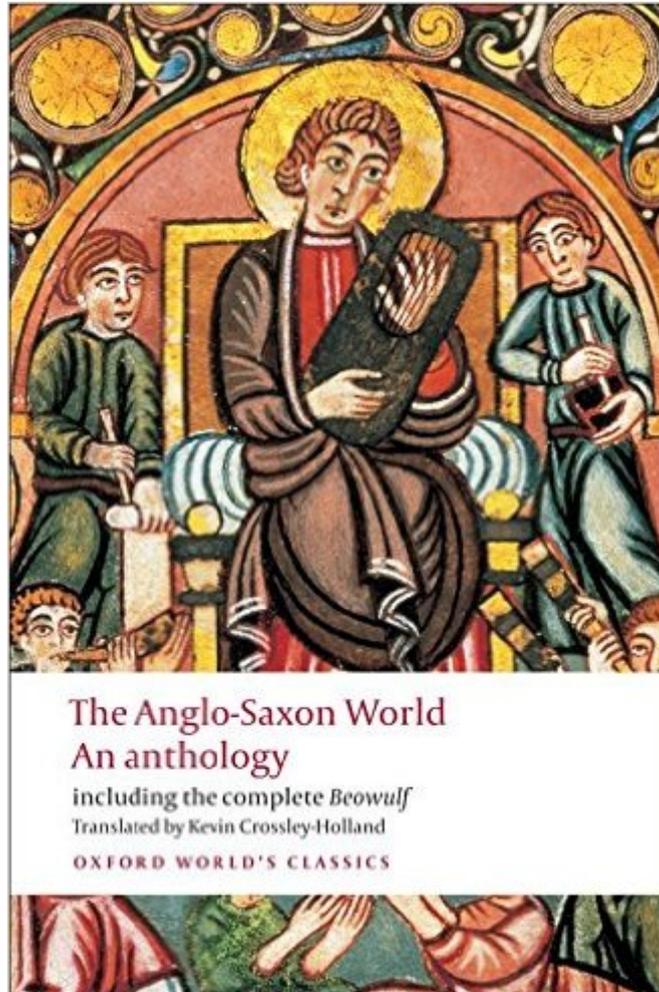


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The Anglo-Saxon World: An Anthology (Oxford World's Classics)



Synopsis

Crossley-Holland--the widely acclaimed translator of Old English texts--introduces the Anglo-Saxons through their chronicles, laws, letters, charters, and poetry, with many of the greatest surviving poems printed in their entirety. About the Series: For over 100 years Oxford World's Classics has made available the broadest spectrum of literature from around the globe. Each affordable volume reflects Oxford's commitment to scholarship, providing the most accurate text plus a wealth of other valuable features, including expert introductions by leading authorities, voluminous notes to clarify the text, up-to-date bibliographies for further study, and much more.

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Customer Reviews

Another gem of the Oxford World's Classics series, Crossley-Holland's anthology presents a generous selection of poetry and prose covering the major genres of Anglo Saxon Lit. All the famous stuff is here -- Seafarer, Wanderer, Battle of Maldon, etc -- including a very fine Beowulf translation that's highly readable without straying far from the literal meaning of the original. Plus riddles, laws, sections of the Chronicle -- quite enough to get a rounded picture of this fascinating literature, and all well translated. The scholarly notes are sparse but adequate for an intro-level text. If I could make one suggestion for improvement, it would be to add the Anglo-Saxon versions in a bilingual edition, so readers could have the sound and structure of the originals.

I bought this book in an old edition paperback form in Dublin because it contained the major elegies such as the Wanderer and the Seafarer. I ended up being extremely satisfied not only with the beautiful translation of the Wanderer, but with all of the selections and with Crossley-Holland's comments. I was very thrilled to meet him recently at a reading in Seattle, where he was promoting his Arthur trilogy. I'll have to check that out.

