**Answer NO-01**

The Anglo-Saxon period denotes the period of British history between about 450 and 1066. It includes the creation of an English nation, with many of the aspects that survive today, including regional government of shires and hundreds. During this period, Christianity was re-established and there was a flowering of literature and language. Charters and law were also instituted. The history of the Anglo-Saxons is the history of a cultural identity. It developed from divergent groups in association with the people’s adoption of Christianity and was integral to the establishment of various kingdoms. The early Anglo-Saxon period covers the period of medieval Britain that starts from the end of Roman rule. In the second half of the 6th century, four structures contributed to the development of Anglo-Saxon society: the position and freedoms of the ceorlpeasants, the smaller tribal areas coalescing into larger kingdoms, the elite developing from warriors to kings, and Irish monasticism developing under Finnian. The 9th century saw the rise of Wessex, from the foundations laid by King Egbert in the first quarter of the century to the achievements of King Alfred the Great in its closing decades. Alfred successfully defended his kingdom against the Viking attempt at conquest and became the dominant ruler in England. He was the first king of the West Saxons to style himself “King of the Anglo-Saxons.” Alfred had a reputation as a learned and merciful man with a gracious and level-headed nature who encouraged education and improved his kingdom’s legal system and military structure and his people’s quality of life. The visible Anglo-Saxon culture can be seen in the material culture of buildings, dress styles, illuminated texts, and grave goods. The effects persist in the 21st century as, according to a study published in March 2015, the genetic makeup of British populations today shows divisions of the tribal political units of the early Anglo-Saxon period. The culture of the Anglo-Saxons was especially solidified and cultivated by King Alfred. The major kingdoms had grown by absorbing smaller principalities, and the means by which they did it and the character their kingdoms acquired as a result represent one of the major themes of the Middle Saxon period. A “good” king was a generous king who won the support that would ensure his supremacy over other kingdoms through his wealth. The first group of King Alfred’s three-fold Anglo-Saxon society are praying men-people who work at prayer. Although Christianity dominates the religious history of the Anglo-Saxons, life in the 5th and 6th centuries was dominated by “pagan” religious beliefs with a Scando-Germanic heritage. Anglo-Saxon England found ways to synthesize the religion of the church with the existing “northern” customs and practices. Thus the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons was not just their switching from one practice to another, but making something fresh out of their old inheritance and their new beliefs and learning. Monasticism, and not just the church, was at the center of Anglo-Saxon Christian life. The second element of Alfred’s society is fighting men. The subject of war and the Anglo-Saxons is a curiously neglected one; however, it is an important element of their society. The third aspect of Alfred’s society is working men. Anglo-Saxon literature, that is, the Old English literature, was almost exclusively a verse literature in oral form. It could be passed down by word of mouth from generation to generation. Its creators for the most part were unknown. It was given a written form long after its composition. There were two groups of poetry in the Anglo-Saxon period. The first group was the pagan poetry represented by Beowulf ; the second was the religious poetry represented by the works of Caedmon and Cynewulf. In the 8th century, Anglo-Saxon prose appeared. The famous prose writers of that period were Venerable Bede and Alfred the Great. The literature of the Anglo-Saxon period was characterized by oral tradition, epic poetry, alliteration, kennings, and a focus on heroic ideals. It reflected the values and beliefs of the society at that time, blending pagan and Christian influences. The language was simple yet powerful, making these literary works accessible to a wide audience. The Anglo-Saxon period was a time in history when people in England spoke Old English and had distinct literary features.

Let’s explore some of these features in easy-to-understand language-

**Oral tradition**-In the Anglo-Saxon period, many stories were passed down orally from one generation to another. This means that people didn’t write everything down, but instead, they told stories and shared them through spoken words. These stories included epic poems, heroic tales, and legends.

**Epic poetry**-One prominent feature of Anglo-Saxon literature is epic poetry. These were long poems that told stories of heroic deeds and adventures. The most famous example is the epic poem “Beowulf,” which talks about the brave deeds of a warrior named Beowulf who battled monsters to protect his people.

**Alliteration**-Anglo-Saxon poetry often used a literary device called alliteration. Alliteration is when words in a line start with the same sound. This made the poetry sound rhythmic and helped people remember the stories when they were spoken aloud.

