

# **HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE**

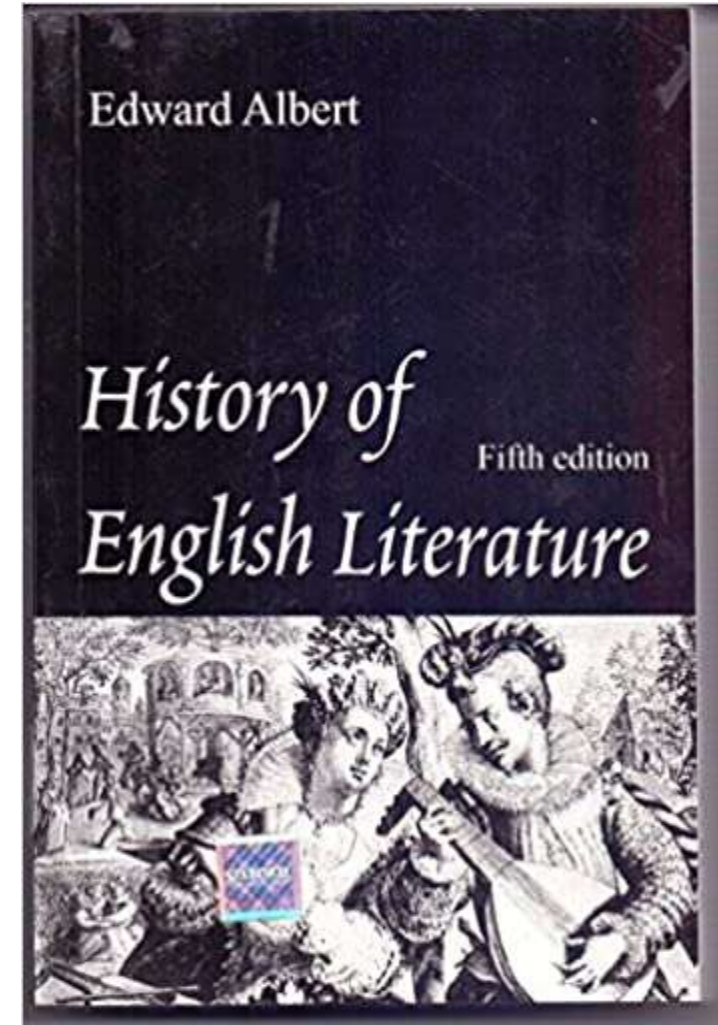
**OLD ENGLISH PERIOD**

**(450 AD – 1066 AD)**



# WHAT? & WHY? STUDY HEL

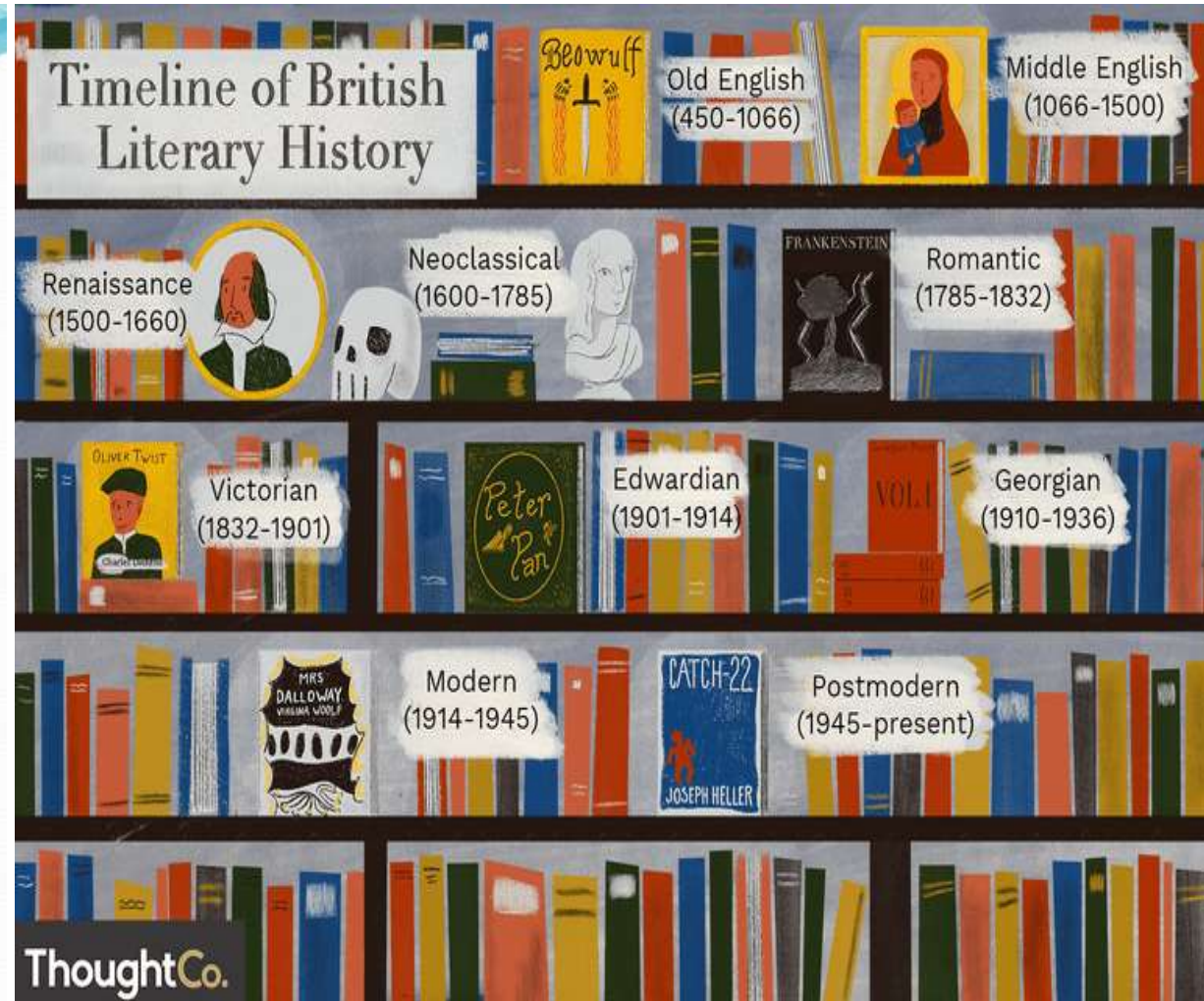
- Deals with the Personality of the writer
  - Life, experience, Characteristics, Writing Style
- Place him among his predecessors and successors
  - Uniqueness / distinctive quality of his genius of his age
- His Influence on others : Schools / Movements
  - according to the change of taste and demands of society
- Influence of society on writer : a product of his age
  - people, lifestyle, expectations, preferred style of writing
- Various periods of Lit. – within the framework of Ages
  - Age of Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, Pope & Johnson
  - Overlapping b/w ages (No specific beginning & end)



# CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER OF AGES

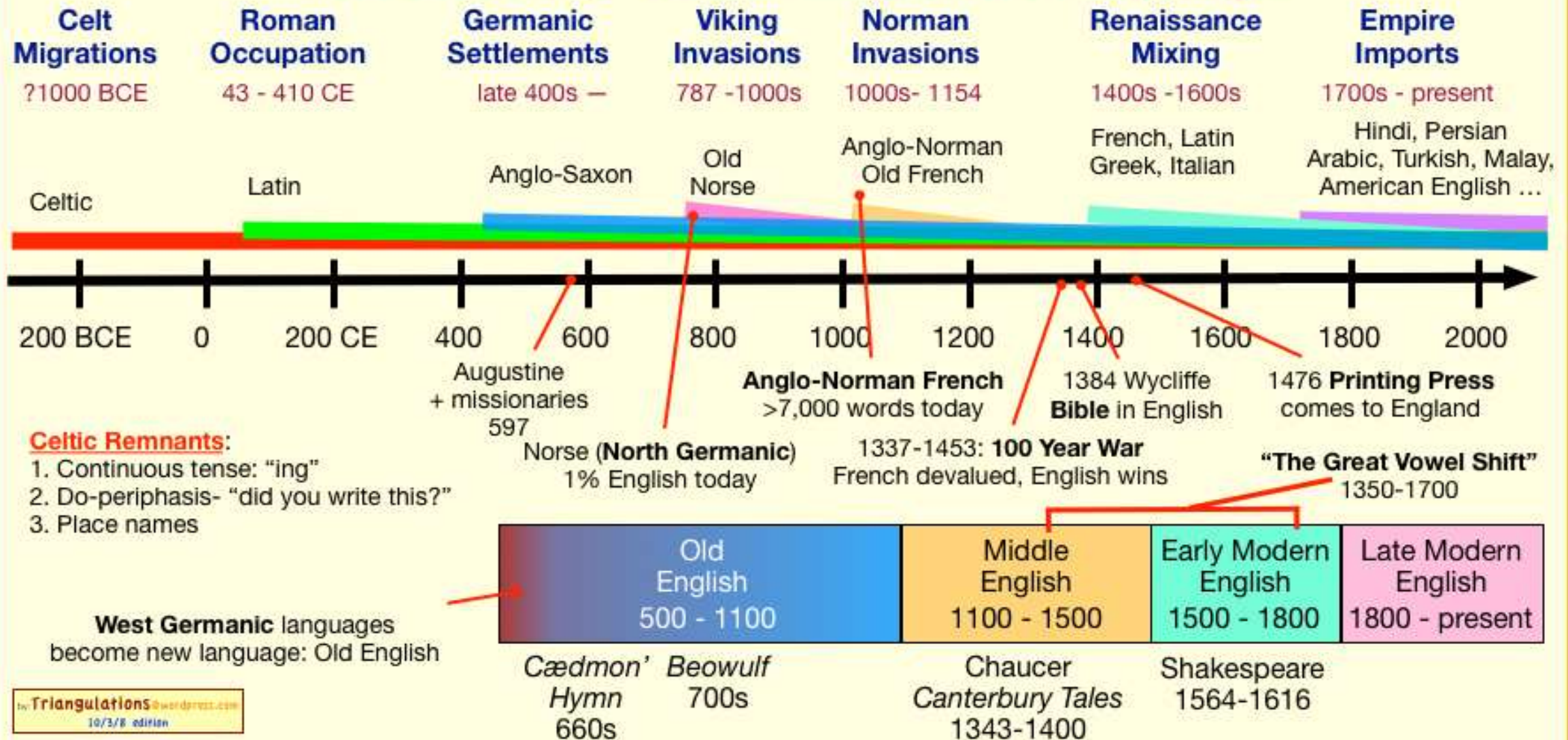
## THE IMPORTANT PERIODS IN THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

- The Old English [450AD -1066AD]
- The Middle English [1066AD-1500AD]
- The Renaissance period [1500-1600]
- The Elizabethan period [1558-1603]
- The Jacobean period [1603-1625]
- The Caroline period [1625-1649]
- The Puritan period [1649-1660]
- The Restoration period [1660-1700]
- The Augustan period [1700-1785]
- The Romantic period [1785-1830]
- The Victorian period [1830-1901]
- The Modern period [1890-1918]
- The Inter-war period [1918-1939]
- The Mid 20<sup>th</sup> century [1939 onwards]





# The History of the English Language



**Celtic Remnants:**

1. Continuous tense: "ing"
2. Do-periphrasis- "did you write this?"
3. Place names

# OLD ENGLISH PERIOD (450-1066 AD)

## Historical Context

- Starting with the invasion of England by Teutonic tribes of Angles, Saxons and Jutes around 428.
- Ending with the establishment of the Norman rule around 1100.
- Monarchies were formed, Christianity was introduced, tribes were in conflict, Alfred the Great was a notable ruler of the period, who unified the Teutonic tribes.
- Norman Conquest (1066) ended serious literature in the period. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bQ8ASqRe\\_Dw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bQ8ASqRe_Dw)

## Major authors and works

- Geoffery Chaucer: *Beowolf* (c. 700)
- Epic poems: "The Seafarer", "Widsith", "Deor's Lament",
- Christian works: Caedmon's "Song", *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Daniel*, *Judith*, *Christ*, *Elene*, *Andreas*, *Phoenix*
- Heroic poems: "Battle of Maldon", "Battle of Brunanburgh"
- Latin-> English prose: Pope Gregory: *Pastoral Care*, Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*, Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*
- Homiles of Aelfric and Wulfstan

# EARLY LITERARY WORKS

## BEOWULF



Grendel's mother came to avenge her monster son's fatal injury and carried off a Danish nobleman and Grendel's torn off arm,



