

Chapter II The Medieval Period 1066-1485

Basic information

- 1) In 1066, the Normans conquered England and earned for their leader the title **William the Conqueror**.
- 2) William the Conqueror's achievements: **feudalism**, the **knighthood** and the code of chivalry, and the English language in a subservient position.
- 3) As a part of feudalism, **Chivalry** is not only a set of rules for good behavior but also an order, which affects much of the literature in the Middle Ages.
- 4) In the medieval period, the two languages, **French** and **English**, blended together to form Middle English. By 1450 English was the everyday language of nobility as well as the common people.
- 5) In 1154, the Norman royal line was at an end and the families of **Plantagenet** ruled England.
- 6) In 1399, the Plantagenet line split into two branches—the Houses of **Lancaster** (whose symbol was a red rose) and **York** (whose symbol was a white rose).
- 7) Important events: **the Hundred Years' War**, the War of the Roses, the **Crusades**, Black Death, the Peasants' Revolt, etc.
- 8) The **printing machine** was introduced in 1471. From that time on, the printed word was to play an indispensable and revolutionary role in the era to come and readership was to be vastly multiplied.
- 9) **Medieval romances** are tales of adventure and love in which knights and kings are motivated by love, religious faith, or the mere desire for adventure. They are less stately in form and tone and less with epic struggle and national destiny.
- 10) Arthurian romances are classified as cyclical or noncyclical. The greatest cyclical treatment is Malory's **Morte D'Arthur** and the outstanding example of the latter is **Sir Gawain and the Green Knight**.
- 11) John Wycliffe is remembered as the **"Morning Star of the Reformation,"** and the prime mover in first translating the **Bible** into English.
- 12) **William Langland** is the putative author of the 14th-century English dream-vision *Piers Plowman*, which is a social **satire** in unrhymed alliterative verse and regarded as the greatest Middle English poem prior to Chaucer.
- 13) The English drama was produced in the Middle Ages by the impulse to teach the uneducated people the **Bible stories**. Although the drama was **secular** and **vernacular**, the chief subject matter remained essentially religious.
- 14) **Geoffrey Chaucer** was in John Dryden's words, "the father of English poetry."
- 15) The folk ballad is essentially a **narrative** poem. **Incremental repetition** and the **ballad stanza** are its two characteristics.

Important Writers/Works/Terms

- 1) Geoffrey Chaucer and *The Canterbury Tales*
- 2) Folk Ballads