I'm a homeschooled student (in 10th grade). I read this book as part of a course on early European history, and have also referred to it while studying the history of the English language. Most of the translations are very accessible to the modern reader on their own, and Mr. Crossley-Holland's insightful commentary clears up those which are more difficult or obscure. Anyone who has a serious interest in the literature and culture of the Anglo-Saxons will not be disappointed in this book.

This collection gives a nice broad overview of the Anglo-Saxon culture by providing examples of various kinds of Anglo-Saxon literature. It includes various forms of poetry (including a complete translation of "Beowulf"), excerpts from several historical records, various letters, and some legal documents. I was not especially impressed with the poetry translation; the alliteration is sporadic in the extreme and the division of each line into two half lines of two beats was occasionally lacking. Seamus Heaney has a much better (stylistically speaking) translation of Beowulf and Lee Hollander is much more consistent in his translation of the very similar Norse poetry. Overall: a nice broad introduction to the Anglo-Saxon culture, but the poetry translation is stylistically lacking.

This book is a good collection of different types of Anglo-Saxon literature. It really helps to give you the "flavor" of Anglo-Saxon life and times. The English translations are not my favorite, but they are pretty good, and this book has the excellent advantage of being very affordable (saving you from having to spend more money to buy each of the different Anglo-Saxon writings in many separate volumes). If you have more than a passing interest in Anglo-Saxon literature, though, I would strongly recommend that you take a few weeks to learn Old English. (here is a marvelous tool that includes an audio CD so you can hear Anglo Saxon spoken slowly and clearly as you learn: Complete Old English (Anglo-Saxon) with Two Audio CDs: A Teach Yourself Guide (Teach Yourself Language)). Once you have learned some Old English, you can start reading Beowulf right away with this excellent student edition that has a running dictionary, so you don't have to keep looking up words: Beowulf: A Student Edition. Even if you take the time to learn some Old English, I would still

recommend getting this book just to have it. You will probably return to it again and again. As always, if you feel this review is unhelpful, please leave a comment and let me know how it can be improved. Thanks!

Kevin Crossley-Holland's translation of "Beowulf" is beautifully poetic. Fortunately it is available in this anthology, "The Anglo-Saxon World", in which Kevin Crossley-Holland assembles his own poetic and other scholars' prose translations from Old English. The collection proposes, according to Crossley-Holland, "to introduce the Anglo-Saxons in their own words -- their chronicles, laws and letters, charters and charms, and above all their magnificent poems" (p. xii). This is an odd statement of the program, however. For, whatever the linguistic continuities of English, it is precisely the Anglo-Saxon's 'own words' that we do not get. The complete exclusion of scholarly paraphernalia obscures our frequent uncertainty as to what their own words were, not to mention what they may have meant. Still, the selection of texts is sensible and generous, the translations reliable. With the exception of "Beowulf", the rest of Crossley-Holland's own translations seem to me unobtrusive rather than poetic. Whatever the merits of this edition readers will, to echo the editor's own hopes, have to "continue the journey and look further for themselves" (p. xii).

This is the book that got me hooked on the Oxford World Classics series, which has not yet failed to provide beautiful translations where even the densest language becomes clearly understandable, all the while still keeping the integrity of the original work. The Anglo-Saxon World gives a sweeping introduction into the literature of the Anglo-Saxons while providing short commentary that places each work into historical perspective. While the information is unfortunately is not in depth, it is adequate enough for those unfamiliar with the history of the period to see the works in the proper context. Found here are the major works: the epic Beowulf, "The Seafarer," "The Wanderer," and the works of Bede. But also found are the more obscure and, perhaps, more telling examples of their written culture, including (sometimes bawdy) riddles and even the amusing remedy for a woman's chatter: "eat a radish at night, while fasting; that day the chatter cannot harm you" (276). The texts range from deep pathos and solemn wisdom to the light, humorous and superstitious. Most significantly, this collection makes an ancient and foreign culture both easily approachable and readily accessible. For those with even a passing interest in Anglo-Saxon history, this book is well worth the time and money.

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