

# Introduction to the Medieval Period

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# What do we mean when we say “Medieval”?

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- Violent?
- Illogical?
- Useless?

# Violent?

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■ “I’m Gonna Git *Medieval*...”  
Ving Rhames,  
as Marcellus Wallace,  
in the 1994 film *Pulp Fiction*



# Illogical?

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"Despite the commitment of many able people, the WTO remains a **medieval** organisation... The procedures and rules of this organisation have not supported the weight of the task.

There is no way to structure and steer discussions amongst 146 members in a manner conducive to consensus. The decision-making needs to be revamped."

Pascal Lamy, September 2003



WTO Director, 2005

# Useless?

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"I don't mind there being  
some **medievalists**  
around for ornamental purposes,  
but there is no reason for the state to pay for them"


Charles Clarke, May 2003  
UK Education Secretary





# How “Medieval” is “Medieval”?

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According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, “medieval”, a word first recorded in English in the nineteenth century, is derived from post-classical Latin term “*medium aevum*” meaning “the Middle Ages,” a term that dates to 1604. Perhaps the shortening of “medium aevum” to “medieval” copies the word “primeval”—or it may reflect similar terms used in other languages around the same time: the French “*médiéval*” (dated 1874) or Italian “*medievale*” (1868).

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**Oxford English Dictionary** Lost for Words?   Find Word 

**medieval, *a.* and *n.*** DRAFT REVISION June 2001 [Earlier](#)

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[< post-classical Latin *medium aevum* the Middle Ages (1604; < classical Latin *medium*, neuter of *medius* middle (see [MEDIUM](#) *n.* and *a.*) + *aevum* [AEVUM](#) *n.*) + -AL<sup>1</sup>, perh. after [PRIMEVAL](#) *a.* or [EVAL](#) *a.* Cf. French *médiéval* (1874), Italian *medievale* (1868). Cf. *the Middle Ages* s.v. [MIDDLE AGE](#) *n.* 2  
Pronunciation with /i(:)/ in the first syllable of this and derived words is recorded by U.S. dictionaries from the second half of the 19th cent. onwards. The trisyllabic pronunciation, with contraction of the two medial vowels into one, is recorded by U.S. and British dictionaries from the second half of the 20th cent. onwards]

**A. *adj.***

**1. *a.*** Of or relating to a period of time intervening between (periods designated as) ancient and modern; *spec.* of, relating to, or characteristic of the Middle Ages. Also, of art, religion, etc.: resembling or imitative of that of the Middle Ages.

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## medieval, *a.* and *n.*

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medick, *n.*  
medico, *n.*  
medico-, *comb. form*  
medicommissure, *n.*  
medics, *n.*  
medicus, *n.*  
medie, *v.*  
medietas linguae, *n.*  
mediety, *n.*  
**medieval, *a.* and *n.***  
medievalism, *n.*  
medievalist, *n.*  
medievalize, *v.*  
medievalized, *a.*  
medievalizing, *n.*  
medievalizing, *a.*  
medievally, *adv.*  
medifixed, *a.*  
medifurca, *n.*

**b. U.S. to get medieval:** to use violence or extreme measures on, to become aggressive.

**1994** Q. TARANTINO & R. AVARY *Pulp Fiction* 131, I ain't through with you by a damn sight. I'm gonna git Medieval on your ass. **1996** *Rolling Stone* 13 July 85/3 And with the metal-on-metal grinding and old-school synth whoops..Faust and O'Rourke really get medieval. **1999** *Washington Post* 9 May F1, I have no idea why we're talking about sending ground troops to Kosovo when we can send a fleet of Ford Expeditions and Lincoln Navigators over there. What's Milosevic going to throw at them—Yugos? These things will get medieval with Yugos. **2000** *N.Y. Times* 5 May E8/1 The teenage crowd screamed and cheered—but only when Macbeth got medieval on someone.

**B. *n.***

†**1. humorous.** A person of middle age. *Obs. rare.*

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# How “Medieval” is “Medieval”?

