

**Sample Midterm Questions**  
**ENGL 2323, Fall 2023**  
**British Literature I**  
**Questions are drawn from previous examinations.**

*Section I: Identifications (via Blackboard):*

You will be asked to locate a passage in the readings for this semester and give some specific information about it. There will be seven passages; subquestions a) and b) are worth two points apiece, c) 1 point, for a total of five points per question; 7 passages @ 5 points = 35 points. Note that I will have underlined a clue for you in each passage.

X1) For the following passage: a) give the title of the poem; b) give the formal name of the manuscript in which it is found (i.e., city/library/shelfmark format); c) the rough date of that manuscript.

Young men must always be serious in mind  
and stout-hearted; they must hide  
their heartaches, that host of constant sorrows,  
behind a smiling face. Whether he is master  
of his own fate or is exiled in a far-off land –  
sitting under rocky storm-cliffs, chilled  
with hoar-frost, weary in mind,  
surrounded by the sea in some sad place –  
my husband is caught in the clutches of anguish;  
over and again he recalls a happier home.  
Grief goes side by side with those  
who suffer longing for a loved one.

1a) Wife's Lament
1b) Exeter, Cathedral Library (Dean and Chapter), MS 3501
1c) second half of the 10 <sup>th</sup> century (950-970)

*Section II: Short answer (via Blackboard):*

I will give a lengthy list of terms for you to choose from; for seven of the terms, give at least one work they are associated with, the author if known (if the author is not known, say "anonymous"), and a brief definition of the term that includes the term's importance in the text or the context of the course (no more than two or three sentences should be needed – don't spend a lot of time writing a short essay). 7 terms @ 5 points/question (1 for author if known, 1 for work, 3 for definition and importance) = 35 points.

X2) "Our whelp":

The whelp is mentioned in *Wulf and Eadwacer* by an anonymous author. It looks like Eadwacer is the female narrator's lover and Wulf is her husband; the whelp appears to be the child of the narrator and Eadwacer, whom Wulf is going to abandon to its death in the woods. (one student's interpretation – remember, this text is tricky!)

### X3) Hygelac

Hygelac is associated with *Beowulf* (anonymous). He is Beowulf's lord who Beowulf gives Hrothgar's treasure to on his return home and who is killed in a raid against the Franks. His death against the Franks puts Heardred on the throne, which leads to Beowulf becoming regent and eventually king.

### X4) *adventus Saxonum*:

The *adventus Saxonum* is a Latin term for “the coming of the Saxons” in 449. The Angles, Saxons, and Jutes were brought to Britain as mercenary soldiers to help the Britons fight the Picts and the Scots (Irish) and began to migrate to Britain, eventually either outnumbering or culturally dominating the Romanized British population. This is mentioned in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (commissioned by Alfred, but exact writer unknown) and in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*.

### *Section III: Essay*

You will be given a choice from a pair of essay questions; answer ONE question in a short essay of two to three pages (400-600 words). The essay will be worth 30 points.

X5) Pick one of the passages above from the identification section and write an essay on the relationship between duty and kinship in the passage. What is the situation occurring in the passage? Does the main character think that his/her duty hurts or helps his/her family? What does the speaker resolve to do in order to try to make the situation work?

Answers will vary, but a good essay for the sample passage given above might note that the narrator appears to be the wife of a man whose lord summoned him for warfare; she feels betrayed by her husband, who both promised to love her and remain with her and yet also left to fight for his lord; that his absence is causing her great pain and loneliness; that she really has no resolution to her situation except to hope that he misses her to OR is suffering as much as she is, depending on how one reads the last verse paragraph.