• Old English or Anglo-Saxon Period (c. 450-1066)
  • Begins with the invasion of Celtic England by Germanic tribes and lasts until the conquest of England by the Norman-French William the Conqueror.
  • Major works: Beowulf, The Wanderer, The Seafarer
• Middle English Period (1066-1500)
  • In the 15th century (1400s), literature aimed at a popular audience grew, and a range of genres emerged (chivalric romances, folk ballads, dramas, morality plays).
  • Major works: Sir Gawein and the Green Knight, Geoffrey Chaucer’s The Canterbury Tales
TIMELINE OF LITERARY PERIODS (BRITISH LITERATURE)

MEDIEVAL • NEOCLASSICAL • VICTORIAN • MODERN

C. 450 TODAY

• Also called the Early Modern Period (1500-1660)
  • The Renaissance refers broadly to the flourishing of the arts.
  • The King James Bible was written in this period.
  • Major works: Sir Thomas More’s *Utopia*, plays and poetry by William Shakespeare, prose by Francis Bacon, prose by Sir Walter Raleigh, poetry by John Milton
Neoclassical Period (1660-1785)
- Theatre came back into popularity, and drama typically focused on the aristocracy.
- The end of this period anticipates Romanticism because it moves from topics of order and civility to instinct and feeling.
- Major works: John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, Isaac Newton’s *Principles of Mathematics*, Jonathan Swift’s *A Modest Proposal* and *Gulliver’s Travels*
Romanticism (1785-1837)

- Writers emphasized feeling and imagination; they looked to nature for insight into the divine. Individual experiences were highly valued.
- This period featured innovations in the novel form, including the Gothic novel.
- Major works and writers: Robert Burns, William Blake, William Wordsworth, Lord Byron, John Keats, Jane Austen, Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*
• **Victorian Period (1837-1901)**
  - Reflected a changing social, political, economic, and cultural climate.
  - Affected by industrialization and technological advances.
  - Recurrent issues included poverty, class, gender, religion.
  - Major works and writers: Charlotte Bronte, Emily Bronte, Charles Dickens, Florence Nightingale, Robert Browning, Charles Darwin, Oscar Wilde.
• Edwardian (1901-1910)
  - Refers to literature after the Victorian period and before WWI.
  - Refers more to historical period than literary style, so many writers are also classified as Victorian or early Modern.
  - Major works and writers: William Butler Yeats, Rudyard Kipling, Thomas Hardy, H.G. Wells, Joseph Conrad, George Bernard Shaw
• Modern Period (1914-1939)
  • Spans the years between WWI and WWII.
  • Works reflect the changing social, political, and cultural climate. They are diverse, experiment, and nontraditional.
  • Major works and writers: Wilfred Owen, TS Eliot, WH Auden, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, DH Lawrence, William Butler Yeats
• Postmodern/Contemporary (1939-present)
  • Refers to works written after WWII, which typically reflect anxieties and reactions to life in the 20th century. Works are highly experimental and anti-conventional and have become increasingly so since 1939.
  • Major works and writers: Seamus Heaney, George Orwell, William Golding, Graham Greene, Dylan Thomas