Shooting an Elephant by George Orwell (pg. 812 Old Book / pg. 1077 New Book)

Biography (Old Book only):
• Born Eric Arthur Blair, in Bengal, to the son of a minor Indian civil servant.
• Returned to England, went to expensive preparatory school but joined Imperial Police in Burma (instead of continuing to a university, despite receiving a scholarship).
• In Burma, outraged by imperialism » Returns to England to become a writer.
• Troubled by poverty, he lives with the poor and learns more about them.
• Spanish Civil War: Being socialist, he fights with the Republicans » disillusioned by brutality in communism.
• Rejected from the military service for World War II, he becomes a journalist for BBC, and writes essays that he becomes famous for and are praised by critics.
• Remaining socialist, he chastises the left party in Animal Farm and Nineteen Eighty-four.
• Dies at the age of 46 from tuberculosis.

Shooting an Elephant:
Orwell tells the story of his time in Burma as part of the Imperial police. He notes how the people are very anti-European and how many of the people seem to hate him despite him really being on the people's side against Imperialism. The story then goes on to tell how a sub-inspector calls him, asking him to take care of a ravaging elephant that killed one of the Indian citizens. Eventually in the story, he comes to a point where he's ready to shoot the elephant, but knows he shouldn't (the elephant was useful with work, beginning to act peacefully, worth more alive than dead, and killing it would hinder the owner's economic position), yet he does because of all the pressure he feels from the Burmese. He later compares this feeling of pressure to the pressure that the English often place upon the Burmese. The owner was furious, and the English were divided (the older ones agreed with him, while the younger said that it was a shame to shoot it just because it killed an Indian).

Anglo-Saxon Cultural Milieu

Lectures
09/08/08 - Anglo-Saxon Lecture #1 (taken from pages 3-7 from the Old Book)
(*She required that this Lecture be in outline format)
I. Roman Britain
   A. 55 B.C. – Rome (under Julius Caesar) raids Britain.
      1. Very militant country
      2. Used Church to help convince people
      3. Built strong friendships by appreciating the foreign culture
   B. 43 A.D. – Claudius invades Britain
      1. Brought new forms of building
         a. Built roads
         b. Brought new architecture
      2. Brought changes in culture
         a. Language: Latin
         b. Roman Baths
c. New trends of leisure
3. Changed Britain into a prosperous colony
   a. population of 3-4 million people
   b. Over 100 towns served as administrative centers
C. 410 A.D. Rome pillaged by German Barbarians
   1. Barbarians were much stronger
      a. More experienced in war and weaponry
      b. Physically larger than Romans/Britons
   2. Emperor Honorius sends letter to Britons that they're on their own
      a. Roman culture is slowly lost
      b. Britain left open, weak, and unprotected
   3. Angles, Saxons, and Jutes forced to leave
D. 441 A.D. Angles, Saxons, and Jutes move to Thames River
   1. Drove out Celtic Inhabitants
   2. Southern lowland inhabited by Angles (the original English people)
II. Anglo-Saxon England
A. Beowulf depicts the first decades of England
B. King organizes primitive warriors
C. Missionaries bring Christianity to Kings
   1. St. Augustine from Rome forms an Arch Bishop (Christian leader in Canterbury)
   2. Anglo-Saxon Britain changes from Pagan to Christian

09/11+12/08 - Anglo-Saxon Lecture #2 and Epithets/Kennings
Brief background on the Christian Bible:
Old Testament (B.C.) and New Testament (A.D.)
Important in Old Testament:
   Genesis - The creation story of the Bible
      - Adam and Eve are the first human couple
      - Cain and Abel are two of their sons - Cain commits the first sin in the Bible by killing his brother, Abel, due to jealousy
      - Lines 60-70 (Beowulf) refer to Cain and Abel in describing Grendel (showing how evil Grendel is).

What is the Mead-hall?
It was a location where the people could come together:
   – tight relationship between the King and the thanes, and amongst the thanes themselves
   – symbolize unity and power
   – anti-war, celebration
   lines 78-79: "forgetting grief"

Epithet – a descriptive expression usually mentioning a quality or attribute of the thing it describes
(often found in epic poetry)
Examples:
   Spear-Danes       Lion-Heart       Snot-green sea       whale-road
   Alfred the Great  Ivan the terrible peace-weavers swan-road

Kenning – composite word (as in words connected with a dash)
Figuring out kennings:
   battle-sweat = blood       sun-of-the-house = fireplace
   raven-harvest = corpses    sky-candle = sun
   moons-of-the-forehead = eyes icicle-of-blood = sword
   feeder-of-raven = warrior
**Word-Hoard** – A collection of kennings that could be used interchangeably for the same idea (a word hoard allows a scop to be interesting and use many different kennings to describe the same thing without becoming repetitive).

**Beowulf & Coast Guard:**
The interaction between Beowulf and the Coast Guard demonstrates some of the values during Beowulf's time and how these two would form a connection:
– They speak respectfully and truthfully
– They ask who they come from
  ↳ Beowulf’s father is noble and a leader, thus forming a connection with the Coast Guard
– They both look like warriors
Overall, the scene is light and cinematic

**Alliteration** – The repeated occurrence of the same consonant sound at the beginning of several words in the same phrase.

**09/15/08 – Beowulf Lecture #1**
Shamus Heany - Newest Translation of Beowulf
Beowulf - foundation of English Poetry
  ↳ Scandinavian land (crossed sea from Geats to Danes)
  ↳ Danes - meets Grendel

Scholars have studied poem's world view
They're interested in how much the poet understands and his current-world view
  • How much does he know about pre-Anglo-Saxons?
    (We know they were migratory and were a **Pagan Germanic Society**
  ↳ Governed by heroic code of honor
  • How involved was the Beowulf poet in this this society?
  • How did he know what it was like to live there?
Our current idea: Body will decay and move onto somewhere (**idea of intangibility**)
  ↳ This idea of intangibility doesn't exist in Beowulf
The poem has Christian influence, but not Christian values
  – Not concerned about soul
Germanic Society
  – Values how noble and loyal you are

Shamus Heany said that Tolkein made Beowulf more valuable to us
Tolkein recognized the warrior values
  – Assumed they didn't concern about an afterlife
  – Knew the poet was familiar with folklore but had an imagination that made him connect Christianity
  – "Felt his way through inherited material"
  – Said the poet used
    • Creative intuition
    • Conscious structuring (important and interesting craft, pagan elements intertwined with Christianity)

Why is the English speaking community more familiar with Odyssey, which has Greek origins, than Beowulf, which has English origins?
– We don't know the author of Beowulf as well as the author of the Odyssey
– We don't know Anglo-Saxon as well as we know Greek and Latin
– Greek and Latin poetry exist in our **cultural memory**
  ↳ Things we have in our cultural past.
– The Renaissance revived Greek and Latin
Conclusion: We have more ties to Greek and Latin literature than Old English/Anglo-Saxon Literature

Does it being unfamiliar make it "more difficult"?
– "Shock of the new" - it's harder to understand something we haven't been exposed to.
– Kennings served a great purpose in Beowulf's time, but they can be ambiguous to us today.
– Scops depended on their storytelling ability and imagination; we have to read it instead of hearing it.

William Butler Yeats – Phantasmagoria
The idea that there are three "agons" (struggles) in a person's life
These are represented by three archetypal sights of fear
1. Barricaded building
2. Infested underwater currents
3. Reptile-haunted rocks of wilderness
Apply this to Beowulf:
1. The Mead-hall (battle with Grendel)
2. The Troll-Wife's lair
3. The Fire-Dragon's den

Allegory – A story in which things are symbolic

09/22/08 – Beowulf Lecture #2
(* She made us take these notes in Notes+Questions format, but the questions aren't included here)

Associated with gold
– Beowulf's reward
– Hrothgar (King)
– It's a constant element in Beowulf
Doesn't represent corrupt riches
⇒ Instead, it's value is doubted
It isn't until the Middle Ages that gold represented riches, wealth, and corruption
– Unlike Grendel and the Troll-Wife, the dragon is symbolic by being described as having a "golden glamour"
The Dragon: Why is Beowulf defeated by it?
– Beowulf is different than when he defeated Grendel and its mother; he's aged much more
– This is symbolized by the dragon living in the shadow of death, "beyond the grave".
The scene where Beowulf dies has a resolute and tragic mood; it shows the humans are capable of enduring anything.

