

Chapter I The Anglo-Saxon Period 449-1066

Basic information

- 1) British literary history began with the Anglo-Saxons.
- 2) The first British were the Celts, and from them came the name Briton and British.
- 3) In 55 B.C., Julius Caesar conquered England and brought to it its first touch of **Roman** civilization. In A.D. 43, the Romans returned to Britain. They brought the **Christian religion**, constructed monasteries and cathedrals, and built **the city London**.
- 4) In 449, the **Jutes**, **Angles** and **Saxons** invaded Britain from the European continent. All of the tribes were of **German** origin. From the Angles, who were the most numerous, the country became known as Angle-land, which later evolved into **England**.
- 5) The process of **re-Christianization** is from the late sixth century to the end of the seventh century. **Saint Augustine** is the first Archbishop of Canterbury.
- 6) *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, written in **Latin**, leads the Venerable Bede to be called the father of **English history**. It tells the history of Britain from the raids by Julius Caesar in 55 B.C. up to A.D. 729, and is the chief source for the history of the British Isles during the period.
- 7) According to Bede, Caedmon, a cowherd, is the earliest known poet in English literature and the father of English songs. His first poem, **Hymn**, is the oldest English religious poem.
- 8) **King Alfred the Great** is the first Anglo-Saxon who commissions the writing of *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* in old English vernacular, which remains the primary historical source of information on the later Anglo-Saxon period.
- 9) **Beowulf** is the earliest English poem we have known and regarded as the national epic of Anglo-Saxon.
- 10) An **epic** is a long narrative poem in a formal and elevated style about the achievements of a central hero who usually embodies national ideals.
- 11) **Caesura** is the pause in a line of poetry. **Alliteration** is the repetition of same consonant sounds, usually at the beginnings of words. **Kenning** is a formalized metaphorical phrase to express or describe a simple noun.
- 12) **The Exeter Book** is the largest known collection of Old English literature still in existence.

Important Writers/Works/Terms

- 1) *Beowulf*