Aula 5

MEDIEVAL LITERATURE

META

Apresentar, de forma panorâmica, a literatura inglesa produzida no período medieval, atentando para seus principais gêneros e autores.

OBJETIVOS

Ao final da aula o(a) aluno(a) deve ser capaz de:
Compreender o processo de formação do cânone da literatura medieval inglesa, atentando para seus principais autores e gêneros.
Identificar e analisar as características do Inglês Médio (Middle English) na literatura medieval e no inglês moderno.

PRERREQUISITOS

Contexto sócio-histórico do período medieval na Inglaterra.

Luiz Eduardo Oliveira

INTRODUÇÃO

In this class, we will study the medieval literature, its genres (religious and secular) and main works and authors. In a first moment, we will have some historical information about the literary sand artistic culture period. Then we will see the main genres into which it is divided and can be classified and, finally, some general characteristics of Middle English. In short, we are going to learn that, in the history of English literature, the expression "medieval literature" refers to the literature written in Middle English, from the 12th century until the 1470s. During this time the **Chancery Standard**, a form of London-based English, became widespread and the printing press standardized the language. Between the 1470s and the middle of the following century there was a transition from Middle English to Modern English. The works of authors like Langland, Gower and Chaucer is a linguistic and cultural testimony of the use of English in this specific phase of development.

The term **Medieval literature** refers to all of the literary works and writings produced during the Middle Ages, which is marked by the Fall of the Roman Empire, in the 5th century, and lasts until the beginning of Florentine Renaissance. In order to achieve a clear understanding of it, we should start our study by mentioning the categories into which it can be divided. The literature of this period is often grouped into two types, namely, religious and secular. Sacred and profane are also terms that are used to describe writings of this time, since, as we will see, that was a moment in which the influence of the Church was widespread, and that will reflect on what was produced in those days. **Beowulf** is a notorious example of that because, although it is considered a pagan myth, it is possible to find Christian elements, such as Biblical references throughout the narrative.

Before we move forward to talk about the above-mentioned types of works that prevailed throughout the Middle Ages, we must point out a very important aspect that is present in a considerable amount of literature from this period, which is the fact that most of it is anonymous. Medieval writers tended to re-tell stories they had heard and embellish them instead of creating new ones. Such fact makes it hard to attribute the authorship of those works to a specific person. That is also a result of the way authorship was understood then.

RELIGIOUS LITERATURE

Having said that, let us turn our attention to the religious literature. The first thing we have to bear in mind is that the Church exerted great influence on feudal society. Not surprisingly, the dominant form of literature of the time was composed of theological works, which could be typically

found in libraries. Catholic clerics formed the intellectual center of society and played an important role in the production of these works. Hymns, both liturgical and paraliturgical; theological and philosophical treatises, frequently trying to reconcile the teachings of the Greek and Roman pagan authors with the doctrines of the Church; hagiographies (or lives of the Saints) were some of the most common works.

The **Golden Legend**, for example, which is a collection of hagiographies, by Jacobus de Voragine, became popular at the time. In it, Voragine compiles traditional lore about all of the saints venerated of the period.

Blessed Jacobus de Varagine or Voragine (Italian: Giacomo da Varazze, Jacopo da Varazze (c. 1230 – July 13 or July 16, 1298) was an Italian chronicler and archbishop of Genoa. He was the author, or more accurately the compiler, of Legenda Aurea, the Golden Legend, a collection of the legendary lives of the greater saints of the medieval church that was one of the most popular religious works of the Middle Ages.

There are also the mystery plays, which were the only religious writing that were not produced by clerics. It grew out of simple tableaux re-enactments of biblical scenes to become each village's expression of the main events in the Bible. The text of these plays was frequently controlled by the local guilds and, later on, non-biblical themes would be incorporated into these them.

