill Beowulf? Does this method surprise you? ➡

75. What do you think of Beowulf's final words: "You are the last of us, the only one left / of the Waegmundings. Fate swept us away, / sent my whole brave high-born clan / to their final doom. Now I must follow them" (lines 2813–2816)? ➡

76. Reread lines 3077–3086. Does Wiglaf think Beowulf should have fought the dragon? Why or why not? ➡

77. (lines 3160–3168) The lord gives treasure to his retainers. When Beowulf dies, the people bury the dragon's treasure with him, instead of sharing the treasure among themselves. What is the significance of this? ➡

78. Beowulf's funeral pyre stood "four-square" (line 3138). Line 358 says: "the valiant follower stood four-square". What do you think four-square means? ➡

79. At Beowulf's funeral, a woman sings about her fears. Is this the best perspective to have at a funeral? If you had to speak (or sing) at a loved one's funeral, what would you hope to impart to the listeners? ➡

Summary and Analysis

Questions and Comments

Did you make the plot line? I hope so. I did not just assign it in order to give you busy work. My main hope is that, for this book and all the books you read this year, you will have data and summaries for each text, so, in the future, you have a quick reference. As the years pass, I realize how poor my memory is of books I read in high school and college. I hope for you that you will have these notes to jog your memory. So, if you haven't already done so, make your plot line!

80. Also record the **setting**, the time and place where *Beowulf* occurs. ➡ ■

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

Introductory Comments

Please read the "Middle English" section in Appendix 1.

Like *Beowulf*, another unknown poet wrote the alliterative poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* between AD 1350 and 1400. Only one manuscript survives with this story, and it was not discovered until the nineteenth century, when the library where it was stored caught fire. Three other poems, *Pearl, Purity*, and *Patience* are on the same manuscript, and most believe the same poet wrote all four works. *Sir Gawain* is the best of the bunch, and is acclaimed as "the most important existing English account of the adventures of King Arthur's court."[1] When first written, this poem was not chic, since the poet did not write in French, the language of high society. Nor did the poet write in the language of London, as Chaucer, his contemporary, did. Rather, the poet uses a dialect of northwest England, with only an occasional word taken from French. A tenth of his words come from Scandinavian languages, sources Chaucer scarcely knew.

The poet utilizes a more complex poetic scheme than we saw in *Beowulf*.

Read these first four lines out loud as best you can.

> Sithen the sege and the assaut watz sesed at Troye,
> The borgh brittened and brent to brondez and askez,
> The tulk that the trammes of tresoun ther wroght
> Watz tried for his tricherie, the trewest on erthe.

Here again we have **alliteration** (the same initial consonant of a word) with a **caesura** in the middle (a break, not marked here, though, as it was in *Beowulf*). Again, the first half of the line has two **stressed** syllables, and the second half has two more, for four total per line. A key difference is that BOTH the stressed syllables in the first half alliterate with the first (and occasionally the second) stressed syllables in the second half. (If you remember, in Beowulf, EITHER of the syllables in the first half had to alliterate with the first syllable in the second half.) Mark the first line thus, "Sithen the **SEGE** and the as **SAUT** watz **SESED** at **TROY**e." You mark the next line before you look at my answer in the footnotes.[2]

The poet adds another level of poetic difficulty with the "bob and wheel" construction at the end of each stanza. Look at lines 15–19 on page 20. The words "wyth wynne" are the "bob" and the other four lines are the "wheel." The bob has two syllables, with an unstressed and a stressed syllable, called an **iamb**. The wheel has three stressed syllables in each line. Also, the five lines of the bob and wheel rhyme in the following pattern: ababa (which is short-hand to mean lines 1, 3, and 5 rhyme and lines 2 and 4 rhyme). Can you hear the rhyme if you read it out loud?

Can you hear the stressed and unstressed syllables? The total poem has 101 of these stanzas.

One modern translation retains the alliteration, the stress, and the rhyme scheme of the original. I opted not to use this text because of its archaic diction, although I love it. If you really like *Sir Gawain*, I would highly recommend a copy of the Marie Borroff translation, which maintains the alliterative pattern, though sometimes at the expense of strict accuracy.[3] Here is her first stanza.