09/29/08 – Beowulf Lecture #3: Gender Roles in Beowulf
(* This Lecture was presented as an Argument vs. Counter-argument)
Argument:
Men are responsible: Kings, warriors, and avengers
⇒ They held the power
Women held passive/private roles: Hostess, Peaceweaver, Ritual Mourner
⇒ Marginalized roles (some critics emphasize their marginalization)
"Beowulf is a masculine society where men asserted their position through dramatic movements (warriors, decision makers)

Counter-argument:
Women aren't excluded and play important public/active roles
Beowulf

Plot Overview:

King Hrothgar of Denmark, a descendant of the great king Shield Sheafson, enjoys a prosperous and successful reign. He builds a great mead-hall, called Heorot, where his warriors can gather to drink, receive gifts from their lord, and listen to stories sung by the scops, or bards. But the jubilant noise from Heorot angers Grendel, a horrible demon who lives in the swamplands of Hrothgar's kingdom. Grendel terrorizes the Danes every night, killing them and defeating their efforts to fight back. The Danes suffer many years of fear, danger, and death at the hands of Grendel. Eventually, however, a young Geatish warrior named Beowulf hears of Hrothgar's plight. Inspired by the challenge, Beowulf sails to Denmark with a small company of men, determined to defeat Grendel.

Hrothgar, who had once done a great favor for Beowulf's father Ecgtheow, accepts Beowulf's offer to fight Grendel and holds a feast in the hero's honor. During the feast, an envious Dane named Unferth taunts Beowulf and accuses him of being unworthy of his reputation. Beowulf responds with a boastful description of some of his past accomplishments. His confidence cheers the Danish warriors, and the feast lasts merrily into the night. At last, however, Grendel arrives. Beowulf fights him unarmed, proving himself stronger than the demon, who is terrified. As Grendel struggles to escape, Beowulf tears the monster's arm off. Mortally wounded, Grendel slinks back into the swamp to die. The severed arm is hung high in the mead-hall as a trophy of victory.

Overjoyed, Hrothgar showers Beowulf with gifts and treasure at a feast in his honor. Songs are sung in praise of Beowulf, and the celebration lasts late into the night. But another threat is approaching. Grendel's mother, a swamp-hag who lives in a desolate lake, comes to Heorot seeking revenge for her son's death. She murders Aeschere, one of Hrothgar's most trusted advisers, before slinking away. To avenge Aeschere's death, the company travels to the murky swamp, where Beowulf dives into the water and fights Grendel's mother in her underwater lair. He kills her with a sword forged for a giant, then, finding Grendel's corpse, decapitates it and brings the head as a prize to Hrothgar. The Danish countryside is now purged of its treacherous monsters.

The Danes are again overjoyed, and Beowulf's fame spreads across the kingdom. Beowulf departs after a sorrowful goodbye to Hrothgar, who has treated him like a son. He returns to Geatland, where he and his men are reunited with their king and queen, Hygelac and Hygd, to whom Beowulf recounts his adventures in Denmark. Beowulf then hands over most of his treasure to Hygelac, who, in turn, rewards him.

In time, Hygelac is killed in a war against the Shylfings, and, after Hygelac's son dies, Beowulf ascends to the throne of the Geats. He rules wisely for fifty years, bringing prosperity to Geatland. When Beowulf is an old man, however, a thief disturbs a barrow, or mound, where a great dragon lies guarding a horde of treasure. Enraged, the dragon emerges from the barrow and begins unleashing fiery destruction upon the Geats. Sensing his own death approaching, Beowulf goes to fight the dragon. With
the aid of Wiglaf, he succeeds in killing the beast, but at a heavy cost. The dragon bites Beowulf in the neck, and its fiery venom kills him moments after their encounter. The Geats fear that their enemies will attack them now that Beowulf is dead. According to Beowulf's wishes, they burn their departed king's body on a huge funeral pyre and then bury him with a massive treasure in a barrow overlooking the sea.

Tolkein's Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics

Tolkein stated that he thought critics analyzed Beowulf too thoroughly and thought that Beowulf needed to be read more of as a literary piece. He then uses an allegory to show how the literary value of Beowulf has been diminished due to it being over-examined by "Philologia" (Psychologists), "Mythologia" (Mythologists), "Archaeologia" (Archaeology), and "Laographia" (Litographists). He says that Beowulf is so powerful as a literary piece that it overshadows its content. He then uses a second allegory to show that if people keep trying to overanalyze it, then the true value of the poem will be lost.

Alexandra Olsen's discussion of the female figures in Beowulf

Main points:

Freoðuwebbe (peace-weaver)
- Is it passive or active? She doesn't do much, but her image is very public.
- Looking at the original idea of a freoðuwebbe, it's not what's presented in Beowulf

Ritual Mourners
- All they're doing is crying, but they do it in front of a large group of people.
- We think of the mourner in an American sense, but what of an Anglo-Saxon sense? They're role is different than what it would be today.

Grendel's mother (Troll-Wife)
- Is she considered the same kind of woman?

The original text equates her with the animals
- Is it possible for the female role to be public but passive?

Literary Devices

Alliteration – The repeated occurrence of the same consonant sound at the beginning of several words in the same phrase.

Metaphor – is language that directly compares seemingly unrelated subjects.

Foreshadowing – a literary device in which an author drops subtle hints about plot developments to come later in the story.

Elegy – a mournful, melancholy or plaintive poem, especially a funeral song or a lament for the dead.

Personification – an ontological metaphor in which a thing or abstraction is represented as a person.

Theme – the unifying subject or idea of a story
Medieval Era Cultural Milieu

Lectures

Essay on the Medieval Period
Medieval Period 1066-1500

1002 – King Adethelred of England marries Emma (daughter of Normandy)
  • Son Edward the Confessor becomes King in 1042
    – 30 years in Norman court and studied the French Culture
    – Dies 1066 heirless
  • Throne claimed by Harold Godwinson (Choice of Witan, aka the king’s council) and
  • William Duke of Normandy (claims Edward named him heir)
    – Harold fought Viking army of Norway and kills their king
    – William settles and makes a castle in Hastings
    – William vs. Harold (Harold loses)

Norman England
  • William redistributed land among Anglo Saxon nobles in exchange for oath of loyalty and military service (a.k.a. FEUDALISM)
    – all of the nobles become Vassal/tenants of the King
  • Builds a tower of London to protect city and Canterbury Cathedral (first building of Norman style)
  • Had surveys / “Description of England” also known as DOOMSDAY/DOMESDAY BOOK
    – Sons William II and Henry I (dies without heir)
    – followed by daughter Matilda and nephew Stephen of Blois
    – Stephen’s mild rule → Anarchy

1095 – First Crusade
  • fought for spread of Christianity against Moslem Turks
  • Creation of the knight (chivalry <3)
    – Chivalry practice binds a lawless warrior to a code
  • 1117 Higher Education
    – School at Oxford
    – 1136 Geoffrey of Monmouth *The History of the Kings in Britain*

England under the Plantagenets
  • Henry II 1154 throne
    – reformed judicial system and reestablished the power of the monarchy
    – Later Becket (a poet) killed by four knights of Henry’s without his knowledge
      (becomes excommunicated)
  • His son Richard Coeur de Lion
    – Fought Moslem leader Saladin
    – killed later, brother John finally gets to take over throne
  • John forced to sign Magna Carta June 15th 1215

1337 – Hundred Years War
  • Henry V and Joan of Arc
  • New weapons, new plague
    – 1/3 die from bubonic plague
    – peasants revolt 1381 (Wat Tyler is leader)

Great Schism until 1417

Literature
  • Canterbury Tales
  • End Rhyme
Drama
  • miracle/mystery plays
Elsewhere
  • Spain
    – El Cid 1140
  • Germany
    – Nibelungenlied 1190
1455 The War of Roses
  • 30 year dynastic struggle

10/20/08 – Chaucer Lecture
No evidence to prove when he started writing poetry
  • Some speculate when he returns to France
  • translates love poetry written by De Lorris in France
  • promoted as courtier for King
  • 1367, attending on king himself

--Marries Philippa de Roet
  • Lady in attendance on the scene
  • wasn’t the fashion for husband and wife to trade love poems
  • Courtly love—knight loves queen but its unobtainable
  • foreign in marriage

--In chivalry, there is an unobtainable lady put on a pedestal.
  • All of Chaucer’s characters regard love as the most beautiful of absolute disasters.
  • Agony experienced through this love

--Eye
  • From pupil travels the spirit.
  • When pupils meet, spirit transfers love.

--Medieval marriage
  • Men – command; Women – obey
  • Chaucer gives voice to the unmedieval women

--Important missions abroad given to Chaucer
  • Chaucer efficient and trustworthy
  • Reading a variety of works, and he has extremely keen memory of these works (chars diverse)

--Learned to read in:
  • Latin
  • Anglo-Norman
  • French
  • Italian

--Contemporary Sciences
  • astronomy
  • medicine
--Literary and Historical Favorites

**Works “Ancients”**
- Vergil
- Statius
- Ovid
- Seneca
- Cicero

**Works “Moderns”**
- Dante—Alighieri
- Boccaccio

--Chaucer quotes all parts of Bible
--Two Journeys (quite far from England)
  - 1372—goes to Genoa
  - 1378 Milan
  - Brought him in contact w/dawn of Renaissance

--Tone
  - the author’s attitude toward an aspect (character, event, climax, setting) of the text.