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- Those living through the period never considered themselves as living in the ‘Middle Ages’ [*Medium Aevum*].
- The period is almost 1,000 years long (6<sup>th</sup> century to 15<sup>th</sup> century A.C.E.).
- What label would you apply to our lifetime?

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Oxford English Dictionary

Lost for Words? 


Find Word

modern, *a.* and *n.*

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Earlier

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Pronunciation

Spellings

Etymology

Quotations

Date chart

moderator, *n.*

moderatorial, *a.*

moderatorship, *n.*

moderatress, *n.*

modetrice, *n.*

modetrax, *n.*

modetrature, *n.*1

modetrature, *n.*2

moderating, *n.*

modern, *a.* and *n.*

modernal, *a.*

moderne, *a.* (and *n.*)

Modern English, *n.* and *a.*

moderner, *n.*

modernicide, *n.*

modernism, *n.*

Modernisme, *n.*

Modernismo, *n.*

modernismus, *n.*

[ < Middle French, French *moderne*, noun (14th cent. denoting a person of the present time as opposed to antiquity, 1756 denoting a person with modern tastes, 1694 denoting a work of modern architecture) and adjective (1455 in sense 'of the present time', 16th cent. designating the current form of a language, 1680 in *architecture moderne*) and its etymon post-classical Latin *modernus* of the present time (5th cent.; from c1125 in British sources designating a person currently holding office), also as noun denoting people (early 6th cent.) or things (5th cent.) < classical Latin *modo* just now (use as adverb of ablative of *modus* **MODE** *n.*) + *-ernus* (in classical Latin *hodiernus* **HODIERN** *a.*). Cf. Italian *moderno* (1308 as noun, 1319 as adjective), Spanish *moderno* (1433), Portuguese *moderno* (1572); cf. also Dutch *modern* (early 17th cent.), Swedish *modern* (1668), German *modern* (early 18th cent.), Danish *moderne* (1767 as †*modern*), all prob. from French.]

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Dr. S. Kamath

# What is our interest in the Medieval Period?

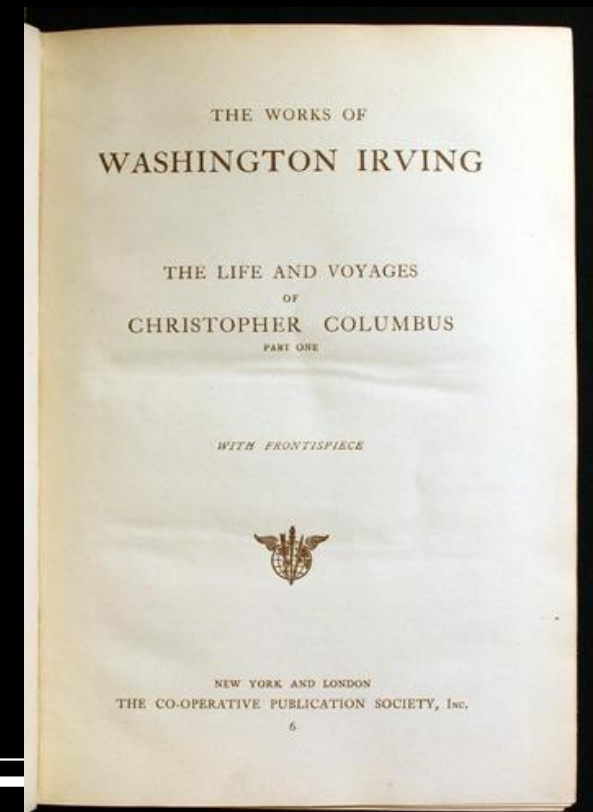
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- Self-definition
- Fantasy
- Search for origins

