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COURSE PAPER

On Literature

On theme: The role of national traditions of English literature in the development of world literature

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INTRODUCTION

1. The role of the English Literature in the Development of the world Literature.
2. The Periods of the English Literature.

English literature is a component part of the world literature. Its best national traditions have played an important role in enriching and development of the world literature. English literature consists of poetry, prose and drama written in the English language by authors in England, Scotland, and Wales. These lands have produced many outstanding writers.

English literature is a rich literature. It includes masterpieces in many forms, particularly a novel, a short story, an epic and lyric poetry, an essay, literary criticism, and drama. English literature is also one of the oldest national literatures in the world. The masters of English literature from the turn of the XIV century to the present rank among the world's greatest literary figures. Such names as Geoffrey Chaucer, Wiiliam Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, Daniel Defoe, Jonathan Swift, George Gordon Byron, Charles Dickens, Bernard Shaw, John Galsworthy and many others are famous all over the world. Their way of writing has influenced a great number of writers, poets and playwrights from other countries.

National literature is the reflection of the history and national peculiarities of people. Each national literature has much in common with the world literary progress, but at the same time has Its own specific features as well. One of the characteristic features of the English authors is that they have always been deeply interested in political and social environment of their time. They are parts of the real world, which dramatically influences what and how they write. What takes place in the writer's study is crucial, but it also emphasizes the importance of what takes place in the larger world.

The World Book Encyclopedia gives the following outline of English literature:

- I. Old English literature (500-1100)
 - A. Old English Poetry.
 - B. Old English Prose.
- II. Middle English literature (1100-1485)
 - A. The development of English romances.
 - B. The age of Chaucer.
 - C. Early English drama.
- III. The beginning of Modern English literature (1485-1603)

- A.Elizabethan poetry.
- B.Elizabethan drama.
- C.Elizabethan fiction.
- IV. The Stuarts and Puritans (1603-1660)
 - A.Metaphysical and Cavalier poets..
 - B.Jacobian drama
 - C.Prose writing, D.John Milton.
- V.Restoration literature (1660-1700).
 - A.John Dryden..
 - B.Restoration drama.
 - C.Restoration prose
- VI.The Augustan Age (1700-1750)
 - A.Swift and Pope.,
 - B.Addison and Steele.
 - C.The rise of the novel
- VII.The Age of Johnson (1750-1784)
 - A.Samuel Johnson.
 - B.The Johnson circle.
- VIII.Romantic literature (1784-1832)
 - A.The pre-romantics
 - B.Romantic poetry..
 - C.Romantic prose.
- IX.Victorian literature (1832-1901).
 - A.Early Victorian literature.
 - B.Later Victorian literature.
- X.The 1900's.
 - A.Literature before World War t.
 - B.Poetry between the wars.
 - C.Fiction between the wars.
 - D.Literature after World War II.
 - E.English literature today.

Having studied the outline given above, and the periodizations presented in other books on English literature, and taking into consideration the general objectives of the course and the number of academic hours in the curriculum, we decided to focus on more general issues and divided this book into nine units according to the following outline:

- Old English Literature.
- Middle English Literature.
- The Renaissance.

- English literature in the Seventeenth Century.
- The Eighteenth Century. (The Age of Reason or Enlightenment).
- The Romantic Age.
- The Victorian Age.
- English Literature at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century.
- English Literature in the Twentieth Century.

II.MAIN PART

II. 1.Roman invasion

For the first eleven hundred years of its recorded history, the island of Britain suffered a series of invasions. The southern part of the island, washed by the warm waters of the Gulf Stream, was attractive to outsiders with its mild climate and rich soil. Each invasion brought bloodshed and sorrow, but each also brought new people with new culture and those different peoples created a nation.

250,000 years ago the island was inhabited by cave dwellers. Invaders from the Iberian peninsula (Modern Spain and Portugal) overcame their culture about 2000 B.C., erecting Stonehenge -the circle of huge upright stones. Then a new group, the Celts, appeared. Migrating from East, the Celtic people spread throughout Europe before reaching the British Isles around 600 B.C. They used bronze and later iron tools and grew crops. Some Celtic tribes, each with its own King, warred with each other, and erected timber and stone fortresses. Their priests - called druids - made sacrifices in forest shrines. The people who lived in Britain at that time were called the Britons.

In the 1st century before our era the powerful State of Rome conquered Britain. The Romans were practical men. They were very clever at making hard roads and building bridges and fine tall houses. The Romans taught Britons many things. But at the end of the 4th century they had to leave Britain because they were needed to defend their own country invaded by barbaric people. As soon as Romans left, Britain had to defend the country from Germanic tribes called Angles, Saxons and Jutes. The Anglo-saxons were advanced people and by the time they conquered Britain, they already had their own letters called "runes", but still) written literature existed yet; the stories and poems composed at that time passed from one generation to another verbally. Songs sung and told by people when at work or at war, or for icnt (folk-lore) became wide-spread. There were also professional singers called "bards". They composed songs about events they wanted to be remembered. Their songs were about wonderful battles and exploits of brave warriors. These songs were handed down to their children and grandchildren and finally reached the times when certain people who were called "scribes" wrote them down. (The word "scribe" comes from the Latin "scribere"- "to write").

