

## Essay and preliminary assignments

Over the course of the winter, you will write an essay of eight to ten double-spaced pages on any aspect of Anglo-Saxon literature, history, or culture. A critical requirement is that the essay should quote a combined total of at least eight lines of Old English prose or verse in the original language, accompanied by your own translation and discussion. In addition, it should refer to a minimum of two secondary sources. A major factor in the assessment of the essay will be whether the student shows an ability to discuss intelligently the text(s) under study (for instance, what are the author's aims and cultural/ideological premises? What can you say about his or her choice of words?) and form an opinion informed by, yet critical of, the secondary literature used. The essay should have an explicit thesis or research question (and answer).

For a general idea of the range of possible topics, see the attached list. You are encouraged to find inspiration for a topic of your own in a particular text or literary genre discussed in class or in one of the volumes on course reserve (Pulsiano and Treharne's *Companion to Anglo-Saxon Literature*, Godden and Lapidge's *Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, and North and Allard's *Beowulf and Other Stories*). Note that the articles in these volumes are introductory rather than critical; while permitted as secondary sources, they are therefore not the best type of source to cite. Keep in mind furthermore that you may not have the time to read long primary sources, such as the *Consolation of Philosophy*, in their entirety. You are welcome to discuss a single passage from a longer work, such as the discussion of free will in *Consolation* ch. 39, or a biblical passage or parable in comparison with its Latin model (or rather its English equivalent in the Douay-Rheims translation). One of the most straightforward approaches is simply to pick one of the short lyrics, such as *Deor* or *The Husband's Message*, and discuss an aspect of it with reference to secondary literature.

You will report on your research process at three stages:

1. for **assignment 1**, due on Friday **26 November**, you will submit 100 to 200 words outlining your proposed research topic;
2. for **assignment 2**, due on Friday **11 February**, you will submit a reflection on the research process in 500–600 words, containing your interim thesis statement, a descriptive outline of your essay, and a reflection on the sources and materials you have used and intend to use as well as any problems you have encountered;
3. the **essay** itself, due on Friday **18 March**.

Assignments 1 and 2 will not be marked, but they **must** be submitted in good time. If either is more than 7 days late, the essay will not be marked. Think of them as a way of ensuring you are headed in the right direction. For each day the essay itself is late, three percent will be subtracted from the essay mark. Submitting early is never a problem!

To conserve paper, please print double-sided (learn how to at [printdoublesided.sa.utoronto.ca](http://printdoublesided.sa.utoronto.ca)).

## Essay topic suggestions

- the vocabulary of creation (discussing treatments of Genesis 1 in the Old English prose Genesis, the verse *Genesis A*, and/or *Cædmon's Hymn*)
- elegiac landscape (discussing the landscape in any or several of the lyrics)
- the identity and circumstances of the speaker in *The Wife's Lament*
- attitudes towards translation (comparing the prefaces by Alfred and Ælfric [M&R #4, #5])
- authorial purpose in *The Ruin*
- heroism and gender (e.g. Æthelflæd in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, or *Judith*)
- burial, *Beowulf*, and archaeology (see Owen-Crocker, *The Four Funerals in Beowulf*)
- children in Old English poetry (e.g. *Beowulf*, *Genesis A*)
- guilt in *Genesis B*
- heroism in *Genesis A* and *Genesis B*
- the functions of birds in Old English lyric (*The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer*, *The Husband's Message*)
- the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* as national propaganda
- the relationship between text and picture (see Karkov, *Narrative Strategies*)
- Christian syncretism in the charms (see various books on Anglo-Saxon magic)
- the lexical field of lordship and/or religious leadership
- the logistics of warfare (see, e.g., the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for the year 893)

Browse the course reserve volumes, OENDB, or the journal *Anglo-Saxon England* for further ideas!

## Research aids

Once you have chosen a topic (general or specific), create an account at <http://oenewsletter.org/OENDB> to find secondary literature, or use the [International Medieval Bibliography](#) (available online via the library catalogue). Catalogues like [JSTOR](#), [Chadwyck](#), and [ProQuest](#) may also turn up relevant results, but they are less complete and specific than OENDB and the IMB.