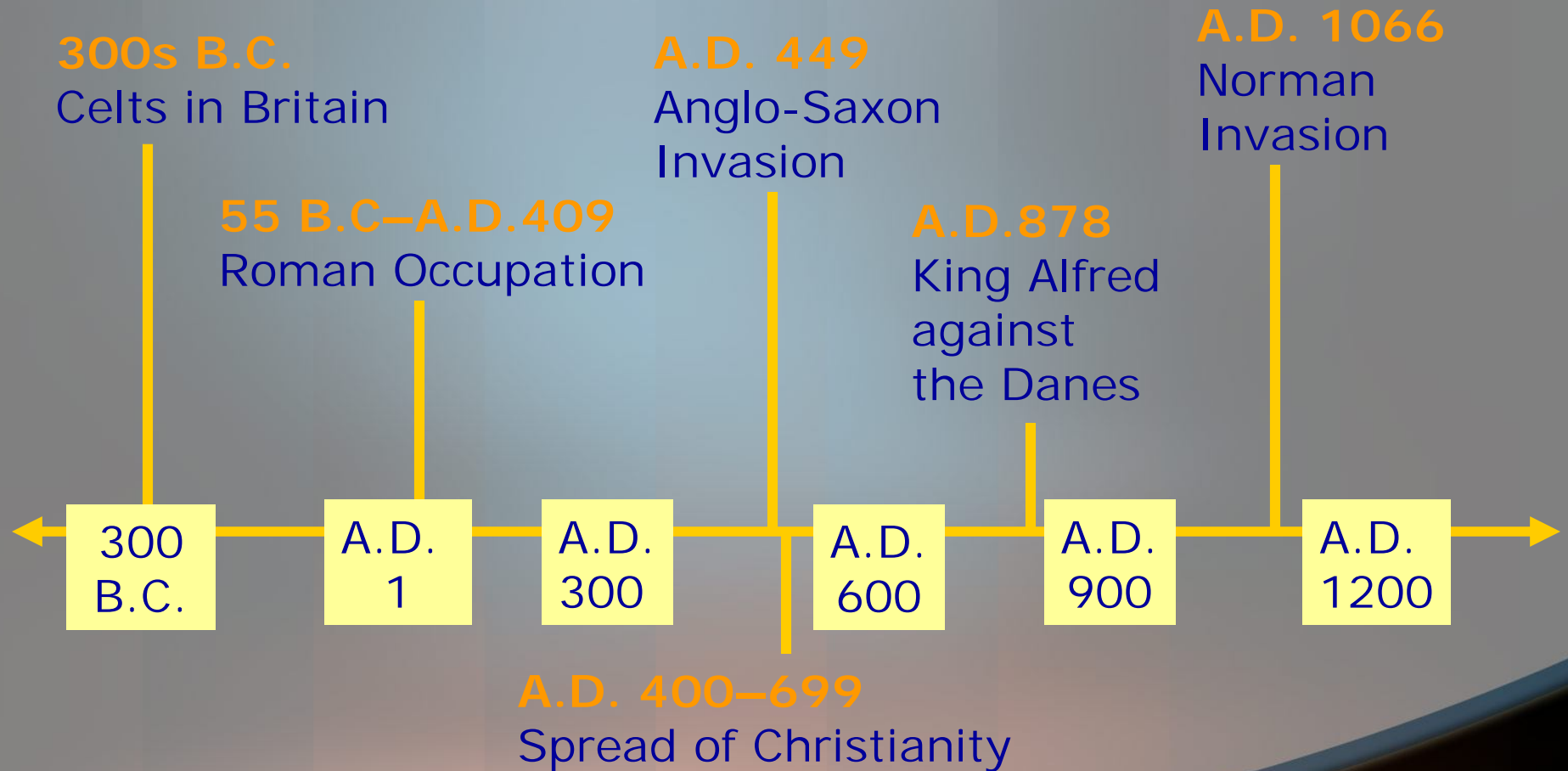


The Anglo-Saxons: 449–1066 Introduction to the Literary Period

The Anglo-Saxons: 449–1066



The Celts in Britain

Before and during the 4th century B.C.

