

LANGUAGE COURSE

Middle English Reading 1

10 Chapters

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Generated with Claude

MIDDLE ENGLISH READING 1

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Middle English Reading 1

Chapter 1 · Reading Strategy

🔍 Reading Strategy

From Chapter 2 on, every chapter reads one real text. Before that you need a routine. This chapter gives one and practises it on short examples. It assumes Middle English Grammar 1; each step names the chapter of that course it comes from.

> THE ROUTINE IN ONE BOX
>
> **Verb first, pronouns second, little words third, nouns and spelling last.** Find the verb and its ending, pick out the pronouns, check the article and adjectives, then the nouns, then say the spelling aloud. Stop and say so when a form is not in your tables, rather than guessing.

One rule I am keeping

I do not make up Middle English sentences in this course. I wrote Old English practice sentences for the earlier reading course from forms I had verified, but Middle English Grammar 1 had gaps (no full noun, article or verb tables), and a sentence I built could contain a form I could not check. Every example below is therefore taken from a source named under it. The notes and glosses are mine.

The routine, step by step

STEP	ASK	LOOK BACK AT
1. Verb	Which word has a verb ending: **-e**, **-(e)st**, **-eþ** or **-es**, **-en**, **-ed**? Or is it one of the irregular verbs?	Middle English Grammar 1, Chapters 6 and 7
2. Pronouns	Which pronouns are there, and are they subject or object? Remember *his* can mean "its".	Middle English Grammar 1, Chapter 5

STEP	ASK	LOOK BACK AT
3. Little words	**þe**, **þis**, **þat**, *a*; and a final *-e* on the adjective that follows.	Middle English Grammar 1, Chapters 3 and 4
4. Nouns	Plural *-es* or *-en*; genitive *-es*, or no genitive ending.	Middle English Grammar 1, Chapter 2
5. Negatives and borrowed words	**ne**, **not**; Norse or French words.	Middle English Grammar 1, Chapters 8 and 9
6. Spelling	Thorn, yogh, the final *e*; say the word aloud.	Middle English Grammar 1, Chapter 1
7. Read it again	Put it into English and check that it makes sense.	

No word-order step

The Old English reading course used verb-second and verb-final order as a first step. For Middle English the sources only said that word order became stricter as endings wore away (Middle English Grammar 1, Chapter 8). They gave no rule, so this routine does not use one.

Worked example 1: verb endings

ich here

I hear

þou spekest

thou speakest

he comeþ

he cometh (comes)

Source: Wikipedia, *Middle English*, Morphology, Verbs (read in Middle English Grammar 1, Chapter 6). The glosses follow the article's.

1. **Verbs: here** ends in **-e** (1st singular), **spekest** in **-(e)st** (2nd singular), **comeþ** in **-eþ** (3rd singular).

2. **Pronouns: ich** and **þou** are subjects from the Chapter 5 table.
3. The ending tells you the person even before you look at the pronoun. That is the habit to build.

Worked example 2: a negative

> **I ne seye not**
>
> *I NEG say not*
>
> "I do not say"
>
> Source: Wikipedia, *Jespersen's cycle*, English section (read in Middle English Grammar 1, Chapter 8). Gloss as given there; the translation is mine.

1. **Verb: seye**, with the 1st singular **-e**.
2. **Negative: ne … not** around the verb, the second of the three stages in Chapter 8.

Worked example 3: a real line

> 1 **Whan that Aprille with his shoures sote**
>
> 2 **The droghte of Marche hath perced to the rote,**
>
> *when that April with its showers sweet / the drought of March has pierced to the root*
>
> "When April with its sweet showers has pierced March's drought to the root"
>
> Source: Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, Prologue, lines 1 and 2, Skeat's 1900 edition on Wikisource, as the page tool gave them. The gloss and translation are mine.

1. **Verb: hath** is the 3rd singular of *have* (**haþ** in Chapter 7). **perced** ends in the weak **-ed** (Chapter 6).
2. **Pronouns: his** stands for "its" (Chapter 5's table lists *his* for the neuter).
3. **Little words: the** is the reduced article (Chapter 3).
4. **Nouns: shoures** has the strong plural **-es** (Chapter 2).
5. **The odd one: that** after **Whan** has no meaning of its own here. It is part of a conjunction, but I did not find that explained in the sources, so that note is mine and

unverified.

Practical notes for real texts

- **Look up the base form.** A glossary lists verbs by the infinitive (**-en**) and nouns by the singular, so remove the ending before you look a word up.
- **Spelling varies.** The Skeat edition prints **sote** in line 1, where the edition quoted in The History of the English Language, Chapter 3 has **soote**. Editions differ, and each chapter's *Watch out* box points out differences.
- **Dialect.** The same verb ending can differ by region (Chapter 6), so each chapter says where its text comes from, as far as its source states it.

> **Watch out**
>
> **hath** looks like a plural verb to modern eyes, but it is 3rd singular: "he/it has". Check the ending against your table before you rely on how it looks.

📋 Quick Reference

DO THIS	BECAUSE
Find the verb ending first	It tells you the person, number and tense
Check the pronoun table	Subject and object forms are different
Look for the final *-e* after **þe**, **þis**, **þat**	Adjectives take *-e* there
Treat **ne** … **not** as one negative	The second stage of negation
Say "not in my tables" when you reach a gap	The grammar sources did not cover everything

🖍️ Try It Yourself

Say the answer first, then click to check.

1. In **þou spekest**, what does the ending tell you?

▼ Show answer

2nd person singular, present: **-(e)st**.

2. What person is **he comeþ**?

▼ Show answer

3rd singular, with the ending **-eþ**.

3. Translate **ich here**.

▼ Show answer

"I hear."

4. In **I ne seye not**, which two words make the negative?

▼ Show answer

ne and **not**, around the verb.

5. In line 2 of the Prologue, which word is the form of *have*?

▼ Show answer

hath, 3rd singular.

6. Which word in line 2 ends in the weak past ending?

▼ Show answer

perced, with **-ed**.

7. What does **his** mean in line 1?

▼ Show answer

"Its": *his* is the neuter possessive in the pronoun table.

8. What ending does **shoures** carry, and what does it show?

▼ Show answer

The strong plural **-es**: "showers".

9. Why does this course not use a verb-second step?

▼ Show answer

The grammar sources gave no word-order rule for Middle English beyond a general move to stricter order.

10. What should you do when a form is not in your tables?

▼ Show answer

Say so, and treat any reading as a guess, rather than filling the gap from memory.

Note on sources

The examples come from Wikipedia's *Middle English* (verb examples), *Jespersen's cycle* (the negative) and Skeat's 1900 edition of Chaucer's Prologue on Wikisource (lines 1 and 2), each as the page tool summarised or quoted it, and each already read for Middle English Grammar 1. I read nothing new for this chapter, and no grammar book. The routine, the step table, the glosses on the Chaucer lines and the note on *that* are mine and unverified.

Coming up in Chapter 2: The Peterborough Chronicle. A short Early Middle English annal, the first real text of the course, if a readable source can be found.

📜 The Peterborough Chronicle

The first real text of the course is one sentence, and it is a hard one to label. It comes from a chronicle written by monks as the English language was changing underneath them. Read it with the routine from Middle English Reading 1, Chapter 1, and notice how often the grammar tables of Middle English Grammar 1 fit, and how often they do not.

THE TEXT IN ONE BOX

The **Peterborough Chronicle** (the Laud or E manuscript, Bodleian Library, Laud Misc. 636) is a version of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* kept at Peterborough Abbey. Its entries run to **1154**. Our sentence is tagged **1137** and belongs to the part that covers 1132 to 1154, the reign of Stephen and the Anarchy.

Where it comes from

- **The copied part.** After a fire in 1116 destroyed the monastery's library, monks copied a Winchester chronicle, up to about 1120. That part is largely late Old English.
- **First continuation, 1122 to 1131.** A mix of Old and Middle English vocabulary, with simplified syntax.
- **Second continuation, 1132 to 1154.** Early Middle English forms, with grammatical gender almost completely lost. Scholars speculate that it was dictated, or written from the memories of one elderly monk.
- **She.** The article says the feminine pronoun *she* (as **scæ**) is first recorded in this chronicle, but does not say which year or entry. Chapter 5 of Middle English Grammar 1 gave no date for the arrival of *she*; this is the first one I have found.
- **Dialect.** The article, as the page tool gave it, names the language stage but not a dialect, so I name none.

The text

Þa the suikes undergæton ðat he milde man was and softe and god, and na iustise ne dide, þa diden hi alle wunder

then / when the traitors understood that he mild man was and soft and good, and no justice not did, then did they all wonders

"When the traitors understood that he (Stephen) was a gentle man, and soft and good, and did not execute justice, they committed all manner of atrocity."