> Since the siege and the assault was ceased at Troy,
> The walls breached and burnt down to brands
>   and ashes,
> The knight that had knotted the nets of deceit
> Was impeached for his perfidy, proven most true,
> It was high-born Aeneas and his haughty race
> That since prevailed over provinces, and proudly
>   reigned
> Over well-nigh all the wealth of the West Isles.
> Great Romulus to Rome repairs in haste;
> With boast and with bravery builds he that city
> And names it with his own name, that it now bears.
> Ticius to Tuscany, and towers raises.
> Langobard in Lombardy lays out homes,
> And far over the French Sea, Felix Brutus
> On many broad hills and high Britain he sets,
>   most fair.
>   Where war and wrack and wonder
>   By shifts have sojourned there,
>   And bliss by turns with blunder
>   In that land's lot had share.[4]

As you look at the Middle English text, can you understand the words more easily than the Old English text in *Beowulf*?

During Fall Semester 1999 at the University of Idaho, I was fortunate to take a class on King Arthur, called "Arthur is Everywhere," taught by the wonderful professor Rick Fehrenbacher. Many of the following notes and ideas about this text came from his course.

Although we know little about him, King Arthur lived around AD 500, after the collapse of the Roman Empire in Britain. He caught the popular imagination—in fact, the Neoclassical period is the only period since the Middle Ages that King Arthur was not popular. You have probably heard of the Knights of the Round Table, and probably of Lancelot, the greatest knight. However, Lancelot did not gain popularity until the 1100–1200s, when French speech and customs also gained popularity in England. Lancelot, with his French name and French chivalry, overshadowed

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1. Mumbach, Mary. "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight." *Invitation to the Classics*. Ed. Louise Cowan and Os Guinness. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1998, p. 103.

2. "The borgh **BRIT**tened and **BRENT** to **BRON**dez and **ASK**ez."

3. If you can find the original publication from the 1960s, that is much less expensive than the edition released in 2001. The original ISBN is 0393097544, and, at the time of this writing, they are available from amazon.com starting at $0.39.

4. Borroff, Marie. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001.

the formerly most popular knight. Gawain—a Celt—up until then had been the most popular hero.

Professor Fehrenbacher's assertion (from what I remember and from my notes) is that this text is about the clash between the stolid Englishman and the French dandy (not specifically—not Gawain vs. Lancelot—but generally—simple, hearty people vs. fashionable but silly nobles). As you read, look for these contrasts.

In this text, I have highlighted a few words at the start of each day's questions. Try to figure out the meaning of the word from the context of the quote, then check your answers to the definition.

Also, with this text, I again want you to draw a plot line. An example is provided for you in Appendix 4. And now, enjoy!

Lines 1–669

Notes

Aeneas was the one man to escape Troy when it fell during the Trojan War and fled to Phoenicia. He settled in Carthage, loved Queen Dido, and was commanded by the gods to leave. Dido commits suicide. Aeneas goes on to rule Rome.

(line 8) Romulus, a twin, founded Rome. He was son of the god Mars and murdered his twin when they disagreed on where Rome should be located. Romulus and his men killed the men of a neighboring tribe and stole the women. Do you think he was noble?

(line 37) Camelot was the name of Arthur's castle. Queen Guinevere was Arthur's wife.

Vocabulary Development

(line 86) He brimmed with ***ebullience***, …

(line 161) he revealed himself veritably ***verdant***!

(line 171) … with the ***cantle*** and the skirts of the saddle …

(line 203) Yet he wore no helmet and no ***hauberk*** either, …

(line 209) a cruel piece of ***kit*** I kid you not: …

(line 210) the head was an ***ell*** in length…

(line 212) the skull-busting blade was so ***stropped*** and buffed …

(line 280) … just bum-fluffed ***bairns.***

(line 314) ***skittled*** and ***scuppered*** by a stranger …

(line 398) … you'll dole out today in this ***decorous*** hall …

(line 575) clamped them with ***greaves*** …

(line 578) ***lagging*** the flesh …

Questions and Comments

1. (line 1) Why does the poet start the poem with Troy and Rome? Isn't this text about an English king? ➜

2. (lines 26*ff*) In the exposition, the poet describes King Arthur's court. Do the descriptive words match the noble and chivalrous actions of King Arthur's court? Support your answer. ➜

Dramatic irony occurs when we, the audience, see a character's mistake, although the character does not. An example would be Jephthah, the judge of Israel, who promises God that, if he defeats his enemies, "whoever comes forth from the doors of my house to meet me, … shall be the LORD's, and I will offer him up for a burnt offering" (Judges 11:31). As readers, we wince, because we know that Jephthah's daughter will come out to meet him first, and we also know that God does not delight in human sacrifice. Jephthah, though, does not realize his mistake—yet.

