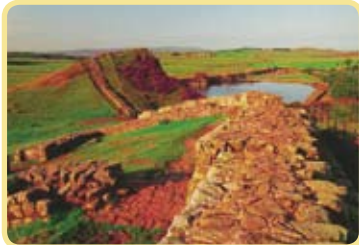


BRITISH LITERATURE

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.

Alex Jordan (UK)
Ryan Scott (Australia)

*Free th...
Because both meant,
Might thence a newe
And part farr pure*



100-400
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.



The Anglo-Saxons invade, driving the native British westwards. They bring their own literature with them and compose some more after they arrive. Around 800 AD Vikings begin to raid the coast, eventually settling and ruling the north of England and parts of Scotland and Ireland.

400-1066

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.



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

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.



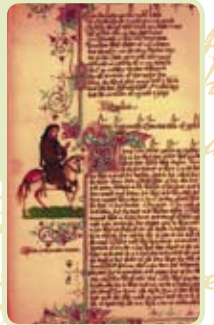
1347
The Black Death gruesomely kills a third of the population and the feudal system begins to break down as there are too few peasants.

1370s
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 written down.

1534
Henry VIII declares himself head of the Church of England.

1540s
Dissolution of the monasteries

Libraries are burnt and destroyed. A lot of medieval and Anglo-Saxon literature is lost.



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.



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 Donne, who are overshadowed by Shakespeare.

1611
The King James Bible is published. This is the first English translation.

1642-1651
The English Civil War
The war between the Parliamentarians and the Royalists.

1660
1667
John Milton publishes *Paradise Lost*, an epic poem concerned with the early stories of the Book of Genesis.



The Restoration
The monarchy is restored under Charles II

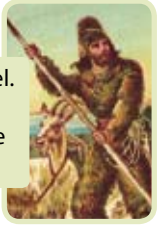
THROUGHOUT HISTORY

1707

The English and Scottish parliaments both passed the Act of Union starting the process that led to today's United Kingdom.

1719

Daniel Defoe writes *Robinson Crusoe*. This is an early novel. As well as being an adventure story, it deals with themes of **repentance**, economics and colonialism. Many people at the time mistakenly thought the story was true.



1726

Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* is published. It is a **savage** satire. This marks the beginning of another Golden Age – of satire. For the next eighty years writers and cartoonists **wittily** attack each other.

LATE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The Industrial Revolution

People begin to move into the cities and work in factories instead of on the land. Most of the people who come to the cities in search of wealth and jobs find themselves living in poverty, in **appalling conditions**.



Jane Austen's novels are published. Her books concentrate on the dependence of women on a good marriage which would secure them. Romanticism became popular around the time Jane Austen was writing. The Romantics were interested mainly in death, love, nature and the cult of the individual. Famous Romantics include Lord Byron and the Brontë sisters.

1837-1901

The Victorian era

The British Empire expands rapidly to include a third of the world. Society becomes more repressed and religious. Industry continues to develop and the country gradually becomes more democratic.



Later, writers such as Dickens **would depict** these conditions in their works and campaign to end them. It was a long time before anyone took any notice, perhaps because as Dickens said, 'We live in two worlds, the rich and the poor'.



1890-1900

Oscar Wilde becomes popular through his witty conversation plays, such as *The Importance of Being Ernest* and *An Ideal Husband*. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is his only novel. This was also the period that saw the rise of detective fiction, such as the works of Arthur Conan Doyle, and science fiction, **typified** by H.G. Wells whose novels include *The Time Machine*.



1918

End of the First World War

The first Labour (Socialist) government follows, though the country is still a liberal democracy.



Modernist works such as *Ulysses* (James Joyce) begin to be written during the 1920s. *Ulysses*, was one of the first examples of **stream of consciousness** – a novel written as a narrative of its characters' thoughts instead of a description of their actions. T.S. Eliot publishes *The Wasteland*, a challenging collection of poems, which people are still trying to interpret today. A couple of years later Virginia Woolf published *Mrs Dalloway*. Characteristic of modernism, it uses interior monologue and shifting non-linear narrative.

VOCABULARY

HISTORY

- to invade** [ɪn'veɪd] - vpadnout
- westwards** ['westwɜːd] - směrem na západ
- to raid** [reɪd] - plenit, dělat nájezdy
- gruesomely** ['gruːs(ə)mli] - strašlivě
- peasant** - rolník
- dissolution** [dɪsə'luːʃ(ə)n] - zrušení
- civil war** - občanská válka
- appalling conditions** [ə'pɔːlɪŋ] - hrozné (životní) podmínky

LITERATURE

- wizard** ['wɪzəd] - kouzelník
- pagan** [peɪɡ(ə)n] - pohanský
- were being passed down** - se předávaly
- depending on** - podle toho
- scholar** ['skɒlə] - vědec, badatel
- tiny scraps** [skɹæps] - zlomky
- to mock** - vysmívat se, zesměšňovat
- medieval** [mɛd'i:v(ə)] - středověký
- to preach** [pri:tʃ] - kázat
- sermon** - kázání
- who are overshadowed** - kteří jsou zastíněni

repentance

- repentance** - pokání
- savage** ['sævɪdʒ] - krutý
- wittily** - vtipně
- to depict** - vylicít
- to typify** ['tɪpɪfaɪ] - být představitelem
- stream of consciousness** ['kɒn'ʃənsɪs] - proud vědomí

GLOSSARY

cliffhanger - exciting end to a part of a book or TV programme that makes you want to read or watch the next part

CULTURE POINTS

- Anglo-Saxons** - the Germanic tribes (the Angles, the Saxons and the Jutes) that invaded England 600 AD
- Vikings** - Scandinavian people that attacked the coastal towns of England
- Normans** - a people from Normandy in France, originally from Norway, who took over England in 1066.