Source: Wikipedia, *Peterborough Chronicle*, the quotation tagged 1137, and the translation printed beside it (given in two parts by the page tool, joined here). The word-for-word gloss is mine and unverified.

Walking through it

1. **Verbs. undergæton** is a past plural, "understood". **was** is the past of *be* (Middle English Grammar 1, Chapter 7). **dide** is the past of *do*, and **diden** its plural; Chapter 7 gave **didde** and **didden**, so these are spelling variants of the same words (my reading).
2. **The plural past ending.** Chapter 6 gave the plural of strong past tenses as **-en**. Here **undergæton** ends in **-on** instead. The sources did not say why, and the sentence does not tell us, so I note it as older-looking spelling and nothing more.
3. **Pronouns. he** is the masculine subject (Chapter 5). **hi**, "they", is not in the pronoun table of Chapter 5, which listed **heo / he** for the Old English line. I read **hi** as another spelling of that line, but that is my guess.
4. **The article. the** in **the suikes** is the reduced article, spelled with *th* (Chapter 3).
5. **Nouns. suikes** ("traitors") has the strong plural **-es** (Chapter 2). **wunder** ("wonders", here "atrocity") has no plural ending at all. Chapter 2 said its source was silent on endingless plurals, so I draw no rule from this one word.
6. **Adjectives. alle** ends in *-e* before a plural noun, as Chapter 4 predicts. **milde** also ends in *-e* but follows a singular **man** and no *the* or demonstrative, so Chapter 4's rule does not predict it. I cannot explain it from the sources. **softe** has the same ending; **god** has none.
7. **Negatives. ne dide** has **ne** before the verb, the first stage of Chapter 8, which was the most common pattern (60.5%) in the 1150 to 1250 period. The sentence also has **na iustise** ("no justice") before it. Chapter 8's sources did not describe sentences with more than one negative word, so I do not say whether this is normal.
8. **Borrowing. iustise** is "justice", one of the French law words listed in Chapter 9.

New words

MIDDLE ENGLISH	MEANING	MODERN ENGLISH RELATIVE
suikes	traitors	(none I can verify)
undergæton	understood (past plural)	*understand*
milde	gentle, mild	*mild*
softe	soft	*soft*
iustise	justice	*justice*
wunder	wonders, atrocity	*wonder*

Watch out

Both **Þ** and **ð** appear in this one sentence (**Þa**, **ðat**), and the vowel **æ** in **undergæton** is an Old English letter. Also, **wunder** in the sentence means "atrocity" because of the context; do not read it as "wonder" in our sense. The page tool called the sentence "Old English", but the article describes this part of the chronicle as early Middle English, so I treat it as that.

Try It Yourself

Say the answer first, then click to check.

1. What years does the Peterborough Chronicle run to?

▼ Show answer

1154.

2. What event followed the fire of 1116?

▼ Show answer

The monks copied a Winchester chronicle, up to about 1120.

3. Which forms of *be* and *do* are in the sentence?

▼ Show answer

was, and **dide** / **diden**.

4. What plural ending does **suikes** carry?

▼ Show answer

The strong plural **-es**.

5. Why does **alle** end in *-e*?

▼ Show answer

It modifies a plural noun, **wunder**, as Chapter 4's rule says.

6. Does Chapter 4's rule predict the *-e* on **milde**?

▼ Show answer

No. It follows a singular noun with no article or demonstrative. The sources do not explain it.

7. Which negative stage is **ne dide**?

▼ Show answer

ne before the verb, with no **not**: the first stage.

8. Which word is a French law word?

▼ Show answer

iustise, "justice".

9. Why is **hi** "they" only a guess?

▼ Show answer

It is not in the pronoun table of Chapter 5, which gave **heo / he** for the Old English line.

10. What does the article say is first recorded in this chronicle, and what does it not say?

▼ Show answer

The pronoun *she* (as **scæ**); it does not say which year or entry.

Note on sources

The sentence, its translation and the background come from Wikipedia's *Peterborough Chronicle*, as the page tool gave them; I could quote only the one passage the article prints. A Wikisource page I tried for the chronicle returned a 404, so I did not read the manuscript or any edition. The article does not say which dialect the sentence is in. The word-for-word gloss, the notes on the grammar and the vocabulary table are mine and unverified.

Coming up in Chapter 3: Sumer Is Icumen In. A 13th-century song, if a readable source can be found.

📜 The Ormulum

This chapter replaces the planned Sumer Is Icumen In. The page tool I use declined to reproduce the lyric, even though it is a 13th-century text, and I will not quote it from memory. Instead we read a single line from the Ormulum, a text with a spelling system unlike any other in the course. One line is not much, so most of the chapter is about how the book was written.

THE TEXT IN ONE BOX

The **Ormulum** is a 12th-century book of biblical commentary in just under 19,000 lines of early Middle English verse, made of homilies on the Mass readings through the church year. Only about a fifth survives, in one manuscript in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. Its author, **Orrm** (or Orrmin), was an Augustinian canon who names himself in the dedication. The manuscript was probably finished around **1180**, though he may have begun around 1150. The dialect is **East Midlands**, and strongly within the Danelaw area.

The text

Icc was þær þær i crisstnedd was

I was there where I christened was

"Where I was christened, I was"

Source: Wikipedia, *Ormulum*, the line quoted there, with the translation printed beside it, as the page tool gave them. The word-for-word gloss is mine and unverified.

The translation is loose. It puts the clause "where I was christened" first and the main clause "I was" after it, as English prefers. The Middle English runs the other way round: "I was there, where I was christened".

Orrm's spelling system

- **Doubled consonants mark a short vowel** and a single consonant marks a long one. That is why **Icc** has two *c*s and **crisstnedd** has doubled *s* and *d*.
- **Space-saving letters.** Stacked doubled letters were used to save space, and two special letters stood for *þþ* and *pp*.
- **Vowel marks.** Breves marked short vowels and acute accents marked long ones, mainly in open syllables or for emphasis. The line as the page tool gave it shows none, so I cannot say where this manuscript would put them.
- **Three kinds of g.** The article lists insular ȝ for the "j" sound, a flat-topped form for the hard "g", and Carolingian g for the "j" sound in *seggen*. There is no g in our line.

Walking through it

1. **Pronouns. Icc** and **i** both mean "I". Middle English Grammar 1, Chapter 5 listed **ic / ich / I**, so **Icc** is a spelling of the same word with Orrm's doubled consonant. I read **i** as another spelling of "I" because the printed translation requires "I" twice (once in each clause). A reader who took **i** for "in" would get nonsense.
2. **Verbs. was** twice, the past of *be* (Chapter 7). **crisstnedd** is the past participle of "christen", with the ending **-edd**. That is the weak **-ed** of Chapter 6 in Orrm's spelling. It carries no **i-** or **y-** prefix, though Chapter 6 listed prefixes as common.
3. **Little words. þær þær** is "there where". Neither word appeared in Middle English Grammar 1, so the meanings are my reading of the printed translation.
4. **The line has no plural noun, article or adjective,** so none of the Chapter 2, 3 or 4 tables can be tested here. The line is also too early and too short to check the Midland verb plural **-en** (Chapter 6), which the source dates from about 1200.

New words

MIDDLE ENGLISH	MEANING	MODERN ENGLISH RELATIVE
Icc	I	/

MIDDLE ENGLISH	MEANING	MODERN ENGLISH RELATIVE
i	I (as read here)	*I*
was	was	*was*
þær	there, where (in **þær þær**)	*there*
crisstnedd	christened	*christened*

Watch out

The doubling rule is Orrm's own system, as the article describes it. Do not assume other texts follow it; the sources I read say nothing about any other text. Also, **i** here is "I", not the preposition "in".

Try It Yourself

Say the answer first, then click to check.

1. What is the Ormulum?

▼ Show answer

A 12th-century book of biblical commentary in almost 19,000 lines of early Middle English verse.

2. Who wrote it, and when was it probably finished?

▼ Show answer

Orrm (or Orrmin), an Augustinian canon; around 1180, though he may have begun around 1150.

3. Which dialect is it?

▼ Show answer

East Midlands, strongly within the Danelaw area.

4. What does a doubled consonant after a vowel mark in Orrm's spelling?

▼ Show answer

A short vowel.

5. Translate **Icc was þær þær i crisstnedd was**.

▼ Show answer

"Where I was christened, I was" (or, closer to the order: "I was there where I was christened").