**Kennings**-Kennings were imaginative and metaphorical expressions used in Anglo-Saxon literature. Instead of saying a simple word, poets used descriptive phrases. For example, instead of saying “sea,” they might say “whale-road.” This added creativity and vividness to their language.

**Caesura**-Caesura refers to a pause or break in the middle of a line of poetry. Anglo-Saxon poetry often had a caesura in the middle of each line, creating a distinct rhythm. This pause allowed the listener to take a breath and added to the overall musicality of the verse.

**Heroic ideal**-The Anglo-Saxons admired heroic qualities like bravery, loyalty, and strength. Their literature often focused on heroic ideals, portraying characters who faced great challenges and demonstrated these virtues. Beowulf, for instance, embodies the heroic ideal by facing monstrous foes with courage and strength.

**Wyrd or Fate**-The concept of “wyrd” was significant in Anglo-Saxon literature. It refers to fate or destiny. The idea was that events in life were guided by a larger force, and individuals had to accept their fate. This belief in fate is evident in many Anglo-Saxon poems and stories.

**Simplicity of Language**-The language used in Anglo-Saxon literature was straightforward and simple. The poets and storytellers aimed to convey their messages clearly, using words that people could easily understand. This simplicity helped in the oral transmission of stories from one generation to the next.

I find these Anglo-Saxon features in the epic poem “Beowulf”. Here I elaborate-

Beowulf is the oldest poem in the English language. It is the most important specimen of Anglo-Saxon literature, and also the oldest surviving epic in the English language. It consists of more than 3,000 lines. It had been passed from mouth to mouth for hundreds of years before it was written down in the 10th century or at the end of the 9th century. The main stories in the poem are based on the folk legends of the primitive northern tribes. The writer of Beowulf is anonymous. It’s neither a complete work of fiction, nor is it fully factual. It’s a great adventure story. Beowulf was written in Old English but since the language has changed significantly over time it is usually read in translation. There have been many translations, including ones by Seamus Heaney and J. R. R. Tolkien. It’s the longest and greatest surviving Anglo-Saxon poem. It’s an Old English [epic poem](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epic_poetry).  It’s an [epic poem](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epic_poetry). It is an [Old English](https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_English_language) [heroic](https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hero) [epic poem](https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epic_poetry). It’s an epic poem that is both one of the most important works in English literature, and a great adventure story. Beowulf belongs metrically, stylistically and thematically to a heroic tradition grounded in [Germanic religion and mythology](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Germanic-religion-and-mythology). It is also part of the broader tradition of [heroic poetry](https://www.britannica.com/art/heroic-poetry). Many incidents, such as the tearing-off of the monster’s arm and the hero’s descent into the mere, are familiar motifs from [folklore](https://www.britannica.com/art/folk-literature). The [ethical](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ethical) values are manifestly the Germanic code of loyalty to chief and tribe and [vengeance](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/vengeance) to enemies. Yet the poem is so infused with a [Christian](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Christianity) spirit that it lacks the grim fatality of many of the [Eddaic](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Edda) lays or the [sagas](https://www.britannica.com/art/saga) of [Icelandic literature](https://www.britannica.com/art/Icelandic-literature). Beowulf himself seems more altruistic than other Germanic heroes or the ancient Greek heroes of the [Iliad](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Iliad-epic-poem-by-Homer). It is significant that his three battles are not against men, which would entail the retaliation of the [blood feud](https://www.britannica.com/topic/feud-private-war), but against evil monsters, enemies of the whole [community](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/community) and of civilization itself. Beowulf is an epic poem of unknown authorship, was likely composed between the 8th and 11th centuries. It stands as a cornerstone of Anglo-Saxon literature, embodying the heroic spirit of the time. Set in Scandinavia, the narrative follows Beowulf, a Geatish warrior, as he arrives in Denmark to assist King Hrothgar in defeating the monstrous Grendel, who terrorizes the Danes. Beowulf’s subsequent battles against Grendel’s mother and a dragon showcase themes of heroism, loyalty, and the inevitable struggle against mortality. It’s the oldest surviving [epic poem](https://www.thoughtco.com/epic-literature-and-poetry-119651) in the English language and the earliest piece of vernacular European literature. Perhaps the most common question readers have is what language "Beowulf" was