SECULAR LITERATURE

Secular literature in this period was not produced in equal quantity as religious literature, but much of it has survived to this day. Courtly love is the subject that became important in the 11th century, especially in the Romance languages and Greek. The poetry produced by the Anglo-Saxons in Old English was extensive. Some of it was written down as early as the 9th century, although most surviving poems were compiled in the 10th and early 11th century. **Beowulf** is typical of these poems, and it portrays a vivid, heroic tale, ending with the main character's death caused by a dragon, but still showing signs of the new Christian influences in England. Old English was also used for academic and courtly writing from the 9th century onwards, including translations of popular foreign works.

Political poetry was written also, especially towards the end of this period, and the goliardic form saw use by secular writers as well as clerics. That was also a moment in which travel literature was highly popular. Fantastic accounts of far-off lands (frequently embellished or entirely false) were very common and were used to entertain a society that, in most cases, limited people to the area in which they were born. It is also important to highlight the importance of pilgrimages, some of which were present in works of the period such as the **Canterbury Tales** by Chaucer (see Aula 6).

MUSIC

Music and singing also had their place in England during the medieval period. They were present in religious ceremonies, court occasions and in theatrical works. Gymel, for example, is a singing technique introduced in England in the 13th century, accompanied by instruments such as the guitar, harp, pipes and organ. Henry IV was a sponsor of an extensive range of music in England, while his son Henry V brought back many influences from occupied France. Carols became a prominent form of music in the 15th century; originally these had been a song sung during a dance with a well-known refrain — the 15th century form lost the dancing and introduced strong religious overtones.

Ballads were also popular from the late 14th century onwards. Among them are the **Ballad of Chevy Chase** and others describing the activities of **Robin Hood**. There are also the Miracle plays, also called Saint's Play, which were performed to communicate the Bible in various locations. By the late 14th century, these had been extended into vernacular mystery plays. This kind of play developed from plays presented in Latin by churchmen on church premises and depicted such subjects as the Creation, Adam and Eve, the murder of Abel, and the Last Judgment. They were performed annually over several days, broken up into various cycles of plays; a handful have survived into the 21st century. Guilds competed to produce the best

plays in each town and performances were often an expression of civic identity (see **Aula 9**).
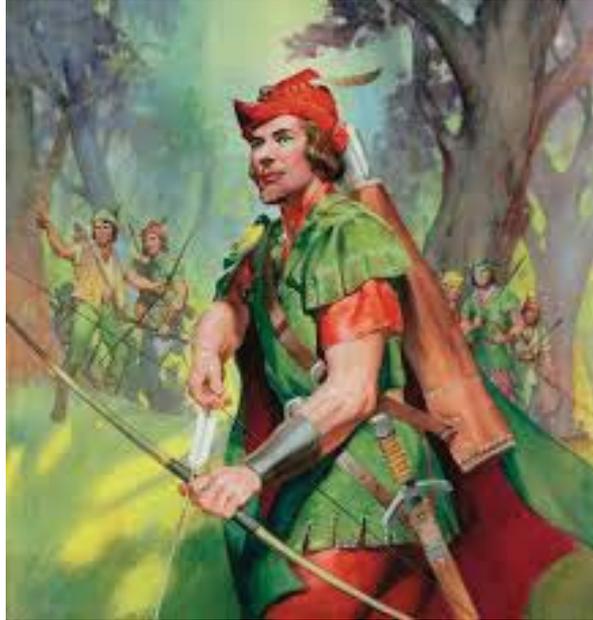
Robin Hood is a heroic outlaw in English folklore who, according to legend, was a highly skilled archer and swordsman. Traditionally depicted as being dressed in Lincoln green**,** he is often portrayed as "robbing from the rich and giving to the poor" alongside his band of Merry Men. Robin Hood became a popular folk figure in the late-medieval period, and continues to be widely represented in literature, films and television.
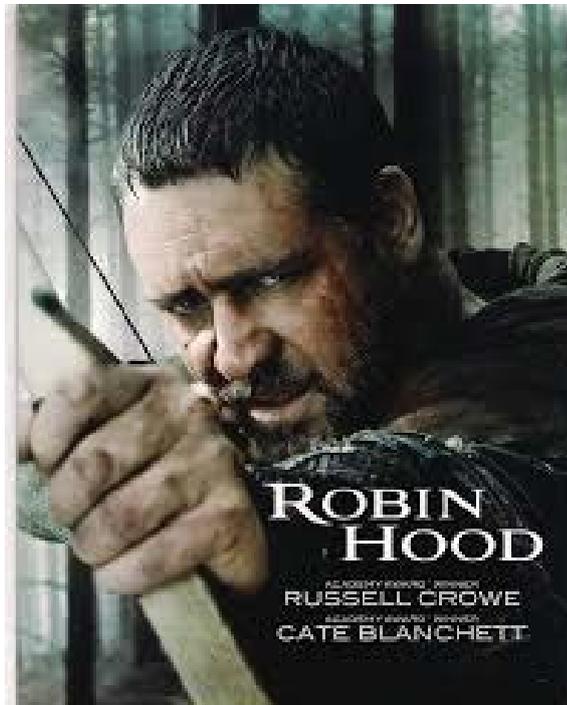
Robin Hood is also a 2010 British-American epic adventure film based on the Robin Hood legend, directed by Ridley Scott and starring Russell Crowe and Cate Blanchett. It was released in 12 countries on 12 May 2010, including the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland, and was also the opening film at the 2010 Cannes Film Festival the same day. It was released in a further 23 countries the following day, among them Australia, and an additional 17 countries on 14 May 2010, among them the United States and Canada.