**10/26/08 – Chaucer's Original Idea**
1368 onward - approximately 15 years
--Worked on Canterbury Tales
  - 10 fragments of poem
  - modern editors arrange to what they believe were intended sequence

Endlink:
- Conversations pilgrims have in between the tales.
- Brings it back to the pilgrims every time.
- Prologue—each tells 2 tales on the way to Canterbury.
- Start at Tabar + 2 tales on the way back
- Southwark Canterbury (Tomb Thomas Becket)
- Never completed.
- Never completed revising any of the tales.

Furnivale—1868, the man came up with sequences
- Takes place from 16th -20th of April, and brings to outskirts of Canterbury
- IDEA: To create tales to suit pilgrims and unite them in common purpose.
- Never attempted/reported before.

Collection of stories very common
  - Pilgrimage unites the stories.

Nevil Coghill
From Oxford and makes argument
“In all literature, there is nothing that touches or resembles the prologue.”
The prologue gives concise portrait about general nation.

Chaucer uses realistic characters with wide range.
  - lay/clergy
  - town/country
  - land/sea
  - righteous/evil
  - educated/ignorant

Even though the pilgrims are individual, together they make up
  Tales they tell are from all over Europe.
  Storytelling is major form of entertainment, but more so how they say it and present it.
  All show at end there is a moral

Yeoman’s Tale
  - Chaucer’s original and Chaucer used as an act of revenge against al Alchemist
  - One of the best

Miller’s Tale
  - fabliau (x) – obscene short comic tale in verse
  - Used in medieval literature
  - Bawdy & obscene humor

22/120 in 15 years

Ironic sense of humor—monk & friars
  - Doesn’t load us w/cynicism [pessimism, sarcasm]
  - He keeps detached and present the character and presents a tone but audience is allowed to interpret.
  - Accept some character and develops fondness
  - Visually graphic poet

Folk Ballads
Ballad- narrative poem that was originally composed to be sung or recited
  - Rely on dialogue
  - Often tragedy or end in death
  - Not strong character development
  - Sudden build up in climax, and often no resolution
  - Lots of repetition
  - Legacy often spoken of (like as Lord Randall died, his mom asked him who he was leaving what to)

Lord Randal
Lines 1-4
The first stanza introduces the main character, the nobleman Lord Randal. The listener also learns that he is “handsome” and “young.” His youth suggests that he is susceptible to danger, because he
probably lacks worldly experience that would enable him to sense and thwart treachery. Lord Randal’s mother asks him where he has been, and he answers that he has been hunting in the forest; he says he is tired, and he requests that she ready his bed for him because he would like to lie down. In this first stanza, there is no indication of anything out of the ordinary about Lord Randal’s day, but the fact that he has been in the “greenwood,” or forest, carries with it the connotation of adventure and danger.

Lines 5-8

As if she suspects that her son has been doing something other than hunting, Lord Randal’s mother asks him who he met in the forest. He answers that he met his “true love” there and repeats his complaint of tiredness and request that his bed be readied for him. The idea of meeting a sweetheart on a hunting trip raises the first suspicion that something out of the ordinary has happened to Lord Randal.

Lines 9-12

The mother continues her questioning, asking Lord Randal what he received from his sweetheart. He answers that he ate fried eels that she gave him. Once again, Lord Randal concludes his answer with his complaint and request. At this third repetition, it seems more urgent that Lord Randal be given a place to rest.

Lines 13-16

The mother now asks Lord Randal who got his leftover food. He answers her that he gave it to his hunting birds and hounds. (Trained hounds and hawks were used to chase prey and to retrieve it after it was shot.) Lord Randal again complains of his tiredness and asks for his bed to be made ready. At this point, the listener becomes curious about the mother’s line of questioning and also anxious for Lord Randal.

Lines 17-20

Lord Randal’s mother asks him what happened to his hawks and his hounds. He tells her that they became bloated and died, and then, once again, he says that he is tired and wants to lie down. The pieces of the story begin to come together — Lord Randal’s pets died with symptoms of poisoning after eating the same food that Lord Randal ate. His statement that the hunting tired him and his request for a bed, now repeated for the fifth time, suggest his own illness.

Lines 21-24

The mother finally states her suspicion that Lord Randal has been poisoned. He confirms her belief, and the last line changes. Lord Randal no longer claims that he is tired from hunting; he now asserts that he is “sick at heart,” implying that he has been hurt by his “true love.”

Lines 25-28

In this stanza the nuncupative testament begins. Lord Randal’s mother asks him how he wants his belongings dispensed when he dies. She begins by asking what he will leave to her. He answers that she will receive twenty-four milk cows and repeats his request for his bed to be readied. The listener now knows the bed will be Lord Randal’s deathbed. Lord Randal precedes his request with the new refrain, “For I’m sick at the heart,” throughout the second half of the ballad. The association of the pain of a broken heart and the deathbed establish this ballad as one that speaks of the tragedy of love.
Lines 29-32

Lord Randal’s mother next asks what he will leave to his sister. The gift to his sister represents possessions of more value than the cows that Lord Randal willed to his mother. His sister will receive Lord Randal’s “gold” and “silver.” Repetition of the refrain causes the reader to pity and feel anxious for Lord Randal, whose complaint sounds more desperate each time he makes it.

Lines 33-36

When asked what he will leave his brother, Lord Randal names the most valuable of his possessions, his houses and his lands. The increasing value of these bequests creates an excitement for the listener, a sort of priming in anticipation of the final stanza. In keeping with the pattern, this stanza closes with the refrain, and upon hearing it again, the listener should feel deeply moved by Lord Randal’s suffering.

Lines 37-40

The mother finally asks Lord Randal what he bequeaths to his true love. The listener may expect the greatest gift of all to be named in keeping with the pattern in which Lord Randal names increasingly valuable gifts. However, Lord Randal will not leave his true love anything; he curses her with “hell” and “fire,” revealing at last the extent to which she has hurt him — not only physically, by the poisoning, but also emotionally, due to her lack of love. This last repetition of the refrain establishes the closing of the ballad with a final pitiable cry from the sad, dying lover.

Bonny Barbara Allan

In this story, the main character is poisoned of some unknown reason, and after he confronts his love about it, she reveals that she's upset about him toasting with other women. After he dies, she forgives him, saying that since he died for her, she'll die for him.

Chaucer’s Biography and The Canterbury Tales

(* See Lectures for Bibliographical information)

The Pilgrims

The Narrator - The narrator makes it quite clear that he is also a character in his book. Although he is called Chaucer, we should be wary of accepting his words and opinions as Chaucer's own. In the General Prologue, the narrator presents himself as a gregarious and naïve character. Later on, the Host accuses him of being silent and sullen. Because the narrator writes down his impressions of the pilgrims from memory, whom he does and does not like, and what he chooses and chooses not to remember about the characters, tells us as much about the narrator's own prejudices as it does about the characters themselves.

The Knight - The first pilgrim Chaucer describes in the General Prologue, and the teller of the first tale. The Knight represents the ideal of a medieval Christian man-at-arms. He has participated in no less than fifteen of the great crusades of his era. Brave, experienced, and prudent, the narrator greatly admires him.

The Wife of Bath - Bath is an English town on the Avon River, not the name of this woman's husband. Though she is a seamstress by occupation, she seems to be a professional wife. She has been married five times and had many other affairs in her youth, making her well practiced in the art of love. She presents herself as someone who loves marriage and sex, but, from what we see of her, she also takes
pleasure in rich attire, talking, and arguing. She is deaf in one ear and has a gap between her front teeth, which was considered attractive in Chaucer's time. She has traveled on pilgrimages to Jerusalem three times and elsewhere in Europe as well.

The Pardoner - Pardoners granted papal indulgences—reprieves from penance in exchange for charitable donations to the Church. Many pardoners, including this one, collected profits for themselves. In fact, Chaucer's Pardoner excels in fraud, carrying a bag full of fake relics—for example, he claims to have the veil of the Virgin Mary. The Pardoner has long, greasy, yellow hair and is beardless. These characteristics were associated with shiftiness and gender ambiguity in Chaucer's time. The Pardoner also a gift for singing and preaching whenever he finds himself inside a church.

The Miller - Stout and brawny, the Miller has a wart on his nose and a big mouth, both literally and figuratively. He threatens the Host's notion of propriety when he drunkenly insists on telling the second tale. Indeed, the Miller seems to enjoy overturning all conventions: he ruins the Host's carefully planned storytelling order; he rips doors off hinges; and he tells a tale that is somewhat blasphemous, ridiculing religious clerks, scholarly clerks, carpenters, and women.

The Prioress - Described as modest and quiet, this Prioress (a nun who is head of her convent) aspires to have exquisite taste. Her table manners are dainty, she knows French (though not the French of the court), she dresses well, and she is charitable and compassionate.

The Monk - Most monks of the Middle Ages lived in monasteries according to the Rule of Saint Benedict, which demanded that they devote their lives to “work and prayer.” This Monk cares little for the Rule; his devotion is to hunting and eating. He is large, loud, and well clad in hunting boots and furs.

