UNIT I TEST REVIEW
ANGLO-SAXON PERIOD

Characteristics of Old English Literature
From Beowulf
The Seafarer
BEOWULF: AS AN EPIC HERO

Reflects the values and ideals of his people
Has superior physical strength, courage, and determination
  Is supremely ethical (good morals)
Undertakes a difficult quest (journey)
Defeats monsters that represent dark destructive behaviors
  Is glorified by those he saves
Alliteration is repetition of initial (beginning) consonant sounds in words close to one another.

How the Anglo-Saxons used it: In the 1st ½ of a line 2 words alliterate; in 2nd ½ 1 word alliterates w/ 1st two:

original: “God mid Geatum / Grendles daeda”

translation: “How many times / have my men”
The kenning is a specialized metaphor made up of compound words.

Modern examples: “gas guzzler,” and “headhunter”

Anglo-Saxon examples: “world candle” for sun, “battle dew” for blood, and “whale road” for sea.
BE SURE YOU READ THE FOLLOWING:

“from Beowulf”

“Introduction to Beowulf” pp. 18 – 19

“Before You Read” p. 20

“Elements of Literature” p. 49

“from Beowulf” pp. 21 – 46 (or at least The Fairly Quick Version)

http://www.nexuslearning.net/books/elements_of_lit_course6/Anglo_Saxon_Period/The%20Monster%20Grendel.htm
The Coming of Grendel

Hrothgar builds a great hall, Heorot, to entertain and reward his people. There are festivities at its opening, but the music and laughter enrage Grendel, a human monster living underwater nearby. That night Grendel breaks into Heorot, slaughters and eats thirty of Hrothgar's men (the king's warriors would normally sleep in the hall). This happens again the next night. After that, "it was easy to find him who sought rest somewhere else."

Grendel haunts the hall by night for twelve years. The Danes despair of ridding themselves of him. They can neither defeat him nor come to terms with him.
Beowulf Comes to the Kingdom of Hrothgar

Danish sailors bring news of Grendel to King Hygelac of the Geats whose nephew (also named Beowulf, like King Hrothgar's father Beowulf Scylding) has a growing reputation for strength and monster-killing. Beowulf, supported by the wisest of his people, resolves to go to Hrothgar's aid and sets off by ship with fourteen companions. They land in Denmark and are met and questioned by a coast guard who, impressed with Beowulf, sends them to Heorot. Hrothgar receives them and accepts Beowulf's offer of help.

Unferth, an official of the court who is jealous of Beowulf's attempts to discredit Beowulf with the story of a swimming match Beowulf had as a boy with another boy, Breca. Beowulf exonerates himself with his version of the swimming match.
Beowulf's Fight with Grendel

Hrothgar gives Beowulf and his companions the duty of guarding Heorot that night. The young man decides to face Grendel without weapons since Grendel does not use them. He tells those around him that the outcome of the fight is in the hands of God.

The Danes leave the hall, Beowulf and his companions bed down for the night. When darkness falls, Grendel comes stalking across the empty moors. Intent on slaughter and food, he has no idea what is waiting for him in the hall. He bursts open Heorot's heavy iron-bound doors with the touch of his hand and rushes in, grabs one of the sleeping Geats, eats him, greedily gulping down the blood, and then grabs Beowulf.

Beowulf has had a moment to orient himself, however, and wrestles with Grendel. Grendel is taken aback by his strength and tries to get away, but cannot. They struggle, Beowulf refusing to break his grip. Beowulf's companions try to wound Grendel, only to find he is impervious to their weapons. In the end, Grendel manages to pull away from Beowulf, leaving his arm in the hero's grasp. Mortally wounded, Grendel flees, back to his lair.
The Morning after the Battle

With morning the Danes come to see the huge arm, its nails like steel, and the bloody trail of the dying monster. Some of them follow the trail to the water's edge and come back singing Beowulf's praises.
Grendel's Mother Comes for Vengeance and Beowulf Tracks Her to her Lair

The Geats are given new quarters for the night and Danish warriors sleep in the great hall for the first time in many years. While the Danes are sleeping, Grendel's mother comes to avenge her son. She carries off Aeschere, Hrothgar's friend and counsellor, a man who had always stood at his side in battle.

Beowulf finds Hrothgar broken with grief over the loss of his friend. Hrothgar tells Beowulf everything that the Danes know about the monsters and the wilds where they live. Beowulf offers to track Grendel's mother to her underwater lair, remarking that it is better to perform noble deeds before death, and better to avenge a friend than mourn him too much.

Hrothgar, Beowulf and their men ride to the sea where they find Aesheere's head at the edge of the overhanging cliffs. Unferth, now deeply impressed by Beowulf's generous heroism, loan Beowulf his sword. Beowulf asks Hrothgar to take care of his companions and to send Hygelac the treasures he had been given for killing Grendel if he (Beowulf) dies.
Beowulf's Fight with Grendel's Mother

Beowulf enters the water and is seized by Grendel's mother, who drags him to her den, which is dry despite its underwater entrance. Unferth's sword is useless against this monstrous hag.