3. During the rising action, the description of King Arthur's court is full of dramatic irony. Underline three examples found during the rising action. ➜

4. How does the Green Knight insult King Arthur? (Think about when Beowulf arrived on the coast of Denmark—did the guard recognize him as leader?) ➜

5. Is the color green indicative of good or evil? Defend your answer. ➜

6. What does the Green Knight carry and why? ➜

7. Repeat the challenge in modern English. ➜

8. Write a two sentence description of each of the seasons as does the poet on pp. 37–39.

9. Are Gawain's clothes suitable for travel and battle? ➜

10. (line 367) How does Gawain move? ➜

11. (line 431) How does the Green Knight move? ➜

12. Who, based on my introduction, is more British, and who is more French? ➜

13. (line 626) Why does Gawain have a pentangle on his shield? ➜

Lines 670–1371

Notes

In the 1300s when this story takes place, one of the duties of knights was to hunt. They needed to kill game not just for food but to protect the crops: deer eat crops; boars rip up hedgerows, or bushes around the crops that shelter little game and offer wind protection; and foxes kill chickens. The lord of the castle fulfills his place in society, whereas Gawain, separated from men and lounging among women, does not.

This story weaves together three previously unconnected traditional stories: the beheading challenge, the exchange of earnings, and the attempted seduction.

Vocabulary Development

(line 721) here he tangles with **wodwos** … .

(line 730) **bivouacked** in the blackness …

(line 804) to **inveigle** a visit …

(line 886) and **cruets** of salt and silver spoons.

(line 946) and in the **chancel** of the church… .

(line 1129) trussing and tying all the **trammel** and tack.

(line 1340) and they went to work on the **gralloching** …

(line 1347) … and its name is the **numbles** …

(line 1354) and the choice meat of the flanks chopped away from the **chine** …

(line 1359) … and the dogs **pogged** out …

Questions and Comments

14. (lines 672*ff*) Do Arthur's knights support Gawain as he leaves the court? Support your answer. ➔

15. (lines 691–762) As Gawain leaves his ideal life in King Arthur's court, how does his life change? (How is it no longer ideal?) ➔

Note: In lines 755–758 Gawain desires to attend mass on Christmas Day. During "mass," Catholics celebrate the Lord's supper. "Matins" is the worship service in the morning. The "Pater" is the Lord's prayer, and the "Ave" is the Ave Maria or a prayer addressed to Mary. Ave Maria means "Hail Mary" and the prayer begins "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee" (see Luke 1:28). The Ave is used during the discipline of the rosary. The "Creed" is the Apostle's Creed.

16. (lines 807*ff*) Compare Gawain's arrival at the mysterious castle with the Green Knight's arrival at King Arthur's castle. If the mysterious castle is the height of hospitality, how did Arthur fail? ➔

17. (lines 833*ff*) Read Luke 14:12–14. Does the lord of the castle obey these words? Why or why not? ➔

18. Is Gawain known for his fighting prowess, as would befit a knight? ➔

19. What is he known for? ➔

20. Early in this text, we meet Guinevere (French), with eyes so lovely "not one [precious] stone outshone / the quartz of the queen's eyes" (line 81). Who in today's passage is better-looking than Guinevere? Find the passage. ➔

21. Compare the Christmas celebrations at Camelot described in lines 37–135 with those in the mysterious castle, lines 995–1026. Based on the two descriptions, do you think Dr. Fehrenbacher is correct, and that the poet compares the Frenchified Arthurian court to the standard English castle, to the detriment of the court, or do you think the two are the same? ➔

Note: St. John's Day (line 1022) is December 27th.

22. What promise does the lord of the castle exchange with Sir Gawain? ➔

23. Earlier in the text, Gawain pretends humility. Reread lines 1241–1247. Is he again fishing for compliments? If not, how do you read his tone? ➔

Lines 1372–1997

Notes

Today's reading probably strikes you as odd—why is the woman so forward? In modern society, the man is supposed to have a greater sexual appetite. However, when this story was written, people believed otherwise: women were sex-crazed, while men were thinkers, above physical pleasure. Which time believes correctly? My guess is, it depends on the individual.

Vocabulary Development

(line 1470) … and, **cosseted** in costly quiled covers …

(line 1481) … I am **galled** …

(line 1529) or does he deem me too duncelike to hear of **dalliances**?

(line 1586) Aware that the man was **wafting** a weapon …

(line 1701) A young **harrier** …

(line 1706) **haranguing** him with horrific ranting howls.