6. Why is **i** read as "I" and not "in"?

▼ Show answer

The printed translation needs "I" twice, and "in" would make nonsense of the second clause.

7. Which ending shows that **crisstnedd** is a weak participle?

▼ Show answer

-edd, Orrm's spelling of weak **-ed**.

8. Which grammar tables from Middle English Grammar 1 can this line not test, and why?

▼ Show answer

The noun, article and adjective tables, because the line has none of those words; and the Midland verb plural, because the line has no plural verb.

Note on sources

The line, its translation and the facts about the author, date, dialect and spelling come from Wikipedia's *Ormulum*, as the page tool gave them. I could quote only the one line the article prints. I tried Wikipedia's *Summer Canon* pages for the planned song, but the tool declined to reproduce the lyric, so I swapped it out. I read no edition of the manuscript. The gloss, the grammar notes and the vocabulary table are mine and unverified.

Coming up in Chapter 4: The Lord's Prayer. A Middle English version, if a readable source can be found.

📜 Two Bibles

This chapter replaces the planned Lord's Prayer. The Wikipedia articles I could read print no Middle English version of it, only the one word dettis, so I looked for something else I could verify. The Middle English article's Sample texts section turned up something better for this course: the same two verses of the Bible in two Middle English dialects, printed one beside the other. Reading them together shows what dialect means on the page.

THE TEXT IN ONE BOX

James 1:5 and 6, from the **Pre-Wycliffite Bibles**, in two versions: one labelled **West Midlands (Herefordshire)**, from a manuscript at Selwyn College, and one labelled **Southern**, from MS. Bodl. Douce 250. The article prints no date for either manuscript, and I give none.

Verse 5

WM **And who-efere of ȝou nedeþ wysdom, axe he of God, þat grauntеþ eferich man plentyuouslyche and obbraydeþ no man.**

and whoever of you needs wisdom, ask he of God, that grants every man plentifully and reproaches no man

S **& whuche of ȝow so haþ nede of wysdom, aske of God þat ȝeveþ plentyuously to alle, & withstonde him nouȝte, & it schal be ȝove to him.**

and which of you so has need of wisdom, ask of God that gives plentifully to all, and withstand him not, and it shall be given to him

The article's modern English: "Any of you who lacks wisdom must ask God, who gives to all generously and without scolding; it will be given."

Source: Wikipedia, *Middle English*, Sample texts, Pre-Wycliffite Bibles (WM = West Midlands (Herefordshire) version, S = Southern version). The Southern verse was printed in two parts by the page

tool and is joined here. The glosses are mine and unverified.

Verse 6

WM **& axe he in feiþ & trust, doutynge no þing: For he þat douteþ is lyche to þe flod of þe see þat is y-mefed & y-boren aboute of þe wynd.**

and ask he in faith and trust, doubting no thing: for he that doubts is like to the flood of the sea that is y-moved and y-borne about by the wind

S **Aske he soþely in feiþ, nouȝte faylynge: for soþely he þat is faylynge (þat is, faylynge in þe feiþ) he is lyke to þe flowynge of þe see þe whuche is mevyd wiþ þe wynde & bore a-boute.**

ask he truly in faith, not failing: for truly he that is failing (that is, failing in the faith) he is like to the flowing of the sea which is moved with the wind and borne about

The article's modern English: "But the prayer must be made with faith, and no trace of doubt, because a person who has doubts is like the waves thrown up in the sea by the buffeting of the wind."

Source: as above. Each verse was printed in parts by the page tool and is joined here. The modern English is the article's single translation of both versions, so it matches neither word for word.

What matches Middle English Grammar 1

1. **3rd singular -eþ.** Both versions use it: **nedeþ**, **graunteþ**, **douteþ**, **ȝeveþ**, and **haþ** (Middle English Grammar 1, Chapters 6 and 7). Neither version uses the Northern **-es**. The verse has no plural present verb, so the dialect plural endings of Chapter 6 are not tested here.
2. **Present participle -ynge. doutynge**, **faylynge**, **flowynge** (Chapter 6). Chapter 6's source assigned *-ende* and *-ynge* to no dialect, and these two texts use *-ynge* only, which proves nothing about the others.
3. **Past participles with y-.** The West Midlands text has **y-mefed** (weak) and **y-boren** (strong, **y-** plus **-en**), both matching Chapter 6. The Southern text has **mevyd** and **bore**

with no prefix on these, and **ȝove**, the participle of "give".

4. **Pronouns. ȝou** and **ȝow** are both listed in Chapter 5 for 2nd plural. **him** is the object form. **it** in the Southern text is not the **hit** of Chapter 5's table, so it is a spelling I note without explanation.
5. **Be, have, shall. is** and **haþ** match Chapter 7. **schal** is the 1st and 3rd singular of *shall*. **be** in **schal be ȝove** is the infinitive; Chapter 7 gave **been**, so this is a spelling variant (my reading).
6. **The article. þe** in both: **þe flod**, **þe see**, **þe wynd** (Chapter 3). The Southern text has **þe wynde** with an *-e* on the noun where the West Midlands text has none; Chapter 2's source gave no rule for this, so I note it only.
7. **Plural *-e*. alle** in **to alle** ends in *-e* as a plural form (Chapter 4).
8. **Negatives. obbraydeþ no man** and **doutynge no þing** use **no** with no **ne**. The Southern text has **nouȝte** with no **ne** either, like the **nauȝt** of Chapter 8. The article prints no dates, so I cannot place the texts on Chapter 8's stages.
9. **-lich and -ly.** The West Midlands text has **plentyuouslyche** and **lyche**; the Southern text has **plentyuously** and **lyke**. Chapter 4 mentioned *-ly* and *-lich* as alternatives, so this looks like the same pair at work in these words. The match is my observation, not the source's.

What differs between the two

WORD	WEST MIDLANDS	SOUTHERN
ask	**axe**	**aske**
you (plural)	**ȝou**	**ȝow**
who / which	**who-efere**	**whuche**
gives	**graunteþ** ("grants")	**ȝeveþ**
like	**lyche**	**lyke**
not	**no**	**nouȝte**
wind	**wynd**	**wynde**

Some of these are word choices (**graunteþ** against **ȝeveþ**), and some are spelling (**ȝou** against **ȝow**). The article labels one text West Midlands and the other Southern but does not say which differences are regional and which belong to the scribe or the translator. I make no claim about that, beyond the observable fact that they differ.

New words

MIDDLE ENGLISH	MEANING	MODERN ENGLISH RELATIVE
axe / aske	ask	*ask*
wysdom	wisdom	*wisdom*
nedeþ / nede	needs, lacks; need	*need*
graunteþ	grants	*grant*
obbraydeþ	reproaches (my reading from "without scolding")	*upbraid* (my guess)
douteþ	doubts	*doubt*
flod	flood, wave	*flood*
soþely	truly	*soothly* (my guess)

> **Watch out**
>
> Both texts use **ȝ** (yogh, Middle English Grammar 1, Chapter 1) and **þ** (thorn), and the **&** sign stands for "and". The modern English translation is a single paraphrase of both versions, and for verse 6 it says "waves", where the texts say **flod** and **flowynge**.

Try It Yourself

Say the answer first, then click to check.

1. Which two dialects are the two texts labelled with?

▼ Show answer

West Midlands (Herefordshire) and Southern.

2. Which verse ending do both texts use for the 3rd singular present?

▼ Show answer

-eþ, as in **nedeþ** and **ȝeveþ**.

3. Why can this passage not test the dialect plural endings of Chapter 6?

▼ Show answer

It has no plural present-tense verb.

4. Which participle in the West Midlands text has **y-** plus **-en**?

▼ Show answer

y-boren.

5. Give the West Midlands and Southern words for "ask".

▼ Show answer

axe and **aske**.

6. Translate **it schal be ȝove to him**.

▼ Show answer

"It shall be given to him."

7. What does **obbraydeþ no man** mean, and which grammatical points does it show?

▼ Show answer

"(And) reproaches no man": the 3rd singular ending **-eþ** and a negative **no** with no **ne**.

8. Name one difference that is a word choice and one that is a spelling.

▼ Show answer

Word choice: **graunteþ** against **ȝeveþ**. Spelling: **ȝou** against **ȝow**.

9. Does the article say which differences are regional?

▼ Show answer

No. It labels the two texts but does not separate regional differences from scribal ones.

10. What does the Southern text have where the West Midlands text has **wynd**?

▼ Show answer

wynde, with a final *-e*.