MIDDLE ENGLISH

With the Norman Conquest, there were linguistic and cultural changes, because with the Crusades, a new ideal appears, the ideal of the knight. Even the hero is different. While in **Beowulf** we see a violent hero, a brutal hero, who is only concerned about his fight and about his faith, now this ancient hero gives place to another kind of hero, a hero who comes from the Crusades, a hero who is considered a knight, a hero who has love affairs and who writes love poems. In short, a hero who is more delicate than the Anglo-Saxon hero. The man who led the Norman invasion was William I, William the Conqueror, who was born in 1028 and died in 1087. He is usually known as William the Conqueror and sometimes William the Bastard. He was the first Norman king of England, reigning from 1066, which is the year of the Battle of Hastings, until his death in 1087.

Thus, the Middle Ages are marked, in England, by the coming of the Normans, in 1066, and goes on until the fifteenth century. But there's a controversy about the end of the second period of English literature. According to some authors, it ends up with the death of Geoffrey Chaucer, who is the most important writer of the period (see **Aula 6**). According to some others, this period takes place from 1066 until the War of the Roses.

And what about the medieval canon?

We have oral tradition in the medieval canon. For example, the stories about Robin Hood begin to circulate during this period. So, this is a period of a very strong and popular oral tradition, but it is also a period of written culture, because during this period the first European universities were built.

After the Norman conquest, the written form of the Anglo-Saxon language continued in some monasteries, but, under the influence of the new aristocracy, **Law French** became the standard language of courts, parliament, and polite society.

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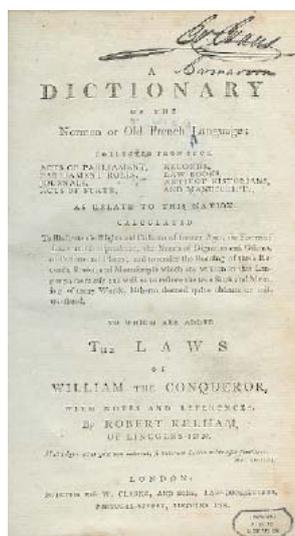
Kelham's Dictionary of the Norman or Old French Language (1779) provided English translations of Law French terms from parliamentary and legal records.

As the invaders were integrated, their language and literature mingled with that of the natives. The Norman language of the ruling classes became Anglo-Norman, and Anglo-Saxon underwent a gradual transition into Middle English. Middle English literature was written, then, in the many dialects that corresponded to the history, culture, and background of the individual authors.