Questions and Comments

24. On the first day, both Gawain and the lord exchange the gifts they received that day. Do both truly give what they received? ➔

25. After the second day do Gawain and the lord exchange equal gifts? ➔

26. Is the lord impressed with Gawain? Defend your answer. ➔

27. Compare the game captured each day to the lady's actions toward Gawain. ➔

28. (lines 1469–1470) Why do you think that, after the events of the first day, Gawain greets the lady in bed again? ➔

29. (lines 1770–1776) What dilemma does Gawain face on all three days? ➔

30. On the second day, "So the lady tempted and teased him, trying / to enmesh him in whatever mischief she had in mind. / But fairly and without fault he defended himself, / no evil in either of them, only ecstasy / that day" (lines 1549–1553). Is this practice wise? Do you think that, if you were constantly tempted, you would feel delight? Why or why not? ➔

31. (lines 1648–1656) Why do you think the lord's company can celebrate with a clear conscience at night? ➜

32. The lord tells Gawain, "Now, a lord can feel low whenever he likes, / so let's chase cheerfulness while we have the chance" (lines 1681–1682). Is this idea Scriptural? Read Ecclesiastes 11: 7–10 and Luke 12:15–21 (and any other Bible verses you know) to answer this question. ➜

33. (lines 1782–1784) A broad definition of **irony** includes anything that is incongruous or irregular. With this definition, what is odd about the lord's wife accusing Sir Gawain of having plighted troth with another lady? ➜

34. (line 1832) What color is the girdle the lady offers Sir Gawain? Why might this make you suspicious? ➜

35. (lines 647–650) Who is painted on the inside of Gawain's shield? Which woman do you think Gawain trusts in more? ➜

36. (lines 1876–1884) When Gawain goes to confession, he should confess all. What sin does he hold back? ➜

Lines 1998–2530

Notes

Most long poems contain three or five divisions, not four, as is *Sir Gawain*—one more twist the author includes.

The green chapel is a burial mound, or barrow, like we saw in *Beowulf*.

Questions and Comments

37. What is the climax of this text? Think about this—the answer may not be obvious. ➜

38. What is the falling action, and what is the denouement? ➜

Note: (line 2102) The Hector referred to was the strong, courageous, and well-loved prince of Troy—the heir to the throne.

39. How does the Green Knight build up this encounter to make it as scary as possible? ➜

40. What does the Knight think about Gawain's failure? ➜

41. Reread lines 2369–2438. Gawain is caught in wrongdoing. Does he repent? Support your answer. ➜

Note: (line 2446) Morgan le Fay was Arthur's half-sister who hated Arthur and sought to defeat his rule. She (according to legend) taught herself magic to gain power over Arthur.

42. (line 2513) When the court heard about Gawain's failure, "laughter filled the castle." Is this an appropriate reaction? Remember earlier in the story that the Green Knight compares them to children. What do you think of the court's response? ➜

43. How does the poem end and why? ➜

Note: HONY SOYT QUI MAL PENCE means "Shame be to him who thinks ill of it." This is the motto of the Order of the Garter, assumed to be a later addition.

Summary and Analysis

44. Finish your plot line.

45. What is the setting? ➜

46. A **quest** is the pursuit of a goal. The most famous quest in King Arthur's court is the "Quest for the Holy Grail," a drinking cup that, when found, will heal the king and the land. What is Gawain's quest in this text? The hero is supposed to return wiser and more experienced after a quest. Do you think this is the case? ➜

Now I want you to record the **theme** of the book. The theme is the central idea of the work, the statement about life that the author wants to express. If you have used previous Sonlight® programs, you may have heard the same idea called the "Purpose" of the book.[5]

Stating the theme is tricky—only occasionally does the author explicitly state the theme (for example, Aesop's fables, that end with a **moral**, a lesson the author wants to elaborate). Most often, though, the author does not directly state the theme, and the reader must piece together what the author wants to show you about life. For an example, let's look at *Beowulf*. I pulled several quotes that might be the author's theme.

- "But death is not easily / escaped from by anyone: / all of us with souls, earth-dwellers / and children of men, must make our way / to a destination already ordained / where the body, after the banqueting, / sleeps on its deathbed" (lines 1001–1008).

- "So, while you may, / bask in your fortune, and then bequeath / kingdom and nation to your kith and kin, / before your decease" (lines 1176–1179).

