

Panel I

"BEOWULF"

This epic poem - the earliest on record in any modern language - echoes the thunderous excitement of battle and the hero-worship of the 6th Century Nordic seafarers. In this first panel, the muralist depicts the heroic Beowulf in bare-handed combat with the monster Grendel, mortally wounding him by wrenching off his arm.



Panel II

Chaucer's "CANTERBURY TALES"

The muralist's rendition of the rich tapestry of medieval life, as revealed in the stories told by a party of pilgrims on the road to Canterbury. Portraits of five of the twenty-nine travelers are shown: the chivalrous, battle-seasoned knight; the vivacious young squire; "The Prioress Tale", a nun "ful symple and coy," feeding her pet dog; the pensive, studious Clerk; and the jovial, worldly Wife of Bath.



Panel III

Shakespeare's "MACBETH"

The dark mood of the panel is symbolic of this tragedy of a man defeated in his lust for power as he lives by the sword and perishes by it. Macbeth and his wife share the panel with the three witches as they work their spell around the evil cauldron; their double-tongued prophecies lead Macbeth into treachery and murder. Plagued by guilt and fear and entangled in his own weaknesses, he falls in battle, his "hour upon the stage" coming to a wretched end.



Panel IV

Dickens' "A TALE OF TWO CITIES"

The background of the panel symbolizes the social upheaval of the times of the French Revolution. Characters from Dickens' panoramic novel stand out against this backdrop, representing innocence and purity, courage and self-pity, tradition and stability, persecution and justice, vengeance and hate - redolent of a poetic tale of the "best of times and the worst of times," that still has meaning for our time.



Panel V

Hawthorne's "THE SCARLET LETTER"

Poe's "THE RAVEN"

Placed in Puritan New England of the 17th century, Hawthorne's novel, through the searing emotions of the principals, presents a penetrating psychological study of sin and punishment. The muralist suggests the forces at play; the self-denying spirit of the Adulteress; the hypocrisy and torment of the pious minister, the concealed paramour; and the moral degradation of the avenging husband obsessed with torturing the hypocritical minister.



The RAVEN of Poe's poem chants the refrain

"Nevermore." The quintessential imaginative poem... the mind starts wandering and the consciousness stirring with each "Nevermore."

The mural concludes with the venerated symbol of intellectual exploration, the OPEN DOOR of new learning for the present and the future.