Old English  
Literature Period:  
469AD - 1066 AD

Or Anglo-Saxon Literature

- Anglo-Saxons
- Norman Conquest
- Caedmon's Hymn
- Song of Beowulf



# **AGE OF CHAUCER (1340 - 1400)**

**MEDIEVAL AGES/  
MIDDLE ENGLISH  
PERIOD**

# THE FATHER OF ENGLISH POETRY

- Roughly **1343 -1400 (14<sup>th</sup> C)** - Born to middle class family
- His father - wine merchant (Vintner) – received formal education
- Fluent in **English, Italian, Latin & French** – 3 literary periods
- Odd jobs = page, courtier, diplomat, civil servant, scrap metal collector
- Worked as a government official during three different kings
- **Edward III, Richard II, Henry IV** – Born, lived & died
- Favoured by **John of Gaunt** - Travelled all over **Europe (France, Italy, Rome)**
- First writer to be buried in **The Poets' Corner** of Westminster Abbey
- Called as **“The Morning Star of the Literary Renaissance”**

# CHAUCER'S MAIN WORKS

## I. The French period : poetry modelled on **French romance styles and subjects**

- *The Romaunt of the Rose* (before 1373), introduces medieval court behaviour in **courtly love**
- *The Boke of the Duchesse* (ca. 1369), **a personal elegy** - the knight in black mourns for the loss of his wife – **an allegory on death of Blanche**, John of Gaunt's wife (Patron)

## II. The Italian period

- *The Parliament of Foules* (ca. 1380) introduces one of the most popular genres of medieval literature, the **Bird and the Beast Fable**.
- *The House of Fame* (ca. 1383), a masterpiece of **comic fantasy** dealing with the contemplation of the **vanity of human wishes**.
- *The Legende of Good Women* (ca. 1385) about the **unhappy fate of women** who suffered in the cause of love (**unfinished**)
- *Troilus and Criseyde* (ca. 1380-5), a long poem adapted **from Boccaccio** which reveals a subtle **psychological insight** into the development of characters.