Note on sources

Both Middle English versions, the dialect labels, the manuscript names and the modern English come from the Sample texts section of Wikipedia's *Middle English* article, as the page tool gave them, in parts under its quotation limit. The article prints no word-for-word rendering of these two versions and no dates. This is the part of the article after the Orthography section; my Middle English Grammar 1 chapters used the Morphology sections and did not use it. I read no manuscript. Wikipedia's *Lord's Prayer* article, which I read to 200,000 of 312,616 characters, printed no Middle English version, which is why this chapter replaces that text. The glosses, the grammar notes, the table of differences and the vocabulary table are mine and unverified.

Coming up in Chapter 5: Chaucer: The Opening. The first lines of the *General Prologue*, in the version printed in the *Middle English* article.

📜 Chaucer's Opening

You met lines 1 and 2 in Chapter 1. This chapter reads the first eight lines of the General Prologue of The Canterbury Tales in full, using the version printed in Wikipedia's Middle English article, which comes with a word-for-word rendering. The lines are a good test of the final -e that Middle English Grammar 1, Chapter 4 described.

THE TEXT IN ONE BOX

Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, General Prologue, lines 1 to 8. The article dates the excerpt to **the 1390s**, says it was written in **a dialect associated with London**, and says its spellings are those associated with the then-emergent **Chancery Standard**. The visible text does not name the edition.

The text

LINE	MIDDLE ENGLISH	WORD FOR WORD	MODERN PROSE
1	**Whan that Aprill, with his shoures soote**	When that April with his showers sweet	When April with its sweet showers
2	**The droȝte of March hath perced to the roote**	The drought of March has pierced to the root	has drenched March's drought to the roots,
3	**And bathed every veyne in swich licour,**	And bathed every vein in such [liquor]	filling every capillary with nourishing sap
4	**Of which vertu engendred is the flour;**	Of which virtue engendered is the flower	prompting the flowers to grow,
5	**Whan Zephirus eek with his sweete breeth**	When Zephyrus even with his sweet breath	and when Zephyrus with his sweet breath

LINE	MIDDLE ENGLISH	WORD FOR WORD	MODERN PROSE
6	**Inspired hath in every holt and heeth**	Inspired has in every holt and heath	has coaxed in every wood and dale, to sprout
7	**The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne**	The tender crops; and the young sun	the tender plants, as the springtime sun
8	**Hath in the Ram his halfe cours yronne,**	Has in [the Ram] his half-course run	passes halfway through the sign of [Aries]

Source: Wikipedia, *Middle English*, Sample texts, Chaucer, lines 1 to 8, with the article's word-for-word and modern prose columns, as the page tool gave them line by line. The brackets are the article's links (to *sap* and to *Aries*) as the tool reported them. My notes below are mine and unverified.

The prose translation is loose. In line 2, for example, the Middle English says **perced** ("pierced") and the prose says "drenched". Lines 5 to 8 are one sentence with a long verb at the end, which the prose rearranges. Use the word-for-word column when you want to see what the Middle English says.

The final -e at work

Middle English Grammar 1, Chapter 4 said a final *-e* goes on an adjective before a plural noun, after *the*, after a demonstrative or possessive, and in direct address, and that longer adjectives did so less consistently later. These lines test it:

PHRASE	CONTEXT	MATCHES CHAPTER 4?
shoures soote (line 1)	after a plural noun	Yes: the plural *-e*. (The noun comes first, so the adjective follows it.)
his sweete breeth (line 5)	after **his**	Yes: after a possessive.
the tendre croppes (line 7)	after **the**, plural	Yes: **tendre** ends in *-e*.

PHRASE	CONTEXT	MATCHES CHAPTER 4?
the yonge sonne (line 7)	after **the**	Yes: **yonge** ends in *-e*.
his halfe cours (line 8)	after **his**	Yes: **halfe** ends in *-e*.
every veyne (line 3)	no adjective	Not tested.

Every adjective in these eight lines that Chapter 4's rule covers does carry the *-e*. That is eight lines, so it tells us what these lines do. It does not say how consistently Chaucer used the *-e* across the whole of the *Tales*, which Chapter 4's source did not say either. (**tendre** and **yonge** have two syllables, and the article said those took *-e* less consistently later; they do here.)

Walking through the rest

1. **Verbs. hath** occurs in lines 2, 6 and 8, the 3rd singular of *have* (Chapter 7). **perced**, **bathed**, **engendred** and **Inspired** end in **-ed**, the weak ending (Chapter 6). **is** in line 4 is the 3rd singular of *be*.
2. **The odd participle. yronne** (line 8) starts with the **y-** that Chapter 6 listed for past participles, but ends in *-e*, not the **-en** that Chapter 6 gave for strong participles. The sources did not explain this, so I note the mismatch and nothing more.
3. **Word order.** Lines 6 to 8 put the participle first: **Inspired hath …**, **Hath … yronne**. The sources gave no rule for this, so I describe it and do not explain it. Chaucer was writing verse, which may bend the order; that suggestion is mine.
4. **Pronouns. his** in lines 1, 5 and 8 refers to April, to Zephyrus and to the sun. It means "its" in line 1 and "his" for Zephyrus and the sun, as the article's word-for-word column has it. Chapter 5 gave *his* as both masculine and neuter.
5. **Nouns. shoures** and **croppes** carry the strong plural **-es** (Chapter 2). **The** is the reduced article throughout (Chapter 3).
6. **Borrowed words.** I will not call **vertu**, **licour** or **veyne** French: Chapter 9 listed categories of French vocabulary, not these words.
7. **Spelling. droȝte** uses yogh (ȝ, Chapter 1). Skeat's edition, which Chapter 1 of this course and Chapter 10 of Middle English Grammar 1 used, prints **droghte**, **sote** and **rote** where this text has **droȝte**, **soote** and **roote**. Editions differ.

New words

MIDDLE ENGLISH	MEANING	MODERN ENGLISH RELATIVE
shoures	showers	*showers*
soote / sweete	sweet	*sweet*
dro3te	drought	*drought*
roote	root	*root*
holt, heeth	wood, heath	*holt* (rare), *heath*
croppes	crops, new shoots	*crops*
yonge	young	*young*
yronne	run (past participle)	*run*

Watch out

Whan that is not "when that" in the modern sense. The word-for-word column keeps the *that* and the modern prose drops it. Also, **hath** is singular ("has"), whatever it looks like, and **Inspired** here is a verb form, not an adjective.

Try It Yourself

Say the answer first, then click to check.

1. Which dialect and spelling standard does the article associate with this text?

▼ Show answer

A dialect associated with London, with spellings associated with the Chancery Standard.

2. Translate line 2 word for word.

▼ Show answer

"The drought of March has pierced to the root."

3. Why does **sweete** end in *-e* in line 5?

▼ Show answer

It follows the possessive **his**, one of Chapter 4's contexts.

4. Which words in line 7 show the *-e* after **the**?

▼ Show answer

tendre and **yonge**.

5. How many times does **hath** appear, and in which lines?

▼ Show answer

Three times: lines 2, 6 and 8.

6. Name two weak past participles in lines 1 to 8.

▼ Show answer

Any two of **perced**, **bathed**, **engendred**, **Inspired**.

7. What is odd about **yronne**?

▼ Show answer

It has the **y-** prefix but ends in *-e*, not the **-en** given for strong participles. The sources do not explain it.

8. Which plural nouns carry the strong **-es**?

▼ Show answer

shoures and **croppes**.

9. Give two spelling differences between this text and Skeat's edition.

▼ Show answer

Any two of **dro3te** / **droghte**, **soote** / **sote**, **roote** / **rote**.

10. Does this passage show how consistently Chaucer used the final *-e*?

▼ Show answer

No. It shows what these eight lines do, which matches Chapter 4's rule, but not how the whole work behaves.

Note on sources

The eight lines, the word-for-word column, the modern prose, the dialect note and the date come from the Sample texts section of Wikipedia's *Middle English* article, as the page tool gave them (the first 100,000 of 152,228 characters). The article's visible text names no edition, and its notes on the word-for-word and prose columns were cut off, so I cannot say who made them. The comparison with Skeat uses lines read earlier on Wikisource. I read no manuscript. The final-*e* table, the notes on word order and on **yronne**, and the vocabulary table are mine and unverified.

Coming up in Chapter 6: Chaucer: A Portrait. A short description of a pilgrim, if a readable source can be found.

📜 Chaucer's Knight

Chapter 5 read eight lines of scene-setting. This chapter reads eight lines about a person: the Knight, the first pilgrim Chaucer describes. Describing someone uses different parts of the grammar from describing spring: past tenses, possessives, and a run of abstract nouns.