written in originally. The first manuscript was written in the language of the Saxons, "[Old English](https://www.thoughtco.com/old-english-anglo-saxon-1691449)," also known as "Anglo-Saxon." Since then, the epic poem has been estimated to have been translated into 65 languages. However, many translators have struggled to maintain the flow and alliteration present within the complex text. But It is not known who wrote it, and there is no agreement as to when it was written. Estimates for the date range from [AD](https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/AD) 608 right through to AD 1000, and there is no consensus. The poem has only one [manuscript](https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manuscript) source, written about 1010. Beowulf is 3182 lines long. [Tolkien](https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tolkien) describes and illustrates many of the features of Old English poetry in his 1940 essay on translating Beowulf. The [protagonist](https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protagonist) of the poem is [Beowulf](https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beowulf_(hero)). In the poem, Beowulf fights three monsters: [Grendel](https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grendel) and [Grendel's mother](https://simple.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Grendel%27s_mother&action=edit&redlink=1), and later in his life an unnamed [dragon](https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dragon). Little is known about this famous epic poem's origins, unfortunately. Many believe that "Beowulf" may have been composed as an elegy for a king who died in the seventh century, but little evidence indicates who that king may have been. The burial rites described in the epic show a great similarity to the evidence found at [Sutton Hoo](http://suttonhoo.org/), but too much remains unknown to form a direct correlation between the poem and the burial site. Beowulf may have been composed as early as around 700 C.E. and evolved through many retellings before it was finally written down. Regardless, whoever the original author may have been is lost to history. "Beowulf" contains many [pagan](https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-pagan-120163) and folkloric elements, but there are undeniable Christian themes as well. This dichotomy has led some to interpret the epic as the work of more than one author. Others have seen it as symbolic of the transition from paganism to Christianity in [early medieval Britain](https://www.thoughtco.com/post-roman-britain-1788725). The extreme delicacy of the manuscript, the perceived two separate hands that inscribed the text, and the complete lack of clues to the identity of the author make a realistic determination difficult at best. Originally untitled, in the 19th century the poem was eventually referred to by the name of its Scandinavian hero, whose adventures are its primary focus. While some historical elements run through the poem, the hero and the story are both fictional. The sole manuscript of "Beowulf" dates to around the year 1000. Handwriting style reveals that it was inscribed by two different people. Whether either scribe embellished or altered the original story is unknown. The earliest known owner of the manuscript was 16th-century scholar Lawrence Nowell. In the 17th century, it became part of Robert Bruce Cotton's collection and is therefore known as Cotton Vitellius A.XV. The manuscript is now in the British Library, although in 1731 the manuscript suffered irreparable damage in a fire. The first transcription of the poem was made by Icelandic scholar Grímur Jónsson Thorkelin in 1818. Since the manuscript has decayed further, Thorkelin's version is highly prized, yet its accuracy has been questioned. In 1845, the pages of the manuscript were mounted in paper frames to save them from further damage. This protected the pages, but it also covered some of the letters around the edges. In 1993, the British Library initiated the [Electronic Beowulf Project](http://www.uky.edu/~kiernan/eBeowulf/guide.htm). Through the use of special infrared and ultraviolet lighting techniques, the covered letters were revealed as electronic images of the manuscript were made. Much has been written about this epic poem, and it will surely continue to inspire scholarly investigation and debate, both literary and historical. For decades students have undertaken the difficult task of learning Old English in order to read it in its original language. The poem has also inspired fresh creative works, from Tolkien's "Lord of the Rings" to Michael Crichton's "Eaters of the Dead," and it will probably continue to do so for centuries to come. Beowulf Originally written in Old English, the first translation of the poem was into Latin by Thorkelin, in connection with his transcription of 1818. Two years later Nicolai Grundtvig made the first translation into a modern language, Danish. The first translation into modern English was made by J. M. Kemble in 1837. In total, it is estimated that the epic poem has been translated into 65 languages. Since then there have been many modern English translations. The version done by Francis B. Gummere in 1919 is out of copyright and freely available at several websites. Many more recent translations, in both prose and verse form, are