

Introduction to the Middle Ages Group Work

“The days are gone / When the kingdoms of earth flourished in glory” – “The Seafarer”

If you did not do your reading today – I will allow you to get into a group (today ONLY). REMAIN FOCUSED and SOLUTION ORIENTED THROUGHOUT this work.

Part I - 11 minutes

Carefully mark up and write on your assigned reading – (some are primary sources). The topics are as follows

- A: Women
- B: The Clergy & student life
- C: Knights, Chivalry, and the treatment of Jews
- D: The Normans & the peasants
- E: The Crusades, The Children’s Crusade

Read the following before you begin your close reading of your handout

READ and mark up your handout. Cover it with your ideas, comments, questions, connections – TIME YOURSELF. If you have to skim parts, so be it. BEFORE YOU BEGIN – read the following (and the bullet points) Your focus, and what you should be marking notes on are as follows (though of course you may find more to write up and highlight):

- Links with what you read in your textbook
- Points of Irony (feel free to look this up, in either your textbook or dictionary)
- Possible links with the other topics listed above (women, clergy, etc.)
- Links with other readings that you have done so far this year with special attention to
 - ◆ Anglo-Saxon codes of heroism
 - ◆ Treatment of women in literature (think *Wealtheow*) and history (Celts, Anglo-Saxons, etc.)
 - ◆ The Venerable Bede and his methods of historicism. Remember – or look up what **Bede did differently**. What were his ideals as a historian, but still

for all of that what ended up being his focus?

- ◆ Why do we read this old stuff? What is the place of history in a literature class?

Part II (6 minutes) - Now you will get together with all of your “like letters” (ie **all the “A’s” will get together**). Discuss what you found, paying special attention to the above points of focus. Write down extensive notes of what others found. Compare and look for new information, time permitting. Write down notes – going through the above points (the ones applicable to your group anyway).

Part III (rest of the period) Now get together in a group and share with your **original group** (the numbers as opposed to the letters) what you found. If you have a copy of the Intro to the Middle Ages or your book with you (**each group may get a text by leaving an ID on my desk**), you may use it. Now as a group, answer the following questions:

1. **What were the most striking ironies found in your readings?** Between perceived history and literature with what really happened? Between different areas especially between A&B, C&E, D&C. Be specific as possible – let each group member give at least one specific irony with an example.
2. **How did the code of chivalry naturally follow the Anglo-Saxon codes of honor in practice** (find at least 3 specific connections). How did that differ in practice (again, at least 3 examples).



3. **Did a bigger picture emerge from doing this group work – if so what** – be as specific as time permits – using as many examples as you can to illustrate your answer. How can we link what we discovered with what Grendel observed while watching history unfold – then consequently listening to the Shaper’s story? Is what you did – reading these **Primary Sources** – closer to what Bede (the Venerable) did (make sure your group is sure about what made him different (get out your Bede groupwork if necessary) – or to what his predecessors did?

You may want to begin this discussion by thinking of our (today’s society’s) common perception of The Crusades. Even more fundamental: think of our understanding of the word, *crusade* & *crusader* (positive or negative connotation and after reading what you did – should it be so –ahhh *Grendel!*). In our John & Barbara discussion (Mary Poppins) – we talked about how the younger than I, John & Barbara saw the cherry trees on their street – the adults just saw a name – there is a subtle and powerful connection to the discussion here.

In the Bede group work, you read an excerpt from an old history book about slaves and slavery in America: “The settlers bought them,” explained the 1903 text, “... and found them so helpful in raising tobacco that more were brought in, and slavery became part of our history.”

How does this “fit in” with this group work? How would primary sources have given a more accurate view of slave life in early America? Were any of your preconceived notions of the Middle Ages (or crusades, or the clergy, or anything you read), overturned by primary sources and facts?

4. *You may do this on your own – if you run out of time and turn in tomorrow (or when we next meet).* Ok – **the dragon said no age was any darker than any other** – comment (with intelligence and specifics) on this now that you have read about the “dark ages” (aka – the Middle Ages). A student in class (2017) said that we tend to taint our view of history with nostalgia. Consider the epigraph at the top of this group work. Given our tendency to believe the past was better, purer (think of our “Seafarer” disc) – how can we improve our “historical vision”?

Homework (please copy into your assignment books).

Don’t forget – The Illuminated Text & reading The Once & Future King extra credit.

Thursday (10/17): Ballads (intro & ballads) pgs 90-96 (read all boxes, as always).

Friday: Chaucer and 1st half of *The Canterbury Tales* Prologue (up to page 117).

Monday (10/21) : finish Prologue (**200 point quiz**).

Tuesday: The Pardoner’s Prologue (handout) and Tale (text book 131-138) – make sure you read both.

Weds: Wife of Bath’s Prologue (handout)

Thursday: “Wife of Bath’s Tale” 140-149 in your textbook