At the end of the 6th century the head of the Roman church at that time Pope Gregory decided to spread his influence over England. He wanted to convert people to Christianity and he sent monks to the island. They landed in Kent and built the first church in the town of Canterbury.

The Roman civilization poured into the country again. Latin words once more entered the Languages of the Anglo – Saxons, because the religious books were written in Latin. Poets and writers of that period made up stories in Latin. The names of : Caedmon and Cynewulf have reached our days.

Caedmon lived in the 7th century. He composed hymns and a poem “Paraphrase”. This poem retells fragments from the Bible.

Cynewulf was a monk who lived at the end of the 8th century. He wrote poems “Elen” and “Juliana”. These poems are notable because they are the first Anglo – Saxon poems which introduced women characters.

THE VENERABLE BEDE

The Venerable Bede is considered the father of English history. Because he was the author of the most important history of early England. He was the most learned scholar in all of Western Europe. He was born in the Anglo – Saxon kingdom, in 673. He was orphaned when he was only seven and his relatives put him under the supervision of monks at Wearmouth Abbey. Two years later, in 682, he was sent to the newly built abbey of Jarrow, where he was to spend the rest of his life. From boyhood Bede studied in the library of Jarrow. In 703 Bede began to write. He completed forty books: commentaries on the Bible, lives of abbots and saints, books on philosophy and poetry..

ALFRED THE GREAT.

The beginning of the 9th century was troubled time for England. Danish pirates came. Each year their number increased. Alfred was a king and he decided to make peace with them. The greater portion of England was given up to the new – comers. The only part of the kingdom left in possession of Alfred was Wessex.

Alfred was a Latin scholar. He is famous not only for having built the first navy, but for trying to enlighten his people. He wrote laws and translated the Church history of Bede from Latin into Anglo – Saxon. He created the first history of England, the 1st prose in English Literature “ Anglo – Saxon Chronicle ” .

The literature of the early Middle ages and the church taught that man was an evil being and his life on earth was a sinful life.

As man was subordinated to God he had to prepare himself for the after – life by subduing his passions and disregarding all earthly cares.

MIDDLE ENGLISH LITERATURE

In 1066, William, Duke of Normandy, defeated the English troops in a great Battle. The lands of most of the Anglo – Saxon aristocracy were given to the Norman barons. The English became an oppressed nation.

William the Conqueror could not speak a word of English. He and his barons spoke in Norman dialect of the French language.

During twenty years communication went on in three languages: in Latin, Norman French, in English.

In the 13th century the first universities in Oxford and Cambridge were founded.

By about 1300 English had again become the chief national language but it called Middle English included elements of French, Latin, Old English and local dialects.

Tales in verse and lyrical poems appeared. At first they were all in Norman – French. Many of the stories came from old French sources, the language of which was of a Romanic dialect. For that reason these works were called “romances” .

In the 15th century sir Thomas Mallory (1395 – 1471) collected the romances of king Arthur. They began with the birth of Arthur, how he become king.

The work was published in 1485 by Caxton, the first English printer , under the title of “ sir Thomas Malory’s Book of king Arthur and of his Noble knights of Round Table ” .

II. 2. Anglo-Saxon literature

THE MEDIEVAL ROMANCE

In the medieval period the term “romance” meant a long narrative in verse or prose telling of adventures of a hero. These stories include knights, ladies in distress, kings. The materials for the medieval romance in English were mainly drawn from the stories of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. This is called the “Matter of Britain”.

Central to the medieval romance was the code of the chivalry, the rules and customs connected with knighthood. The qualities of the ideal courtly knight in the Middle Ages were bravery, honor, protection of the weak, respect for women, generosity, and fairness to enemies. An important element in the code of chivalry was the ideal of courtly love. This concept required a knight to serve a virtuous noblewoman and perform brave deeds to prove his devotion while she remained chaste and unattainable.

The code of chivalry and the ideal of courtly love were still in evidence during the Renaissance as well. Knights and courtiers who wrote on courtly themes included the Earl of Surrey, Sir Thomas Wyatt, and Sir Walter Raleigh.

Edmund Spenser and Sir Philip Sidney wrote highly formalized portraits of ideal love.

Medieval romance and its attendant codes of chivalry and courtly love faded in the Age of Reason during the XVIII century, but in the nineteenth century, Romanticism brought back the ideals of chivalry.

