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ABSTRACT

These exercises, prepared by the National Council of Teachers of English Commission on the English Language, focus on six literary works significant to the history of the English language: "Beowulf," "The Peterborough Chronicle," Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales," Caxton's prologue to "The Boke of Eneydos," the second quarto of Shakespeare's "Hamlet," and Pope's "Epistle to Bathurst." Each exercise contains a discussion of the work and its place in the history of the English language, printed text of the facsimile page, and questions for students. (AA)

Comments and Exercises on Historical Linguistics

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BEOWULF*

Introduction

When did the English language begin? One possible answer would be in the fifth century. It was at this time that certain Germanic tribes, speaking the language from which Modern English is descended, came to the island presumably at the request of the British king Vortigern to help him subdue his enemies. They found the place to their liking, sent for their kinfolk back home, and like the proverbial camel occupied most of the tent, pushing the earlier Celtic inhabitants back to the west and north. By the end of the sixth century, Angles, Saxons, and Jutes were well established in their new home, and so was their language.

Central Europe, the area which was the home of the invaders, had not yet accepted Christianity by the time they left Schleswig-Holstein and Jutland. But Britain had become Christian during the period of Roman rule, and the Church was not inclined to give up its territory without a struggle. Consequently Irish missionaries moved into the north and proceeded southward, St. Augustine, coming from Rome, landed in Kent and moved northward. Thus the seventh century was one of Christianization.

Christianity had certain notable effects upon the language and culture of the island. It established Latin as the language of the Church. In doing so, it made England a part of the European intellectual community and rendered accessible, at least to the English clergy, those works which were of primary significance in Medieval thought. The Latin alphabet was adopted as a device for writing the English language. Because there were no English words for the Church hierarchy, the ritual, and the concepts of Christianity, Latin terms were often taken into English to meet this need, although English words were often adapted to serve the purpose.

England developed rapidly under the new dispensation. Before long it had produced some first-rate churchmen of its own, notably Bede and Aldhelm, and an English cleric was serving as advisor to the court of Charlemagne. Moreover it had retained and reworked much of the Germanic poetic story material which had crossed the Channel with the early settlers and had produced another body of literature based upon Christian tradition. This literature, like some of the work in other arts during this period, was intricate in its design, workmanlike in its execution. It reflected an artistically sophisticated culture.

The language easily lent itself to deft stylistic manipulation. Compounding, in both noun and verb structures, made possible striking juxtaposition of word elements. Departures from the word order of ordinary conversation, forced by the demands of alliteration and metrical form, contributed both suspension and inversion as poetic devices. A heavy dependence upon inflections as signals of meaning and relationship gives the reader a sense of the cryptic and the syntactic as characteristic qualities of Old English verse. Yet the drumbeat of the alliterative line is impressive for its vigor. Small wonder that this poetry has for centuries stood as a challenge to the translator and modernizer.

*Adapted from *The First Page of the "Beowulf" Manuscript*, by Maurice L. Rider and Galen S. Besco, 1961, comments and exercises prepared by the Committee on Historical Linguistics, National Council of Teachers of English, 508 South Sixth Street, Champaign, Illinois 61820. The facsimile of the first page of the *Beowulf Manuscript* is reproduced with the permission of the British Museum.

THE MANUSCRIPT

The poem *Beowulf* is the one major English literary work that has been preserved to us from what was probably a much more extensive body of Germanic heroic literature. On the next page is a reproduction, somewhat smaller than the original, of the first page of the *Beowulf* manuscript. It is taken from the only Old English manuscript of the poem that has come down to us, but it is quite likely that there were other copies that have disappeared. The story itself is much older and was probably handed down by oral tradition for a period before it was set down in writing. The manuscript itself is late, probably having been written by an English monk about the year 1000. Nothing is known of its history before it came into the possession of Sir Robert Cotton (1571-1631). In 1731 it was damaged by a fire which destroyed part of the Cottonian collection in Ashburnham House. In that same year, along with the other surviving Cotton manuscripts, it was removed to the British Museum, where it is still identified as Cotton Vitellus A 15, the shelf number it had in the Cotton library.

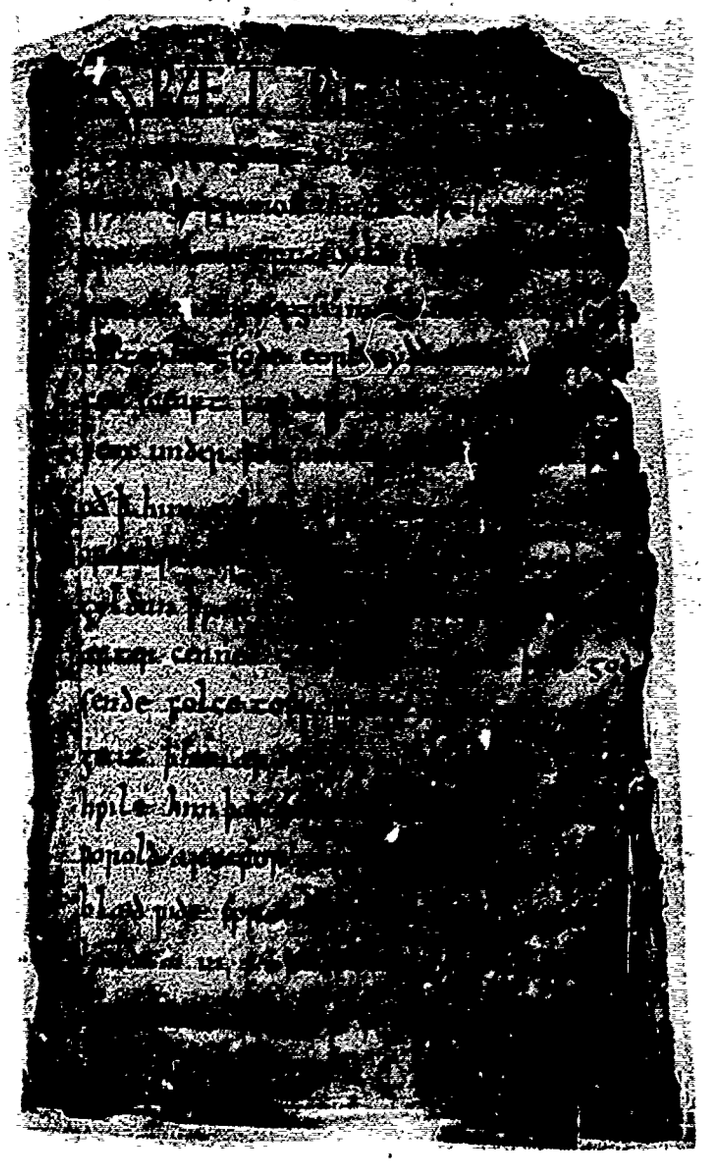
Since the manuscript page leaves something to be desired as to legibility, a transliteration has been provided on page 4. Certain features of it merit attention. If we begin with the first line of the manuscript, we notice that the initial *H* represents the modern small *h* and that the character for *w*, known as the *wen* (taken from the old runic alphabet), looks like a slender capital *P*. The *r* character, as we find it at the end of the second word in the second line also has a conformation different from its modern counterpart. The first character in the third line is the *thorn* (þ), also from the runic alphabet, one way of representing the *th* sound in Old English. The other was by means of the character *eth* (ð), which appears in the fourth word in the second line. Actually, it was a *d* crossed in the same manner that we cross *t*'s.

