B.A. PART I
History of English Literature

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The Middle English Period. (1066 – 1340)

→ Political: the establishment of the Norman and the Angevian dynasties.
the internal struggles between king, nobles, clergy and the people.
the numerous wars at home and abroad.

→ Literary: the rise of the religious orders, their early enthusiasm and their subsequent decline.
the blossoming of spirit of chivalry and romance.
new sympathy for the weak and the poor.
the crusades and the widening of the European outlook (which was gradually to expand into the rebirth of the intellect: Renaissance.

English Language

Five main dialects:

a) Northern: Lowlands Scots & Northern English. (Old Northumbrian) Origin from
b) Mercian: East Midland and West Midland.
c) Kentish: South Eastern
d) West Saxon: South Western

East Midland dialect developed into Recieved Standard English of today. (because of the importance of the capital, London.

Literary Features

1) The Transition:
2) The Anonymous literature
3) The Domination of Poetry.

Poetry

Verse Chronicles | Romances — Religious & Didactic Poetry

Poetry

Chronicles: Especially Verse Chronicles

a) Laymons Brut: Laymon wrote in 1205. The chief source is The Roman de Brut of Wace (which was itself a translation into Norman French of the Historia Regum Britannie of Geoffrey of Monmouth. (History of Britain from the landing of Brutus to the death of Cadwallader.

) Robert of Gloucester: Rymimg Chronicles. For him Arthur is the hero of his work.

) Robert Manning of Brune:

✓ Story of England: Wrote and finished between 3-4 p.m in afternoon of friday on 25th May, 1338. It begins with Noah and the Deluge and Ends with the death of Edward I.

Source: first part translates Wace's Brut

Second part: Chronicle of Pierre De Langtoft an Anglo Norman work. (Alexandrine Couplets)

✓ Handlyng Synne: 1303, four stress line couplets.

Based upon: Manuel des Pechiez of Wadington.

III Religious and Didactic Poetry.

a) Ormulum: Written by Orm.

North East Midland Dialect:

Metre based on the Latin septenarius (15 Syllables)

Large number of homilies (religious)

b) The Owl and the Nightingale: rhyming Couplets.

long argument between owl (standing for wisdom and soberiety) & Nightingale (lighter joys of life)

c) The Orison to Our Lady, Genesis, Exodus, Bestiary the Moral Ode, The Proverbs of the Alfred., Moral Ode

d) The Cursor Mundi: religious work of an encyclopaedic nature dealing all the Old and the new Testament stories.
e) Richard Rolle of Hampolle: Pricke of Conscience.
f) The Alliterative Poems:
Pearl, Purity, Patience, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.

(3) The Romances:
Four Groups: Alliterative and Rhyming Both.
a) The Matter of England: English history and Heroes: King Hor & Havelock the Dane, Guy of Walwick and Bevis of Hampton.

b) The Matter of Britain: King Arthur
Sir Tristem, Arthur and Merlin, Ywain and Gwain, Morte de Arthu
Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: finest Middle English Romance
c) The Matter of Rome, the Great: Alexander the Great
Siege of Troy, The Destruction of Troy, King Alisaunder.

d) The Matter of France: Charlmagne legends, Six Fesumbras

Prose
1) The Ancrene Riwle: written for three Noble Ladies to guide them in life they had chosen. Guiding principle is moderation in everything

2) The Azenbite of Inwyt: written by Dan Michael of Northgate in 1340.