# THE CANTERBURY TALES

Geoffrey Chaucer

## The Canterbury Tales



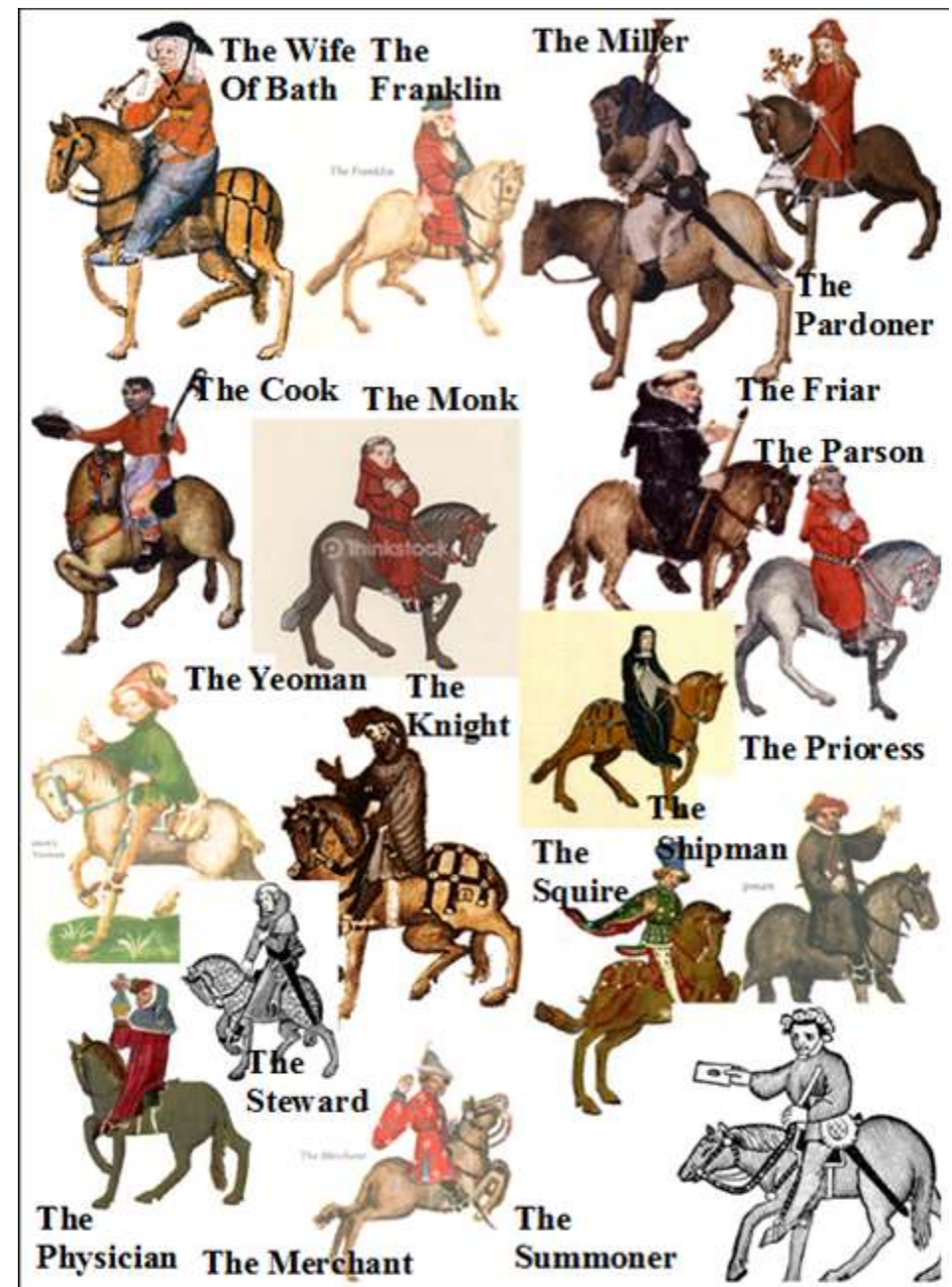
Feathers Classics

### III. English Period – Not Imitative / Independent

- The work - incomplete, *The Canterbury Tales* is considered **one of the greatest works** in the English language
- The narrator meets **29 pilgrims** at the **Tabard Inn** in London and travels with them to the shrine of **St. Thomas Becket** in **Canterbury**.
- The host (**Harry Bailly**) suggests that each pilgrim should tell **two stories** while going to Canterbury and **two on the way back**: the **best tale wins a dinner** at the inn when they get back, courtesy of the other travelers – Host act as Judge (*The Prologue* – explained)
- Originally planned (29\*4=116) but written **only 24 tales**, Characters from different background, Themes not original borrowed from different sources, Tales embody **romantic spirit of the court**
- **“Chaucer remains a delightful storyteller in verse”**

# 29 CHARACTERS

- Narrator (“Chaucer”)
- Host = L’Oste
- Knight = Il Cavaliere
- Squire = Lo Scudiero
- Yeoman = Il piccolo proprietario terriero
- Prioress = La Madre Priora
- Second Nun = La seconda suora
- Three Priests = Tre preti
- Monk = il Monaco
- Friar = il Frate
- Merchant = il Mercante
- Clerk = il Chierico
- Man of Law = L’uomo di legge
- Franklin = L’Allodoliere