Printed editions of *Beowulf* retain the eth and thorn, but now all other letters are usually represented by their modern equivalents. In line 6 we can see the two forms of the Old English *s*—the tall *f*-like character in the manuscript word *egsode* and the short *s* in *syþþan*. The elongated *s* persisted in English printing until after the middle of the eighteenth century and may still be seen in the selection from Pope which constitutes the final one in this series.

On page 4, the letters inclosed in brackets indicate editorial reconstructions of the faulty text. Those at the end of lines 3, 4, 6, and 7 were probably destroyed by fire or rough handling of the brittle manuscript after the fire. Age rather than abuse may account for the indistinct letters in lines 14 and 18. Editors of *Beowulf* have been able to guess at the probable nature of these missing or indistinct letters from the context of the poem, just as we, in reading a battered book, are able to supply missing or illegible words. The final *m* in *monegum* (line 5) was indicated in the manuscript by a line over the preceding *u*. In like manner, we know that þ, with a line through the upper part of the stem is a shorthand symbol for *þæt* or *þe*. This occurs in lines 9, 11, and 14.

Note how little capitalization and punctuation there are in the manuscript. The initial *H* occupies the left-hand space of the first two lines, and the entire first line is capitalized—devices which a printer might use today. Only two other capitals

appear on the page: in the words *Oft* (line 4), and *Swa* (line 6). Both of these mark the beginning of a sentence. Other sequences of words which we would consider sentences do not begin with capitals, and such proper names as *beowulf* (line 16) and *god* (line 12) are not capitalized. The sole punctuation on this page consists of eight periods, some but not all of them marking the ends of sentences. As a consequence of this sparsity of punctuation, it is the modern editor who generally supplies the punctuation of an Old English poem according to present-day standards.



HWÆT WE GARDE
na ingear dagum. þeod cyninga
þrym gé frunon huða æþelinȝas elle[n]
fre medon. Oft scyld scefing sceathe[na]
þreatum monegum mægþum meodo setla
of teah egsode eorl syððan ærest wear[þ]
fea sceaft funden he þæs frofre geba[d]
weox under wolcnum weorð myndum þah.
oð þæt him æghwylc þara ymb sittendra
ofer hron rade hyran scolde gomba:
gyldan þæt wæs god cyning. ðæm eafera wæs
æfter cenned geong in geardum þone god
sende folce tofrofre fyren ðearfe on
geat þe hie ær drugon aldor [le]ase. lange
hwile him þæs lif frea wuldres wealdend
worold are forgeaf. beowulf wæs breme
blæd wide sprang scyldes eafera scede
landum in. Swa sceal [geong g]uma gode
ge wyrcean fromum feoh giftum. on fæder

EXERCISE 1

Substituting the modern alphabet for the manuscript characters makes it possible to recognize certain Old English words which have come down to us without changes in spelling and/or meaning. Three such words are we (line 1), oft (line 4), and under (line 8). Make a list of other words which you think you recognize as modern words. Include in your list those words which seem to suggest modern words even though the spelling is no longer exactly the same, for example, þaet for that.

When you have completed your word list you will want to turn to page 5 and read the first page of *Beowulf* as it is usually printed in books today. The modern editor of *Beowulf* is able to produce a copy of the poem that is far more readable than the original manuscript. These are some of the changes he makes for the modern reader: (1) Punctuation is added to clarify the meaning. (2) Each line (or verse) of the poem is printed as a single line on the page. (The manuscript, as written down, looks like prose.) (3) All words are combined consistently. (The *Beowulf* scribe sometimes ran two words together and at other times separated the parts of a compound word.) (4) The long vowels are marked to show their pronunciation. (5) Less obvious corrections and alterations are sometimes made. For example, the word *þara*, which appears in line 9 above, is dropped completely from the text reprinted below. Scholars consider the word an addition which is unnecessary for the rhythm of the line.

The first page of *Beowulf* appears below as it is printed in a modern edition. Under each line of the poem is a literal translation of the Anglo-Saxon. You will want to check your list of words against this translation.

HWÆT, WĒ GĀR-DEna in gēardagum,
What! we of-spear-Danes in yore-days,

þēodcyninga þrym gefrūnon,
of-folk-Kings prowess heard,

hū ðā æþelingas ellen fremedon!
how the princes deeds-of-valor wrought!

Oft Scyld Scēfing sceaþena þrēatum,
Oft Shield Son of Sheaf from enemies bands,

monegum mǣgþum meodosetla oftēah,
from-many tribes mead-benches tore,

egsode eorl[as], syððan ǣrest wearð
terrified earls. after first he-was

fēasceaft funden; hē þæs frōfre gebād,
destitute found: he for-that solace received.

wēox under wolcnum weorðmyndum þāh,
grew under welkin, honors won,

oð þæt him ǣghwylc ymbsittendra
until him everyone of nearby peoples

ofer hronrāde hȳran scolde,
over whale-road obey had to

gomban gyldan; þæt wæs gōd cyning!
tribute pay; that was good king!

Ðǣm eafera wæs æfter cenned
To-him child was afterwards born,

geong in geardum, þone God sende
young in courts, whom God sent

folce tō frōfre; fyrenðearfe ongeat,
to people for solace; dire-need perceived,

þē hīe ǣr drugon aldor(lē)ase
which they before suffered leader-less

lange hwile; him þæs Liffrēa,
for a long while; him for-that [the] Life-lord,

wuldres Wealdend woroldāre forgeaf;
of-glory Wielder, world-honor gave;

Bēowulf wæs brēme —— blǣd wīde sprang ——
Beowulf* was renowned — fame far spread —

Scyldes eafera Scedelandum in.
Scyld's son Scandian-lands in,

Swā sceal (geong g)uma gōde gewyrcean,
So shall young man with good will accomplish,

fromum feohgiftum on fæder . . .
through splendid money-gifts in father's . . . .

*This is not the Beowulf who is the hero of the poem.

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EXERCISE 2

I. In the dictionary find the derivation of the **bold-faced** word in each of the following sentences. Compare the Old English (Anglo-Saxon) ancestor of each word with the form of that word which appears on the first page of Beowulf reproduced above. What differences in meaning and spelling do you find?

1. The storm will be over ere long. (See line 15)
2. He greeted folk from all nations. (line 14)
3. He escaped without scathe. (line 4)
4. They sat together on the settle. (line 5)
5. What shall we do tomorrow? (line 20)
6. His threat frightened no one. (line 4)
7. He may yet wax mighty on the gridiron. (line 8)
8. His fame spread far and wide. (line 18)
9. Keep the dog in the back yard. (line 13)
10. I yield to no man. (line 11)

II. Look up the word **inflection** in the dictionary. Can you explain how inflection accounts for differences in the spelling of modern English words such as **child, children; spring, sprang, sprung?** How may inflection also explain the differences between the Old English words you find in the dictionary and those same words which appear in Beowulf?