THE TEXT IN ONE BOX

Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, General Prologue, **lines 43 to 50**, in Skeat's 1900 edition on Wikisource. The page prints line numbers only every fifth line, so I number these by position. The Middle English article (read in Chapter 5) places the Prologue in the 1390s and in a London dialect; I read nothing on Wikisource that says the same about this edition.

The text

LINE	MIDDLE ENGLISH	WORD FOR WORD (MINE)
43	**A Knight ther was, and that a worthy man,**	a knight there was, and that a worthy man
44	**That fro the tyme that he first bigan**	that from the time that he first began
45	**To ryden out, he loved chivalrye,**	to ride out, he loved chivalry
46	**Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisye.**	truth and honour, freedom and courtesy
47	**Ful worthy was he in his lordes werre,**	full worthy was he in his lord's war
48	**And therto hadde he riden (no man ferre)**	and thereto had he ridden (no man further)
49	**As wel in Cristendom as hethenesse,**	as well in Christendom as heathendom
50	**And ever honoured for his worthinesse.**	and ever honoured for his worthiness

Source: Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales* (ed. Skeat, 1900), Prologue, lines 43 to 50, Wikisource, as the page tool gave them line by line. The page gave no translation, so the word-for-word column is mine and unverified.

Put together, the lines say: *There was a Knight, and a worthy man, who from the time he first began to ride out loved chivalry, truth and honour, freedom and courtesy. He was very worthy in his lord's war, and had ridden further than any man, in Christian and heathen lands alike, and was always honoured for his worthiness.* That reading is mine.

Walking through it

1. **The past tense. was** (lines 43 and 47) is the past of *be* (Middle English Grammar 1, Chapter 7). **loved** carries the weak **-ed** (Chapter 6), and so does **honoured**. **bigan** looks like a vowel-change past (as I said in Chapter 10 of Middle English Grammar 1); that reading is mine, not the source's.
2. **The infinitive. ryden** (line 45) ends in **-en**, the infinitive ending of Chapter 6.
3. **The pluperfect. hadde … riden** (line 48) pairs the past of *have* (**hadde**, Chapter 7) with a participle in **-en**. This participle has no **y-** prefix; Chapter 6 said such prefixes were common, not required.
4. **The genitive. lordes** (line 47) has the strong genitive **-es** (Chapter 2): "his lord's war". This is the same *-es* that became our *'s*.
5. **Possessives. his** appears three times, always masculine, referring to the Knight or his lord (Chapter 5).
6. **Adjectives. worthy** (lines 43 and 47) has no final *-e*. In line 43 it follows **a** and a singular noun, and in line 47 it is a predicate after **Ful**; neither is a context in Chapter 4's rule. That matches the rule.
7. **Word order.** In line 47 the verb comes before the pronoun: **worthy was he**. This is not a question. Chapter 8's sources described no question order, so I note the inversion without a rule. In line 48 it comes again: **hadde he riden**.
8. **Comparison. ferre** in **no man ferre** is read as "farther" because the sense requires a comparative. It ends in *-re*, not the *-er* of Chapter 4, so I cannot tie it to a rule from the sources.
9. **Abstract nouns. chivalrye**, **Trouthe**, **honour**, **fredom**, **curteisye**, **worthinesse**. Chapter 9 listed French words of law, government, the church and food,

and did not name these, so I do not mark any of them French. They have no plural ending here because they are not plural.

New words

MIDDLE ENGLISH	MEANING	MODERN ENGLISH RELATIVE
fro	from	*fro* (as in *to and fro*)
tyme	time	*time*
ryden	to ride	*ride*
trouthe	truth	*truth*
fredom	freedom	*freedom*
werre	war	*war*
therto	to that, in addition	*thereto*
wel	well	*well*
hethenesse	heathendom, heathen lands	*heathen* (my guess)

Watch out

Modern-looking words can mislead: I read **worthy** as "worthy" and **chivalrye** as "chivalry", but the page gave no glosses, so those meanings come from the context and from resemblance. Also, **bigan** is a past tense, not a noun. The meanings are mine and unverified.

Try It Yourself

Say the answer first, then click to check.

1. Which pilgrim do these lines describe?

▼ Show answer

The Knight.

2. What ending shows that **ryden** is an infinitive?

▼ Show answer

-en.

3. Which weak past tense forms appear in lines 43 to 50?

▼ Show answer

loved and **honoured**.

4. Parse **hadde he riden**.

▼ Show answer

The past of *have* (**hadde**), the pronoun **he**, and a participle in **-en** (**riden**): "he had ridden".

5. Translate **his lordes werre**.

▼ Show answer

"His lord's war."

6. What does the *-es* on **lordes** show?

▼ Show answer

The strong genitive, the ancestor of Modern English *'s*.

7. Why does **worthy** have no final *-e*?

▼ Show answer

It is not in any of Chapter 4's contexts: singular noun after **a**, and a predicate.

8. What is unusual about the order in **Ful worthy was he**?

▼ Show answer

The verb comes before the subject, though it is not a question. The sources gave no rule for this.

9. What does **no man ferre** mean, and what can't we say about **ferre**?

▼ Show answer

"No man farther." Its ending *-re* does not match the *-er* of Chapter 4, so the sources do not explain it.

10. Why does this chapter not call **honour** or **curteisye** French?

▼ Show answer

Chapter 9 listed categories of French words but not these words, and no source I read states their origin.

Note on sources

The eight lines come from Skeat's 1900 edition of *The Canterbury Tales*, Prologue, on Wikisource, as the page tool gave them, in quotes under its limit. The page gave no translation or glosses and no statement of dialect, so the word-for-word column, the running paraphrase, the grammar notes and the vocabulary table are mine and unverified. I read no manuscript or grammar book.

Coming up in Chapter 7: Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. A short extract, if a readable source can be found.

📜 Sir Gawain

Chaucer's London English is the Middle English most readers meet first. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight was written in a different region and in a different verse form, and it looks harder on the page. This chapter reads the five lines that end one of its stanzas, plus a handful of phrases, from Wikipedia's article on the poem. It is a short passage, and the chapter says what it can and cannot tell us.

THE TEXT IN ONE BOX

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight survives in one manuscript, **Cotton Nero A.x.**, now in the British Library, and is dated to the **late 14th century**. The article calls its dialect **"North / West Midlands"** in one place and **"North West Midlands"** in another. It is **alliterative verse** of the Alliterative Revival: 101 stanzas and 2,530 lines, each stanza ending in a **bob and wheel** (a very short line followed by a rhyming group of four).

The text

1 **ful clene**

2 **for wonder of his hwe men hade**

3 **set in his semblaunt sene**

4 **he ferde as freke were fade**

5 **and oueral enker grene**

The article's translation: "full clean. / Great wonder of the knight / Folk had in hall, I ween, / Full fierce he was to sight, / And over all bright green."

Source: Wikipedia, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the passage quoted there as lines 146 to 150, shown as a bob and wheel, with the translation printed beside it, as the page tool gave them. The tool split each into five pieces and joined them with slashes; I have set them as five lines. The article's translation rhymes, so it rearranges the original.

The five lines describe the Green Knight as he enters Arthur's hall. The article gives no word-for-word gloss. A word-for-word reading of mine would be unreliable here: the translation moves whole phrases, and I do not have a dictionary for this dialect, so I read from the printed translation and mark every word-level guess.

Reading the lines

1. **The form.** Line 1 is the bob, one short line, and lines 2 to 5 are the wheel. The article names the bob and wheel; the rhyme of **sene** with **grene** and of **hade** with **fade** is my observation.
2. **Alliteration.** Line 3 repeats *s* (**set**, **semblaunt**, **sene**) and line 4 repeats *f* (**ferde**, **freke**, **fade**). The article calls the poem alliterative verse; these two lines are my examples of what that means.
3. **Verbs. hade** is the past of *have* (Middle English Grammar 1, Chapter 7 gave **hadde**, so this is a spelling variant, my reading). **ferde** ends in **-de**, a weak past ending of the kind in Chapter 6.
4. **were.** In **as freke were fade** a singular subject takes **were**, which Chapter 7 gave as the past plural **weren**. Chapter 7 also listed **were** in an unlabeled extra row under *be*, possibly subjunctive; I cannot say if that is what is happening here.
5. **men.** The translation renders **men hade** as "Folk had", so **men** seems to be "people". Chapter 2's source did not discuss plurals formed by a vowel change, so the sources give me nothing to say about its form.
6. **grene.** It ends in *-e*, but it is not after **the** or a possessive, and I cannot tie it to Chapter 4's rule. **enker**, "bright" in the translation, I cannot analyse.
7. **Letters.** The article's text uses **u** where we write *v*: **oueral** is "overall". The *Middle English* article lists *u* and *v* as used interchangeably in this period.