Beowulf wrestles with her. The woman trips him and tries to stab him with her dagger, but the blade is turned away by his chainmail (a mesh tunic of fine interlocked metal rings). He struggles away from her, grabs a great sword hanging on the wall, and strikes off her head.

He sees the body of Grendel and cuts off his head too, the sword blade melting in his blood. Carrying Grendel's head and the sword's hilt, Beowulf swims back to the surface.
The Treasure and the Dragon

Years pass. Beowulf's uncle and his uncle's son, Heardred, die in battle. Beowulf becomes king of the Geats, and rules well for fifty years. Then a dragon begins to threaten the land.

The dragon had been sleeping on a treasure, deposited in a barrow above the sea centuries before by the last despairing survivor of a noble family. A desperate man stumbles upon the treasure and steals a golden cup from it to regain his lord's favor. The dragon, in revenge, terrorizes the countryside, burning Beowulf's hall in the old king's absence.

Beowulf decides to fight the dragon. He orders an iron shield made and assembles an escort of twelve warriors plus the thief, brought along as a guide. Beowulf then announces that he intends to fight the dragon alone. He goes down the path to the treasure barrow and attacks the dragon, but cannot manage to kill it.
Only one of his men, the young warrior Wiglaf, comes to his aid. Together they kill the dragon, but Beowulf is fatally wounded. He dies saying he has no fear in God's judgment of him and thanking God for allowing him to trade his old life for a great treasure for his people. He tells Wiglaf to take care of the Geats.

Finally, he asks that they build a barrow for him on the cliffs where it will be seen and he remembered. The Geats build the barrow, place the treasure in it, and mourn their lost king as the kindest and most worthy of rulers.
Beowulf Returns from the Fight in Triumph

Meanwhile, from the cliffs above, the waiting men see blood welling up to the surface of the water. Hrothgar and the Danes assume the worst and make their way sorrowfully back to the hall. Beowulf's companions linger, grieving and forlornly hoping for his return.

Beowulf comes to the surface. He and his men return to the hall. He presents Grendel's head and the hilt of the ancient sword to Hrothgar. Beowulf recounts his underwater fight to the court, acknowledging the grace of God.
An elegy is a poem that mourns the death of a person or laments something lost.

Other examples include “The Wanderer,” and even “Beowulf.”
BE SURE YOU READ THE FOLLOWING:

The Seafarer

“Before You Read” p. 55
“Primary Sources” p. 59
“The Seafarer” pp.56-58

http://www.nexuslearning.net/books/elements_of_lit_course6/Anglo_Saxon_Period/The%20Seafarer.htm
The speaker of "The Seafarer" announces that he can make a true song about himself and the suffering he has endured while traveling over the ocean in the middle of winter. He remembers terrible cold and loneliness, and hearing the sounds of seabirds instead of the mead hall. This life of hardship is one about which the comfortable "city dwellers" know nothing. They'll never understand his suffering, poor guy. The weather worsens as snow and hail fall. His spirit is troubled, urging him to endure the harsh conditions on the winter sea so that he can seek a faraway "foreign" homeland.
Ah, the arrival of spring should help, right? Wrong. It only provokes more wanderlust in the speaker. The cry of the cuckoo, a sign of warmer weather, makes our speaker feel downright down in the dumps. It tells him it's time for yet another journey. The Seafarer's spirit leaps out of his chest and soars all over the world, then returns to him unsatisfied.
The Seafarer — The Quick Version

He knows the world's riches will not last, since everyone dies and you can't take your possessions with you. Because it's only through the praise of the living after one's death that a person can hope to live forever, people should fight hard against the devil so their bravery will be remembered after their death. That way, they can live forever with the angels. Sweet.
The days of earthly glory are over, the speaker tells us, because the wealthy and powerful civilizations have fallen. The weak have inherited the earth. Glory and nobility have faded just like an aging person, whose body and senses fail. No matter how much we try to comfort the dead and ourselves with gold, it won't work because a sinful soul can't take his gold with him after death, and you cannot buy forgiveness. He's painting quite the pretty picture, this seafarer guy.
So what's the point here? Our speaker tells us that it's important to fear God, who created the whole world, and before whom it stands still. Only a fool does not fear God: he will meet his death unprepared. In order to avoid this, a man has to live humbly, control his passions, keep his word, and be fair to both friends and enemies. A man should think about his earthly life, focus on the heavenly home that awaits him, and how to get there. In fact, our speaker suggests, we should all work hard to get to the eternal life, where joy awaits us, Amen.
The test will consist of 33 multiple-choice questions.

It is an open-book test.

Much of the section that covers “The Seafarer” will require you to interpret sections of the poem.