III. Old English word order differs from that of modern English. To get satisfactory sense out of the translation above, it is necessary to arrange the words as they would appear in modern English sentences. Occasionally it will be necessary to add prepositions and articles which do not appear in Old English. With the help of the literal translation above, write your own modern-English translation of the first twenty-one lines of Beowulf. What difficulties do you have? Is it always possible to make sense of the literal translation?

IV. A poetic device common in Old English poetry is the kenning—an expression in which the simple name for a person (or an object) is replaced by a combination of words expressing some characteristics of that person. For example, **wuldres Wealdend** (wonder Wielder) in line 17 is a kenning for God. Can you find other kennings in the first twenty-one lines of Beowulf?

V. The verse form of Beowulf has three major features. First, each full line is composed of two half-lines. In modern printings of the poem the lines and half-lines are clearly marked as in the text and translation above. Second, each half-line contains two stressed or accented syllables. These stressed syllables are not marked in the text but are evident to anyone who can read Old English aloud. Third, the lines contain no end rhyme, but the effect of sound correspondence is achieved through alliteration—the recurrence of the same letter at the beginning of two or more words in a line. Notice the alliteration in these lines of Beowulf—w in the first line; b in the second:

*w*uldres *W*ealdend, *w*oroldāre forgeaf,
*B*ēowulf wæs *b*rēme —*b*lǣd wīde sprang—

In many lines of Beowulf the vowels and diphthongs form the alliterative pattern. Any vowel or diphthong may alliterate with any other vowel or diphthong: i, e, æ, u, o, a, eo, ea, ie. Find the letter which suggests the alliterative pattern in the following lines, 4, 5, 7, 8, 11, 13, 14, 20, 21.

THE PETERBOROUGH CHRONICLE*

Introduction

Alfred of England truly deserves to be called *the Great.* Important though his military and naval victories were, they alone do not account for his stature. He was determined to raise the level of education and religion among his people, to improve their government, and to give them a sense of nationhood. As one means of achieving the last of these purposes, he encouraged the compilation of a single national chronicle from what must have been a host of individual local sources. The impulse carried through for a century and a half after his death.

There are seven surviving manuscripts of *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.* Most of them do not continue the year by year account of national events beyond 1066, the year of the Norman Conquest. A few end even earlier. But the monks at the Cathedral of Peterborough in Northamptonshire, perhaps a little more remote than others from social and political upheaval, continued their work even through the black days of King Stephen's reign, down to the year 1154. The later entries in particular are tersely and tragically detailed. The *Chronicle* entry for the year 1140 has been chosen to illustrate the second stage in the development of the English language.

As a language English has led a vigorous and adventurous life. Scarcely had it been transplanted from the European continent proper to its new island home when it had to adapt itself to the concepts and material requirements of a new religion, Christianity. Then a large section of the country was invaded and settled by speakers of a related Germanic language, the Scandinavians. Next, the entire country came under the domination of an alien people, speaking another language but insufficient in numbers to impose it upon the populace. Nevertheless, English was affected by the newly imported language, the French of Normandy which existed alongside of it for almost two centuries. Later on there were to be other stirring events which left their mark: the cultural changes of the Renaissance, the religious upheavals of the Reformation, the exportation of the language across the seven seas, to be spoken by strange people in foreign environments. Other languages underwent similar experiences, but few of them on so vast a scale. Nevertheless, the eleventh and twelfth centuries remain as periods of profound change in English.

Indeed, not all of the differences between the speech of King Alfred and that of Chaucer are properly attributable to the ill-fated arrow which pierced the helmet of King Harold at Hastings. Change was in the air, regardless of the battle's outcome. French thought, customs, and language had begun to make their impact upon England from 1041 onwards. Moreover, the grammatical structure of English, influenced in some part by contact with Scandinavian in the north, and to an equal

To p. 3

*Comments and exercises prepared by the Committee on Historical Linguistics, National Council of Teachers of English, 508 South Sixth Street, Champaign, Illinois 61820. Facsimile of MS. Laud Misc. 626 f. 90[v] is reproduced by permission of the Department of Western Manuscripts, Bodleian Library, Oxford, England.

or greater degree by native tendencies which had long been evident, was in the midst of change. Inflectional patterns were simplified. Word order tended to become more rigid. The language came to depend more and more upon prepositions and auxiliary verbs to signal grammatical relationships. The *Chronicle* entry for 1140 aptly portrays the language in this state of flux, especially when it is compared with the selection from *Beowulf* which precedes it and that from Chaucer which follows it.

The transcription which follows reproduces in modern type the manuscript on the opposite page without change except that abbreviations have been expanded and are indicated by italics. The symbol 7 which was used at that time for the word *and* has been left unchanged. The lines of the transcription correspond to those of the manuscript.

* * * * *

MCXL On þis gær wolde þe king Stephne tæcen Rodbert eorl of glou
cestre þe kinges sune Henries. ac he ne myhte for he wart it war.
þer efter in þe lengten þestrede þe sunne 7 te dæi abuton non tid
dæies. þa men eten. ðat me lihtede candles to æten bi. 7 þat was
xiii· kalend April. wæron men suythe ofwundred. þer efter fordfeorde Willelm
ærcebiscop of Cantwarberi. 7 te king makede Teodbald ærcebiscop þe was
abbot in the bec. þer efter wæx suythe micel uuerre betuyx
þe king 7 Randolf eorl of cæstre noht for þi ðat he ne iaf him al
ðat he cuthe axen him. alse he dide alle othre. oc æfre þe mare
he iaf heom. þe wærse hi wæron him. þe eorl heold lincol agænes
þe king. 7 benam him al ðat he ahte to hauen. 7 te king for þider
7 besætte him 7 his brother Willelm de-Romare in þe castel. 7 te æorl
stæl ut 7 ferde efter Rodbert eorl of gloucester. 7 brohte him þider
mid micel ferd. 7 fahten suythe on Candelmasse dæi agenes
heore lauerd. 7 namen him for his men him suyken 7 flugæn. 7 læd
him to Bristowe 7 diden þar in prisun 7 feteres. þa was al engleland
styred mar þan ær was. 7 al yuel wæs in lande. þer efter com þe kinges
dohter henries þe hefde emperice in alamanie 7 nu wæs cuntesse
in Angou. 7 com to lundene 7 te lundenisse folc hire wolde tæcen.
7 scæ fleh forles þar micel. þer efter þe biscop of Wincestre
henri þe kinges brother Stephnes spac wid Rodbert eorl 7 wid þemperice
7 suor heom athas ðat he neure ma mid te king his brother wolde hal
den. 7 cursede alle þe men þe mid him heoldon. 7 sæde heom ðat he uuol
de iiuen heom up Wincestre. 7 dide heom cumen þider. þa hi þær
inne wæren. þa com þe kinges cuen mid al hire strengthe. 7 besæt
heom. ðat þer wæs inne micel hungær. þa he ne leng ne muhten
þolen þa stali hi ut 7 flugen. 7 hi wurthen war wid uten 7
folecheden heom. 7 namen Rodbert eorl of gloucestre. 7 ledden him to Roue
cestre. 7 diden him þare in prisun. 7 te emperice fleh into an minstre.