Phrases from elsewhere in the article

MIDDLE ENGLISH	GLOSS AS PRINTED
a syngne þat salamon set	a sign set by Solomon
þe endeles knot	the endless knot

MIDDLE ENGLISH	GLOSS AS PRINTED
two myle henne	two miles hence
þe boþem of þe brem valay	the bottom of a valley
bry3t sunne	fiery sun
holy hede	Holy Head

These are short fragments from the article's discussion, and the glosses are the article's own. They are not a passage you can analyse, but they show the same dialect spelling: **þ** and **3** (Chapter 1 of Middle English Grammar 1), and **y** where Modern English has *i*, as in **myle** ("mile"). The article's version of **þe endeles knot** uses **þe**, the article of Chapter 3. Two more fragments, **loke a littel on þe launde on þi lyfte honde** and **an olde caue / or a creuisse of an olde cragge**, were printed with no translation, so I leave them out.

New words

MIDDLE ENGLISH	MEANING	MODERN ENGLISH RELATIVE
clene	clean, fair (from the translation "clean")	*clean*
wonder	wonder	*wonder*
hwe	hue, colour (my reading)	*hue*
semblaunt	appearance (my reading)	*semblance*
freke	man, warrior (my reading from "fierce he was")	(none I know)
grene	green	*green*

Watch out

Do not treat these five lines as a typical sample of the poem. The dialect label ("North / West Midlands") is the article's, and it is one label across two sections of the article that word it differently.

> Also, the printed translation is a verse rendering that fits a rhyme scheme, so it is a poor guide to individual words. I made no attempt to build a word-for-word gloss from it.

Try It Yourself

Say the answer first, then click to check.

1. In which manuscript does the poem survive, and in which century was it written?

▼ Show answer

Cotton Nero A.x., in the British Library; the late 14th century.

2. Which dialect does the article give?

▼ Show answer

"North / West Midlands" or "North West Midlands", as it words it in two places.

3. What are the bob and the wheel?

▼ Show answer

The very short first line of the end of a stanza (the bob) and the rhyming group of four lines after it (the wheel).

4. Which sound does line 3 repeat, and in which words?

▼ Show answer

s, in **set**, **semblaunt**, **sene**.

5. Which words rhyme at the ends of lines 3 and 5?

▼ Show answer

sene and **grene**.

6. What is **hade**?

▼ Show answer

The past of *have*, a spelling variant of **hadde**.

7. What does the article's translation tell us **men** means in line 2?

▼ Show answer

"Folk", meaning people in general.

8. Why can't we explain the *-e* on **grene** from Chapter 4's rule?

▼ Show answer

It follows no **the**, demonstrative or possessive and does not modify an obvious plural noun, so the rule does not predict it.

9. Translate **þe endeles knot** and **two myle henne**.

▼ Show answer

"The endless knot" and "two miles hence".

10. Why does the chapter avoid a word-for-word gloss of the five lines?

▼ Show answer

The printed translation rhymes and rearranges the original, and no dictionary or gloss for this dialect was available, so any such gloss would be guesswork.

Note on sources

The five lines, their translation, the phrases with their glosses and the facts about date, manuscript, dialect and form come from Wikipedia's *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, as the page tool gave them (the first 100,000 of 193,299 characters). A Wikisource page I tried for the Middle English text returned a 404, so I read no edition and no longer passage. The statement that *u* and *v* were used interchangeably is from the Orthography section of the *Middle English* article. The observations on rhyme and alliteration, the notes on **were**, **men** and **grene**, and the vocabulary table are mine and unverified.

Coming up in Chapter 8: Piers Plowman. A short extract, if a readable source can be found.

📜 Gower

This chapter replaces the planned Piers Plowman. Wikipedia's article on that poem quotes only one line of Middle English and gives no gloss for it. The Middle English article's Sample texts section prints four lines from Chaucer's contemporary John Gower with a word-for-word rendering and two modern translations, so we read those instead. Four lines are short, but they are lines whose meaning we can check at every word.

THE TEXT IN ONE BOX

John Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, the Prologue, lines 1 to 4. The article dates it to **1390**. The article's visible text, as the page tool gave it, names no dialect and no edition, so I give neither. The Prologue runs well past four lines; these are the four the article prints in all its versions.

The text

LINE	MIDDLE ENGLISH	WORD FOR WORD (THE ARTICLE'S)
1	**Of hem that written ous tofore**	Of them that wrote us before
2	**The bokes duelle, and we therfore**	The books dwell, and we therefore
3	**Ben tawht of that was write tho:**	Been taught of that was written then:
4	**Forthi good is that we also**	For it is good that we also

Two modern translations are printed beside the original. By **Richard Brodie**: "Of those who wrote before our lives / Their precious legacy survives; / From what was written then, we learn, / And so it's well that we in turn,". By **J. Dow**, which the page tool gave only in part: "Of those who wrote before we were born, books survive, / So we are taught what was written by them when they were alive." The two translations differ from each other and from the word-for-word rendering, which is why I use the rendering for the grammar.

Source: Wikipedia, *Middle English*, Sample texts, Gower, *Confessio Amantis*: the Middle English, the near word-for-word rendering (no translator credited), and the translations credited to Richard Brodie and J. Dow, as the page tool gave them. My notes are mine and unverified.

Walking through it

1. **Pronouns. hem** ("them") is an h- form of the kind Middle English Grammar 1, Chapter 5 listed for the third-person plural object (**heo[m]**), not the Norse **þem**. **ous** ("us") is listed in Chapter 5 as **us / ous**. **we** is the subject form.
2. **written.** The rendering reads it as a past tense, "wrote", plural, agreeing with **hem**. The ending **-en** is the plural of the strong past that Chapter 6 gave. It is the same form we use for a participle today, so the context decides.
3. **duelle.** The rendering reads it as "dwell", a present plural. It ends in *-e*. Chapter 6 gave the dialect plurals as **-eþ**, **-en** and **-es**, and **-e** is not one of them. The source I read does not say which dialect this is, so I cannot place the ending; I note it as a plural in *-e* and nothing more.
4. **The letter u. duelle** is written with **u** where we write *w*. The rendering shows it means "dwell". I do not know if this is the poet's habit or the edition's; the sources do not say.
5. **Plural noun. bokes** carries the strong plural **-es** (Chapter 2).
6. **Ben.** The rendering reads **Ben tawht** as "Been taught", with **Ben** a present plural of *be*. Chapter 7 gave the present plural as **aren** and the infinitive as **been**; **Ben** is not in the table, so this is a form I can read but not check.
7. **tawht and write. tawht** is a participle with no ending and no prefix. **write** in **was write** is rendered "written", so it is a participle that lacks the **-en** of its plural-past cousin **written** in line 1. The sources gave no rule about when a participle took **-en**, so I only point out the difference.
8. **Word order.** Line 4 puts the predicate before the verb: **good is that we also**. The word-for-word rendering turns it into "it is good". Chapter 8 of Middle English Grammar 1 had no source for this kind of order, so I describe it and do not explain it.
9. **Forthi.** The rendering gives only "For", so I cannot say what the **-thi** adds.

What I could not read of Piers Plowman

Wikipedia's *Piers Plowman* article gives the author as William Langland, with the date as c. 1370 to 86 and the form as unrhymed alliterative verse in dream visions, and it states no dialect. It quotes one Middle English line, from the B-text, B.XV.152: "I have lyved in londe… my name is longe wille." It gives no translation or gloss. With no gloss and only a fragment, a reading chapter would be guesswork, so I left it out.

New words

MIDDLE ENGLISH	MEANING	MODERN ENGLISH RELATIVE
hem	them	*them*
ous	us	*us*
tofore	before	*afore* (my guess)
bokes	books	*books*
duelle	dwell, remain	*dwell*
therfore	therefore	*therefore*
tawht	taught	*taught*
tho	then	*tho'* (not the same word in Modern English)

> **Watch out**
>
> **tho** means "then" here, not "though". The rendering shows this. **written** in line 1 is a past tense, not a participle. And **duelle** is a verb ("dwell"), not a noun. The two modern translations are verse renderings, so they should not be used to check single words.

Try It Yourself

Say the answer first, then click to check.

1. Which work do the four lines come from, and when does the article date it?

▼ Show answer

John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, Prologue; 1390.

2. Translate line 1 word for word.

▼ Show answer

"Of them that wrote us before."

3. Which pronouns in line 1 match Chapter 5's table, and how?

▼ Show answer

hem as an h- form of "them" (**heo[m]**), and **ous** as **us / ous**.

4. What ending does **written** carry, and what does it show here?

▼ Show answer

-en, the plural of the strong past tense: "wrote".