The Friar - Roaming priests with no ties to a monastery, friars were a great object of criticism in Chaucer's time. Always ready to befriend young women or rich men who might need his services, the friar actively administers the sacraments in his town, especially those of marriage and confession. However, Chaucer's worldly Friar has taken to accepting bribes.

The Summoner - The Summoner brings persons accused of violating Church law to ecclesiastical court. This Summoner is a lecherous man whose face is scarred by leprosy. He gets drunk frequently, is irritable, and is not particularly qualified for his position. He spouts the few words of Latin he knows in an attempt to sound educated.

The Host - The leader of the group, the Host is large, loud, and merry, although he possesses a quick temper. He mediates among the pilgrims and facilitates the flow of the tales. His title of “host” may be a pun, suggesting both an innkeeper and the Eucharist, or Holy Host.

The Parson - The only devout churchman in the company, the Parson lives in poverty, but is rich in holy thoughts and deeds. The pastor of a sizable town, he preaches the Gospel and makes sure to practice what he preaches. He is everything that the Monk, the Friar, and the Pardoner are not.

The Squire - The Knight's son and apprentice. The Squire is curly-haired, youthfully handsome, and loves dancing and courting.

The Clerk - The Clerk is a poor student of philosophy. Having spent his money on books and learning rather than on fine clothes, he is threadbare and wan. He speaks little, but when he does, his words are wise and full of moral virtue.
The Man of Law - A successful lawyer commissioned by the king. He upholds justice in matters large and small and knows every statute of England's law by heart.

The Manciple - A manciple was in charge of getting provisions for a college or court. Despite his lack of education, this Manciple is smarter than the thirty lawyers he feeds.

The Merchant - The Merchant trades in furs and other cloths, mostly from Flanders. He is part of a powerful and wealthy class in Chaucer's society.

The Shipman - Brown-skinned from years of sailing, the Shipman has seen every bay and river in England, and exotic ports in Spain and Carthage as well. He is a bit of a rascal, known for stealing wine while the ship's captain sleeps.

The Physician - The Physician is one of the best in his profession, for he knows the cause of every malady and can cure most of them. Though the Physician keeps himself in perfect physical health, the narrator calls into question the Physician's spiritual health: he rarely consults the Bible and has an unhealthy love of financial gain.

The Franklin - The word “franklin” means “free man.” In Chaucer's society, a franklin was neither a vassal serving a lord nor a member of the nobility. This particular franklin is a connoisseur of food and wine, so much so that his table remains laid and ready for food all day.

The Reeve - A reeve was similar to a steward of a manor, and this reeve performs his job shrewdly—his lord never loses so much as a ram to the other employees, and the vassals under his command are kept in line. However, he steals from his master.

The Plowman - The Plowman is the Parson's brother and is equally good-hearted. A member of the peasant class, he pays his tithes to the Church and leads a good Christian life.

The Guildsmen - Listed together, the five Guildsmen appear as a unit. English guilds were a combination of labor unions and social fraternities: craftsmen of similar occupations joined together to increase their bargaining power, and live communally. All five Guildsmen are clad in the livery of their brotherhood.

The Cook - The Cook works for the Guildsmen. Chaucer gives little detail about him, although he mentions a crusty sore on the Cook's leg.

The Yeoman - The servant who accompanies the Knight and the Squire. The narrator mentions that his dress and weapons suggest he may be a forester.

The Second Nun - The Second Nun is not described in the General Prologue, but she tells a saint's life for her tale.

The Nun's Priest - Like the Second Nun, the Nun's Priest is not described in the General Prologue. His story of Chanticleer, however, is well crafted and suggests that he is a witty, self-effacing preacher.
The Pardoner's Introduction, Prologue and Tale

Summary: Introduction to the Pardoner's Tale

The Host reacts to the Physician's Tale, which has just been told. He is shocked at the death of the young Roman girl in the tale, and mourns the fact that her beauty ultimately caused the chain of events that led her father to kill her. Wanting to cheer up, the Host asks the Pardoner to tell the group a merrier, farcical tale. The Pardoner agrees, but will continue only after he has food and drink in his stomach. Other pilgrims interject that they would prefer to hear a moral story, and the Pardoner again agrees.

Summary: Prologue to the Pardoner's Tale

My theme is alwey oon, and evere was—
Radix malorum est Cupiditas.

After getting a drink, the Pardoner begins his Prologue. He tells the company about his occupation—a combination of itinerant preaching and selling promises of salvation. His sermon topic always remains the same: Radix malorum est Cupiditas, or “greed is the root of all evil.” He gives a similar sermon to every congregation and then breaks out his bag of “relics”—which, he readily admits to the listening pilgrims, are fake. He will take a sheep's bone and claim it has miraculous healing powers for all kinds of ailments. The parishioners always believe him and make their offerings to the relics, which the Pardoner quickly pockets.

The Pardoner admits that he preaches solely to get money, not to correct sin. He argues that many sermons are the product of evil intentions. By preaching, the Pardoner can get back at anyone who has offended him or his brethren. In his sermon, he always preaches about covetousness, the very vice that he himself is gripped by. His one and only interest is to fill his ever-deepening pockets. He would rather take the last penny from a widow and her starving family than give up his money, and the good cheeses, breads, and wines that such income brings him. Speaking of alcohol, he notes, he has now finished his drink of “corny ale” and is ready to begin his tale.

Summary: The Pardoner's Tale

The Pardoner describes a group of young Flemish people who spend their time drinking and reveling, indulging in all forms of excess. After commenting on their lifestyle of debauchery, the Pardoner enters into a tirade against the vices that they practice. First and foremost is gluttony, which he identifies as the sin that first caused the fall of mankind in Eden. Next, he attacks drunkenness, which makes a man seem mad and witless. Next is gambling, the temptation that ruins men of power and wealth. Finally, he denounces swearing. He argues that it so offends God that he forbade swearing in the Second Commandment—placing it higher up on the list than homicide. After almost two hundred lines of sermonizing, the Pardoner finally returns to his story of the lecherous Flemish youngsters.

As three of these rioters sit drinking, they hear a funeral knell. One of the revelers' servants tells the group that an old friend of theirs was slain that very night by a mysterious figure named Death. The rioters are outraged and, in their drunkenness, decide to find and kill Death to avenge their friend. Traveling down the road, they meet an old man who appears sorrowful. He says his sorrow stems from old age—he has been waiting for Death to come and take him for some time, and he has wandered all over the world. The youths, hearing the name of Death, demand to know where they can find him. The old man directs them into a grove, where he says he just left Death under an oak tree. The rioters rush
to the tree, underneath which they find not Death but eight bushels of gold coins with no owner in sight.

At first, they are speechless, but, then, the slyest of the three reminds them that if they carry the gold into town in daylight, they will be taken for thieves. They must transport the gold under cover of night, and so someone must run into town to fetch bread and wine in the meantime. They draw lots, and the youngest of the three loses and runs off toward town. As soon as he is gone, the sly plotter turns to his friend and divulges his plan: when their friend returns from town, they will kill him and therefore receive greater shares of the wealth. The second rioter agrees, and they prepare their trap. Back in town, the youngest vagrant is having similar thoughts. He could easily be the richest man in town, he realizes, if he could have all the gold to himself. He goes to the apothecary and buys the strongest poison available, then puts the poison into two bottles of wine, leaving a third bottle pure for himself. He returns to the tree, but the other two rioters leap out and kill him.

They sit down to drink their friend's wine and celebrate, but each happens to pick up a poisoned bottle. Within minutes, they lie dead next to their friend. Thus, concludes the Pardoner, all must beware the sin of avarice, which can only bring treachery and death. He realizes that he has forgotten something: he has relics and pardons in his bag. According to his custom, he tells the pilgrims the value of his relics and asks for contributions—even though he has just told them the relics are fake. He offers the Host the first chance to come forth and kiss the relics, since the Host is clearly the most enveloped in sin (942). The Host is outraged and proposes to make a relic out of the Pardoner's genitals, but the Knight calms everybody down. The Host and Pardoner kiss and make up, and all have a good laugh as they continue on their way.

The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale

Summary

The Wife of Bath begins the Prologue to her tale by establishing herself as an authority on marriage, due to her extensive personal experience with the institution. Since her first marriage at the tender age of twelve, she has had five husbands. She says that many people have criticized her for her numerous marriages, most of them on the basis that Christ went only once to a wedding, at Cana in Galilee. The Wife of Bath has her own views of Scripture and God's plan. She says that men can only guess and interpret what Jesus meant when he told a Samaritan woman that her fifth husband was not her husband. With or without this bit of Scripture, no man has ever been able to give her an exact reply when she asks to know how many husbands a woman may have in her lifetime. God bade us to wax fruitful and multiply, she says, and that is the text that she wholeheartedly endorses. After all, great Old Testament figures, like Abraham, Jacob, and Solomon, enjoyed multiple wives at once. She admits that many great Fathers of the Church have proclaimed the importance of virginity, such as the Apostle Paul. But, she reasons, even if virginity is important, someone must be procreating so that virgins can be created. Leave virginity to the perfect, she says, and let the rest of us use our gifts as best we may—and her gift, doubtless, is her sexual power. She uses this power as an “instrument” to control her husbands.