TRANSLATION

In this year King Stephen wanted to seize Robert, Earl of Gloucester, the son of King Henry, but he was not able to because he (Robert) was aware of it.

Afterward during Lent the sun and the daylight darkened about noon, when men were eating, so that one had to light candles to eat by. And that was on the twentieth of March. Men were greatly astonished.

Thereafter William, Archbishop of Canterbury, passed away, and the king made Theobald archbishop, who had been Abbot of Bec.

After that a very great war broke out between the king and Randolph, Earl of Chester, not because he (the king) had not given him (Randolph) everything that he might have asked of him, as he (the king) had done to all the others. But as always, the more he gave them, the worse they were toward him.

The earl held Lincoln against the king and took from him everything that he should have had And the king went there and besieged him and his brother, William de Roumare, in the castle. And the earl stole out and went after (to get the help of) Robert of Gloucester and brought him thither with a large army. And they fought mightily on Candlemas day against their lord and captured him, because his men betrayed him and fled. They led him to Bristol and put him in prison and in fetters. Then all of England was more stirred up than ever before, and all was evil in the land.

After that the daughter of King Henry, who had been empress in Germany and was now countess in Anjou, came to London, and the people of London wanted to capture her. And she fled and lost much there.

Thereupon Henry, the Bishop of Winchester and brother of King Stephen, spoke with Earl Robert and with the empress and swore oaths to them that he would no longer support the king, his brother, and cursed all the men who remained with him, and told them that he would give up Winchester to them (Robert and the empress) and caused them to come thither. When they were inside, then came the king's queen with all her force and besieged them so that there was great hunger within. When they could endure no longer, then they stole out and fled. And those outside were aware of this and followed them and captured Robert, Earl of Gloucester, and led him to Rochester and put him in prison there. And the empress fled into a monastery.

EXERCISES

I. *Vocabulary*

1. The verb *tæcen* occurs several times in this selection. Consult the *Oxford English Dictionary* to find out how and at what time it got into English. By looking at line 15 of the *Chronicle* selection, can you identify the verb it replaced?

2. What is the Modern English reflex or equivalent of the word *uuerre* in line 7? From what language did it come into English? What is the present form of the word in that language? Can you suggest why it did not form the basis for our English term? Does the presence of such pairs as *warden* and *guardian, ward* and *guard, wimple* and *guimpe, warrant* and *guarantee* suggest anything about the form in which words from a particular language may be borrowed? Is it in any way a reflection of the political history of England?

3. From what language were the following words taken? When did they come into English? Can you suggest why these particular words should have been borrowed?

castle	12	empress	18
prison	16	countess	18

4. Find out the relative dare of adoption into English of *countess* and *count, empress* and *emperor*. In each instance, which came into the language first, the masculine or the feminine form? Can you give any reason for this?

5. Note the term *fordfeorde*, line 5. Literally, *feoren* meant 'to go' and *ford (forth)* meant what it now does. How is this verbal compound translated? Look up the word *euphemism* and explain why this might be construed as one. Do you know other euphemisms for death and dying? Why is this an area of the vocabulary in which they might be likely to develop?

II. *Grammar*

1. Find the noun plurals in lines 4, 16, and 22. What do you conclude to be the plural inflection in this text? In the selection from *Beowulf* there are plurals in *-as, -a,* and *-um*. What appears to have happened to English noun plurals between the time that *Beowulf* was written and the year 1140?

2. Select all of the instances of the definite article that you can find in the first fifteen lines. How many forms do you find for it? Had this same passage been written in Old English, the following forms would have occurred: *sē sēo, þone, þām, þȳ*. What has happened to the article in early Middle English?

3. How do the instances of the definite article which you have collected vary with respect to the initial consonant? Classify each of these forms according to the consonant that precedes them. Can you formulate a rule which would account for the occurrences of *te*?

4. Do any of the adjectives in this selection appear to be inflected? Were they in the *Beowulf* selection? What has happened during the time lapse between the two texts?

5. Collect a number of examples of plural verbs in the past tense. Lines 4, 5, 10, 14, 15, 16, and 25 will furnish you with examples. Is the ending even of the same verb always spelled the same? Under the circumstances, how do you interpret the pronunciation of the vowels in these endings?

6. What, in lines 16 and 29, appears to be the meaning or function of the verb *do?* Does it have this function today? Look up the words *don* and *doff*. What is their origin? What does *dide* mean in line 24?

7. What is the order of the verb and subject in the clauses in lines 1, 3, 5, and 7? What is it in lines 10-13? Is there any difference in the way in which the clauses in the two groups begin? Construct a rule which will account for these differences. Is there any vestige of the construction represented by the first group of classes left in Modern English?

8. How might we say *þe kinges sune Henries* in Modern English? Essentially, what is the difference between our ordering of the elements in such a phrase and that of the twelfth century? Are there other instances of the same construction elsewhere in this text? Where?

9. Can we, in Modern English, use the verb *say* in the context in which it appears in line 23? What verb would we be most likely to use today? Is the difference between our use and that of the twelfth century a matter of meaning or one of structure?

III. *Pronunciation and graphics*

1. In how many ways is the word for *earl* spelled in this text? The word for *that?* What does this suggest about the value of the sound which earlier had been indicated by the character æ?

2. The word *oc* in line 9 would have been written *āc* in Old English. Assuming that the change in spelling does indicate a change in pronunciation, what might the newer pronunciation have been?

3. What does the twelfth-century spelling of the word *that* in line 4 tell you about the values of the characters ð and þ? Note also the words *suythe* 5, 7, *cuthe* 9, *athas* 22. How does the sound of the consonant combination in these words compare with that of words written with þ and ð? What is happening to the spelling of this consonant? Do you notice any instances of *d* being substituted for the characters þ and ð? Name the words in which this occurs.

4. Note the words *wæx* and *uuerre* in line 7. What are the Modern English reflexes of these words? Examine the manuscript reproduction for the initial consonants of these words, noting also the capital form of this letter in line 12. How is the name which we give to this consonant today illustrated by the spelling of the early Middle English equivalent of our word *..ar*? What is the value of *u* in *yuel*, 17?

