**Dr. BELMERABET Fatiha**

**Lecture TWO:**

**The Middle English Period (1066-1500)**

**8.1. Introduction**

This period started with the Norman Conquest in 1066 led by William of Normandy and ended at the close of the fifteenth century. There are two shorter eras within this period. The time from 1066 to 1340 is called the **Anglo-Norman Period** because the literature of that age was composed mainly in Anglo-Norman, the French dialect, spoken by the ruling aristocracy of England. The period from 1340 to 1400 is called **the Age of Chaucer** because he, as an outstanding poet, dominated this period. The whole period from 1066 to 1500 is called **The Middle Ages**. The first part of the Middle Ages is called the **Dark Ages** because little is known about what happened during that time.

**8.2. Influencing Factors of the Literature of this Period**

This literary period is influenced by a set of events that had a great impact on the writings of the time. Some of them are social and cultural and others are political. Here are the most important ones:

(1) The English parliament was established in 1295.

(2) Crusade, the religious battle between Muslims and Christians, took place between the 11th and 13th centuries.

(3) Magna Carta, the great charter which limited the power of the monarchs was passed on 15th June 1215.

(4) In 1362 English was declared to be the language of law and courts. Before, the French language was the authorized language in the British institutions.

(5) The Norman Feudal System, the severe taxation system, fell after the Black Death, a plague in 1348-49.

(6) John Wycliffe started his Reformation of the English Church.

(7) William Caxton established a printing press in 1476.

(8) Renaissance began after the crusade defection. Thus, the Christian scholars fled to different parts of Europe, Britain was one of their destinations, where they spread their knowledge. Thus, earliest learning started reviving. This restoration of classical knowledge is called the renaissance. Its features are interest about the unknown, patriotism, desire for limitless wealth and power, love of adventures, admiration for beauty, care for humanism, and fondness for the past.

**8.3. Major Authors of the Period and their Major Works**

John Wycliffe (1324-84): He is labelled the father of English prose. He translated The Bible from Latin into English

John Gower (1325-1408): wrote *Confessio Amantis*

Geoffrey Chaucer (1340- 1400): wrote *Troilus* and *Criseyde* (1387), *Canterbury Tales* (1 385-1 400)

William Langland (1332-1386): wrote *Piers Plowman* (1362)

Sir Thomas Malory: wrote *Morte de Arthur* (1485), which is considered the first romance in prose

**8.4. Prevailing Literary Characteristics of the Age**

1) Poetry serves as the main genre.

2) Prose in English started to own a strong foundation.

3) The English language reaches a considerable standard though old spelling continues.

4) Drama began in its ancient forms “Mystery Play,” “Morality Play” and “Interlude”.

5) The writers of the age are influenced by the Italian authors Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio.

6) Love, chivalry, and religion are the three principal literary subjects of this period.

7) The spirit of romance dominates the age, unlike the old English period.

8) Use of pentameter (ten syllables in each line) begins.

9) End-rhyme is introduced.

10) Stressed alliteration (alliterative verse) is thrown away and humor, irony, and satire are brought into practice.