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Introduction

British Literature: a Study of British Writers

A British Literature course should be documented on every high school student's transcript. Understanding the value of writing offered by great British authors and poets provides a deeper understanding that will help students as they're introduced to college literature courses. As well, integrating writing, verbal skills, higher level thinking and project organization provides further training for more intense academic studies. All high school students should complete the Train up a Child Publishing *Essays Styles* course (visit infodesk@trainupachildpub.com for more information) or a comparable course as a prerequisite for British Literature. If a student attempts this course without previous essay writing instruction, he may find the essay assignments overly challenging, particularly the higher level essays such as persuasive and comparison/contrast which are assigned repeatedly in this course.

This curriculum was designed to reveal and explore the unique qualities of British writing, with an emphasis on the Victorian age. With the huge expanse of British literature, selecting the titles was challenging. The books were carefully chosen bearing in mind such components as literary elements, writing styles, quality of writing, story content and character value. As with all Train up a Child Publishing courses and curricula, we have personally read and evaluated each of the books.

We also ask that you not make assumptions based on the authors chosen for this study. With some authors, we believe that using certain selections is appropriate for high school students, while using other selections might not be. For example, William Shakespeare is an icon of British Literature. We feel that his work must be studied, but for high school students there are definite selections we would not choose. *Romeo and Juliet*, with the themes of disobeying parents and committing suicide in the name of love, would not be a play that we would recommend for high school students. With other authors, such as C.S. Lewis, we are able to confidently recommend his works, even those prior to his salvation because of their content and creativity. If you choose to have your student read British Literature beyond what is suggested this course, or if you substitute materials, please use caution. Don't assume that older works will always be better or appropriate.

Our goals for the students who utilize Train up a Child Publishing's literature-based curricula include:

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- A greater love for reading
- The capacity to identify valuable literature
- Enhanced knowledge of literary elements and the written word
- Increased skills related to researching, organizing, writing and editing
- Improved oral narration abilities
- Overall confidence in language arts proficiency

As with all our curricula, we have included distinctive and helpful components for both the student and the teacher. Some valuable highlights of this particular curriculum include:

- An introduction with information about the writing process and how to fully use the curriculum.
- Assignment units including reading levels, goals and objectives, literature summaries and comprehensive instructions for writing and evaluating each assignment.
- Step by step instructions offering a wide variety of activities and writing assignments directly related to the selected literature.
- Evaluation directions, rubric usage and recommendations for the teacher.
- The opportunity to utilize the course for Honors credit.
- A glossary of terms.
- Appendices containing helpful tools such as:
 - Study Guide template and instructions
 - Point of View notes
 - Answer Keys
 - Graphic Organizers
 - Plot Map
 - Vocabulary
 - Grading rubrics predesigned for all major assignments and instructions on how to calculate rubric grades
 - Instructions for grading papers using Microsoft Word's editing tools –

As well as lessons and reading assignments, we have included literature summaries and evaluation guidelines designed to assist teachers with content and grading without adding the burden of you having to read each book thoroughly. However, you may certainly desire to go even deeper

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into the content and meaning of the literature by reading it in full. If you should choose to further explore the materials using the Internet, we strongly warn you against assuming that web material is accurate. With literature in particular, we have found that distortions have occurred which have little or no basis in the actual writing. For example, with William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, two of the main male characters are close friends. Despite the fact that Shakespeare has both of these men in love with women, some analysts want students to evaluate whether the two men could have been homosexuals. In examining the material, we've found little evidence of that situation, but there are quite a few websites on the Internet that imply such a relationship and suggest that students examine that possibility.

The selections for this course are as follows and the appropriate edition of each may be ordered at infodesk@trainupachildpub.com on the *Books!* page:

- *Beowulf* translated by Seamus Heaney (epic poetry)
- *Julius Caesar* by William Shakespeare (historical play)
- *A Study in Scarlet* by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (short story)
- *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer (short stories)
- *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte (novel)
- *Mansfield Park* by Jane Austen (novel)
- *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens (novel)
- *Screwtape Letters* by C.S. Lewis (novel)
- *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde (play)
- Selected poetry printed in the curriculum appendices.

Teacher's Notes

Group Activities

You may want to consider working on this curriculum with a small group of other high school families. It is ideal for weekly discussion groups. Having other students and parents with whom you and your student can discuss and share the assignments may enhance the overall course experience.