GEOFFREY CHAUCER, *CANTERBURY TALES**

Introduction

One result of the Norman Conquest was the disappearance of a dominant literary tradition in the English language. When writing in the native vernacular again began to spread, each work revealed the regional origin of its author. Or, to put it another way, each regional variety of English was acceptable for purposes of literature. By the end of the fourteenth century, however, the language of London and its environs began to take on special prestige. In the London of this period flourished the greatest literary figure before Shakespeare—Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1340-1400), who brought to literature such wit, versatility, ironic humor, and dramatic sense as had never been witnessed before in England. However, despite the commanding position of Chaucer in the history of our literature, his formative influence on the language was less than has sometimes been represented. It is necessary, in particular, to dismiss two serious overstatements. Chaucer did not, as Chesterton believed, determine that English rather than French was to be the native language of England, nor was he singly responsible for the selection of the Southeast Midland dialect as the prestige speech of England. The importance of the upper-class speech of London and its surroundings was determined by political, social, and economic factors much more powerful than the personal influence of one man, but it is quite reasonable to assume that the popularity of Chaucer's writings encouraged the general acceptance of this variety of English as the standard for literary usage. It was, indeed, a fortunate coincidence that he who was to exhibit the most remarkable genius for literary creation in an age of relative abundance was born in London, reared in the households of the great, educated for the royal service, and mingled in positions of trust among the powerful and the socially privileged of his age. From people of this kind a large part of his audience was drawn.

To the student of language, then, the study of Chaucer supplies two valuable assets: a rich account of newly emerging standard speech of the cultivated classes of London, which was to become the possession of educated Englishmen generally, and a measure of how superbly well that language would serve as a vehicle of the finest literary expression.

To what extent did Chaucer modify the language to serve his purposes? In phonology, morphology, and syntax he was conservative, even to the point of expressing regret for the inevitable changes that time imposes on language. As to a tendency to introduce new words from French and Latin no conclusive statement can be made. It has often been pointed out that the first recorded occurrence of many words is in Chaucer, but two facts should be remembered in this connection: a considerable lag may intervene between the first oral use of a word and its appearance in permanent written form, and much written material from less celebrated

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*Comments and exercises prepared by the Committee on Historical Linguistics, National Council of Teachers of English, 508 South Sixth Street, Champaign, Illinois 61820. Facsimile of manuscript (Manchester FAC) of the *Ellesmere Chaucer*, Vol. 2, First Page, is reproduced by permission of *The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.*

¶ Here foldeth the Wordes of the Frankeleyn to the Squyer and the Wordes of the Host to the Frankeleyn

Squyer, thou hast wel yspoken
thus gentilly / I preise wel thy wit
Quod the Frankeleyn / considerynge thy yonthe
So feelyngly thou spekest / sire / I allowe the
as to my doom / ther is noon that is heere
of eloquence that shal be thy peere
if that thou live / god yeve thee good / chaunce
And in vertu / sende thee continue
For of thy speche / I have gret deyntee
I have a sone / and by the Trinitee
I had lever than twenty pound worth land
Though it right now / were fallen in myn hond
He were a man / of swich discrecioun
As that ye been / fy on possessioun
But I am vnlerned / and so seith my wyf
Thanne wil I speke / my tale / and my lyf
But I pray you / al / yeve me audience
And I wil tel / the wordes of my sentence
Beth blithe / for I shal nat glose
I wil nat countrefete / no man / for me suppose
But speke / my wordes / in my tonge / as I can
For I wil nat / speke / as a clerk can
I learned nevere / rethoryk certeyn
Thing that I speke / it must been / bare and pleyn
I slepe nevere on the mount of Pernaso
Ne lerned Marcus Tullius Scithero
Colours know I none / withouten doute
But swiche colours / as growen in the route
Whereby men dyen / cloothes / of sondry hewes
Colours of rethoryk / been to me vnknowes
I am a man / ful lyte / and have a lyte entente
But trouthe wil I / telle / if I have mente
My tale / if it displese any man of yow
Of remenant / I pray yow / hertely now
Forgeve it me / for my rude intellect
Ne deemeth nat / that I it say / for disdeyn
But for my wit / is al to rude / and feyn
Now sire / now wil I telle / my tale / as I can
With every word / that my maister began
I wil nat warante / al be / he or she
But I wil seye / the gretter / the lesse
Or elles / he moste / speke / pleynly
Or elles / he moste / leve / it al vnsayd
Wel / quod he / I pray / thee / forthy
Quod he / thanne / wil I / my tale / pleyn
This olde / gentil / Britoun / in his day
Which that / men / clepe / Dorigen / that lay
Wedded / the fayreste / wyf / vnder sonne
Of / many / a day / men / wedden / wyf / I conne
Wherfore / it fel / so / longe / yeres / gon
That / for / to / serve / hir / worship / wel / and / don
He / leften / al / the / contree / as / he / lay
And / pursued / the / love / of / this / lady / gay
For / she / was / of / so / grete / beautee
That / many / a / man / wende / she / lost / hir / herte
But / she / was / ful / wel / ware / of / his / art
And / eke / she / loved / him / wel / for / his / desert
But / whan / he / saw / he / had / hir / love / wonne
Ne / knew / he / nat / of / al / this / longe / sonne
Of / preyinge / ne / of / noon / obeysaunce
But / as / a / man / is / wont / to / doon / in / France
He / lay / at / hom / in / his / owne / contree
Fer / fro / the / contree / ther / she / was / born
Ther / as / he / pursueth / hir / with / al / his / might
With / every / wight / that / wil / of / love / endite
And / eke / with / every / maner / minstralcye
That / may / or / can / be / told / of / trecherye
For / she / was / wont / to / make / hir / revel / and / pley
Wherfore / upon / a / day / in / May / it / fel
That / for / to / walke / in / a / medwe / she / went
Hir / for / to / pleye / and / romen / an / hir / wente
And / eke / hir / fayre / bodi / for / to / reste
Hir / thoughte / it / was / a / noble / thing / to / preste
The / fresshe / beautee / of / the / morwe / tyde
But / it / was / passed / prime / and / half / an / houre / wyde
And / down / a / greet / deel / the / sonne / was / descended
So / hye / in / his / declinacioun / he / was / ascended
That / I / ne / kan / nat / telle / what / it / was / to / clocke
But / lat / it / be / as / it / was / by / my / faye
For / he / that / wolde / have / told / it / wel / and / right
Shal / nat / erren / a / quarter / of / an / houre / I / plighte
Now / was / she / come / unto / a / wilde / corner
And / wandred / hath / hir / fayre / felawes / fro / hir
And / pleyinge / as / a / child / is / wont / to / do
She / romed / hath / hir / fayre / felawes / fro / hir
And / pleyinge / as / a / child / is / wont / to / do
She / romed / hath / hir / fayre / felawes / fro / hir
And / pleyinge / as / a / child / is / wont / to / do

Explicit

Heere folwen the wordes of the ffrankeleyn to the Squier and the wordes of the hoost to the ffrankeleyn