At this point, the Pardoner interrupts. He is planning to marry soon and worries that his wife will control his body, as the Wife of Bath describes. The Wife of Bath tells him to have patience and to listen to the whole tale to see if it reveals the truth about marriage. Of her five husbands, three have been “good” and two have been “bad.” The first three were good, she admits, mostly because they were rich, old, and submissive. She laughs to recall the torments that she put these men through and recounts a typical conversation that she had with her older husbands. She would accuse her -husband of having
an affair, launching into a tirade in which she would charge him with a bewildering array of accusations. If one of her husbands got drunk, she would claim he said that every wife is out to destroy her husband. He would then feel guilty and give her what she wanted. All of this, the Wife of Bath tells the rest of the pilgrims, was a pack of lies—her husbands never held these opinions, but she made these claims to give them grief. Worse, she would tease her husbands in bed, refusing to give them full satisfaction until they promised her money. She admits proudly to using her verbal and sexual power to bring her husbands to total submission.

The Wife of Bath begins her description of her two “bad” husbands. Her fourth husband, whom she married when still young, was a reveler, and he had a “paramour,” or mistress (454). Remembering her wild youth, she becomes wistful as she describes the dancing and singing in which she and her fourth husband used to indulge. Her nostalgia reminds her of how old she has become, but she says that she pays her loss of beauty no mind. She will try to be merry, for, though she has lost her “flour,” she will try to sell the “bran” that remains. Realizing that she has digressed, she returns to the story of her fourth husband. She confesses that she was his purgatory on Earth, always trying to make him jealous. He died while she was on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

Of her fifth husband, she has much more to say. She loved him, even though he treated her horribly and beat her. He was coy and flattering in bed, and always won her back. Women, the Wife says, always desire what is forbidden them, and run away from whatever pursues or is forced upon them. This husband was also different from the other four because she married him for love, not money. He was a poor ex-student who boarded with the Wife's friend and confidante.

When she first met this fifth husband, Jankyn, she was still married to her fourth. While walking with him one day, she told him that she would marry him if she were widowed. She lied to him and told him he had enchanted her, and that she had dreamed that he would kill her as she slept, filling her bed with blood, which signifies gold. But, she confides to her listeners, all of this was false: she never had such a dream. She loses her place in the story momentarily, then resumes with her fourth husband's funeral. She made a big show of crying, although, she admits, she actually cried very little since she already had a new husband lined up.

As she watched Jankyn carry her husband's casket, she fell in love with him. He was only twenty and she forty, but she was always a lusty woman and thought she could handle his youth. But, she says, she came to regret the age difference, because he would not suffer her abuse like her past husbands and gave some of his own abuse in return. He had a “book of wicked wives” she recalls, called Valerie and Theofraste. This book contained the stories of the most deceitful wives in history. It began with Eve, who brought all mankind into sin by first taking the apple in the Garden of Eden; from there, it chronicled Delilah's betrayal of Samson, Clytemnestra's murder of Agamemnon, and other famous stories. Jankyn would torment the Wife of Bath (whom we learn in line 804 is named Alisoun) by reading out of this book at night.

One evening, out of frustration, the Wife tears three pages out of the book and punches Jankyn in the face. Jankyn repays her by striking her on the head, which is the reason, she explains in line 636, that she is now deaf in one ear. She cries out that she wants to kiss him before she dies, but when he comes over, she hits him again. They finally manage a truce, in which he hands over all of his meager estate to her, and she acts kindly and loving.

Her tale of her marriages finished, the Wife announces that she will tell her story, eliciting laughter from the Friar, who exclaims, “This is a long preamble of a tale!” (831). The Summoner tells him to
shut up, and they exchange some angry words. The Host quiets everybody down and allows the Wife of Bath to begin her story.

The Wife of Bath's Tale

Fragment III, lines 857–1264
Summary
In the days of King Arthur, the Wife of Bath begins, the isle of Britain was full of fairies and elves. Now, those creatures are gone because their spots have been taken by the friars and other mendicants that seem to fill every nook and cranny of the isle. And though the friars rape women, just as the incubi did in the days of the fairies, the friars only cause women dishonor—the incubi always got them pregnant.

In Arthur's court, however, a young, lusty knight comes across a beautiful young maiden one day. Overcome by lust and his sense of his own power, he rapes her. The court is scandalized by the crime and decrees that the knight should be put to death by decapitation. However, Arthur's queen and other ladies of the court intercede on his behalf and ask the king to give him one chance to save his own life. Arthur, wisely obedient to wifely counsel, grants their request. The queen presents the knight with the following challenge: if, within one year, he can discover what women want most in the world and report his findings back to the court, he will keep his life. If he cannot find the answer to the queen's question, or if his answer is wrong, he will lose his head.

The knight sets forth in sorrow. He roams throughout the country, posing the question to every woman he meets. To the knight's dismay, nearly every one of them answers differently. Some claim women love money best, some honor, some jolliness, some looks, some sex, some remarriage, some flattery, and some say that women most want to be free to do as they wish. Finally, says the Wife, some say that women most want to be considered discreet and secretive, although she argues that such an answer is clearly untrue, since no woman can keep a secret. As proof, she retells Ovid's story of Midas. Midas had two ass's ears growing under his hair, which he concealed from everybody except his wife, whom he begged not to disclose his secret. She swore she would not, but the secret burned so much inside her that she ran down to a marsh and whispered her husband's secret to the water. The Wife then says that if her listeners would like to hear how the tale ends, they should read Ovid.

She returns to her story of the knight. When his day of judgment draws near, the knight sorrowfully heads for home. As he rides near a forest, he sees a large group of women dancing and decides to approach them to ask his question. But as he approaches, the group vanishes, and all he can see is an ugly old woman. The woman asks if she can be of help, and the knight explains his predicament and promises to reward her if she can help him. The woman tells the knight that he must pledge himself to her in return for her help, and the knight, having no options left, gladly consents. She then guarantees that his life will be saved.

The knight and the old woman travel together to the court, where, in front of a large audience, the knight tells the queen the answer with which the old woman supplied him: what women most desire is to be in charge of their husbands and lovers. The women agree resoundingly that this is the answer, and the queen spares the knight's life. The old hag comes forth and publicly asks the knight to marry her. The knight cries out in horror. He begs her to take his material possessions rather than his body, but she refuses to yield, and in the end he is forced to consent. The two are married in a small, private wedding and go to bed together the same night. Throughout the entire ordeal, the knight remains miserable.
While in bed, the loathsome hag asks the knight why he is so sad. He replies that he could hardly bear the shame of having such an ugly, lowborn wife. She does not take offense at the insult, but calmly asks him whether real “gentillesse,” or noble character, can be hereditary (1109). There have been sons of noble fathers, she argues, who were shameful and villainous, though they shared the same blood. Her family may be poor, but real poverty lies in covetousness, and real riches lie in having little and wanting nothing. She offers the knight a choice: either he can have her be ugly but loyal and good, or he can have her young and fair but also coquettish and unfaithful. The knight ponders in silence. Finally, he replies that he would rather trust her judgment, and he asks her to choose whatever she thinks best. Because the knight's answer gave the woman what she most desired, the authority to choose for herself, she becomes both beautiful and good. The two have a long, happy marriage, and the woman becomes completely obedient to her husband. The Wife of Bath concludes with a plea that Jesus Christ send all women husbands who are young, meek, and fresh in bed, and the grace to outlive their husbands.

**Tone and Irony**

**Tone** – The author's attitude toward his or her subject matter and toward the audience. Tone can be stated or implied.
- The prologue for the Tales of Canterbury make extensive use of tone in describing the characters.

**Irony** – A contrast between what appears to be and what really is
- Verbal Irony – Words imply the opposite of what they literally mean.
- Situational Irony – Presents a state of affairs that is the opposite of what is expected.
- Dramatic Irony – When the reader knows more than a character or characters do.

**Literary Terms**

Rhythm – The arrangement of stressed and unstressed sounds in speech or writing. Rhythm, or meter, may be regular or it may vary within a line or work. The four most common metrical feet are iamb, trochee, anapest, and dactyl.

Characterization – The methods an author uses to develop the personality of a character in a literary work. An author can describe a character's appearance and personality, speech and behavior, thoughts and feelings, and interactions with other characters. Characters may be "round" or "flat" - as is a stereotype - and dynamic or static.

Irony – (look above in "Tone and Irony")

Allusion – A brief reference to a person, event, or place, real or fictitious, or to a work of art. An allusion may or may not be central to the meaning of a literary work.

Protagonist – The leading character in a literary work.

Antagonist – A character who opposes the protagonist. An antagonist whose traits are opposite those of the protagonist is a foil.