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As well, certain assignments, such as the Canterbury character scrapbook, can be completed by individuals or in groups.

Choosing Assignments

One decision that you will need to make is how many and which assignments you'll want your student to complete. Although you may work through the assignments as written, especially with those books with multiple assignments, you may want to limit your choice somewhat. You may also adapt an assignment to better meet the needs of your student. For example, you might want to make an assignment shorter. For a college prep course, the student should complete approximately 8-10 assignments for the year, which would average into 1-2 of the regular assignments for each book selection. This should not include a few of the quicker, oral assignments. Also consider quality over quantity. Particularly with challenging writing assignments and essays, allowing the student more time to create a better end result often makes more sense than having the student complete several different shorter assignments.

Honors Credit

As you examine this course, you will note that certain assignments are required for Honors credit. Before beginning, you will want to decide whether to work through the Honors course load or the College Prep course load. An Honors curriculum is more challenging and time consuming, typically requiring higher level thinking skills and more effort. However, it is an asset to any student's transcript when seeking college admission and scholarships, particularly in a state with a weighted grade point average. For Honors credit, the student will need to complete the previously mentioned number of assignments plus at least four of the Honors assignments for the entire year. This means that the student will not need to complete an Honors assignment for every book selection. Obviously, if the teacher feels that the student should complete more than recommended, that is entirely up to the discretion of the teacher. Another option for Honors is that the student can complete a research paper for the year. There is any number of topics presented within the curricula that would support a research paper.

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Concerning Writing

As there are many writing assignments associated with this curriculum, we've included the following information to assist you and your student as needed.

The Process of Writing

Understanding the process of writing is essential for completing the writing assignments in this course. With each style of essay, students will be required to minimally do the following:

- Take sufficient notes to complete the essay
- Write a thesis statement
- Create an outline
- Use the outline to write an essay 4-8 paragraphs in length
- Use a checklist to self-edit writing
- Write multiple drafts that improve with each effort
- Complete a final draft that demonstrates knowledge of the essay style, content and writing skills.

It is imperative that students complete every step of the writing process. The process of writing is covered in more detail in the Train up a Child Publishing *Teacher's Manual*, available for purchase on our website. Even if a student is talented enough to write an essay without an outline (not many demonstrate such ability), it is essential to develop this skill for more challenging work in the future. Initially, the teacher should evaluate each step of the process to make sure that the student is completing it thoroughly and correctly.

Essay Styles

The three styles of essays required to complete the written assignments in this curriculum include the following:

- **Narrative** – tells a story, most often written in first person using “I.”
- **Persuasive** – a style that is used to argue a specific point with strong support.
- **Comparison/Contrast** – an essay that explains the similarities and differences of two or more ideas, people or things.

This literature course utilizes fewer essay types but those assigned are quite challenging. Students need to have adequate time to take notes, outline, write, edit and rewrite essays.

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Essay Presentation

It is assumed that by this point, students are able to use the computer and type essays rather than write them. Hand writing multiple drafts of an essay is time consuming and frustrating. As students save their work, require them to number and save each draft.

We recommend that the following computer formatting style be implemented for consistency and general practice of all written assignments:

1. Fonts should be 12 point and readable rather than decorative. Recommended fonts include Times New Roman, Arial, or Tahoma.
2. Titles for essays should be in a 14 point font and bolded. The titles are typically centered on the first page of the essay with the student's name and the date of the assignment in 12 point, not bolded, below the title.
3. Paragraphs should be indented and double spaced.
4. Titles (book, magazine, etc.) should be bolded or italicized, but not both, rather than underlined. Quotes should contain quotation marks or be italicized, but not both.
5. Spelling and grammar checks are optional and their usage should be determined by the teacher. By high school, we suggest that students use spell check and grammar check on their computers because in college and as adults, they will most likely do so.

Understanding the Units

Each of the British Literature units is similarly designed but is not necessarily in chronological order based on the time periods of the writing or the story settings. We chose this order to best execute assignments and related skills rather than simply putting the materials in order by publication. The assignments may be chosen by the teacher and student, but note the abbreviations listed before each numbered assignment to determine when an assignment is best completed. The abbreviation key is: **PR** – Prior to Reading, **AR** – As you Read and **FR** – Following Reading. Pay particular attention to who is to read each section, as some sections are written to the teacher, some are to be read by both the teacher and the student, and some are written directly to the student. For clarity, the sections written directly to the student will be indicated throughout the curriculum by a light bulb  at the beginning of the section.