available today. Critics have varied in their opinion of almost every aspect of Beowulf. For Tolkien, one of the most astute, Grendel and the Dragon both are fundamental to the meaning of the poem, one a suitable beginning for the hero's exploits, the other a fitting end. Together, he regards them as framing the poem's structure and providing a contrasting description of two moments in the life of the hero: its rising and setting, youth and age, first triumph over the nearly human and final defeat by an older and more elemental force. Such monstrous foes are powerful creations of the imagination and elevate the story above history and place to one of fate and the effort of human life. It is not surprising, therefore, that Tolkien later expresses these same themes in the Lord of the Rings. The title of Beowulf is probably the most famous thing about this poem. The fact that a monster named Grendel features at some point. But because the specific details of the story are not widely known, numerous misconceptions about the poem abound. This is a matter of some conjecture, with guesses ranging anywhere between the eighth century and the first half of the eleventh century. Critics can’t even agree on what the first line of the poem means. Over the duration of the poem “Beowulf” the character Beowulf encounters with Three major beasts and battles them. This poem is the longest poem written in Old English. Old English poetry uses alliterative meter, meaning that the stressed words in a line begin with the same sound. A line of Old English poetry has two halves, with a brief pause, called a caesura, in the middle of the line. The two halves of a line are linked by the alliteration at least three words in a line alliterate. Old English poetry also uses kennings, compressed metaphors like "heaven's candle" for the sun, or "whale's road" for the sea, or calling a woman married in an effort to gain peace a "peace weaver." The author was an anonymous Anglo-Saxon poet, referred to by scholars as the “Beowulf poet.” The Beowulf poet cleverly picked real events and characters from history, and incorporated them into the world of the poem. This helped listeners identify with the poem and find some familiarity in it. The character Beowulf himself, however, seems to be completely original. The poem explores many aspects of Nordic warrior culture: glory, greed, leadership, virtue, courage, cowardice, and sacrifice. On a psychological level, one can read Beowulf’s battles as an analogy for how we should deal with our own problems: If we do nothing, they will continue to attack and destroy us. The only way to defeat our problems is either to let them come to us and fight them when they do, or to seek them out and destroy them ourselves. On a broader societal level, Beowulf is about the importance of strength, honor, and virtue. It depicts how a society with strong, courageous, self-sacrificial leadership is able to thrive. It also condemns the cowardice of those who abandoned Beowulf during his greatest battle. Beowulf’s death is better viewed as a selfless sacrifice than simply a tragic death. While his death is tragic, the real tragedy stems from the fact that the Geats lose a courageous warrior, strong protector, and just leader. The poem Beowulf belongs metrically, stylistically, and thematically to a heroic tradition grounded in [Germanic religion and mythology](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Germanic-religion-and-mythology). It is also part of the broader tradition of [heroic poetry](https://www.britannica.com/art/heroic-poetry). Many incidents, such as the tearing-off of the monster’s arm and the hero’s descent into the mere, are familiar motifs from [folklore](https://www.britannica.com/art/folk-literature). 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Tolkien](https://www.britannica.com/biography/J-R-R-Tolkien) suggested that its total effect is more like a long lyrical [elegy](https://www.britannica.com/art/elegy) than an [epic](https://www.britannica.com/art/epic). Even the earlier, happier section in Denmark is filled with [ominous](https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/ominous) references that would have been well understood by contemporary audiences. Thus, after Grendel’s death, King Hrothgar speaks sanguinely of the future, which the audience would know will end with the destruction of his line and the burning of Heorot. In the second part the movement is slow and funereal: scenes from Beowulf’s youth are replayed in a minor key as a counterpoint to his last battle, and the mood becomes increasingly sombre as the wyrd means fate that comes to all men closes in on him. Beowulf is more than just another monster story. It’s an epic of heroism, glory, pride, defeat, and tragedy. Beowulf has been with us for over a thousand years. There’s a reason it sticks around still: something about it resonates with us deeply. Whether you want to glimpse into a culture of ages past, study Old English, or get inspired to slay the monsters in our own life, Beowulf is for us.

Here is Beowulf's some major themes in which I find some Anglo-Saxon period features too:-

* **Loyalty**
* **Heroic Code**
* **Bravery**
* **Revenge**
* **Good against Evil**
* **Generosity**
* **Hospitality**
* **Duty of the King**
* **Death**

In these Beowulf’s themes I find Anglo-Saxon features too.