**Renaissance Era Cultural Milieu**

**Lectures**

**Shakespeare**
William Shakespeare
Born: 1564 Died: 1616

Bill Shakespeare was an English Poet, actor, and playwrite.
Parental Units: We begin with his childhood. William Shakespeare was born to John Shakespeare and Mary Arden. His Father was a financially stable, wealthy man for most of William's early life. He had many talents, and was well respected amongst his townsfolks. Some of his careers were:

- glover
- butcher
- farmer (barley)
- lumberjack

He was also politically involved. He was

- one of two chamberlins entrusted with his town's funds
- aldermen
- balif
- He upheld dignity, justice, and peace

John Shakespeare was obviously a well respected Renaissance man. His involvement in his town's politics shows that he was trusted and respected by all of neighbors.

Siblings: William had many brothers and sisters. He was the 3rd of 8 children, although the 1st one who lived past infancy. His siblings rattled by in chronological order as follows:

- Joan – 1558 – 1558 (lived 2 months)
- Margaret – 1562 – 1563 (lived 1 year)
- William – 1564 – 1616 (THE Bill Shakespeare)
- Gilbert – 1566 – 1612
- Joan II – 1569 – 1646
- Anne – 1571 – 1579 (Age 7)
- Richard – 1574 – 1639
- Edmund – 1580 – 1607

Until his late childhood William's parents could afford to send him to a Free form Grammer School. This meant he learned all the basics like reading and writing, as well as being exposed to both Greek and Latin texts.

In 1577, when William was in his mid-teenaged years, his father had a financial crisis. Will could not continue school and instead had to begin an apprenticeship as a butcher. There is evidence that, when slaughtering animals, William would often put on dramatic performances and speeches for the amusement of his co-butchers.

At age 18, William married Anne Hathoway. Anne was 8 years older than Shakespeare.

Shakespeare began writing and acting. Then the black plague came along. 'Twas as common as the flu and as deadly as a gernade. This plague caused many the theaters to close putting Shakespeare out of business. During this time he traveled to Germany, England, and Italy.

**Shakespearean Tragedies/Symbolism and Theme Lecture**
Shakespeare wrote 10 major tragedies
- 4 most notable:
  - King Lear
  - Othello
  - Hamlet
  - Macbeth
The Protagonist is a tragic hero:

- King Lear - the wife dies and the eldest daughter develops a relationship with the King
  - He becomes disillusioned
- Hamlet - learns of his father's death (the King) and his mother remarries her brother-in-law
  - Pushes him to a precarious state
- Macbeth
  - Based off of Mac Bethad Mac Findláich
    - resembles 11th century Scottish King born around 1005
      - August 1040 - King Duncan I killed in battle of Elgin, Morayshire
      - Macbeth also kills Crenan, Duncan's father
      - 14 years after Macbeth usurps, things calm down

Paradoxes of Life presented
- Disappointment of thinking things should go our way and then they ending up not going our way
  - We don't expect bad things
  - Paradoxical thinking
- Ambition
  - We really want things in life
  - How far are we willing to go to get what we want?

Symbolism of newborn babe
- Purity

Sonnets

"Sonetto" - little sound or song
14 line poem written in iambic pentameter

Petrarchan (Italian)  Shakespearean (English)
14 line poem written in iambic pentameter

2 Stanzas: abba abba 3 Quatrains abab cdc d c
Octave (First 8 lines) abba abba 1 couplet gg
  - argument, observation, question
Volta - Turn 1 conclusion, amplification, refute
Sestet (Final 6 lines) cdc d/c d/c d/c d/c d/c
  - answers, counterargument, clarification
  - Gives what octave demands
Tightly suited to fit Italian

Sir Thomas Wyatt introduced
Petarchan sonnet to England
Because English is rhyme-poor,
they needed a new structure

Biography of Sir Thomas Wyatt
- Born in Kent, spent most of adult life serving in court for King Henry VIII
- Educated at Cambridge, served as courtier and diplomat, ambassador to Spain, Emperor Charles V, and member of a number of diplomatic missions to France and Italy
- Imprisoned twice, once for adultery with Anne Boleyn (King Henry VIII's wife), another for treason
- Died of fever on way to diplomatic mission
- First introduced Italian sonnet structure to England
Biography of Queen Elizabeth I
– Usually known for her political marvel as queen, but also had an artistic side
– Enjoyed writing poetry and being honored in poems about her by courtiers
– Showed fickleness in relationships, and thus reflected into her poetry

What Is Our Life? (pg. 177 from Old Book)
This sonnet by Sir Walter Raleigh, first begins to compare life to a play of passion and song and wonder, but then takes a somber turn and says it turns dark like the curtains on a stage closing.

William Shakespeare's Sonnets
Sonnet 18
Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade
Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou growest:
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

Summary
The speaker opens the poem with a question addressed to the beloved: "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" The next eleven lines are devoted to such a comparison. In line 2, the speaker stipulates what mainly differentiates the young man from the summer's day: he is "more lovely and more temperate." Summer's days tend toward extremes: they are shaken by "rough winds"; in them, the sun ("the eye of heaven") often shines "too hot," or too dim. And summer is fleeting: its date is too short, and it leads to the withering of autumn, as "every fair from fair sometime declines." The final quatrains of the sonnet tells how the beloved differs from the summer in that respect: his beauty will last forever ("Thy eternal summer shall not fade...") and never die. In the couplet, the speaker explains how the beloved's beauty will accomplish this feat, and not perish because it is preserved in the poem, which will last forever; it will live "as long as men can breathe or eyes can see."

Commentary
This sonnet is certainly the most famous in the sequence of Shakespeare's sonnets; it may be the most famous lyric poem in English. Among Shakespeare's works, only lines such as "To be or not to be" and "Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?" are better-known. This is not to say that it is at all the best or most interesting or most beautiful of the sonnets; but the simplicity and loveliness of its praise of the beloved has guaranteed its place.
On the surface, the poem is simply a statement of praise about the beauty of the beloved; summer tends to unpleasant extremes of windiness and heat, but the beloved is always mild and temperate. Summer is incidentally personified as the "eye of heaven" with its "gold complexion"; the imagery throughout is simple and unaffected, with the "darling buds of May" giving way to the "eternal summer", which the speaker promises the beloved. The language, too, is comparatively unadorned for the sonnets; it is not heavy with alliteration or assonance, and nearly every line is its own self-contained clause--almost every line ends with some punctuation, which effects a pause.

Sonnet 18 is the first poem in the sonnets not to explicitly encourage the young man to have children. The "procreation" sequence of the first 17 sonnets ended with the speaker's realization that the young man might not need children to preserve his beauty; he could also live, the speaker writes at the end of Sonnet 17, "in my rhyme." Sonnet 18, then, is the first "rhyme"--the speaker's first attempt to preserve the young man's beauty for all time. An important theme of the sonnet (as it is an important theme throughout much of the sequence) is the power of the speaker's poem to defy time and last forever, carrying the beauty of the beloved down to future generations. The beloved's "eternal summer" shall not fade precisely because it is embodied in the sonnet: "So long as men can breathe or eyes can see," the speaker writes in the couplet, "So long lives this, and this gives life to thee."

Sonnet 29
Interpretation:
When I'm in disgrace with everyone and my luck has deserted me, I sit all alone and cry about the fact that I'm an outcast, and bother God with useless cries, which fall on deaf ears, and look at myself and curse my fate, wishing that I had more to hope for, wishing I had this man's good looks and that man's friends, this man's skills and that man's opportunities, and totally dissatisfied with the things I usually enjoy the most. Yet, as I'm thinking these thoughts and almost hating myself, I happen to think about you, and then my condition improves—like a lark at daybreak rising up and leaving the earth far behind to sing hymns to God. For when I remember your sweet love, I feel so wealthy that I'd refuse to change places even with kings.

Sonnet 30
Interpretation:
When I sit alone in silence and remember the past, I get depressed about all the things I don't have that I once strived for, and I add to old griefs new tears for all the valuable time I've wasted. Then I can drown my eyes, which are not usually wet from crying, in tears for precious friends who are dead, and I can weep again for hurts in loves that are long since over and moan about the loss of many things I'll never see again. Then I can grieve about grievances I had let go of and sadly recount each woe that I'd already cried about in the past, feeling the pain all over again, as if I hadn't suffered over these things already. But if I think about you, my dear friend, while I'm doing all of this, I get back everything I'd lost, and all my sorrows end.