- Britain home to several Celtic tribes
- Britain named for one Celtic tribe—the Brythons
- King Arthur – famous Celtic King (516?)
- Celtic religion a form of *animism* (belief that Gods/spirits controlled all aspects of life and could take the form of trees, rivers, fire, thunder, etc)



Stonehenge

The Roman Occupation

55 B.C.

Julius Caesar invades Britain ▼

A.D. 43

Celts defeated by Claudius

- Romans build walls, villas, baths, roads ▼

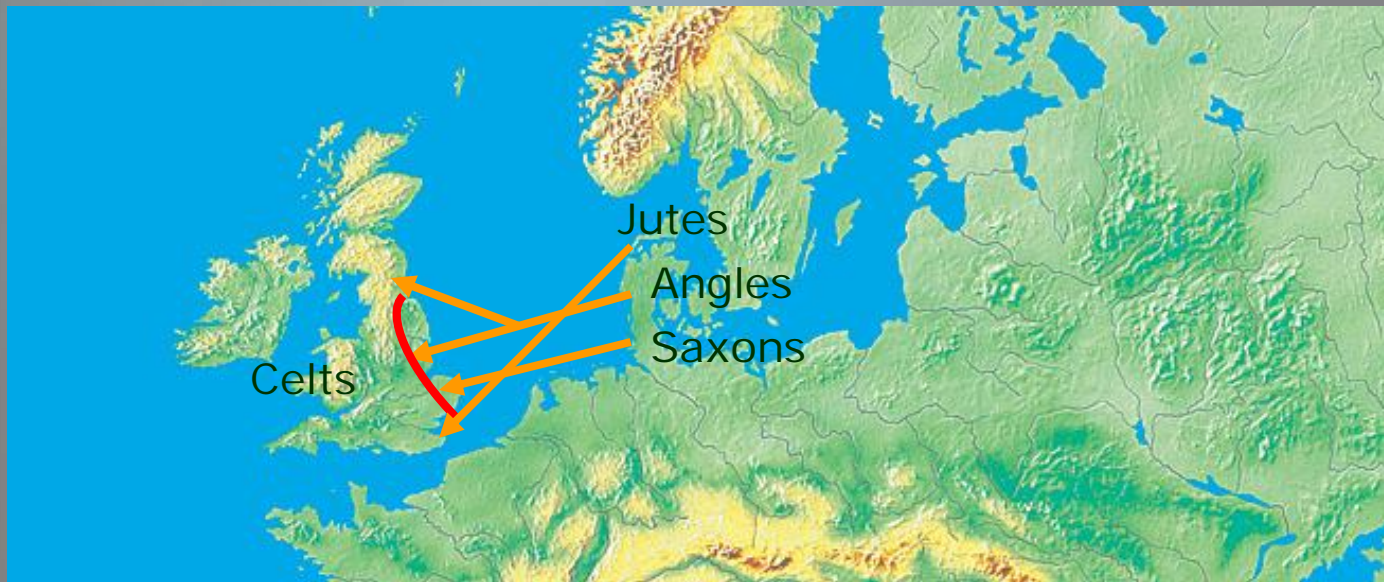
A.D. 409

Romans evacuate their troops

- Britain left vulnerable to attack
- Central government breaks down



The Anglo-Saxon Invasion



A.D. 449 The Anglo-Saxons push the Celts into the far west of the country.

