

# Introduction

*British Literature 1: Beginnings to Age of Reason* focuses on authors and works from Anglo-Saxon epic poetry to Chaucer's lively tales to the glorious Elizabethan period to the orderly, satiric wit of the eighteenth century. Lessons emphasize the links among literature, culture, and history.

Part 1 presents the Anglo-Saxon era, with an emphasis on *Beowulf*. In Part 2 students focus on the Medieval period, including Arthurian legends and *The Canterbury Tales*. Part 3 deals with the great flowering of Elizabethan poetry and drama. Part 4 introduces the Cavaliers and Metaphysicals of the seventeenth century. Finally, in Part 5 students meet eminent writers of the eighteenth century, among them Swift, Pope, and Johnson.

This unit has nine general objectives:

- To familiarize students with major writers and works from *Beowulf* to the late eighteenth century
- To generate enthusiasm for and interest in England's literature, culture, and history
- To appreciate the debt current language, culture, and literature owe to earlier ages in English history
- To develop an awareness of interrelationships among literature, art, history, scientific development, and philosophy
- To prompt understanding of Cavalier spirit, metaphysical poetry, and satirical prose and poetry
- To challenge students to relate their own experience and thoughts to English literature
- To encourage integration of reading, thinking, writing, and speaking skills
- To facilitate diverse classroom activities in teaching/learning literature
- To lead students to cross-relate recurring themes and movements in English literature