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Particularly in the evaluation sections, directions are often repeated, but they may vary by a few significant words and therefore, should still be read carefully. In fact, we strongly suggest that teachers adequately prepare to teach each unit by first reading it through several times.

The unit sections are as follows:

- *Reading Level* – this curriculum uses books with a variety of reading levels and we noted the levels as we perceived them. Included in parentheses are the reasons for our noted level indication. It shouldn't be assumed that a short story is naturally easier than a long book. If you find that a book is too challenging for your student, there are several ways to overcome this issue:
 - Give him more time to read the material so he can read less in each sitting.
 - Let him listen to the book on CD.
 - Read the book aloud with him. When doing so, plan extra time because reading aloud takes longer than reading silently. Discuss the book in small segments with your student as he reads to insure comprehension.
- *Timeframe for Completion* – this is an estimate for the average student. Your student may need more or less time with either the reading or the written assignments, which is fine as long as the work is properly completed. Honors students should be given additional time to complete their extra assignments, as needed. This is an excellent opportunity for high school students to learn to set and meet deadlines. You may want to have consequences for late deadlines to reinforce this important life skill.
- *Objectives* – While *written to the teacher*, these two types of goals should be read and understood by the student, as well. They provide direction for what the student should accomplish with this unit and also focus on what will be evaluated in the end.
-  *Literature Summary* – Directed to both the student and the teacher, this overview provides an introduction to and preview of the written work.
-  *Assignments* – Written for the student to follow, they provide detailed instructions on how to complete the various literature assignments and activities. The order of most of the assignments is not relevant and the teacher, along with student, may select the most desired or appropriate assignments. If there are rubrics connected to the evaluation of the assignment, it will probably benefit the student to read through the rubric before starting the assignment. This way he has a clearer picture of what is expected of him.

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- *Evaluation – Written to assist the teacher*, this procedure was designed to make the evaluation process easier and more understandable for both the teacher and the student.

Special Features

- *Study Guides* – Each major piece of literature (plays and novels) offers a study guide template (see Appendix A) as a possible assignment. We recommend that students do at least two of these study guides during the course. This assignment is more easily completed as the student reads. Having the student spend time each day working on the study guide will ease the challenges that can occur with longer assignments. If using this assignment with a class, the teacher might consider working on the study guide in pairs or groups during class and discussing the work in the classroom setting. Another option would be to assign portions of the study guide to different students who then share the information with the other students.
- *Bolded words* – The bolded words found throughout the units are defined in the glossary section at the back of the curriculum.
- *Appendices* – Throughout the curriculum there are references to the Appendices as previously listed. It is important to review this section before you begin teaching to have an overview of the tools and helpful notes available to you and your student.

Evaluation Methods

There is more than one way to grade assignments. While we make suggestions, feel free to use the evaluation method with which you're most comfortable. Some of the evaluation methods referred to in this curriculum include:

- *Pass/fail* – this evaluation type is most often used with smaller projects in which the student completes the assignment competently or not. It shouldn't be used too often, but works well when the assignment grade isn't vital, but you still want the student to have the assignment experience.
- *Oral presentations* – almost any of the assignments can be changed to or include an oral presentation component. A percentage grading key may be found in the evaluation section, but typically looks like this on a 100 point scale:
 - Preparedness of material to be presented. 25%

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- Presentation of material including eye contact, smooth speech patterns and organized speaking. 25%
- Clear articulation. 15%
- Topic is well represented by content of material. 35%
- *Essay and longer writing assignments* - Like the oral presentation grading, these assignments may be graded on a 100 point scale as in the following example for a Persuasive essay:
 - Persuasive style maintained 25%
 - General essay rules (introduction, thesis statement, paragraph transition, well-formed paragraphs, conclusion) 20%
 - Grammar, punctuation, and spelling 15%
 - Clarity of written communication 15%
 - Deadlines maintained and all components included (thesis statement, outline, notes, drafts and final essay) 15%
 - Presentation (typed, titled, etc.) 10%
- *Rubric grading* – For any of the larger assignments, including the final drafts of essays, it is advisable to use a rubric. (Use the rubric *or* the percentages.) **Prior to the assignment, go over the rubric with your student so that he has a clear picture of what you’re expecting of him.** Rubrics are easy to use and understand. You can adapt or use the following predesigned rubrics that we’ve included in Appendix B.