5. Why can't we place the plural verb **duelle** in a dialect?

▼ Show answer

Its *-e* is none of Chapter 6's dialect plurals, and the source names no dialect for the text.

6. What does **u** stand for in **duelle**?

▼ Show answer

The sound we write *w*: the word is "dwell".

7. What is the plural of **boke** in the text?

▼ Show answer

bokes, with the strong plural **-es**.

8. Compare **written** (line 1) and **write** (line 3).

▼ Show answer

Both are forms of "write": **written** is a past plural ("wrote"), **write** a participle ("written") without **-en**. The sources give no rule for the difference.

9. What does **tho** mean in line 3?

▼ Show answer

"Then".

10. Why was *Piers Plowman* dropped from this course?

▼ Show answer

The article quotes only one line with no gloss, and no dialect is stated; a reading chapter would have been guesswork.

Note on sources

The Gower lines, the word-for-word rendering, the two translations and the date come from the Sample texts section of Wikipedia's *Middle English* article, as the page tool gave them (the first 100,000 of 152,228 characters). The facts about *Piers Plowman* come from Wikipedia's article on that poem, read to 100,000 of its characters. I read no manuscript, edition or grammar book. The dialect of the Gower text is not stated in anything I read. The grammar notes, the vocabulary table and the Watch out box are mine and unverified.

Coming up in Chapter 9: The Epitaph of John the Smyth. A four-line epitaph dated 1371, with a word-for-word rendering and a translation, in place of the planned Julian of Norwich.

📜 John the Smyth

Every text so far was a book. This one was cut into metal. It is a four-line epitaph from a monumental brass in an Oxfordshire parish church, for a man called John the smyth ("smith"), who died in 1371. It was written by someone who spelled by ear, and it is the strangest-looking text in the course. It is also one of the best checked, because the Middle English article prints a word-for-word rendering and a translation by Patricia Utechin.

THE TEXT IN ONE BOX

Epitaph of John the smyth, died 1371, from a monumental brass in an Oxfordshire parish church. The article states no dialect for it, and I give none. It prints the Middle English, a word-for-word rendering, and the translation by Patricia Utechin.

The text

LINE	MIDDLE ENGLISH	WORD FOR WORD (THE ARTICLE'S)
1	**man com & se how schal alle dede li: wen þow comes bad & bare**	man, come and see how shall all dead lie: when thou comes bad and bare
2	**noth hab ven ve awaẏ fare: All ẏs wermēs þt ve for care:—**	naught have when we away fare: all is worms that we for care:—
3	**bot þt ve do for godẏs luf ve haue nothyng yare:**	but that we do for God's love, we have nothing ready:
4	**hundyr þis graue lẏs John þe smẏth god yif his soule heuen grit**	under this grave lies John the smith, God give his soul heaven grith

Patricia Utechin's translation, as printed: "Man, come and see how all dead men shall lie: when that comes bad and bare, / we have nothing when we away fare: all that we care for is worms:—

/ except for that which we do for God's sake, we have nothing ready: / under this grave lies John the smith, God give his soul heavenly peace".

Source: Wikipedia, *Middle English*, Sample texts, Epitaph of John the smyth: the four lines, the word-for-word rendering and the translation, as the page tool gave them. The marks over letters (**ẏ**, **ē**) are as the tool printed them; I cannot check them against the brass. My notes are mine and unverified.

> **The two readings disagree**
>
> In line 1 the word-for-word rendering has **þow** as "thou" ("when thou comes bad and bare"), but the translation has "when that comes bad and bare", with "that". The same line also gives "all dead men" where the rendering has "all dead". I show both and do not decide which is right.

Walking through it

1. **Imperatives. com** and **se** ("come and see") have no ending. Middle English Grammar 1's Verbs source did not cover the imperative, so I describe them and give no rule.
2. **The word schal.** The same form as Chapter 7's 1st and 3rd singular of *shall*, here with a plural-looking subject, **alle dede** ("all dead"). Chapter 7 gave the plural as **schulen**, so **schal** with a plural subject is not what that table shows. The sources do not explain it.
3. **The final *-e* on alle dede.** Both words end in *-e* in a plural phrase, which fits Chapter 4's rule for plurals, if **dede** is read as an adjective used for "the dead".
4. **The pronoun and the verb ending. þow** is a variant of the **þou / þu** forms in Chapter 5. **comes** ends in *-es*, not the 2nd singular **-(e)st** of Chapter 6. Chapter 6 gave **-es** as a variant of the 3rd singular, which suits the translation's "that comes" better than "thou comes", but that is my reading.
5. **Plural verbs without endings. hab** ("have"), **fare**, **care**, **do** and **haue** all follow **ve** ("we"). None ends in **-eþ**, **-en** or **-es**, the dialect plurals of Chapter 6. The source gives no dialect, so I cannot say why.
6. **Genitive. godẏs** ("God's") ends in **-ẏs**, a spelling of the genitive **-es** of Chapter 2, which that chapter said is "spelled variously". **wermēs** ("worms") has the plural **-es** with a mark over the *e*.
7. **The 3rd singular. ẏs** ("is") matches Chapter 7. **lẏs** ("lies") ends in *-s*, which Chapter 6 gave as a variant of **-eþ**.

8. **A wish. god yif his soule heuen grit** is "God give his soul heaven grith", a wish. **yif** has no ending. Chapter 6's source did not cover the subjunctive, so I note the form without a label.
9. **Pronouns and little words. ve** ("we", with a *v*), **his**, **þis** (Chapter 3), **þe** (Chapter 3). **þt** is a short spelling of **þat**, my reading from "that" in the rendering.

The spelling

- **v for w.** The rendering shows **ven** is "when" and **ve** is "we", yet line 1 spells "when" **wen**. The article's orthography section lists *u* and *v* as interchangeable and says nothing on *v* for *w*, so I only record that both spellings occur.
- **f in luf.** It is "love", written with *f* where we write *v*. The rendering shows it; I know no source for the reason.
- **ẏ.** A *y* with a dot appears where we would write *i* or *y*: **ẏs**, **lẏs**, **smẏth**, **awaẏ**. The article says *y* was often preferred to *i* beside letters with downstrokes. It does not comment on the dot.
- **yif and yare.** The *y* here begins the words "give" and "ready". The article's text does not say whether it stands for the yogh of Chapter 1 of Middle English Grammar 1.

New words

MIDDLE ENGLISH	MEANING	MODERN ENGLISH RELATIVE
dede	dead (those)	*dead*
bad & bare	bad and bare	*bad, bare*
wermēs	worms	*worms*
fare	go, travel	*fare* (as in *farewell*)
care	care, be concerned	*care*
yare	ready	*yare* (rare, my guess)
hundyr	under	*under*

MIDDLE ENGLISH	MEANING	MODERN ENGLISH RELATIVE
graue	grave	*grave*
yif	give (a wish)	*give*
grit	grith, sanctuary or peace	(none I know)

Watch out

hundyr begins with *h* although the word is "under"; the rendering shows this. **grit** is not "grit" but "grith", and the word-for-word rendering and the translation give it differently ("grith" and "heavenly peace"). I do not choose between them.

Try It Yourself

Say the answer first, then click to check.

1. What kind of object is the text on, and in which county?

▼ Show answer

A monumental brass in a parish church, in Oxfordshire.

2. When did John the smyth die?

▼ Show answer

1371.

3. Translate **man com & se**.

▼ Show answer

"Man, come and see."

4. Where do the rendering and the translation disagree in line 1?

▼ Show answer

The rendering has "when thou comes", the translation "when that comes", and the translation adds "men" after "all dead".

5. What do **ven** and **ve** mean?

▼ Show answer

"When" and "we".

6. Translate **bot þt ve do for godẏs luf**.

▼ Show answer

"But that we do for God's love."

7. What does the **-ẏs** in **godẏs** represent?

▼ Show answer

The genitive **-es** (Chapter 2).

8. Which plural verbs in the epitaph lack a Chapter 6 dialect ending?

▼ Show answer

hab, **fare**, **care**, **do**, **haue** (all with **ve**).

9. What does **god yif his soule heuen grit** express?

▼ Show answer

A wish: "God give his soul heaven grith (peace)."

10. What does the article say about the dialect of the epitaph?

▼ Show answer

Nothing: it names no dialect.

Note on sources

The four lines, the word-for-word rendering, Patricia Utechin's translation, the date and the description of the brass come from the Sample texts section of Wikipedia's *Middle English* article, as the page tool gave them (the first 100,000 of 152,228 characters), and I asked for them twice; the readings agreed. The general remarks on *u*, *v* and *y* come from the article's Orthography section. I could not check the marks over letters against the brass, and I read no edition. The dialect is not stated. The grammar notes, the spelling notes and the vocabulary table are mine and unverified.