- "For every one of us, living in this world / means waiting for our end. Let whoever can / win glory before death. When a warrior is gone, / that will be his best and only bulwark" (lines 1386–1389).

I think that at its core, *Beowulf* is about the realities of life in this world, whether you are Beowulf or Hrothgar or Wiglaf or another. Thus, any of the above quotes could be the theme, from my perspective. To determine the theme there is no one right answer. You might think that *Beowulf* is actually about bravery and defeating obstacles, or about the triumph of good over evil, or something else. Thus, when, in the future, I ask you to record the theme, I will give my best guess, but I hope that you will answer as well.

5. Some sources define theme as the underlying ideas in a work. Some of these ideas in *Sir Gawain* would be chivalry, honesty, and courage. At Sonlight, we would call these **motifs**, and you do not need to worry about that term yet.

Some think that the **epigram** (a concise poem dealing pointedly and often satirically with a single thought or event and often ending with an ingenious turn of thought) "True men pay truly / Then they have nothing to fear" (lines 2354–2355) is the theme of the poem. This idea certainly recurs throughout, and could very well be the theme. I think "Pride goeth before a fall" is another possible example.

(By the way, themes do not have to be pre-established quotes! I just have used quotes because, up until now, I have found them easily.)

I have pulled two quotations from an article about *Sir Gawain*. Read them and think about them. Do you agree? Why or why not? (In the future I may have you write a paragraph or two in response, but for now, just analyze them in your mind.)

> "[W]hen a married noblewoman tempts [Gawain], he must not only avoid adultery but refuse a lady graciously. His solution is to pretend to mistake her seductive proposals for polite flattery. Gawain's conduct demonstrates that the true virtues of Camelot have been passed on to his generation. He protects the lady's honor as carefully as his own."[6]

> "*Sir Gawain* distinguishes between the mere avoidance of sin and the actual practice of charity. It makes clear that the Christian does better to serve, even at the risk of making errors, than to remain a mere spectator in life. But the hero is not excused from the sins he may commit in the course of his extraordinary efforts. If he repents seriously and humbly, however, each fall may prove a *felix culpa* (a happy fault) that gives rise to greater progress toward spiritual maturity."[7] ■

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6. Mumbach, Mary. "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight." *Invitation to the Classics*. Ed. Louise Cowan and Os Guinness. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1998, p. 105.

7. Mumbach, *ibid.*, p. 106.

Canterbury Tales: A Quintet

Introductory Comments

Warning: Although this book is universally recognized as a classic work of literature, the morals and actions of characters are decidedly un-Christian, and much of the humor is bawdy. I do not think this text is much naughtier than parts of Shakespeare, nor more morally reprehensible than some Old Testament stories. One commentator has this to say: one of "Chaucer's most important themes is the power of sex in people's lives and its capacity for perversion. As Chaucer looks at the pilgrims, he sees sex everywhere. In doing so, he is only being true to life. It is not necessarily evidence of a perverse imagination or diseased moral sensibility that leads a writer to choose this for a subject. The Bible also has its share of the portrayal of eros defiled."[1] Nevertheless, please read at your own discretion.

Geoffrey Chaucer (1342–1400) invented **iambic pentameter**, a type of poetry found in English. In iambic pentameter poetry, the cadence always goes unstressed, then stressed: "my MAN and I were MARried YESterDAY." Much of spoken English falls into this pattern. This pattern of unstressed, stressed syllables is called **iambic** (with a single unstressed, stressed pattern, like the bob in *Sir Gawain*, called an **iamb**); other sequences have their own names that you will study in *Sound and Sense*.

Each individual recurrence of unstressed and stressed syllables is called a **foot**. Thus, "my MAN" is a foot, "and I" is another, "were MAR" the third, "ried YES" the fourth, "terDAY" the fifth. The pentameter part of iambic pentameter tells how many feet are in a line: in this case, five (penta means five, as a pentagram is a five-sided star and a pentagon is a shape with five sides). Other lines with more or less iambic feet have other names.

Iambic pentameter was the line of choice for all pretwentieth century English poetry. When we get to Shakespeare, you will see that most of his plays are written in iambic pentameter; all sonnets in English are in this form, and most other poetry.

None of that existed before Chaucer. As the introduction to your text states, "Every poet after him has had a great poet before him writing in English from whom to learn and borrow. Chaucer had no predecessor in English" (p. 14). He invented the form, and defined what great English poetry should be.