Sonnet 71
Interpretation:
When I am dead, mourn for me only as long as you hear the funeral bell telling the world that I've left this vile world to go live with the vile worms. No, if you read this line, don't remember who wrote it, because I love you so much that I'd rather you forgot me than thought about me and became sad. I'm telling you, if you look at this poem when I'm, say, dissolved in the earth, don't so much as utter my name but let your love die with me. Otherwise, the world, in all its wisdom, will investigate why you're sad and use me to mock you, now that I am gone.
Sonnet 116

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove:
O no! it is an ever-fixed mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come:
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

Summary

This sonnet attempts to define love, by telling both what it is and is not. In the first quatrain, the speaker says that love--"the marriage of true minds"--is perfect and unchanging; it does not "admit impediments," and it does not change when it find changes in the loved one. In the second quatrain, the speaker tells what love is through a metaphor: a guiding star to lost ships ("wand'ring barks") that is not susceptible to storms (it "looks on tempests and is never shaken"). In the third quatrain, the speaker again describes what love is not: it is not susceptible to time. Though beauty fades in time as rosy lips and cheeks come within "his bending sickle's compass," love does not change with hours and weeks: instead, it "bears it out ev'n to the edge of doom." In the couplet, the speaker attests to his certainty that love is as he says: if his statements can be proved to be error, he declares, he must never have written a word, and no man can ever have been in love.

Commentary

Along with Sonnets 18 ("Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?") and 130 ("My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun"), Sonnet 116 is one of the most famous poems in the entire sequence. The definition of love that it provides is among the most often quoted and anthologized in the poetic canon. Essentially, this sonnet presents the extreme ideal of romantic love: it never changes, it never fades, it outlasts death and admits no flaw. What is more, it insists that this ideal is the only love that can be called "true"--if love is mortal, changing, or impermanent, the speaker writes, then no man ever loved. The basic division of this poem's argument into the various parts of the sonnet form is extremely simple: the first quatrain says what love is not (changeable), the second quatrain says what it is (a fixed guiding star unshaken by tempests), the third quatrain says more specifically what it is not ("time's fool"--that is, subject to change in the passage of time), and the couplet announces the speaker's certainty. What gives this poem its rhetorical and emotional power is not its complexity; rather, it is the force of its linguistic and emotional conviction.

The language of Sonnet 116 is not remarkable for its imagery or metaphoric range. In fact, its imagery, particularly in the third quatrain (time wielding a sickle that ravages beauty's rosy lips and cheeks), is rather standard within the sonnets, and its major metaphor (love as a guiding star) is hardly startling in its originality. But the language is extraordinary in that it frames its discussion of the passion of love within a very restrained, very intensely disciplined rhetorical structure. With a masterful control of rhythm and variation of tone--the heavy balance of "Love's not time's fool" to open the third quatrain;
the declamatory "O no" to begin the second--the speaker makes an almost legalistic argument for the eternal passion of love, and the result is that the passion seems stronger and more urgent for the restraint in the speaker's tone.

Sonnet 130

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;  
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;  
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;  
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.  
I have seen roses damask'd, red and white,  
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;  
And in some perfumes is there more delight  
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.  
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know  
That music hath a far more pleasing sound;  
I grant I never saw a goddess go;  
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground:  
And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare  
As any she belied with false compare.

Summary

This sonnet compares the speaker's lover to a number of other beauties--and never in the lover's favor. Her eyes are "nothing like the sun," her lips are less red than coral; compared to white snow, her breasts are dun-colored, and her hairs are like black wires on her head. In the second quatrain, the speaker says he has seen roses separated by color ("damasked") into red and white, but he sees no such roses in his mistress's cheeks; and he says the breath that "reeks" from his mistress is less delightful than perfume. In the third quatrain, he admits that, though he loves her voice, music "hath a far more pleasing sound," and that, though he has never seen a goddess, his mistress--unlike goddesses--walks on the ground. In the couplet, however, the speaker declares that, "by heav'n," he thinks his love as rare and valuable "As any she belied with false compare"--that is, any love in which false comparisons were invoked to describe the loved one's beauty.

Commentary

This sonnet, one of Shakespeare's most famous, plays an elaborate joke on the conventions of love poetry common to Shakespeare's day, and it is so well-conceived that the joke remains funny today. Most sonnet sequences in Elizabethan England were modeled after that of Petrarch. Petrarch's famous sonnet sequence was written as a series of love poems to an idealized and idolized mistress named Laura. In the sonnets, Petrarch praises her beauty, her worth, and her perfection using an extraordinary variety of metaphors based largely on natural beauties. In Shakespeare's day, these metaphors had already become cliche (as, indeed, they still are today), but they were still the accepted technique for writing love poetry. The result was that poems tended to make highly idealizing comparisons between nature and the poets' lover that were, if taken literally, completely ridiculous. My mistress' eyes are like the sun; her lips are red as coral; her cheeks are like roses, her breasts are white as snow, her voice is like music, she is a goddess. /PARAGRAPH In many ways, Shakespeare's sonnets subvert and reverse the conventions of the Petrarchan love sequence: the idealizing love poems, for instance, are written not to a perfect woman but to an admittedly imperfect man, and the love poems to the dark lady are anything but idealizing ("My love is as a fever, longing still / For that which longer nurseth the disease" is hardly a Petrarchan conceit.) Sonnet 130 mocks the typical Petrarchan metaphors by presenting a
speaker who seems to take them at face value, and somewhat bemusedly, decides to tell the truth. Your mistress' eyes are like the sun? That's strange--my mistress' eyes aren't at all like the sun. Your mistress' breath smells like perfume? My mistress' breath reeks compared to perfume. In the couplet, then, the speaker shows his full intent, which is to insist that love does not need these conceits in order to be real; and women do not need to look like flowers or the sun in order to be beautiful.

The rhetorical structure of Sonnet 130 is important to its effect. In the first quatrain, the speaker spends one line on each comparison between his mistress and something else (the sun, coral, snow, and wires--the one positive thing in the whole poem some part of his mistress is like. In the second and third quatrains, he expands the descriptions to occupy two lines each, so that roses/cheeks, perfume/breath, music/voice, and goddess/mistress each receive a pair of unrhymed lines. This creates the effect of an expanding and developing argument, and neatly prevents the poem--which does, after all, rely on a single kind of joke for its first twelve lines--from becoming stagnant.

Macbeth

Plot Overview

The play begins with the brief appearance of a trio of witches and then moves to a military camp, where the Scottish King Duncan hears the news that his generals, Macbeth and Banquo, have defeated two separate invading armies—one from Ireland, led by the rebel Macdonald, and one from Norway. Following their pitched battle with these enemy forces, Macbeth and Banquo encounter the witches as they cross a moor. The witches prophesy that Macbeth will be made thane (a rank of Scottish nobility) of Cawdor and eventually king of Scotland. They also prophesy that Macbeth’s companion, Banquo, will beget a line of Scottish kings, although Banquo will never be king himself. The witches vanish, and Macbeth and Banquo treat their prophecies skeptically until some of King Duncan’s men come to thank the two generals for their victories in battle and to tell Macbeth that he has indeed been named thane of Cawdor. The previous thane betrayed Scotland by fighting for the Norwegians and Duncan has condemned him to death. Macbeth is intrigued by the possibility that the remainder of the witches’ prophecy—that he will be crowned king—might be true, but he is uncertain what to expect. He visits with King Duncan, and they plan to dine together at Inverness, Macbeth’s castle, that night. Macbeth writes ahead to his wife, Lady Macbeth, telling her all that has happened.

Lady Macbeth suffers none of her husband’s uncertainty. She desires the kingship for him and wants him to murder Duncan in order to obtain it. When Macbeth arrives at Inverness, she overrides all of her husband’s objections and persuades him to kill the king that very night. He and Lady Macbeth plan to get Duncan’s two chamberlains drunk so they will black out; the next morning they will blame the murder on the chamberlains, who will be defenseless, as they will remember nothing. While Duncan is asleep, Macbeth stabs him, despite his doubts and a number of supernatural portents, including a vision of a bloody dagger. When Duncan’s death is discovered the next morning, Macbeth kills the chamberlains—ostensibly out of rage at their crime—and easily assumes the kingship. Duncan’s sons Malcolm and Donalbain flee to England and Ireland, respectively, fearing that whoever killed Duncan desires their demise as well.

Fearful of the witches’ prophecy that Banquo’s heirs will seize the throne, Macbeth hires a group of murderers to kill Banquo and his son Fleance. They ambush Banquo on his way to a royal feast, but they fail to kill Fleance, who escapes into the night. Macbeth becomes furious: as long as Fleance is alive, he fears that his power remains insecure. At the feast that night, Banquo’s ghost visits Macbeth. When he sees the ghost, Macbeth raves fearfully, startling his guests, who include most of the great Scottish nobility. Lady Macbeth tries to neutralize the damage, but Macbeth’s kingship incites
increasing resistance from his nobles and subjects. Frightened, Macbeth goes to visit the witches in their cavern. There, they show him a sequence of demons and spirits who present him with further prophecies: he must beware of Macduff, a Scottish nobleman who opposed Macbeth’s accession to the throne; he is incapable of being harmed by any man born of woman; and he will be safe until Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane Castle. Macbeth is relieved and feels secure, because he knows that all men are born of women and that forests cannot move. When he learns that Macduff has fled to England to join Malcolm, Macbeth orders that Macduff’s castle be seized and, most cruelly, that Lady Macduff and her children be murdered.