# Self-definition

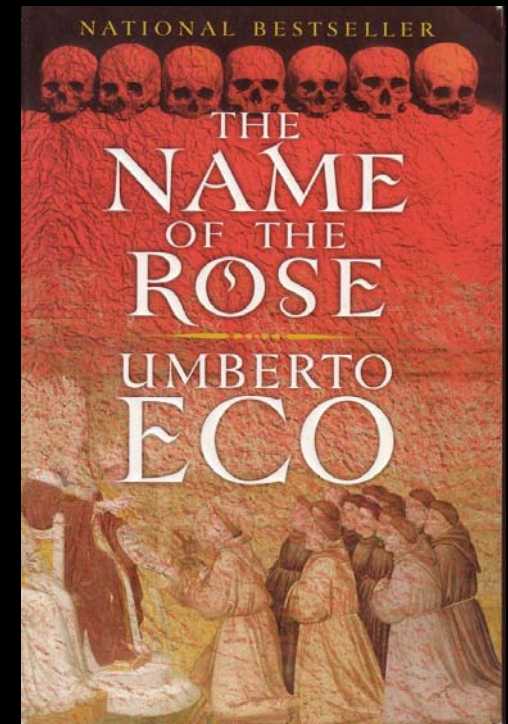
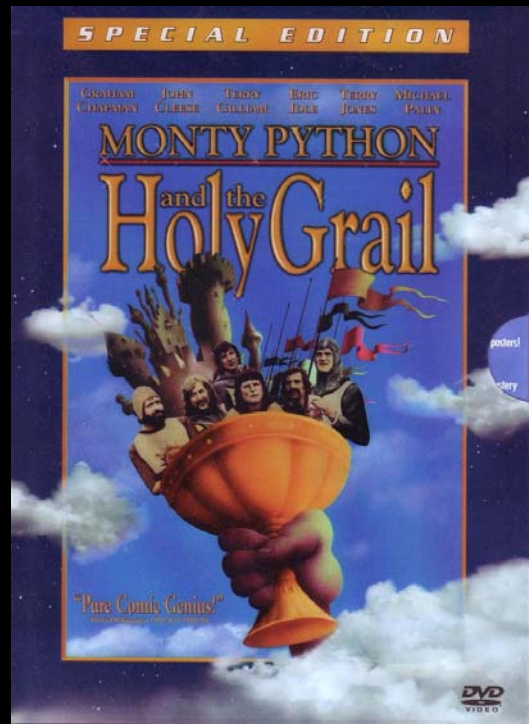
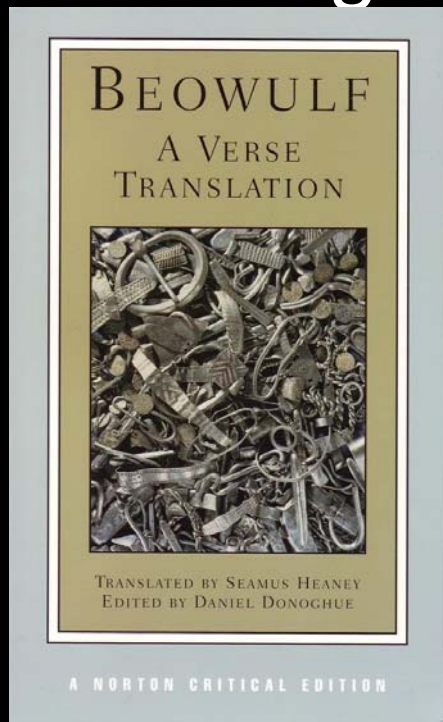
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- From the self-named 'renaissance' (re-birth) through the 'enlightenment', the 'medieval' has defined what we are not.
- Even when we have to invent what 'medieval' was...