FABLE AND FABLIAUX.

In the literature of the towns folk fables and fabliaux were also popular. Fables were short stories with animals for characters and conveying a moral. Fabliaux were funny stories about cunning humbugs and the unfaithful wives of rich merchants. They were metrical tales brought from France. These stories were told in the dialects of Middle English. They were collected and written down much later. The literature of the towns did not idealize characters as the romances did. The fabliaux show a practical attitude to life.

Many old English poems glorified a real or imaginary hero and tried to teach the values of bravery and generosity. Poets used alliteration (words that begin with the same sound) and kennings (elaborate descriptive phrases). They also used internal rhyme, in which a word within a line rhymes with a word at the end of the line.

The first major work of English literature is the epic poem "Beowulf."

II. 3. Beowulf As A Historic Poem

BEOWULF.

The poem was composed by an unknown author. Many parts were added later. The whole poem was written down in the 10th century by an unknown poet.

Long, long ago there lived a king of the Danes named Hrothgar. He had won many battles, and gained great wealth. He built a large and beautiful palace and he presented costly gifts to his warriors and gave splendid banquets. But the joy of the king didn't last long. In the dark fens near his palace lived a sea – monster Grendel. He wanted to destroy the palace Heorot, as he disliked noise. Grendel looked like a man but was much bigger, no weapon could harm him.

One night when everybody were asleep, Grendel came in, seized thirty men and devoured them. The next night the monster appeared again. The men defended themselves bravely, but their swords could not hurt the monster. From that time no one could not come to Heorot. For twelve years the palace stood deserted.

Beowulf was the nephew of the king of Jutes. Beowulf was the strongest and the bravest of all soldiers. He had the strength of the thirty men. He decided to help Hrothgar. With fourteen chosen companions he set sail for the country of the Danes.

Hrothgar gladly welcomed Beowulf and gave a banquet in his honour. Late at night all went to sleep except Beowulf. Beowulf knew that no weapon could kill Grendel, he was ready to fight bare – handed.

Suddenly the man – eater came into the hall. He seized sleeping men and then approached Beowulf. They began fighting. It was so terrible that the walls of the palace shook. Beowulf managed to tear off Grendel's arm, and the monster retreated to his den howling and roaring with pain and fury. He was wounded and soon died.

The next night Grendel's mother, a water – witch came to Heorot to avenge her son's death. While Beowulf was asleep she snatched away one of Hrothgar's

favourite warriors. Beowulf decided to fight the water – witch. He plunged into the water and found the water – witch in her den beside the dead body of her son Grendel. A desperate fight began. At first Beowulf was nearly overcome, as his sword had no power against the monster. But fortunately his glance fell upon a huge magic sword hanging on the wall. Beowulf killed the monster with its help. Then he cut off their heads. Heorot was freed forever. Heorot gave treasures to Beowulf. At last the day came for Beowulf to sail home. Everybody regretted his departure. When Beowulf arrived in his own land, he gave all the treasures he had brought to Higelac and the people. Beowulf was admired and honored by everybody. After the death of Higelac, Beowulf became king of the Jutes.

For fifty years he ruled his country wisely and well until one day a great disaster befell the happy land: every night there appeared a fire – breathing dragon who came and destroyed the villages. Beowulf decided to fight and save his people, but of all his earls only Wiglaf, a brave warrior and heir to the kingdom, had the courage to help him. In a fierce battle the dragon was killed, but his flames burnt Beowulf. Beowulf ordered Wiglaf to take as much treasure as he could carry and give it to the Jutes. In his last hour he thought only of his people, for whose happiness he had sacrificed his life.

Before burning the body of the king Wiglaf put the blame for his death upon the cowardly earls. Beowulf's victory over the monsters symbolized the triumph of a man over the powers of darkness and evil.

The merit of the poem lies in the vivid description of the life of that period, in the heroic deeds of Beowulf and in the beauty of the language.

II. 4. The Literature of the 14th century.

In the 14th century the Norman Kings made London their residence. It became the most populous town in England. The London dialect was the central dialect, and could be understood throughout the country.

There appeared poor priests who wandered from one village to another and talked to the people. They protested not only against rich bishops but also against churchmen who were ignorant and could not teach people anything. Poets and priests William Langland and John Wyclif were among them.

William Langland (1332 – 1400). His name is remembered for a poem he wrote, “ The Visions of William Concerning Piers the Ploughman ”. The poem is called “ Piers Plowman ”.

In “ Piers Plowman ” Vice and Virtue are spoken of as if they were human beings. The poem was very popular in the Middle ages.

John Wyclif (1320 – 1384) He is remembered because he discussed political questions with the common people in the common tongue, and because he translated the Bible into English.

II. 5. Geoffrey Chaucer is the founder of the English literature.

GEOFFREY CHAUCER.