There are two keys to success for purposeful evaluation. Firstly, you need to insure that your student has a clear understanding of what will be evaluated and how you will be evaluating specific assignments. Secondly, you need to be consistent in how you grade your student’s work and return it graded in a timely manner.

Final Note

British Literature is usually most successful with students who have at least one year of high school literature and writing experience. For younger students, you may find the content and readability a challenge. It’s better to take longer to read or begin reading earlier (maybe the summer prior to the school year) than to rush through the material.

First Book Selection with Assignment Choices following

Beowulf

translated by Seamus Heaney

Time Period: Written sometime before the 10th century A.D. in Old English

Reading level: Challenging (content, translated from Old English, high interest)

Time Frame for Completion: 4-6 weeks

Objectives

Literary:

1. Using a template, complete a study guide for a literary work.
2. Understand the divisions of **episodes** and variance of **themes** in a literary work.
3. Discover **kennings** and how they were used in Anglo-Saxon writing.
4. Compare pagan and Christian attributes of *Beowulf*

Language/Other Subject Connections:

1. Research the Anglo-Saxons and discover their vibrant history.
2. Learn how to recognize words written in Old English.
3. Learn to write a narrative poem



Literature Summary: The oldest known example of English poetry, *Beowulf* is one of the most famous Anglo-Saxon poems. It is a **narrative**, meaning that it tells a story or narrates a series of events. Most historians believe that the poem itself is much older than the actual transcript, as it was probably shared orally before being documented in writing. Currently, there is only one known manuscript of *Beowulf*. The narrative tells of an amazing struggle between Beowulf, the story's hero, and the frightening monster, Grendel. Initially, Grendel terrorizes Heorot by attacking and eating men as they sleep. Beowulf kills Grendel and eventually becomes King, but he is later terrorized by Grendel's mother, who is seeking revenge.



Literature Assignments

AR, FR 1. Using the template in Appendix A, fill in the appropriate study guide components. We advise that this assignment be completed over a period of 2-3 weeks while reading the material. It may be completed after finishing the reading, but it will be more time consuming. If you need help understanding how to complete the template, see Appendix A for a template with instructions.

AR, FR 2. Similar to a play, *Beowulf* may be divided into **episodes** or **themes**. As you read, write down a simple name for each episode and the pages of that section. Literary translators usually divide the book into 10-12 different episodes. An example of an episode might be:

Grendel attacks Heorot: pp 9-15

PR, AR 3. Research the Anglo-Saxons. Write a summary or present an oral report of what you learn about them. The written assignment should be in paragraph form as a brief report (3-5 paragraphs).

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AR, FR 4. About a third of the words in *Beowulf* are called **kennings**. Research kennings and discover their relevance to this poem. Write a simple definition for kennings and explain the role of this literary language in *Beowulf*. Also provide examples of kennings from the narrative.

PR, AR, FR 5. Old English is challenging to read, but it is possible to discover some of the words if you understand the phonetics behind the language. Go to the British Library at www.bl.uk/learning/langlit/changlang/activities/lang/beowulf/beowulfpage1.html and follow the directions for the *Learning: Changing Language* assignment. Turn in your list of words and/or phrases for a grade.



Honors Assignments

FR 1. Write a narrative poem of 10 or more stanzas. Using *Beowulf* as an example, be sure you choose a narrative that is entertaining and interesting. Follow these steps for writing your own narrative.

- **Select** a real or made up story upon which to base your poem. It could be based on an event you've experienced, a news story or a work of fiction.
- **Outline** the main episodes in your story. Be sure to include an introductory and concluding episode. As you outline these episodes, consider how many stanzas that you'll need for each. They don't have to be the same in length, but evaluating the length of each episode at this point will allow you to have better control over the length of your narrative poem.
- **Write** each of your episodes. Consider how you might use figurative and descriptive language to create word pictures for your reader. Review sections of *Beowulf* if you struggle with developing a rhythm for your poem. Remember, you don't need to rhyme, but you definitely want it to sound more like a poem than an essay.
- **Read** your poem aloud once you've finished writing it. Look for inconsistencies such as information being left out or too much time spent on any one episode. Also note if you can actually hear the rhythm of your poem. Finally, look for technical errors such as spelling, punctuation and grammar problems.
- **Rewrite** your poem correcting any errors.
- **Title** your poem.