- Guildsmen = Gli uomini della Gilda
- Cook = Il Cuoco
- Shipman = Il Marinaio
- Physician = Il Medico
- Wife of Bath = La signora di Bath
- Parson = Il Parroco
- Plowman = L’Aratore
- Manciple = L’Economo
- Reeve = Il Fattore
- Miller = Il Mugnaio
- Summoner = L’Apparitore o cursore
- Pardoner = L’Indulgenziere



# OTHER WRITERS

- **Poets** - **John Gower** (1332? – 1408) – Chaucer’s Friend
  - Confessio Amantis (English), Vox Clamantis (Latin), Speculum Meditantis (French)
- **William Langland** (1330? – 1400) – Poet of the People
  - Piers the Ploughman(A Vision) – 15,000 lines (allegory)
- **John Barbour** (1316? – 1395) – Father of Scottish poetry
  - The Brus – great deeds of Robert Bruce

## Prose Writers

- **Geoffrey Chaucer** (1340 -1400) : Treatise on the Astrolabe
- **John Wycliff** ( 1320? – 1384) : The Bible (Trans – English)
- **Sir John Maundeville** (14<sup>th</sup>C):The Travels of John Maundeville



# TOPICS TO READ FURTHER

## CHAUCER

*Prologue to "The Canterbury Tales"*  
*Retold in Modern English Prose*



- The Hundred Years War
- The War of Roses
- Black Death / Plague (recurrent)
- Corruption in the Church
- Renaissance – in all disciplines
- Reformation – in Religion
- First English Comedy?
- First English Tragedy?
- Translations of the Bible
- The Prologue to Canterbury Tales



**QUESTIONS  
PLEASE...**