Geoffrey Chaucer is one of the greatest poet in English literature. He was born in London (1340 –1400). His service in that household indicates that his family had sufficient social status for him to receive a courtly education. In 1366 Chaucer married Phillippa Roet, a lady in – waiting to the Queen. Chaucer rose socially through his marriage. In 1368 he became one of the King’s esquires, which in those days meant that he worked in the administrative department of the King’s government.

Chaucer’s poetry is generally divided into three periods.

The first. French period. Chaucer came in contact with French literature, his earliest poems were written in imitation of the French romances. He translated from French a famous allegorical poem of the 13th century.

The second. Italian period. In Italy he became acquainted with Italian life and culture, with the classical authors and with the newer Italian works.

Chaucer’s own writing, the French models of his earliest years gave way to this Italian influence. To the Italian period can be assigned “The House of Fame”, “The Parliament of Fowls”, and “Troilus and Cressida”.

The third, English period. After his return to London, Chaucer became a customs official at the port of London. And began composing his masterpiece “The Canterbury Tales”.

He died in 1400 and was buried in Westminster Abbey in a section, which later became established as the Poet’s Corner.

II. 6. “The Canterbury Tales ” is masterpiece of Geoffrey Chaucer.

“ THE CANTERBURY TALES”.

“The Canterbury Tales ” is a long poem made up of general introduction and twenty four - stories, told in verse. Chaucer draws a rapid portrait of thirty men and women thus showing his characters. Chaucer himself and a certain Harry Bailly, the host of a London in are among them. Harry Bailly proposes the following plan: each pilgrim was to tell two stories on the way to the shrine and two on the way back.

Chaucer introduces each of his pilgrims in the prologue, and than he lets us know about them through stories they tell.

Chaucer’s contribution to English literature is usually explained by the following:

1. “ The Canterbury Tales ” sum up all types of stories that existed in the Middle ages.
2. He managed to show different types of people that lived during his time and through these people he showed a true picture of the life of the 14th century.
3. Chaucer was the creator of a new literary language. He chose to write in the popular tongue that is in English language.
4. Chaucer was by learning a man of the Middle ages, but his attitude towards mankind was so broad – minded that his work is timeless.

II. 7. Literature of the 15th century.

LITERATURE OF THE 15th CENTURY.

Folk poetry flourished in England and Scotland in the 15th century. The most interesting examples of folk poetry were the ballads. Ballads and songs expressed the sentiments and thoughts of the people. The art of printing did not stop the creation of folk – songs and ballads. They continued to develop till the 18th century.

The original authors of ballads are unknown ; a given ballad may exist in several versions, because many different people told and revised the ballad as it travelled from village to village.

“THE WIFE OF USHER’S WELL”

There lived a wife at Usher’s Well,
And a wealthy wife was she;
She had three stout and stalwart sons,
And sent them o’er the sea.
They hadna’ been a week from her,
A week but barely ane,
When word came to the carlin wife
That her three sons were gane.

They hadna’ been a week from her,
A week but barely three,
When word came to the carlin wife
That her sons she’d never see.
I wish the “wind may never cease,
Nor fashes in the flood,
Till my three sons come hame to me,
In earthly flesh and blood”.

Thus, the folk ballad is a popular literary form. The ballad tends to express its meaning in simple language.

Some folk ballads make use of refrains, repetitions of a line or lines in every stanza without variation. Refrains add emphasis and a note of continuity to the ballads.

As regards to content, the ballads are usually divided into three groups: historical, heroic, and romantic ballads. Historical ballads were based on a historical fact, while heroic ballads were about people who were persecuted by the law or by their own families.

Among the most popular ones were those about Robin Hood, who was an outlaw.

II. 8. Robin Hood ballads

ROBIN HOOD BALLADS.

The Robin Hood ballads, numbering some forty separate ballads, were written down at various times not earlier than the 14th and 15th centuries. Robin Hood is partly historical, partly legendary character. He lived in the second half of the 12th century, during the reign of Henry II and his son Richard I. The older ballads tell us much about the Saxon yeomen, who were famous archers and keen hunters. Being ill treated by the Norman robber – barons, they longed to live free in the forest with Robin as their leader.

Robin Hood always helped the country folk in their troubles. Though sheriff put a big price on Robin's head, Saxons didn't betray him.

Thus, Robin was an outlaw and lived in Sherwood Forests. He was smart and clever "with a twinkle in the eye". Whenever the Sheriff or the king sent out a party of men to catch him, Robin fought with so much vigour that his enemies, amazed at his bravery, confessed themselves beaten and stayed with him in the forest.

They became "the merry men of Robin Hood".

In the 16th century many new episodes were introduced into the ballads. They were arranged in series, the most popular of which was "The Jolly Life of Robin Hood and his Men in Sherwood".

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