English literature is the study of literature written in the English language. The writers do not necessarily have to be from England but can be from all over the world. It includes some of history's most famous writers: James Joyce (Ireland), William Shakespeare (England), Mark Twain (United States), Arthur Conan Doyle (Scotland), Dylan Thomas (Wales), and Vladimir Nabokov (Russia), just to name a few.



Figure two people are sitting on the street



Figure two dogs play in the grass

**Why Is Studying English Literature Important?**

Okay, so there are about a thousand things for a teenager, or even a 50-year-old adult, to do in today's wired, 500-channel cable television world. We can watch feature films on our phones or hop in a car and drive a hundred miles away in just a couple of hours. That's not how things used to be. People used to read literature for entertainment because even just 50 years ago, there were simply not many readily available entertainment options.

### Middle English Literature (1150-1485)

Some scholars would argue that the **Middle English** period started as early as the 1100s. However, because the English language did not evolve into a dialect we could understand today until about the 12th century, 1150 seems like a better place to start.



Figure white dog is running through the grass



Figure woman walking down sidewalk street



Figure boy in red shirt is playing soccer ball