Even so, around the turn of the thirteenth century **Layamon** wrote his **Brut**, based on Wace's twelfth century Anglo-Norman epic of the same name. Layamon's language is recognisably Middle English, though his prosody shows a strong Anglo-Saxon influence.

Layamon or Laghamon (US / ˈleɪəmən/; [ˈlaɣamon]), spelled Laȝamon or Laȝamonn in his time, occasionally written Lawman, was a poet of the late 12th/early 13th century and author of the Brut, a notable English poem that was the first English-language work to discuss the legends of Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. Layamon describes himself in his poem as a priest, living at Areley Kings in Worcestershire. His poem provided inspiration for numerous later writers, including Sir Thomas Malory and Jorge Luis Borges, and had an impact on medieval history writing in England.

King Arthur is a legendary British leader of the late 5th and early 6th centuries, who, according to medieval histories and romances, led the defence of Britain against Saxon invaders in the early 6th century. The details of Arthur's story are mainly composed of folklore and literary invention, and his historical existence is debated and disputed by modern historians. The sparse historical background of Arthur is gleaned from various sources, including the Annales Cambriae, the Historia Brittonum, and the writings of Gildas. Arthur's name also occurs in early poetic sources such as Y Gododdin.
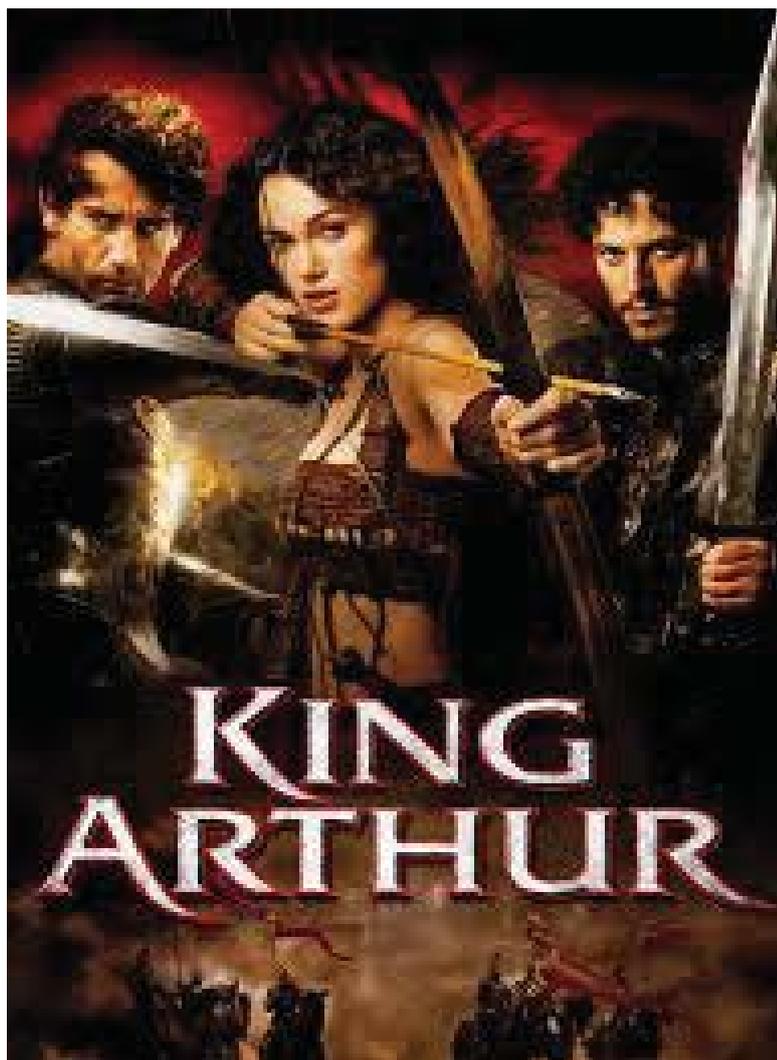
King Arthur is a 2004 action adventure film directed by Antoine Fuqua and written by David Franzoni. It stars Clive Owen as the title character, Ioan Gruffudd as Lancelot, and Keira Knightley as Guinevere. The film is unusual in reinterpreting Arthur as a Roman officer rather than a medieval knight. Despite these departures from the source material, the Welsh Mabinogion, the producers of the film attempted to market it as a more historically accurate version of the Arthurian legends, supposedly inspired by new archaeological findings. The film was shot in England, Ireland, and Wales.