The *Canterbury Tales* is a collection of twenty-four stories, bound together within a larger plot. Twenty-nine pilgrims travel from London toward Canterbury, and along the way they agree to tell four stories each (obviously, Chaucer's collection of twenty-four tales falls far short of the total number expected). Whoever tells the best story wins a free lunch. Supposedly, then, these stories are told as the pilgrims travel. This is not terribly realistic, for I doubt anyone's voice can speak loudly enough that twenty-nine pilgrims on horseback can hear, but the idea is charming, nonetheless. This text, then, includes the common literary idea of the journey. In this case, the pilgrims make a physical journey; other texts might focus on a spiritual journey. A journey is a common thread in literature.

As with the *Sir Gawain* poet, Chaucer wrote the *Canterbury Tales* in Middle English. To read it in Middle English— was feasible, but takes a long time. (Look back at the Middle English in the *Sir Gawain* text—some words are easy to pick out, and some are not!) This text updates the spelling, but that is it. Thus, you will read Chaucer's words, but the word "knight" is spelled "knight," not "knyght." Word definitions come at the end of each line, and line definitions come at the bottom of the page. You do not need to flip around the book to understand, nor plow through without help—the helps are all on the page for you (although you might be surprised how much you understand just through context). Chaucer is the first great English poet, and you get to read four of his best-loved, most famous stories, in his language!

During his life, Chaucer lived mostly in London and worked in various administrative posts. He served three kings, and was generally in favor in court. Early in his life he fought in the Hundred Years War[2], and was taken prisoner. The king ransomed him, but for less money than another man's horse!

Chaucer lived during a time of upheaval. The plague killed at least one third of the English population. (Think about this—how many people in your extended family would die? What would your church look like?) The Peasants' Revolt and other more minor rebellions threatened society. The corrupt church left many people dissatisfied.

Chaucer wrote his poetry in the evenings after work. (What do you do when your schoolwork is done? Probably not write world-class poetry!) When he died, he was the first man buried in the Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey (Tennyson and Robert Browning are also buried there, and monuments stand to Milton, Shakespeare, Keats, and Shelley, among others).

The style of the *Canterbury Tales*, a collection of short stories bound together by a running plot, is also found in the Italian work by Boccaccio, the *Decameron*. Like Boccaccio (and Shakespeare), Chaucer probably did not invent most of the stories. At that time, though, without copyrights or the printing press, if a storyteller retold a story, it was an honor to the story's inventor, not a theft. After all, the more storytellers, the wider the story spreads. And Chaucer's *Tales* spread widely. More than eighty manuscripts survive from the Middle Ages. Compare that to *Sir Gawain*'s one surviving manuscript, and you can see how popular Chaucer's work was.

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1. Ryken, Leland. "Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*." *Realms of Gold*. Wheaton, Illinois: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1991, p. 47.

2. The 100 Years' War was a series of conflicts between France and England that lasted from 1337 to 1453. At its start, Edward III claimed to be King of England and King of France as well. In the end, England had added only the town of Calais to its holdings.

This course orders the key books, overall, chronologically. Some prefer to order their books thematically instead. Sometimes the themes match the chronology. We classify *Canterbury Tales* chronologically as a work of Middle English in the Middle Ages. Thematically, though, this work falls mainly into the **realism** category.[3]

Realist authors try to describe life the way it actually is. Realism is not normally about the upper class, but about middle or lower classes in everyday life. Thus, in Chaucer, we read about the actual appearance of the Wife of Bath—she has a gap-tooth, for example—instead of an idealized version: "The beautiful Wife of Bath approached." Chaucer tells the truth (the truth of his imagination, that is), and, to make his writings seem as believable as possible, he uses details: description, character interaction, character mindset.

Most of his physical descriptions come in the General Prologue. Character interaction occurs in between the stories. Thus we get rivalries (i.e., you insult me in your story, I'll insult you even worse in mine) and debates (what is the ideal wife?), all believable and appropriate. I can imagine having a similar debate and, although I hope I do not wish to trade insults, I can recognize that others might. Chaucer's characters also sometimes tell their psychology, or their mindset. The Pardoner states that he desires money above all, even his soul, and the Wife of Bath explains that she wants control in a marriage, as do all women.

Week 3, Day 1 (The General Prologue)

Note: If you are curious about the odd marks above various words, please see the pronunciation guide on pp. 15–16.