In feith Squier / thow hast thee wel yquit
And gentilly / I preise wel thy wit
Quod the ffrankeleyn / considerynge thy yowthe
So feelyngly thou spekest sire I allowethe
As to my doom / ther is noon that is heere
Of eloquence / that shal be thy peere
If that thou lyue / god yeue thee good chaunce
And in vertu / sende thee continuaunce
ffor of thy speche / I haue greet deyntee
I haue a sone / and by the Trinitee
I hadde leuere / than twenty pound worth lond
Though It right now / were fallen in myn hond
He were a man / of swich discrecioun
As that ye been / fy on possessioun
But if a man / be vertuous withal
I haue my sone snybbed / and yet shal
ffor he to vertu / listneth nat entende
But for to pleye at dees / and to despende
And lese al that he hath / is his vsage
And he hath leuere / talken with a page
Than to comune / with any gentil wight
Where he myghte lerne gentillesse aright
Straw for youre gentillesse / quod oure hoost
What ffrankeleyn / pardee sire wel thou woost
That ech of yow / moot tellen atte leste
A tale or two / or breken his biheste
That knowe I wel sire / quod the ffrankeleyn
I prey yow / haueth me nat in desdeyn
Though to this man / I speke" or two + a word
Telle on thy tale / with outen wordes mo
Gladly sire hoost quod he / I wole obeye
Vn to youre wyl / now herkneth what I seye
I wol yow nat contrarien in no wyse
As fer/ as that my wyttes / wol suffyse
I prey to god / that it may plesen yow
Thanne woot I wel / that it is good vnow

Explicit

writers than Chaucer has perished. It is also arguable that an author both popular and conservative is not likely to put too great a strain on the lexical tastes of his public. On the other hand Chaucer's courtly readers were so familiar with French that words from that language in the English context of *Troilus*, for example, would have been less objectionable than a similar practice today. In the same way, to readers of *Boethius* and the *Treatise on the Astrolabe* a Latin term for technical or learned use may have seemed altogether to be expected. Although on this matter, definite proof either way is not available, we can say that by Chaucer's time the Anglo-Saxon word hoard had been enormously enriched by importations from French and Latin and that the range of Chaucer's vocabulary is a measure of that enrichment.

The selection from the *Canterbury Tales* which is printed here is found in the best manuscripts as a transitional passage, or "link," between the unfinished Squire's Tale and Franklin's Tale. The passage was chosen partly because it is a dialogue between two of the pilgrims of somewhat different social status and thus gives us not only a specimen of the colloquial, at least so far as it can be carried over into verse, but also some evidence of a contrast in speech manners. The reproduction is from the most famous of all the Chaucer manuscripts, the Ellesmere, named after one of its former owners, the Earl of Ellesmere. Acquired in 1917 by the great American collector, Henry E. Huntington, it is now in the possession of the Huntington Library in San Marino, California.

EXERCISES

I. *Graphics*

1. The Ellesmere MS was completed not later than 1410 by one of the professional lay scribes who by this date had largely superseded the monastic scribes of earlier times. Its extraordinary beauty, only in part discernible in a black-and-white print, consists not only in the rich illumination but in the character of the handwriting and the care with which it is executed. Although the Ellesmere scribe was sparing in the use of abbreviations, so common a feature of medieval writing, some do occur. Find examples of contractions and suspensions and give their expanded forms.

2. In many manuscripts the thorn letter (þ) had evolved into a form closely resembling the *y*, the latter being usually dotted to mark the distinction. From the sample given here, what would appear to be the practice of the Ellesmere scribe?

3. In medieval manuscript books as well as in early printed books *i* and *j* were considered variations of the same letter, as were *u* and *v*. Is there any system here in the distribution of these pairs? Does this scribe make any distinction between *i* and *y* when he uses them as vowels? How is his practice different from ours?

4. How many different forms have the letters *r* and *s*? What is unique about the formation of the capital *f*?

5. The letters *i*, *m*, *n*, and *u* were composed of minims, or short downstrokes of the pen, often without perceptible mark of the intended grouping. Notice *comune* in line 21. Does the scribe give clear indication of the proper grouping of the minims? Without the context could you be sure of the reading *my* in line 5?

6. In line 29a, a scribal error has been corrected in the manuscript. Identify an error in line 17 which has not been corrected.

7. Can you deduce the scribe's rules for the use of capitals?

8. The conventions of word division vary from one period of the language to another. Find three instances in this passage which contrast with modern usage.

9. The symbol ¶ which we use for "paragraph," has an ancient tradition in handwriting. For what purpose is it used here?

10. An interesting example of medieval punctuation is the virgule, found here near the middle of the line. Does it indicate a caesural pause or syntactic division—or both?

II. *Phonology*

If, by some miracle of time and space, Chaucer could hear a modern American read his poetry, giving the written symbols their modern sound values, he would very likely not recognize a single line, for his vowel system has been extensively modified, and to some extent his consonant system also. In fact, we do not know with final and absolute certainty how Chaucer's language actually sounded on his own tongue, but we are reasonably sure we can come close enough to it that he would recognize his own poetry, though to be sure, save for his courtly manners, he might smile a little at our "foreign accent." The most remarkable difference between his speech and ours is the result of a system of changes, known as the Great Vowel Shift, which began to take effect not later than the early fifteenth century and extended in some phases into the seventeenth and even later, for poets of the eighteenth century were still riming pairs like *hair* and *ear, away* and *tea, creature* and *traitor*. This modification, which altered the quality of all the long vowels (without making a corresponding change in their written symbols), was brought about very gradually in each affected sound by increasing the elevation of the tongue, the change therefore being known in phonology as "raising." The two highest vowels, front and back, which could not be further raised without becoming consonantal, were diphthongized. The following table of correspondences will enable the beginning student to substitute approximate Chaucerian values for modern sound values in words which had long vowels.

Modern Spelling and Sound				Chaucerian Equivalents			
a-e	as in	page, tale	[e:, ei]	a, aa	as in	page, tale	[a:]
ea	"	bread	[ɛ]	e, ee	"	breed	[ɛ:]
ea	"	break	[ɛɣ]	e, ee	"	breke	[ɛ:]
ea	"	speak, each	[i:]	e, ee	"	speke, ech	[ɛ:]
ee	"	speech, feel, here	[i:]	e, ee	"	speche, feel, heere	[ɛ:]
i-e	"	mine, suffice	[ai]	y, i	"	myn, suffyse	[i:]
igh	"	might, right	[ai]	i(y)gh	"	myghte, right	[ix]
o-e	"	home, host	[o:, ou]	o, oo, o-e	"	hom, hoom, hoost	[ɔ:]
oo	"	food	[u:]	o, oo	"	fod, food	[o:]
oo	"	foot	[ʊ]	o, oo	"	fot, foot	[o:]
oo	"	blood	[ʌ]	o, oo	"	blod, blood	[o:]
ou, ow	"	now, pound	[aʊ]	ou, ow	"	now, pound	[u:]
u, ue	"	use, virtue	[iu]	u	"	use, vertu	[iu]

The short vowels were less strikingly different, but it is important to remember that short *a* as in *hat* was further back than in modern usage, probably [a], and short *o* was rounded, as in modern British pronunciation, never [a] as in the widespread American pronunciation of *pot, rob*, etc. Short *u* (sometimes spelled *o*, especially in the presence of nasals) was a rounded back vowel as in *put*, never centered and unrounded as in *cut*. Digraph vowel spellings were likely to represent diphthongs, especially *ai/ay, ei/ey, au/aw, eu/ew, iu/iw*. The digraphs *ou/ow* represented a diphthong or [u:]. The *eu/ew* digraph represented a pronunciation like that of *iu/iw*, that is [iu], as in *newe*, and sometimes [ɛu] as in *fewe*. In the Early Modern period the diphthongs fell together with the [iu] from French *u*.