Other transitional works were preserved as popular entertainment, including a variety of romances and lyrics. In 1362, Middle English replaced French and Latin in Parliament and courts of law. Early examples of Middle English literature are **the Ormulum** and **Havelock the Dane**

In the fourteenth century, major works of English literature began to appear: Pearl Poet's Pearl, Patience, Cleanness, and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight; Langland's political and religious allegory Piers Plowman; John Gower's Confessio Amantis and the works of Geoffrey Chaucer (see Aula 6), who is sometimes considered the faher of English literature.

Ver glossário no final da Aula

William Langland (/ˈlæŋlənd/; c. 1332 – c. 1386) is the conjectured author of the 14th-century English dream-vision **Piers Plowman**. The attribution of Piers to Langland rests principally on the evidence of a manuscript held at Trinity College, Dublin (MS 212). This directly ascribes 'Perys Ploughman' to one 'Willielmi de Langlond', son of 'Stacy de Rokayle, who died in Shipton-under-Wychwood, a tenant of the Lord Spenser in the county of Oxfordshire'. Other manuscripts also name the author as 'Robert or William langland', or 'Wilhelmus W.' (most likely shorthand for 'William of Wychwood'). The poem itself also seems to point towards Langland's authorship. At one stage the narrator remarks: 'I have lyved in londe...my name is longe wille' (B.XV.152). This can be taken as a coded reference to the poet's name, in the style of much late-medieval literature (see, for instance, Villon's acrostics in Le Testament). Although the evidence may appear slender, Langland's authorship has been widely accepted by commentators since the 1920s. It is not, however, entirely beyond dispute, as recent work by Stella Pates and C. David Benson has demonstrated.

John Gower (/ˈɡaʊər/; c. 1330 – October 1408) was an English poet, a contemporary of William Langland and a personal friend of Geoffrey Chaucer. He is remembered primarily for three major works, t**he Mirour de l'Omme, Vox Clamantis**, and **Confessio Amantis**, three long poems written in French, Latin, and English respectively, which are united by common moral and political themes.

The second half of the 14th century saw the consolidation of English as a written language and a shift from theological or religious subject matter to a more secular nature. Vernacular book production grew. The reputation of Chaucer's successors in the 15th century has suffered in comparison with him, though authors lika John Lydgate, Thomas Hoccleve and Skelton are studied in post-graduate courses.

Scottish poetry also began to appear, with **The Kingis Quair** by James I of Scotland. The main poets of this Scottish group were Robert Henryson, William Dunbar and Gavin Douglas. Henryson and Douglas'poetry is characterized by an almost savage satire, while Douglas's version of Virgil's **Aeneid** is held as a Renaissance literary monument.

The first English printer, **William Caxton** printed four-fifths of his works in English. He also translated a large number of works into English. Historians say that he was a technician rather than a writer, facing dilemmas concerning language standardisation in the books he printed (he wrote about it in the preface to his **Eneydos**).

Caxton is credited with standardising the English language (that is, homogenising regional dialects) through printing. This facilitated the expansion of English vocabulary, the development of inflection and syntax and the gap between the spoken and the written word. However, **Richard Pynson**, a Frenchman who started printing in London in 1491 or 1492 and who favoured **Chancery Standard English**, was a more accomplished stylist and consequently pushed the English language even further toward standardisation.

William Caxton (c. 1415 – c. March 1492) was an English merchant, diplomat, writer and printer. He is thought to be the first English person to work as a printer and the first to introduce a printing press into England, which he did in 1476. He was also the first English retailer of printed books (his London contemporaries in the same trade were all Flemish, German or French). In 2002 he was named among the 100 Greatest Britons in a BBC poll.