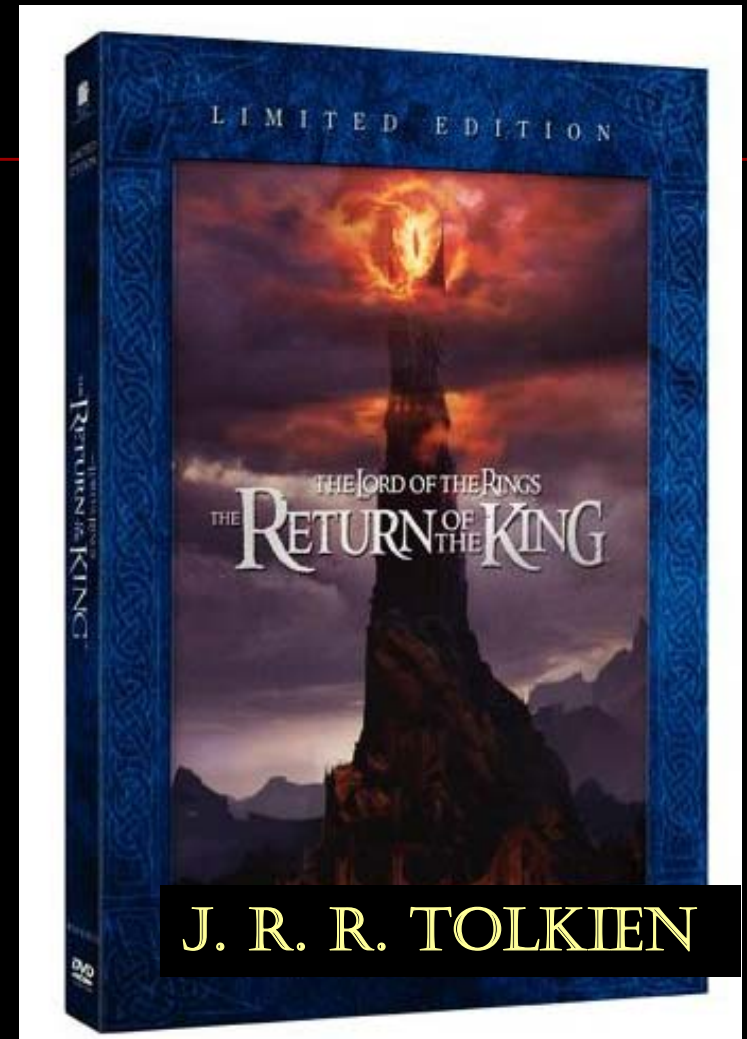
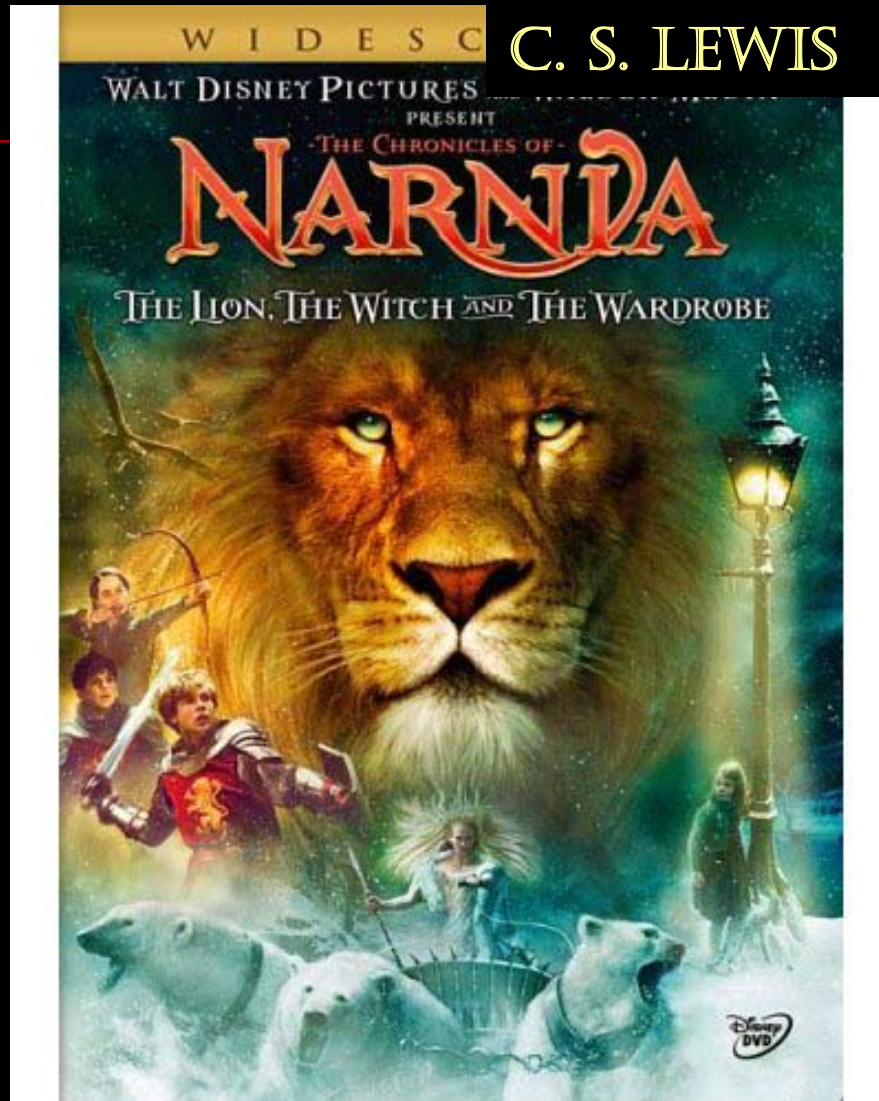