For the reading of Chaucer's verse a special point is in order concerning the final unstressed *e*, which in late Middle English might represent an Old English final vowel or inflectional syllable, in which instance it is called "organic." Or it might result from analogy with organic *e*; it is then referred to as "inorganic *e*." These final vowels were disappearing from the spoken language in the late fourteenth century but were still well enough known to be used for metrical purposes. What was the probable pronunciation of *–e* in lines 2, 6, 7, 16, 20, 21, 27? Compare *gentillesse* in lines 22 and 23. From the rime at lines 3 and 4 what would you conclude about the survival of *–e* at the end of a line of verse? Is there any evidence that the past suffix *ed* and the plural suffix *es* were syllabic?

The consonants were very much like those of Present English, but the following were important differences:

1. A number of consonants, now silent, were sounded: *g* as in *gnaw, k* as in *knyght, w* as in *writen, –gh–* as in *myght*.

2. The digraph *ng* was [ŋg] as in *finger*, not [ŋ] as in *singer*, and this was also the pronunciation in final position as in *thyng*.

3. *r* was trilled, and final *s* was usually voiceless.

4. Initial *h* was silent in words of French origin as well as in some native words occurring in weakly stressed positions *(he, hem, her)*.

III. *Grammar*

1. Chaucer's morphology and syntax were more like ours than like King Alfred's; some Old English features persisted which have since disappeared. Which of these do you find most noticeable? Can you find any forms of speech which today are considered sub-standard?

2. The infinitive suffix in Old English was *an*, which survived in Middle English as *–en*; later as *–e*. What is Chaucer's usage? See lines 20, 21, 22, 25, 26, and 31.

3. Explain the form *yquit* in line 1, *pound* in line 11, *myn* in line 12.

4. Is the suffix in *gentillesse* the same as that in *countess*? Consult OED.

5. Why does the Host address the Franklin with *thou* and *thy*, while the Franklin addresses the Host with *you* and *youre*? How is this related to the difference in verb-endings in lines 28, 30, and 32?

6. From the use of *thee* in line 1 what inference would you make about the form of the reflexive?

7. Compare and explain the second person singular verbs in lines 4 and 7. What about the form *yeue* in line 7?

IV. *Vocabulary*

1. Examples of archaic or obsolete words are easy to find in this passage, but words that vary only in form from their modern counterparts should be examined for their interesting phonological background; for example, *yeue* (line 17), *ynow* (line 36), *atte* (line 25), *lese* (line 19).

2. List as many idiomatic phrases different from modern usage as you can find, such as *but if* (line 15), *hadde leuere* (line 11).

3. Chaucer's English was heavily indebted to the French. From this passage can you form some estimate of the frequence of occurrence of words borrowed from French?

4. Is the earliest recorded use of any of the French words in this passage attributed to Chaucer? Consult OED and MED.

5. What is the meaning of *explicit* at the end of the passage in the manuscript? What does its etymology recall about the history of the book?

WILLIAM CAXTON, PROLOGUE TO *THE BOKE OF ENEYDOS* (1490)*

Introduction

William Caxton was important to the development of the English language in two quite different ways. As a translator and modernizer he made available to English readers at the close of the fifteenth century a vast amount of material which either had not hitherto been in the language or which was too archaic for easy comprehension. He translated, edited, and printed no less than twenty-two folio volumes from French, Dutch, and Latin. Had it not been for him, Malory might well have remained in manuscript and Chaucer could have become a forgotten man, for a period at least.

In putting these authors into readable form, Caxton faced a problem which became a much sharper issue a century later, that of the archaic versus the foreign. His concern with the question is reflected in the passage which is reproduced here. Although the "fair and honest terms and words in French" excite his admiration more than "the rude and broad English" of former times, he recognized that the successful writer could afford to be neither "over-rude nor curious." Thus, keeping to a sound middle course, he enriched his native tongue. The *Oxford English Dictionary* bears impressive testimony to the numberless words still current for which the earliest citations are drawn from Caxton's works.

The development of a standard language was another of his concerns. Although by the time of Chaucer the dialect of London had been established as the prestige form, broadening its use among ordinary people remained a problem. As Caxton's anecdote about the farm woman shows us, they were still clinging to their regional speech and did not easily comprehend the standard language. "What should a man in these days now write?" he asks, and it is obvious that he had not arrived at a wholly satisfactory answer.

Above all, Caxton was a printer. It is hard for us to realize how revolutionary an innovation printing was, how completely it was destined to standardize the outward form of the written language. As long as manuscripts were copied by hand, every book was an individual production, reflecting something of the language habits of the last scribe as well as of the composer, to say nothing of the copyists in between. Multiple production from a single setting of type resulted in the uniformity which is characteristic of written languages today.

This, too, posed a problem to Caxton. At the time that he set up his shop at the sign of the Red Pale, the English language was in the midst of a series of sweeping changes, particularly in pronunciation. It was an inconvenient time for

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After dyuerse werkes made/ translated and achieued/ ha
uyng noo werkie in hande. I sittyng in my studye where as
laye many dyuerse paunflettis and bookys. happened that
to my hande cam a lytyl bookie in frenshe. whiche late was
translated oute of latyn by some noble clerkie of fraūce whi
che bookie is named Eneydos/ made in latyn by that noble
poete & grete clerkie Vyrgyle/ whiche bookie I salde ouer rand
rede therin. How after the generall destruccyon of the gre
te Troye. Eneas departed berynge his olde fader anchises
vpon his sholdres/his lityl sōn yolus on his honde. his wy
fe wyth moche other people sholdynge/and how he shypped
and departed wyth alle thystorye of his aduentures that he
had. er he cam to the achieuement of his conquest of ytalye
as all a longe shall be shewed in this present bokie. In whi;
che bookie I had grete playsyr. by cause of the fayr and hone
ste termes & wordes in frenshe/ Whyche I neuer salde to fo;
re lykie. ne none so playsaunt ne so wel ordred. whiche boo;
kie as me semed sholde be moche requysyte to noble men to see
as wel for the eloquence as the hystorye/ How wel that
many honderd yerys passed was the sayd bookie of eneydos
wyth other werkies made and lerned dayly in scolis specyal;
ly in ytalye & other places/ whiche hystorye the sayd Vyrgyle
made in metre/ And whan I had aduysed me in this sayd bo
kie. I delybered and concluded to translate it in to englysshe
And forthwyth tokie a penne & ynkie and wrote a leef or
tweyne /whyche I ouersalde agayn to correcte it/ And whā
I salde the fayr & straunge termes therin/ I doubted that it
sholde not please some gentylmen, whiche late blamed me
sayeng ỹ in my translacyons I had ouer curyous termes
whiche coude not be vnderstande of comyn people/ and desired
me to vse olde and homely termes in my translacyons. and