Richard Pynson. Died about 1530.

Richard Pynson (1448 in Normandy – 1529) was one of the first printers of English books. The 500 books he printed were influential in the standardisation of the English language. Pynson, whose books make him technically and typographically the outstanding English printer of his generation, is credited with introducing Roman type to English printing.

Middle English phonology is speculative, since it was only possible to be preserved as a written language. Nevertheless, there is a very large text corpus of Middle English. Middle English varies a lot and, in contrast with Old English and Modern English, spelling was usually phonetic rather than conventional. Thus, words were spelled according to how they sounded to the person writing a text down, rather than according to a phonetic system.

As to gramar, the gramar, Middle English is much closer to that of modern English than that of Old English. Middle English retains only two distinct noun-ending patterns from the more system of inflection in Old English. The early Modern English words engel (angel) and name (name) demonstrate the two patterns:

	strong		**week**	
	singular	plural	singular	plural
nom/acc	engel	engles	name	namen
gen	engles	engle	namen	namen(e)
dat	engle	engle(n)	namen	namen

Some nouns of the engel type have an -e in the nominative/accusative singular, like the weak declension, but otherwise strong endings. The strong -(e)s plural form has survived into Modern English. The weak -(e)n form is now rare in the standard language, used only in oxen, children, brethren. It is less rare in some languages, used in eyen for eyes, shoon for shoes, hosen for hose(s), kine for cows, and been for bees. As a general rule, the indicative first person singular of verbs in the present tense ends in -e ("ich here" — "I hear"), the second person in -(e)st ("þou spekest" — "thou speakest"), and the third person in -eþ ("he comeþ" — "he cometh/he comes"). (þ (the letter 'thorn') is pronounced, in this case, like the unvoiced th in "think", but, under certain circumstances, may be like the voiced th in "that"). More information about the Middle English language van be seen here: http://public.oed.com/aspects-of-english/english-in-time/middle-english-an-overview/

CONCLUSÃO

A very interesting thing happens during this period is the invention authorship. Do you have any idea what it is? Remember that during the Anglo-Saxon period we have no authors. Nobody knows who wrote Beowulf. It comes from the oral tradition, but here, we see, for the first time, authors, like William Langland, like, for example, Geoffrey Chaucer. The medieval period is marked, in England, by the Norman invasion in 1066 and goes on until the fifteenth century, but there is a controversy about the end of the second period of English literature. According to some authors, it ends up with the death of Geoffrey Chaucer, who is the most important writer of the period. According to some others, this period takes place from 1066 until the War of the Roses, which is another important episode in the English history and takes place in the fourteenth and fifteenth century. But the fact is that this period takes place before the Elizabethan age, which is the third period of English literature and which is also the period which the English language comes to be the language we know nowadays, the Shakespearean English, or modern English. And what about the medieval canon? We have oral tradition in the medieval canon. This is the period also from the songs from Provence and the cycles of this kind of literature: the matter of France, the matter of Rome and the matter of Britain. In the matter matter of Britain, we have the stories about King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table.

Althoug this is a period of a very strong and popular oral tradition, it is also a period of written culture because during this period the first European universities were created, founded and built. It was during the same time of the foundation of the University of Bologna, the University of Paris and some years afterwards the Universities of Portugal, such as

Coimbra. A very interesting thing happens during this period: the invention of authorship. Remember that during the Anglo-Saxon period, we have no authors. Nobody knows who wrote Beowulf, because it comes from the oral tradition, but here we see for the first time authors like William Langland and Geoffrey Chaucer, who was born around 1343 and died in 1400 and is known as the Father of English literature. H wrote the **Canterbury Tales** and is considered the greatest English poet of the Middle Ages. He was also the first poet to have been buried in the Poet's Corner of Westminster's Abbey.