Questions and Comments

1. Chaucer sets himself up as the **narrator**, the person who tells the story (or the **narration**). When the narrator tells events from an "I" perspective—I was at an inn in Southwark—this is called the **first person point of view**. What can the narrator know if the story is written in the first person? What does he not know? ➡

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3. Personally, I do not prefer thematic grouping because it is very artificial. Thus, people usually associate realism with the mid-nineteenth century, with authors such as Gustave Flaubert, George Eliot, and the dramatist Henrik Ibsen, even though Chaucer offers a reasonable example from the late 1300s.

I prefer to think of novelists the way E. M. Forster does, as if they are all "seated together in a room, a circular room, a sort of British Museum reading-room—all writing their novels simultaneously. They do not, as they sit there, think 'I live under Queen Victoria, I under Anne, I carry on the tradition of Trollope, I am reacting against Aldous Huxley.' The fact that their pens are in their hands is far more vivid to them. They are half mesmerized, their sorrows and joys are pouring out through the ink …" (*Aspects of the Novel*, 9).

Read the possible phonetic translation of the opening sentence aloud. No one really knows, though, how people spoke 600 years ago—they had no way to record their speech.

2. Which of all these character descriptions do you like the most? Why?

3. If you were riding with the company, which four stories would you tell? Remember, you do not have to invent the stories (although you could, if you wanted to). If four is too many, can you think of one? Why would you choose the one(s) you did?

Week 3, Day 2 (The Miller's Tale)

Be sure to read the few pages of commentary before the selection begins—Murphy's comments are fascinating.

Vocabulary Development

But there is no exotic locale here and no aristocratic ***milieu***.

Chaucer deliberately makes this wonderfully ***farcical*** tale follow immediately upon the Knight's long, elegant story …

… much the same thing as the more homely antics of the ***boyos*** and housewives of Oxford.

It is a ***fabliau***, that is, a short merry tale, generally about people in absurd and amusing circumstances, often naughty sexual predicaments.

We are clearly dealing with fiction in spite of Chaucer's ***jocose*** attempt to excuse himself …

Questions and Comments

4. A word you should remember, that *Sound and Sense* mentioned, is the word cuckold. A cuckold is a man whose wife has cheated on him, and traditionally the sign of a cuckold is horns growing on his forehead. Thus, whether in this story or in Shakespeare or anywhere else, if a character mentions horns, the character is not necessarily referring to the devil! Who will be the cuckold in this story? ➡

5. This story offers detailed descriptions of Handy Nicholas, the jolly scholar, Alison, the lovely and seductive young wife, and Absalom, the dandy. Chaucer neglects to describe the carpenter, however. Write a brief description of how you imagine the carpenter (either a paragraph or a few lines of iambic pentameter).

Week 3, Day 3 (lines 3399–end)

Questions and Comments

6. Literature occasionally makes sport of jealous husbands (another example that comes readily to mind is Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor*). What do you think: is the jealous husband at fault, because through

his over-strict imprisonment (lines 3224–3232) the wife turns to others for fun and spite, or is the husband jealous with good reason? (Keep in mind, Alison did not immediately go off with Nicholas, but turned him away at first [lines 3285–3287].) How should a husband treat his wife? Do you agree with the Miller's opinion initially, that he would rather not know his wife's actions, as long as she satisfies him (lines 3163–3166)? Why or why not?

7. Do you think the carpenter provides well for his wife? Think back to her clothing.

8. (lines 3225–3230) Chaucer seems to insinuate that the carpenter was at fault for marrying Alison. What do you think?

9. What is your favorite part of this **farce** (a story with a humorous and improbable plot)? ➡

10. Based solely on this story, what do you presume about the state of the Church at this time? ➡

11. What is the plot of this story: the exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and denouement? ➡

Week 3, Day 4 (The Wife of Bath's Prologue)

Vocabulary Development

Have the **temerity** to get too close to this medieval Venus Flytrap, and be devoured?

… this unforgettably **ebullient** figure is an **amalgam** of many features derived from Chaucer's reading.

She also embodies traits in women which **misogynistic** Church Fathers … denounced in their writings.

… the force of her **polemic** and her personality has attracted far more attention …

Questions and Comments

12. Is the Wife of Bath a moral woman and a good wife? Support your answer with the text. ➡

13. Discuss with your parents what submission should look like, and what a godly marriage should be.

14. The Wife of Bath knows the Bible well. What biblical references does she use, and do you agree with her inferences or not? ➡

15. Alison explains the reasons men complain about their wives, whether the woman be rich or poor, pretty or ugly. What are the reasons? ➡

Week 3, Day 5

Questions and Comments

16. (lines 481–494) How did the Wife of Bath repay her philandering fourth husband? ➡

17. (lines 496–502) What kind of a grave does this husband get? ➡

18. Discuss what should happen with a body after death. In our culture we generally bury people; in another culture the living leave the dead on the top of a wooden rack so vultures will devour the bodies. Is this way sinful? What would you like done with your body? What do your parents want done?