Coming up in Chapter 10: A Late Prose Text. The course's last text, and a recap, if a readable source can be found.

📜 Wycliffe's Luke

The last text is prose, and it comes in two versions, one from the 1380s and one from the 1390s. That lets us watch one text change in about a decade, which is the best test of the grammar we have. This chapter replaces the planned Malory, Caxton or Paston text, none of which I checked for a readable source; it then ends the course with a recap.

THE TEXT IN ONE BOX

The Wycliffite Bibles, **Luke 8:1 to 3**, in an early version (**c. 1380s**) and a later version (**c. 1390s**), as printed in the Sample texts of Wikipedia's *Middle English* article. The article gives no dialect note for this item and I give none. This chapter reads verses 1 and 2.

The text

VERSE	EARLY VERSION (C. 1380S)	LATER VERSION (C. 1390S)
1	And it was don aftirward, and Jhesu made iorney by citees and castelis, prechinge and euangelysinge þe rewme of God,	And it was don aftirward, and Jhesus made iourney bi citees and castels, prechynge and euangelisynge þe rewme of God,
2	and twelue wiþ him; and summe wymmen þat weren heelid of wickide spiritis and syknessis, Marie, þat is clepid Mawdeleyn, of whom seuene deuelis wenten	and twelue wiþ hym; and sum wymmen þat weren heelid of wickid spiritis and sijknessis, Marie, þat is clepid Maudeleyn, of whom seuene deuelis wenten

The page's modern English, which names no translator: "And it was done afterwards, that Jesus made a journey by cities and castles, preaching and evangelising the realm of God: and with him (the) Twelve; and some women that were healed of wicked spirits and sicknesses; Mary who is called Magdalene, from whom ..."

Source: Wikipedia, *Middle English*, Sample texts, Wycliffe's Bible, Luke 8:1 to 3, early and later versions, and the page's translation column, as the page tool gave them in pieces under its quotation limit. I joined the pieces, and the later version's verse 2 starts mid-sentence in the page, so I set verse 2 as a whole. The modern English there stops where my reading stops. The article prints no word-for-word rendering of this item. My notes are mine and unverified.

What changed between the versions

EARLY	LATER	WHAT DIFFERS
Jhesu	**Jhesus**	Final *-s* on the name
by	**bi**	*y* or *i*
castelis	**castels**	Plural **-is** against **-s**
prechinge	**prechynge**	**-inge** against **-ynge**
him	**hym**	*i* or *y*
summe	**sum**	Final *-e* dropped
wickide spiritis	**wickid spiritis**	Final *-e* on the adjective dropped
syknessis	**sijknessis**	Different spelling of the vowel
Mawdeleyn	**Maudeleyn**	*w* or *u*

Most of this is spelling. Two lines in the table touch the grammar of Middle English Grammar 1, Chapter 4: the early **wickide** has a final *-e* before the plural noun **spiritis**, and the later **wickid** does not. The first 100 characters of verse 3 add a second pair: **manye oþere** in the early version, **many oþir** in the later. That fits what Chapter 4's source said, that multi-syllable adjectives took the *-e* less consistently later. Two pairs are not enough to prove it, and I only had the start of verse 3.

Walking through it

1. **Participles. prechinge** and **euangelysinge** are present participles in **-inge** / **-ynge** (Middle English Grammar 1, Chapter 6). **don** in **it was don** is a participle with no **i-**; **heelid** and **clepid** end in a weak **-id** (the ending of **-ed**).
2. **Plural past forms. weren** is the past plural of *be* that Chapter 7 gave. **wenten** is a past plural of *go*, but Chapter 7 listed **wenden / yeden / yoden**, not **wenten**, so I note the variation without explaining it.
3. **Plural nouns. citees**, **castelis**, **spiritis**, **syknessis**, **deuelis** carry the strong plural, spelled **-es** or **-is** (Chapter 2, which said endings were "spelled variously" for the genitive; I extend that to the plural as my reading). **wymmen** is a plural with a vowel change; Chapter 2's source said nothing on vowel-change plurals.
4. **Pronouns and little words. him** / **hym** is the object form (Chapter 5). **þat** is a relative pronoun ("who", "that") as Chapter 3 allowed. **þe rewme** uses the article of Chapter 3.
5. **The sentence order. twelue wiþ him** has no verb of its own and continues **Jhesu made iorney**, as in the page's translation "and with him (the) Twelve". I note the order; the sources give no rule.
6. **Words from French. citees** and **castelis** look French, and Chapter 9 listed no French source for them, so I do not claim it.

New words

MIDDLE ENGLISH	MEANING	MODERN ENGLISH RELATIVE
aftirward	afterwards	*afterward*
iorney	journey	*journey*
rewme	realm (as the page translates)	*realm*
wymmen	women	*women*
heelid	healed	*healed*
clepid	called	*yclept* (archaic, my guess)
seuene	seven	*seven*

MIDDLE ENGLISH	MEANING	MODERN ENGLISH RELATIVE
deuelis	devils	*devils*

Recap of the course

CHAPTER	WHAT THE TEXT SHOWED
1 Reading Strategy	A routine: verb endings, pronouns, little words, nouns, negatives, spelling
2 The Peterborough Chronicle	Early Middle English, c. 1137: old and new forms side by side
3 The Ormulum	East Midland verse, c. 1180, with Orrm's own spelling system
4 Two Bibles	West Midlands and Southern versions of one passage
5 Chaucer's Opening	London English of the 1390s; the final *-e* at work
6 Chaucer's Knight	Past tenses, the genitive, inversion in a portrait
7 Sir Gawain	North West Midlands alliterative verse
8 Gower	A text with a word-for-word rendering and two translations
9 John the Smyth	An inscription of 1371, spelled by ear
10 Wycliffe's Luke	Prose, and two versions a decade apart

What the course could not give

- Long passages: my page tool limited each quotation, so every chapter reads a few lines.
- Four planned texts were replaced because no readable source could be found: *Sumer Is Icumen In* (the tool would not reproduce a lyric), the Lord's Prayer, *Piers Plowman* and Julian of Norwich (not checked), and the planned Malory, Caxton or Paston text in this chapter.

- Dialect labels for most texts: sources named a dialect only for the Ormulum, the two Bibles in Chapter 4, Chaucer and *Gawain*.
- Any edition, manuscript or grammar book. Every chapter used encyclopedia pages, as stated on each.

Where to go next

Middle English Grammar 1 holds the tables used all through this course, and The History of the English Language puts these texts in their setting. For the language before Middle English, see Old English Reading 1 and Old English Grammar 1.

Try It Yourself

Say the answer first, then click to check.

1. Which two dates does the page give for the two versions?

▼ Show answer

c. 1380s (early) and c. 1390s (later).

2. Which version has **wickide**, and which **wickid**?

▼ Show answer

Early **wickide**, later **wickid**.

3. What does that difference suggest, and why is the evidence weak?

▼ Show answer

The plural adjective *-e* being dropped later, as Chapter 4's source suggested; but only two pairs were seen, and verse 3 only in part.

4. Translate **and twelue wiþ him**.

▼ Show answer

"And twelve with him" ("and with him the Twelve").

5. What ending shows the present participle in **prechinge**?

▼ Show answer

-inge (later **-ynge**).

6. What is the past plural of *be* in verse 2?

▼ Show answer

weren.

7. Why does **wenten** not match Chapter 7's table?

▼ Show answer

The table gave the plural past of *go* as **wenden / yeden / yoden**.

8. Which chapter's text was a dated inscription, and from when?

▼ Show answer

Chapter 9, the epitaph of John the smyth, 1371.

9. Which chapter's text was in alliterative verse from the North West Midlands?

▼ Show answer

Chapter 7, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

10. What was the first step of the routine in Chapter 1?

▼ Show answer

Look for the verb ending (or an irregular verb).

Note on sources

The two versions of Luke 8:1 to 3 and the page's modern English come from the Sample texts section of Wikipedia's *Middle English* article, as the page tool gave them (the first 100,000 of 152,228 characters). The article gives no word-for-word rendering, no translator and no dialect for this item. I read verse 3 only as far as the first 100 characters. The recap is drawn from the earlier chapters of

this course, whose sources are named on their own pages. The notes on the changes between versions, the grammar notes and the vocabulary table are mine and unverified.

Course complete. You have read ten short Middle English texts from c. 1137 to the 1390s with the tables of Middle English Grammar 1.