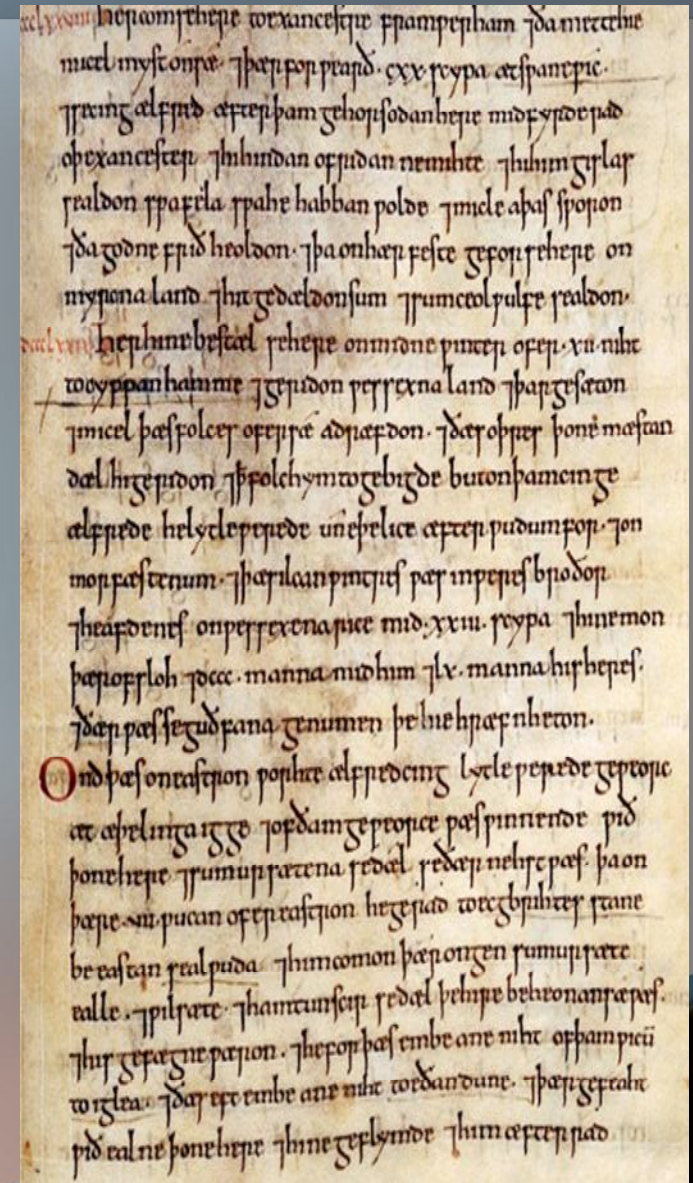
The Anglo-Saxon Invasion

Anglo-Saxon Society

- Warrior-based society, led by strong warrior chief
- “Warfare was the order of the day” (between clans, tribes, and outside invaders)
- Anglo-Saxon life was dominated by the need to protect the clan and home from enemies.
- Fame and success were achieved through loyalty to a leader, and success was measured by gifts received from leaders.

The Anglo-Saxon Invasion

- Women had many rights in Anglo-Saxon society. Women inherited and held property (even when married) and were offered substantial gifts of money and land from prospective husbands.
- English emerged as a written language



The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle

The Anglo-Saxon Invasion

The Anglo-Saxon religion

- offered no hope of an afterlife...only fame offered immortality and provided a defense against death.
- valued concept of the "Heroic Ideal"...earthly virtues of bravery, loyalty, generosity, and friendship.

Norse god	Anglo-Saxon god	Day of week
Odin	Woden	Wednesday
Thor	Thunor	Thursday

The Anglo-Saxon Invasion

The Anglo-Saxon bards

- called "scops"
- skilled storytellers and honored members of society.
- sang of heroic deeds
- regarded as equals to warriors

Why were the scops important?

- Anglo-Saxons did not believe in an afterlife
- warriors gained immortality through songs preserved in the collective memory.



Anglo-Saxon harp

King Alfred the Great against the Danes

8th–9th centuries

Vikings, called Danes, invade Britain

871 Alfred of Wessex becomes king of England.

878 King Alfred unifies the Anglo-Saxons against the Danes. England becomes a nation.

* Alfred was also known for reviving an interest in learning and the English language.



King Sweyn and his Danish troops arrive in England, from a manuscript (c. 14th century)

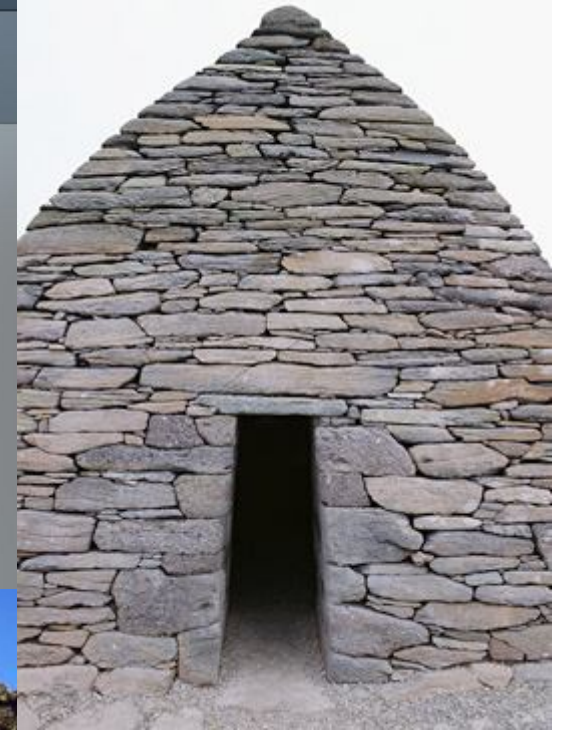
The Spread of Christianity

Around A.D. 400

- Christian monks settle in Britain
- Christianity and Anglo-Saxon culture co-exist

