

Bible Stories

The Garden of Eden - Adam and Eve

God fashioned Adam from dust and placed him in the Garden of Eden. Eve is created from one of Adam's ribs to be Adam's companion. Adam is told that he can eat freely from all the trees in the garden, except from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Satan arrives disguised as a snake and convinced Eve to eat from the tree. He tempted her by saying she would become like God. Eve eats and convinces Adam to as well. God banished them from the Garden of Eden.

Story of Noah

Noah was a righteous man and walked with God. Seeing that the earth was corrupt and filled with violence, God instructed Noah to build an ark in which he, his sons, and their wives, together with male and female of all living creatures, would be saved from the waters. According to the biblical story (Genesis 8:11), a dove was released by Noah after the flood to find land; it came back carrying a freshly plucked olive leaf, a sign of life after the Flood and of God's bringing Noah, his family and the animals to land.

Judas

Judas Iscariot, one of Jesus' twelve apostles, betrayed his master to the authorities. This act led to the crucifixion and death of Jesus. Judas offered to betray Jesus to the religious authorities. They agreed to pay him 30 pieces of silver for doing so. After learning that Jesus was to be crucified, Judas attempted to return the money he had been paid for his betrayal to the chief priests and committed suicide by hanging.

Beowulf

Set against the coming of Christianity, this is the story of the last hero: in 507, a monstrous troll wreaks havoc in the mead hall of the Danish king, Hrothgar. He offers rewards for the death of Grendel, so Beowulf, a great and boastful Geat warrior, arrives with his thanes.

Historical Context:

- ❖ 500AD: The tale is thought to have been created as an oral tale at around this time.
- ❖ 700AD: Beowulf was written by an unknown Anglo-Saxon poet.
- ❖ Historical Figures: Many of the characters (though not Beowulf) were included in the poem because Anglo-Saxons needed oral poems to protect their histories and as an early form of propaganda.
- ❖ Wyrð: An Anglo-Saxon concept, like fate or destiny. Beowulf's story is ruled over by Wyrð.
- ❖ Warrior culture: A society in which strong Anglo-Saxon kings demanded bravery and loyalty from their warriors. In return, the warriors received some of the treasures won in war.

Stylistic Features and Symbols:

- ❖ Monsters: Hideous, evil creatures. In Anglo-Saxon literature they represent external threats which must be defeated for society to remain safe.
- ❖ Oral storytelling: Anglo Saxon tales were told in speech and were not written down until much later in history. Elements were often changed or exaggerated, though the names were kept consistent.
- ❖ Kenning: A short metaphorical description of a thing used in place of the thing's name. A ship might be called a "sea-rider," the sea might be called the "whale-road" or a king a "ring-giver."
- ❖ Alliteration: The repetition of consonant sounds. As Anglo-Saxon poetry existed in oral tradition long before it was written down, alliteration helped remember the thousands of lines they were required to know by heart.

Geoffrey Chaucer

Chaucer is often called 'The Father of English Literature' and is considered to be the greatest poet of the Middle Ages. He had an interesting and varied life. He was a philosopher, soldier, an astronomer, a courtier, an MP, a spy, a diplomat and a poet.

Born: 1343

Died: 1400

The Canterbury Tales

- ❖ Geoffrey Chaucer wrote The Canterbury Tales, a collection of stories in a frame story, between 1387 and 1400. It is the story of a group of thirty people who travel as pilgrims to Canterbury (England). During their travels, each of the pilgrims has their own story to tell.
- ❖ The Tales were unfinished at the time of Chaucer's death.
- ❖ In total there are 24 Tales. The Tales were written before the printing press was invented and therefore were copied out by hand. Mistakes and changes were often made.
- ❖ There is no way of knowing which order Chaucer intended for the Tales to be told in.
- ❖ The Canterbury Tales was different to most other writing from the Middle Ages because it contained stories about a wide range of people.

Stylistic Features:

- ❖ The poetic meter, or rhythm, used throughout *The Canterbury Tales* is **iambic pentameter** meaning unstressed and stressed syllables. The pattern is called *iamb* and *iambic* for a poetry structure. Lines generally have five iambs each, for a total of ten syllables per line; "penta" is the Greek word for "five." Therefore, it is called **iambic pentameter**.
- ❖ Lines are paired off into rhyming couplets which means that each pair of lines has similar-sounding words that rhyme at the end.

William Shakespeare

Biography

Shakespeare was an English poet and playwright and is widely considered to be the greatest writer in the English language. He wrote 38 plays and 154 sonnets.

Born: Stratford-upon-Avon on 23rd April 1564.

Died: 23rd April 1616 (age 52)

Shakespeare wrote at the time of two monarchs: Queen Elizabeth I and James I. The plays that he wrote during the period of Queen Elizabeth are generally happy and joyful, reflecting the mood at the time. However, darker plays were written in the era of James I, which was far more unstable.

Shakespeare wrote 154 sonnets mostly in the 1590s. These short poems deal with issues such as lost love. His sonnets have an enduring appeal due to his formidable skill with language and words.

Shakespeare's plays have been studied more than any other writing in the English language and have been translated into numerous languages.

Play Genres:

- ❖ Histories
- ❖ Tragedies
- ❖ Comedies

Shakespeare's Recurring Key Themes

- ❖ Power
- ❖ Nature
- ❖ Love and Relationships
- ❖ Conflict
- ❖ Appearance Vs Reality
- ❖ Order, disorder and change

Charles Dickens

Biography

Dickens was a Victorian English writer and is still much loved for his contribution to classic English literature. He is remembered as one of the most important writers of the 19th century.

Born: In Portsmouth on 7th February 1812

Died: 9th June 1870 of a stroke

The Victorian era describes the period in which Queen Victoria sat on the English throne – between 1837 and 1901 (most of Dickens' life). Whilst this was a time of industrial revolution, it was also an extremely harsh time to live, and the differences between the lives of the richest and the poorest were intensified. The Victorian era was a period of great change. In this time, the population of England doubled – from 16.8 million 1851 to over 30 million in 1901.

Though Dickens was aware of what his readers wanted and was determined to make as much money as he could with his writing, he believed novels had a moral purpose—to arouse innate moral sentiments and to encourage virtuous behaviour in readers.

Dickens' novels:

- ❖ Reflect how Dickens felt
- ❖ Have the child's perspective
- ❖ Have characters based on previous experiences
- ❖ Show the reality of London to the rich
- ❖ Often criticises society

Dickens' Recurring Key Themes:

- ❖ Criminality
- ❖ Role of the Father
- ❖ Social Hierarchy
- ❖ Dickens' criticism of time and society
- ❖ Children and their treatment
- ❖ Weather/Darkness
- ❖ Redemption
- ❖ Guilt and Innocence
- ❖ Greed/Wealth and selfishness
- ❖ Good vs Evil
- ❖ Fate and Free will
- ❖ The 'undisciplined love'