When news of his family’s execution reaches Macduff in England, he is stricken with grief and vows revenge. Prince Malcolm, Duncan’s son, has succeeded in raising an army in England, and Macduff joins him as he rides to Scotland to challenge Macbeth’s forces. The invasion has the support of the Scottish nobles, who are appalled and frightened by Macbeth’s tyrannical and murderous behavior. Lady Macbeth, meanwhile, becomes plagued with fits of sleepwalking in which she bemoans what she believes to be bloodstains on her hands. Before Macbeth’s opponents arrive, Macbeth receives news that she has killed herself, causing him to sink into a deep and pessimistic despair. Nevertheless, he awaits the English and fortifies Dunsinane, to which he seems to have withdrawn in order to defend himself, certain that the witches’ prophecies guarantee his invincibility. He is struck numb with fear, however, when he learns that the English army is advancing on Dunsinane shielded with boughs cut from Birnam Wood. Birnam Wood is indeed coming to Dunsinane, fulfilling half of the witches’ prophecy.

In the battle, Macbeth hews violently, but the English forces gradually overwhelm his army and castle. On the battlefield, Macbeth encounters the vengeful Macduff, who declares that he was not “of woman born” but was instead “untimely ripped” from his mother’s womb (what we now call birth by cesarean section). Though he realizes that he is doomed, Macbeth continues to fight until Macduff kills and beheads him. Malcolm, now the king of Scotland, declares his benevolent intentions for the country and invites all to see him crowned at Scone.

Character Analysis:

Macbeth

Because we first hear of Macbeth in the wounded captain’s account of his battlefield valor, our initial impression is of a brave and capable warrior. This perspective is complicated, however, once we see Macbeth interact with the three witches. We realize that his physical courage is joined by a consuming ambition and a tendency to self-doubt—the prediction that he will be king brings him joy, but it also creates inner turmoil. These three attributes—bravery, ambition, and self-doubt—struggle for mastery of Macbeth throughout the play. Shakespeare uses Macbeth to show the terrible effects that ambition and guilt can have on a man who lacks strength of character. We may classify Macbeth as irrevocably evil, but his weak character separates him from Shakespeare’s great villains—Iago in Othello, Richard III in Richard III, Edmund in King Lear—who are all strong enough to conquer guilt and self-doubt. Macbeth, great warrior though he is, is ill equipped for the psychic consequences of crime.

Before he kills Duncan, Macbeth is plagued by worry and almost aborts the crime. It takes Lady Macbeth’s steely sense of purpose to push him into the deed. After the murder, however, her powerful personality begins to disintegrate, leaving Macbeth increasingly alone. He fluctuates between fits of fevered action, in which he plots a series of murders to secure his throne, and moments of terrible guilt (as when Banquo’s ghost appears) and absolute pessimism (after his wife’s death, when he seems to succumb to despair). These fluctuations reflect the tragic tension within Macbeth: he is at once too
ambitious to allow his conscience to stop him from murdering his way to the top and too conscientious to be happy with himself as a murderer. As things fall apart for him at the end of the play, he seems almost relieved—with the English army at his gates, he can finally return to life as a warrior, and he displays a kind of reckless bravado as his enemies surround him and drag him down. In part, this stems from his fatal confidence in the witches’ prophecies, but it also seems to derive from the fact that he has returned to the arena where he has been most successful and where his internal turmoil need not affect him—namely, the battlefield. Unlike many of Shakespeare’s other tragic heroes, Macbeth never seems to contemplate suicide: “Why should I play the Roman fool,” he asks, “and die / On mine own sword?” (V.x.1–2). Instead, he goes down fighting, bringing the play full circle: it begins with Macbeth winning on the battlefield and ends with him dying in combat.

Lady Macbeth

Lady Macbeth is one of Shakespeare’s most famous and frightening female characters. When we first see her, she is already plotting Duncan’s murder, and she is stronger, more ruthless, and more ambitious than her husband. She seems fully aware of this and knows that she will have to push Macbeth into committing murder. At one point, she wishes that she were not a woman so that she could do it herself. This theme of the relationship between gender and power is key to Lady Macbeth’s character: her husband implies that she is a masculine soul inhabiting a female body, which seems to link masculinity to ambition and violence. Shakespeare, however, seems to use her, and the witches, to undercut Macbeth’s idea that “undaunted mettle should compose / Nothing but males” (I.vii.73–74). These crafty women use female methods of achieving power—that is, manipulation—to further their supposedly male ambitions. Women, the play implies, can be as ambitious and cruel as men, yet social constraints deny them the means to pursue these ambitions on their own.

Lady Macbeth manipulates her husband with remarkable effectiveness, overriding all his objections; when he hesitates to murder, she repeatedly questions his manhood until he feels that he must commit murder to prove himself. Lady Macbeth’s remarkable strength of will persists through the murder of the king—it is she who steadies her husband’s nerves immediately after the crime has been perpetrated. Afterward, however, she begins a slow slide into madness—just as ambition affects her more strongly than Macbeth before the crime, so does guilt plague her more strongly afterward. By the close of the play, she has been reduced to sleepwalking through the castle, desperately trying to wash away an invisible bloodstain. Once the sense of guilt comes home to roost, Lady Macbeth’s sensitivity becomes a weakness, and she is unable to cope. Significantly, she (apparently) kills herself, signaling her total inability to deal with the legacy of their crimes.

The Three Witches

Throughout the play, the witches—referred to as the “weird sisters” by many of the characters—lurk like dark thoughts and unconscious temptations to evil. In part, the mischief they cause stems from their supernatural powers, but mainly it is the result of their understanding of the weaknesses of their specific interlocutors—they play upon Macbeth’s ambition like puppeteers.

The witches’ beards, bizarre potions, and rhymed speech make them seem slightly ridiculous, like caricatures of the supernatural. Shakespeare has them speak in rhyming couplets throughout (their most famous line is probably “Double, double, toil and trouble, / Fire burn and cauldron bubble” in IV.i.10–11), which separates them from the other characters, who mostly speak in blank verse. The witches’ words seem almost comical, like malevolent nursery rhymes. Despite the absurdity of their “eye of
newt and toe of frog” recipes, however, they are clearly the most dangerous characters in the play, being both tremendously powerful and utterly wicked (IV.1.14).

The audience is left to ask whether the witches are independent agents toying with human lives, or agents of fate, whose prophecies are only reports of the inevitable. The witches bear a striking and obviously intentional resemblance to the Fates, female characters in both Norse and Greek mythology who weave the fabric of human lives and then cut the threads to end them. Some of their prophecies seem self-fulfilling. For example, it is doubtful that Macbeth would have murdered his king without the push given by the witches’ predictions. In other cases, though, their prophecies are just remarkably accurate readings of the future—it is hard to see Birnam Wood coming to Dunsinane as being self-fulfilling in any way. The play offers no easy answers. Instead, Shakespeare keeps the witches well outside the limits of human comprehension. They embody an unreasoning, instinctive evil.

**Literary Devices**

- **Sonnet** – A lyrics poem with a traditional form of fourteen pentameter lines. Sonnets fall into two groups, according to their rhyme schemes: Italian (Petrarchan) or English (Shakespearean).
- **Analogy** – A comparison made between two objects, situations, or ideas that are somewhat alike but unlike in most respects. Frequently an unfamiliar or complex object will be compared to a familiar or simpler one.
- **Paradox** – A statement, often metaphorical, that seems to be self-contradictory but has valid meaning.
- **Conceit** – An elaborate and surprising figure of speech comparing two very dissimilar things. It usually involves intellectual cleverness and ingenuity.
- **Anastrophe** – Inversion of the usual order of the parts of a sentence, primarily for emphasis or to achieve a certain rhythm or rhyme.
- **Connotation** – The emotional associations surrounding a word, as opposed to its literal meaning. A connotation may be personal, or it may have universal associations.
- **Denotation** – The strict, literal meaning of a word.
- **Plot** – Series of happenings in a literary work. It is organized around a conflict and builds to a climax followed by a resolution. The meat of the story.
- **Pastoral** – A conventional form of lyric poetry presenting an idealized picture of rural life.
- **Symbol** – Something relatively concrete, such as an object, action, character, or scene, that signifies something relatively abstract, such as a concept or idea.
- **Hyperbole** – A figure of speech involving great exaggeration.
- **Synecdoche** – A figure of speech in which a part stands for the whole, as in "hired hands". Hands (the part) stands for the whole (those who do manual labor with their hands). The term also refers to a figurative expression in which the whole stands for the part, as in "call the law". Law (the whole) represents the police (the part of a whole system of law).
- **Metonymy** – A figure of speech in which a specific word naming an object is substituted for another word with which it is closely associated. Ex. "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." (Genesis, p.302 in your old textbook) Sweat is used in this to show hard physical labor.
- **Blank Verse** – Unrhymed iambic pentameter, a line of five feet, each with an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed one.