By A.D. 699

- British pagan religions replaced by Christianity

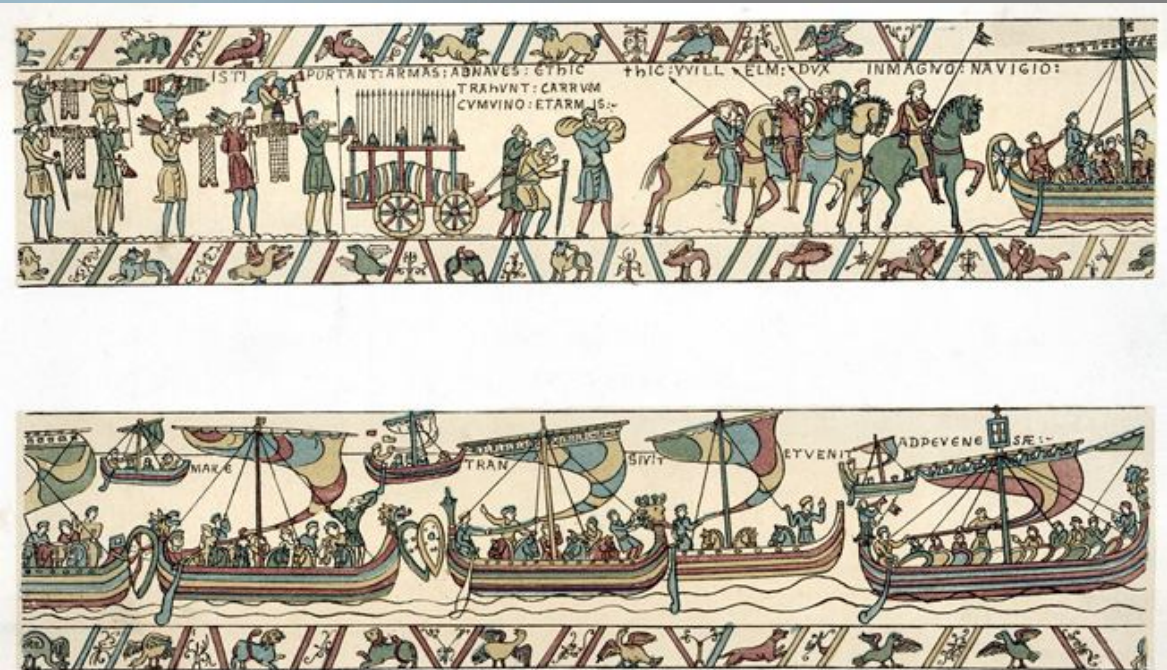


The Norman Invasion

1066

- William of Normandy crosses the English Channel
- William defeats Harold and Anglo-Saxon army
- French replaces English as the language of the ruling class

