



The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Vol. A: Middle Ages

M.H. Abrams (Founding Editor) , Stephen Greenblatt (General Editor) , James Simpson , Alfred David (Editor)

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Firmly grounded by the hallmark strengths of all Norton Anthologies thorough and helpful introductory matter, judicious annotation, complete texts wherever possible The Norton Anthology of English Literature has been revitalized in this Eighth Edition through the collaboration between six new editors and six seasoned ones. Under the direction of Stephen Greenblatt, General Editor, the editors have reconsidered all aspects of the anthology to make it an even better teaching tool.

The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Vol. A: Middle Ages Details

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From Reader Review The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Vol. A: Middle Ages for online ebook

Alice says

This was the first volume in a set of 3.

It is a comprehensive history and survey of English literature up to Middle English.

I personally adore all Norton editions as I find their translations to be the best out there and the footnotes are not insane to read. Some anthologies over do the footnotes and annotations so much that there are more of those than actual text.

In all, this anthology gives a rather good summary and example of what English literature looked like, and includes most, if not all, major works of the time period.

I have begun to read the next in this series and hope it will be the same.

Erin says

So, I have to say this--literature from the Middle Ages does not resonate with me. But, because of the Norton contexts and the professor I had for this particular class, I have new-found appreciation for The Canterbury Tales ("The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale"), Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, and Beowulf (liked it better as an adult than when I was 17 y.o.).

Liz says

How do you rate English history? I won't. I loved this though.

Heather Adkins says

I read this book for my English literature before 1600 class. We didn't read the whole thing, which is damn good because some of this stuff is significantly hard to read. To be honest, the class made the book amazing. The discussions we had on the use of religion in the works and everybody's conflicting opinions on characters such as Sir Gawain, Beowulf, and pious ladies Kempe and Julian were a great way to appreciate literature. These works were the beginning, the famous pieces that were the foundation for writing of today.

Eric says

Super helpful introduction to the foundations of early-middle English literature.

Alisha Helton says

This book has a great collection of stories and poems from the Middle Ages. Each author has an introduction that gives you context of the story. And if the story hasn't been translated to modern day English, they provide in-text translations that really help when trying to understand it. It's a great collection if you like old literature.

Daniel says

This was one of three volumes (A,B,C) in a bundle-pack required for my first English Lit. survey course. The course was entitled, English Literature: Beginnings Through 1865 (or something along those lines). Of the three, I found volume A to be most enjoyable for several reasons: the morality play "Everyman" (Anonymous), the Anglo-Saxon/Old English Poetry and parts of "The Canterbury Tales". Specific poems I enjoyed: "The Dream of the Rood" (allusion to the crucifix, the lord and savior Jesus Christ), "The Wanderer" (the loss of a lord, an elegiac poem teeming with Christian sentiments), and "The Wife's Lament" (a vague and questionable elegiac prose poem). The morality play, "Everyman" is a fun time--certainly a good read! There are bits and pieces of Geoffrey Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales", great/very helpful footnotes included in "The General Prologue" and the vulgar and hilarious "The Miller's Prologue and Tale". All in all, a good time, and if you are a student of Literature this should be one of your main books!

Phillip says

I love the Norton Anthologies of Literature. I have been a Norton fan since my undergrad days when we used them in my survey classes, and now that I'm teaching lit surveys I'm passing these wonderful collections along to my students (by which I mean forcing my students to buy them).

The Norton editors are really good about providing background for such a wide variety of texts, including general introductory material about the medieval period--social organization, religious developments, changes in the English language from Anglo-Saxon Old English, through Norman French to Middle English, and into Early Modern English. The editors also provide more specific background for the individual texts, giving some history of the author (when it's known) and the significance of the text in the overall picture of English literature.

For my British Literature I survey, I selected a variety of texts, including "Cuchullain's Boyhood Deeds," the opening section of Beowulf, pieces of Chaucer's "General Prologue" and "Wife of Bath's Prologue," the "York Play of the Crucifixion," and a couple of pieces from Margery Kempe. As this list suggests, the Norton has a wide range of texts (and I didn't even cast as wide a net as I initially intended to), dealing with a multitude of issues that were important to medieval people, including religion, gender roles, chivalry, the shift from Anglo-Saxon/Old English to Norman/Middle English, and so on.

Peter E. Frangel says

'Beowulf', 'The Canterbury Tales', 'Dream of the Rood', 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight' and more. What else could you ask for? This is a wonderful introduction to Middle Age British literature, if you fancy such things or even just want to learn more about the period, and the foundation of how we write today.

David Withun says

If you are interested in familiarizing yourself with early works of literature in English, this is a very good place to start. The selections are outstanding and the updated language is usually pretty good, though the inconsistently updated spelling in some of the works was a bit distracting. The appendix to the book is also a very helpful resource, with a quite useful bibliography, a short treatment of developments in the English language, and a just-thorough-enough glossary of important literary and poetic terms.

Paras2 says

One of the essentials for English literature students. history and literature packed together. I feel that whatever I say is a cruel underestimation of this books worth so I'd rather keep silent in appreciation and awe.

****First reading review****
there'll be more times...

Molli says

The essentials of English Literature in easy to handle volumes!. Not really a book (or series) to read for sheer pleasure, unless you're a medievalist/classics enthusiast, but certainly worth the read. Unfortunately, some of the longer pieces in this collection are truncated, or appear only in an excerpted form. Beowulf and Gawain, though, seem to be complete.

Krios says

The book was good; however, I had to read this for an English class and I pronounced everything wrong reading Chaucer so I'm salty.

Diana says

The first book of the set used for my British Literature class. We used it mostly for the biographies of the authors, some poetry and the pronunciations to help us understand Old English. I've had to do a ton of

reading for this class with even more to do, we are only in week five. I've enjoyed it immensely , especially since so many of the books had been sitting on my TBR list for multiple years.

Robin says

I like this series of textbooks. Each section has a clear, concise introduction to different aspects of that theme. It provides brief, informative biographies on each author. It includes a wide variety of authors and poets to choose from. There is no way you could cover everything in this book in one semester. It has wonderful footnotes to help clarify archaic words and phrases as well. All this is presented without any kind of opinion or critique, leaving the passages open for debate or personal interpretation. I really enjoyed it.