19. The Wife of Bath claims that women want what they cannot have. Is this true of you? (Guys can answer this, too!)

20. (lines 603–613) Different ages have different ideas of beauty. The Greeks admired symmetry of form (notice how precise their statues are). Today our culture admires slender young women. How does the Wife of Bath's appearance differ from our ideas of beauty? ➡

21. (lines 795*ff*) What wrong behavior does the Wife of Bath's fifth husband exhibit? ➡

22. How does the verse "Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid" (Proverbs 12:1) pertain to the Wife of Bath? (Look around line 660.) ➡

23. The back cover of this text claims this prologue is "the first and funniest feminist manifesto and handbook in English." Did you find it funny? Does any part make feminism attractive to you? Why or why not?

Week 4, Day 2 (The Wife of Bath's Tale)

Questions and Comments

24. (lines 857–881) Why does the Wife of Bath begin her story with fairies? ➡

25. What is the Knight's quest? ➡

26. The hero rapes a girl and yet all turns out well for him. He should be punished. However, this time I appreciated his trials more. What punishments did he undergo? ➡

27. If the knight had asked you, "What thing is it that women most desiren" (line 905), how would you answer? (The answer might be different if you respond with what you, singularly, most want, and what women, corporately, most want.)

28. (lines 1109*ff*) How does the old woman respond to the knight's charges of ugliness, old age, poverty, and low birth? ➡

Survey of British Literature—Schedule for Topics and Skills

Weeks	Title	Author	Genre
1	*Beowulf*	Unknown	Epic poetry
2	*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*	Unknown	Epic poetry
3	*Canterbury Tales*	Geoffrey Chaucer	Short stories in verse
4	*Canterbury Tales*	Geoffrey Chaucer	Short stories in verse
5	*Sherlock Holmes*	Arthur Conan Doyle	Mystery
6	*Hamlet*	William Shakespeare	Tragedy
7	*Finish Hamlet; The Importance of Being Earnest*	Oscar Wilde	Comedy
8	*Paradise Lost*	John Milton	Epic poetry
9	*Paradise Lost*	John Milton	Epic poetry
10	*Peter Pan*	James Barrie	Fantasy fiction
11	*Rime of the Ancient Mariner; Frankenstein*	Samuel Taylor Coleridge; Mary Shelley	Narrative poetry; Science fiction and Gothic horror
12	*Frankenstein*	Mary Shelley	Science fiction and Gothic horror
13	*Gulliver's Travels*	Jonathan Swift	Satire
14	*Three Men in a Boat*	Jerome K. Jerome	Comedy
15	*Emma*	Jane Austen	Romance novel
16	*Emma*	Jane Austen	Romance novel
17	*Emma*	Jane Austen	Romance novel
18	*Emma*	Jane Austen	Romance novel
19	*Wuthering Heights*	Emily Bronte	Novel
20	*Wuthering Heights*	Emily Bronte	Novel
21	*Wuthering Heights; A Severe Mercy*	Emily Bronte; Sheldon Vanauken	Novel; Autobiography
22	*A Severe Mercy*	Sheldon Vanauken	Autobiography
23	*A Severe Mercy*	Sheldon Vanauken	Autobiography
24	*A Tale of Two Cities*	Charles Dickens	Historical fiction
25	*A Tale of Two Cities*	Charles Dickens	Historical fiction
26	*A Tale of Two Cities*	Charles Dickens	Historical fiction
27	*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*	Lewis Carroll	Fantasy fiction
28	*Dubliners*	James Joyce	Short stories
29	*Dubliners*	James Joyce	Short stories
30	*The Great Divorce*	C. S. Lewis	Christian didactic
31	*The Secret Sharer; start Pygmalion*	Joseph Conrad; George Bernard Shaw	Short story; Comedy
32	*Finish Pygmalion; A Passage to India*	E. M. Forster	Novel
33	*A Passage to India*	E. M. Forster	Novel
34	*A Passage to India*	E. M. Forster	Novel
35	*Lord of the Flies*	William Golding	Adventure story
36	*Right Ho, Jeeves*	P. G. Wodehouse	Slapstick novel