The Norman Invasion,
Bayeux Tapestry



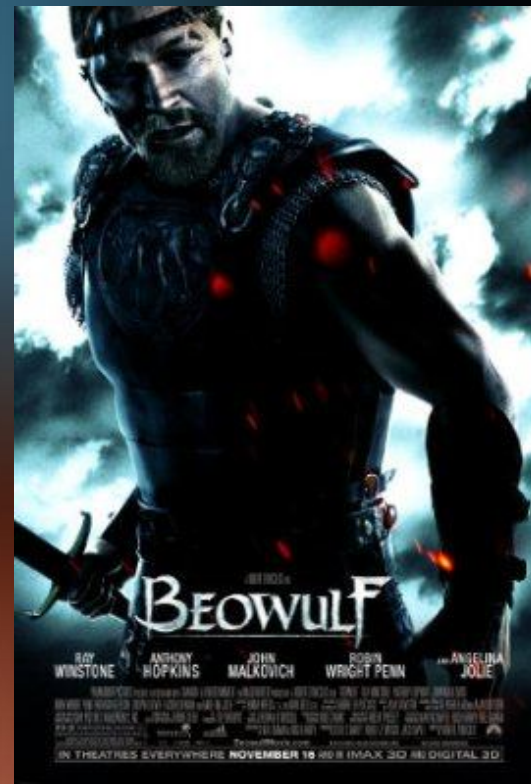
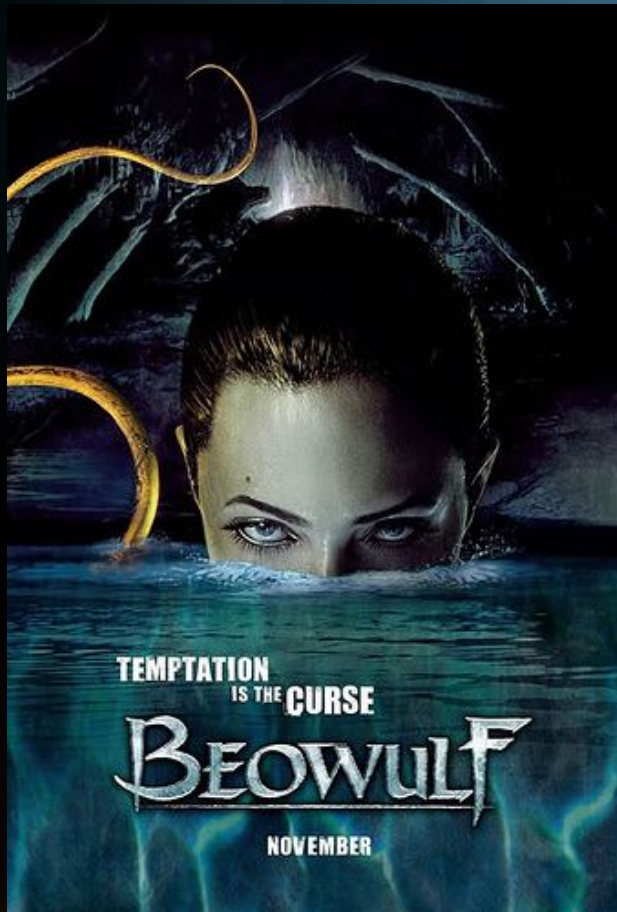
Literature of the Period

- Leading Genres: Poetry and Riddles
 - o Epics (narrative/story-like)
 - o Elegiac mood (somber, sorrowful tone)
 - o Strong rhythm and no rhyme
 - o Lyrical (focuses more on emotion)

Terms

- Animism – Celtic belief that Gods/spirits controlled all aspects of life and could take the form of trees, rivers, fire, thunder, etc.
- Fatalism – Anglo-Saxon belief that the course of one's life was pre-determined by fate.
- Bards – skilled storytellers and honored members of society. The Anglo-Saxons called them "scops" and they were not regarded as inferior to warriors...actually, the Anglo-Saxons viewed creating poetry as important as fighting, hunting, farming, and loving (because of religion).
- Vernacular – language of the people > Old English.
- Alliteration – repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words (ex: the wind whips through the woods).
- Caesura – rhythmical pause separating a line of verse into halves.
- Kennings – descriptive compound words that evoke vivid images ("sea-stallions" and "whale-road").
- Epic – a long, narrative poem that relates the great deeds of a larger than life hero who embodies (is made up of and reflects) the values of a particular society.

An Introduction to Beowulf



Beowulf

- 1st great work of English national literature
- Composed between 700-750, but depicts earlier time period...early 6th century.
- An example of “heroic literature” and, as such, is composed of many traditional motifs and recurring elements.
- Beowulf’s name means “Bear”...??
- The epic is a mythical and literary record of the formative stages of English civilization.

Beowulf

- Story handed down *orally* for generations, naturally with changes and embellishments.
- 3,200 lines long
- Poet unknown...scholars think it was originally told by someone of pagan religion but recorded by a monk due to Christian elements present in the story.

So, why is Beowulf an important work of literature?

1. It is an expression of Anglo-Saxon values and attitudes:

- Warfare was the order of the day
- Fatalism
- Courage, loyalty and honor
- The battle of Good versus Evil
- Boasting
- Storytelling (bards/scops held key to immortality)

So, why is Beowulf an important work of literature?

2. It is an archetypal example of an epic:

- Long
- Narrative
- Adventures of a central hero with supernatural powers
- Worldwide or cosmic setting
- Major battle scenes
- Discussion of hero's weaponry
- Participation by God (or Gods) in action

So, why is Beowulf an important work of literature?

3. It is an example of Old English poetry:

- 4-beat rhythm
- No rhyme
- Alliteration
- Kennings
- Caesuras

- Journal Entry!

- On the last page of your notes, pick one of the journal topics and respond to it in the space provided.
- I will collect your notes after the test on Beowulf and the Anglo Saxon time period, so make sure you do not lose the packet!