FR 2. *Beowulf* is often viewed as a pagan story written from a Christian perspective. Write a 4-6 paragraph essay explaining why this view might be taken. Discuss what might make someone think this is a pagan story, then address what evidence there is that a Christian may have written the story. Use direct quotes from the poem to support your points. Be sure to outline and establish your thesis before beginning the writing of your essay.

Evaluation Tips for the Book Selection Above

Literature Assignments

1. *Study Guide*

We recommend using the rubric in Appendix B to evaluate this assignment. Follow the directions for using a rubric in order to calculate a numerical grade for your student.

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2. *Literary Episodes*

- This assignment should be the student's original ideas. Episodes may be found online but emphasize that it's better for the student to create his own episodes. Otherwise, he's missing the point of discovering the episodes.
- For the teacher's use, suggested episodes are as follows. However, if the student develops slightly different episodes, but he can validate his ideas, accept them.
 1. The introduction or beginning
 2. The attack of Grendel
 3. Beowulf arrives at Heorot
 4. Grendel and Beowulf meet
 5. The speeches
 6. The Queen speaks
 7. Going to Grendel
 8. In the meantime...
 9. King Beowulf
 10. Beowulf's reign
 11. Beowulf fights the dragon
 12. The death of Beowulf
- The student should include both a name for each episode as well as the page numbers.
- The writing should be grammatically correct and clearly articulated. Points should be deducted for spelling, punctuation and grammar errors.
- In weighing the grade for this assignment, we recommend the following percentages or points based on a 100 point scale:
 - Reasonable episode names 45%
 - Page numbers 45%
 - Spelling, punctuation and grammar 10%

3. *Research on Anglo-Saxons*

For written assignments:

- This assignment should be the student's original writing, although it is research based.
- The writing should be grammatically correct and clearly articulated. Points should be deducted for spelling, punctuation and grammar errors.
- The assignment should be within the page length requirements and neatly presented, as discussed in the *Teacher's Notes* on page 7 under *The Process of Writing*.
- In weighing the grade for this assignment, we recommend the following percentages or points based on a 100 point scale:
 - Content of subject matter 50%
 - Grammar, punctuation, and spelling 20%
 - Clarity of written communication 20%
 - Presentation (typed, titled, etc.) 10%

For oral presentations:

As this is an oral presentation, the focus for a grade needs to be on that aspect of the assignment. In weighing the grade for this presentation, we recommend the following percentages or points based on a 100 point scale:

- Preparedness of material to be presented. 25%

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- Presentation of material including eye contact, smooth speech patterns and organized speaking. 25%
- Clear articulation. 15%
- Topic is well represented by content of material. 35%

4. Kennings

This assignment should be graded based on the student including the following:

- A clear and specific definition of kennings (*metaphorical descriptions often used in Anglo-Saxon writing where the author combines two or more words to create a descriptive new word or phrase.*)
- A brief (1-2 paragraphs) explanation of the use of kennings in *Beowulf* (Some important points include: kennings make the narrative poem more poetic and imaginative, there are over 1000 examples of kennings in *Beowulf* and the poet used kennings to be creative with imagery and sound in the poem.)
- Examples of kennings directly from the narrative poem.

Point deductions should be made for punctuation, grammar and other writing errors.

5. Changing Language

The student should be evaluated primarily on effort with this activity and should be given a pass or fail grade. If he follows the directions online and presents a reasonable list of 5-7 examples, the grade may be “pass.” Otherwise, we recommend having the student redo the assignment until a passing grade is achieved.

Honors Assignment

1. Narrative poem

We recommend using the rubric in Appendix B to evaluate this assignment. Follow the directions for using a rubric in order to calculate a numerical grade for your student.

2. Pagan/Christian Essay

- This assignment should be the student’s original writing, although it is research based and should include quotations from *Beowulf*.
- The writing should be grammatically correct and clearly articulated. Points should be deducted for spelling, punctuation and grammar errors.
- The assignment should be within the paragraph length requirements and neatly presented.
- In weighing the grade for this assignment, we recommend the following percentages or points based on a 100 point scale:
 - Content of subject matter including quotations 50%
 - Grammar, punctuation, and spelling 20%
 - Clarity of written communication 20%
 - Presentation (typed, titled, etc.) 10%

This is the end of the sample of British Literature! If you have any questions about this or any of our other courses, we would love to hear from you at the email address at the bottom of the page.