RESUMO

In the history of English literature, the expression "medieval literature" refers to the literature written in Middle English, from the 12th century until the 1470s. During this time the **Chancery Standard**, a form of London-based English, became widespread and the printing press standardized the language. Between the 1470s and the middle of the following century there was a transition from Middle English to Modern English. There are three main categories of Middle English literature: Religious, Courtly love and Arthurian, though much of Geoffrey Chaucer's work stands outside these categories. Among the religious works are the writings of Julian of Norwich and Richard Rolle. After the Norman conquest of England, Law French became the standard language of courts, parliament and society. The language of the ruling classes mixed with the Anglo-Saxon of the people and became Anglo-Norman. Anglo-Saxon, thus, underwent a gradual transition into Middle English. Around the turn of the thirteenth century, Layamon wrote in Middle English. Other transitional works were popular entertainment, including a variety of romances and lyrics. In 1362, it replaced French and Latin in Parliament and courts of law. Early examples of Middle English literature are **the Ormulum** and **Havelock the Dane**. In the fourteenth century major literary works began to appear, including the works of Chaucer (see Aula 6). The second half of the 14th century saw the consolidation of English as a written language and a shift to secular writing. William Caxton printed four-fifths of his works in English, which helped to establish the language and expand the vocabulary.

ATIVIDADES

Answer the questions below:

How can you define, chronologically, the Medieval period in England in terms of literature?

What are the main literary genres of th emedieval period. Explain each one of them.

What are the main characteristics of the Middle English language?

What do you understand by "invention of authorship?". Use your own words.

COMENTÁRIO SOBRE AS ATIVIDADES

The intention of this activity is to retain the main contents of the class in a critical way, as well as to develop, in the students, more familiarity with reading and wrting skills of the English language. The answers must be given in English. Use Always a good dictionary English-English. A dictionary is the best companion for a foreign language teacher.

PRÓXIMA AULA

The Age of Chaucer

REFERÊNCIAS

Faltando!!!!

GLÓSSARIO

Law French is an archaic language originally based on Old Norman and Anglo-Norman, but increasingly influenced by Parisian French and, later, English. It was used in the law courts of England, beginning with the Norman Conquest by William the Conqueror. Its use continued for several centuries in the courts of England.

Layamon's Brut (ca. 1190 - 1215), also known as The Chronicle of Britain, is a Middle English poem compiled and recast by the English priest Layamon. The Brut is 16,095 lines long and narrates the history of Britain: it is the first historiography written in English since the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. Named for Britain's mythical founder, Brutus of Troy, the poem is largely based on the Anglo-Norman Roman de Brut by Wace, which is in turn a version of Geoffrey of Monmouth's Latin Historia Regum Britanniae. Layamon's poem, however, is longer than both and includes an enlarged section on the life and exploits of King Arthur. It is written in the alliterative verse style commonly used in Middle English poetry by rhyming chroniclers, the two halves of the alliterative lines being often linked by rhyme as well as by alliteration.

The Ormulum or Orrmulum is a twelfth-century work of biblical exegesis, written by a monk named Orm (or Ormin) and consisting of just under 19,000 lines of early Middle English verse. Because of the unique phonetic orthography adopted by its author, the work preserves many details of English pronunciation existing at a time when the language was in flux after the Norman Conquest. Consequently, it is invaluable to philologists in tracing the development of the language.

Havelok the Dane, also known as Havelok or Lay of Havelok the Dane, is a Middle English romance considered to be part of the Matter of England. The story, however, is also known in two earlier Anglo-Norman versions. Most scholars place Havelok the Dane at the end of the thirteenth century, between 1280 and 1290. The name "Havelok" also has many variations in spelling, and can be found as "Haveloc" or "Havelock."

Chancery Standard was largely based on the London and East Midland dialects, since those areas were both political and demographic centers of English society. However, it used other dialect forms where they made meanings clearer; for example, the northern "they", "their" and "them" (derived from Scandinavian forms) were used rather than the London "hi/they", "hir" and "hem". This was perhaps because the London forms could be confused with words such as "he", "her" and "him". (However, the colloquial form written as "'em", as in "up and at 'em", may well represent a spoken survival of "hem" rather than a shortening of the Norse-derived "them").