# Fantasy

- Many current best-sellers translate, parody, or imagine the 'medieval'



# Fantasy



# Fantasy



C. Disney



# Fantasy

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[Regale Italian Eatery info](#)

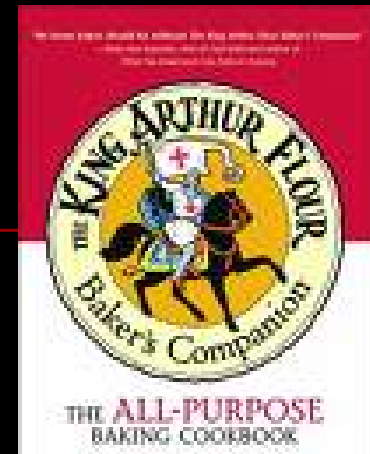


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[Sherwood Forest Cafe info](#)



Features
Over view
Safety

Features
AVALON has been transformed into TOYOTA's High-end, Comfortable, and Emotional Sedan

# What is our interest in the Medieval Period?

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- Self-definition
- Fantasy
- Search for origins

# Thanks to the 'Dark Ages' for...

- Foundations of philosophy, science, and government in the Western world



# Thanks to the 'Dark Ages' for...

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## ■ Beginnings of Universities...

Universities of Paris, Oxford, and Cambridge all founded in the middle ages



# Thanks to the ‘Dark Ages’ for...

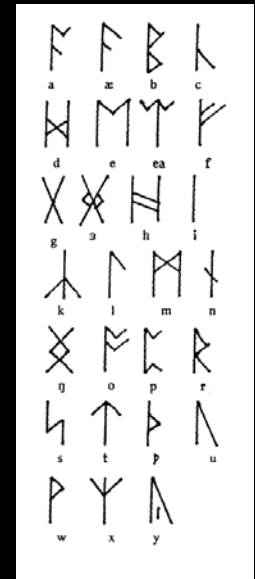
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- Literature in English!

# What is meant by ‘English’?

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- Growth of a Language
  - Old English, Middle English, Modern English
  - Language Status (‘lingua franca’ vs. ‘global English’)
- A Changing Alphabet: runes to Roman
- From Inflexion to Word Order
- Through the Great Vowel Shift
- From a Variety of Dialects to Standardization



# What is meant by 'Literature'?

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- Medieval vs. Modern Expectations
- Genres (epic, romance, hagiography, etc.)  
and Forms (metric verse, rhyming verse,  
prose, etc.)
- Physical Conditions of Transmission
  - Oral vs. Written
  - 15<sup>th</sup> c. Advent of Print

# What Next? Old English and Epic!

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- *Beowulf*, c. 6-8<sup>th</sup> c.
  - Not the first Old English text
  - No English characters
  - Not set in England
  - But probably the best known OE text...why?