

The English Language

1. Is subject to constant growth and decay that characterizes all forms of life.
2. Reflects many centuries of development.
3. Is one of the most important languages of the world and had become important because of the events that have shaped the balance of power among nations.
4. Languages of a large part of Europe and part of Asia were at one time identical (until 3500-2500 BC).
5. Exact geographical location is unknown.
6. During this time, people began to move from this centralized location into different areas! Language evolved!!
7. Many were isolated which explains why the language is distinct.
8. Several languages evolved and survived. They fall into 11 principle groups.

English

1. English derives from the Germanic language group.
2. English belongs to the Low West Germanic Branch of the Indo-European family.
3. English shares certain characteristics common to all the Germanic languages.

In 449...

1. Certain Germanic tribes who were founders of the English nation began invading Britain The three tribes were the Angles, Jutes, and Saxons.
2. For more than 100 years, bands of conquers and settlers migrated from their homes and established themselves in the south and each of the islands.

The Venerable Bede

1. Bede was born in 672 or 673 and dies in 735
2. Bede was named Historian and Doctor of the Church (received this title on because of the advantage the whole Church has derived from his doctrine...)
3. Major accomplishment and doctrine was his Ecclesiastical History of the English People
4. Bede tells us in EHEP that the Jutes, Angles, and Saxons were the Germanic tribes who conquered England....VIP to English history!!

West Saxon Dialect

1. Only dialect in which there is an extensive collection of texts.
2. Dialect was of the West Saxon Kingdom in the southwest.
3. Nearly all of Old English literature is preserved, thanks to King Alfred, in manuscripts transcribed in his region.
4. These manuscripts transcribed in his region became somewhat of a literary standard and because of the abundance of materials , it is made the basis of the study of Old English.
5. However, its start toward becoming the standard speech of England was cut short by the Norman Conquest of 1066.

St. Augustine

1. Date of birth unknown but he dies May 26, 604.
2. Founded Christian Monastery in Canterbury in 597
3. The founding of the Monastery was a major advancement toward Christianizing Britain.

4. Before the Norman Conquest, the Roman Christianizing of Britain in 597 brought England into contact with Latin civilizations and made significant additions to our vocabulary.
5. Influences of Latin upon the English language rose and fell with the fortunes of the church.
6. As a result of remerged literary activity, a new series of Latin importations took place.

Christianity and Old English Culture

1. Literature of the Anglo-Saxons existed only in their memories!!
2. It was not until the Christianizing of Britain (in 597!!) that they learned to make written records.
3. Missionaries such as Alfred the Great (monks) were sent to spread Christianity.
4. Christianity was maintained only in remoter regions where Anglo-Saxons failed to penetrate.
5. St. Augustine was sent by Pope Gregory to King Ethelbert of Kent.
6. Meanwhile, about the same time, missionaries from Ireland began to preach Christianity in the north.
7. Within 75 years, the island was predominately Christian.

Old English Poetry

1. The world was very dark!
2. Romance hardly appears at all.
3. Men seem seldom to relax...always clothed in armor and ready to fight to the death to test their courage against fate.
4. Poetry depicts a harsh reality with extraordinary subtlety and intensity.
5. There is frequent use of ironic understatement to achieve excitement.

Heroic Ideal & Anglo-Saxons

1. Heroic ideal = excellence
2. The hero/king strove to do the best!!
3. Skill and courage were the primary qualities of a king/hero....someone who could and would lead his people in battle and sustain them during peace.
4. Heroic ideal of conduct was aristocratic.
5. Successful king/hero had ENDURING FAME!!! This was most important!!!
6. Their religion offered no promise of everlasting life, so emphasis was added on ENDURING FAME!
7. A name living on after one's death was the closest possibility to immortality.
8. Thus, arises the heroic paradox - - by dying glorious, one may achieve immortality.
9. The immortality that the old heroes had sought was achieved through poetry and poetry in turn gave inspiration to later men.