A 1

fayn wolde I satysfye euery man/ and so to doo take an olde
bolke and rede therin/and certaynly the englysshe was so ru
de and rodwood that I coude not rede vnderstande it. And also
my lorde abbot of westmynster ded do shewe to me late certa:
yn euydences wryton in olde englysshe for to reduce it in to
our englysshe now vsid/ And certaynly it was wreton in
suche wyse that it was more lyke to dutche than englysshe
I coude not reduce ne brynge it to be vnderstanden/ And cer:
taynly our langage now vsed varyeth ferre from that. whi
che was vsed and spoken whan I was borne/ For we en:
glysshe men/ ben borne vnder the domynacyon of the mone.
whiche is neuer stedfaste/but euer wauerynge/wexynge o:
ne season/ and wanyth & dyscreaseth another season/ And
that comyn englysshe that is spoken in one shyre varyeth
from a nother. In so moche that in my dayes happened that
certayn marchaūtes were in a ship in tamyse for to haue
sayled ouer the see into zelande/and for lacke of wynde thei
taryed atte forlond.and went to lande for to refreshe them
And one of theym named sheffelde a mercer cam in to an
hows and axed for mete .and specyally he axyd after eggys
And the goode wyf answerde.that she coude speke no fren:
she . And the marchaūt was angry.for he also coude speke
no frenshe. but wolde haue hadde egges/ and she vnderstode
hym not/ And thenne at laste a nother sayd that he wolde
haue eyren/then the good wyf sayd that she vnderstod hym
wel/ Loo what sholde a man in thyse dayes now wryte.eg:
ges or eyren/ certaynly it is harde to playse euery man/ by
cause of dyuersite & chaūge of langage . For in these dayes
euery man that is in ony reputacyon in his coūtre. wyll bet
ter his cōmynycacyon and maners & ter:
mes/that fewe men shall vnderstonde theym/ And som ho:

spelling to become fixed, and the result is the complicated orthography which creates such problems for our language today. As we shall see from the specimen which follows, Caxton did his best. In many instances the spelling practices he adopted were as reasonable as could be expected. Just as his style improved with practice, so did his manipulation of the conventions of the printed page. In his day, he exerted an influence upon the language that was at once profound and varied. His contribution to the development of English was not only major in extent but unique in kind.

In the transcription which follows, punctuation and capitalization have been normalized. A few difficult readings have been clarified in the footnotes.

* * * * *

After dyuerse werkes made, translated and achieued, hauyng
noo werke in hande, I sittyng in my studye where as laye many
dyuerse paunflettis and bookys, happened that to my hande
cam a lytyl booke in frenche, whiche late was translated oute
of latyn by some noble clerke of fraūce, whiche booke is
nāmed Eneydos, made in latyn by that noble poete & grete clerke
Vyrgyle, whiche booke I sawe ouer and redde therin. How after
the generall destruccyon of the grete Troye, Eneas departed
berynge his olde fader anchises vpon his sholdres, his lityl
son yolus on his honde, his wyfe wyth moche other people
folowynge, and how he shypped and departed wyth all thystorye
of his aduentures that he had er he cam to the achieuement of
his conquest of ytalye as all a longe shall be shewed in this
present boke. In whiche booke I had grete playsyr by cause
of the fayr and honest termes & wordes in frenshe, whyche I
neuer sawe to fore lyke, ne none so playsaunt ne so wel ordred,
whiche booke as me semed sholde be moche requysyte to noble
men to see as wel for the eloquence as the historyes. How wel
that many honderd yerys passed was the sayd booke of eneydos
wyth other werkes made and lerned dayly in soolis[1] specyally
in ytalye & other places, whiche historye the sayd Vyrgyle
made in metre. And whan I had aduysed me in this sayd boke,
I delybered and concluded to translate it in to englysshe.
And forthwyth toke a penne & ynke and wrote a leef or tweyne,
whyche I ouersawe agayn to correcte it. And whā I sawe the
fayr & straunge termes therin, I doubted that it sholde not
please some gentylmen whiche late blamed me sayeng yt in my
translacyons I had ouer curyous termes whiche coude not be
vnderstande of comyn peple, and desired me te[2] vse olde and
homely termes in my translacyons. And fayn wolde I satysfye
euery man, and so to doo take an olde boke and redde therin,
and certaynly the englysshe was so rude and brood that I coude
not wele vnderstande it. And also my lorde abbot of West-
mynster ded do shewe to me late certayn euydences wryton in
olde englysshe for to reduce it in to our englysshe now usid.

[1] schools
[2] to

And certaynly it was wreton in suche wyse that it was more lyke to dutche than englysshe. I coude not reduce ne brynge it to be vnderstenden. And certaynly our langage now vsed varyeth ferre from that whiche was vsed and spoken whan I was borne. For we englysshe men ben borne vnder the domynacyon of the mone, whiche is neuer stedfaste but euer wauerynge, wexynge one season, and waneth & dyscreaseth another season. And that comyn englysshe that is spoken in one shyre varyeth from a nother. In so moche that in my dayes happened that certain marchaūtes were in a ship in tamyse[3] for to haue sayled ouer the see into zelande, and for lacke of wynde thei taryed atte forlond, and wente to lande for to refreshe them. And one of theym named sheffelde a mercer cam in to an hows and axed for mete, and specyally he axyd after eggys, and the goode wyf answerde that she coude speke no frenshe. And the marchaūt was angry, for he also coude speke no frenshe, but wolde haue hadde egges, and she vnderstode hym not. And thenne at laste a nother sayd that he wolde haue eyren; then the good wyf sayd that she vnderstod hym wel. Loo what sholde a man in thyse dayes now wryte, egges or eyren. Certaynly it is harde to playse euery man by cause of dyuersitie & chaūge of langage. For in these dayes euery man that is in ony reputacyon in his coūtre wyll vtter his cōmynycacyon and maters in suche manners and termes that fewe men shall vnderstonde theym.

[3] Thames

EXERCISES

I. *Vocabulary*

1. Look up the following words in a good dictionary (the OED, if it is available) and find the meaning which is nearest to what Caxton here intends:

requysyte	(17)	curyous	(28)
concluded	(23)	homely	(30)
ouersawe	(25)	euydences	(34)
doubted	(26)	mercer	(48)

2. How does Caxton write *because*? Was it originally one or two words? Find out as much as you can about its history.

3. How could someone ask for meat, "especially eggs"? Find out the pertinent facts about the earlier history of *meat* which would explain this apparent contradiction. Is the word *meat* now narrower or broader in its reference than formerly?

4. One writer on Caxton in treating this preface refers to the story of a London merchant "who asked a woman in Forland for eggs." Consult either Webster or the Oxford English Dictionary for the treatment of the word *foreland*. What error does the writer appear to have made?

5. Note the word *delybered* (23). What would the modern form of it be? What word in Latin does it come from? What form of the Latin word accounts for the ending *-ate*? What form of the Latin verb would give rise to the word as it is found in Caxton?

II. *Grammar*

1. Note the present plural of the verb *be* (40). What is the corresponding form in Chaucer? In Shakespeare? With which does Caxton agree?

2. Answer the same questions with reference to the third person singular, present tense inflection of verbs. See lines 38, 42, 43.

3. What was Chaucer's equivalent for Caxton's *their* and *them*? What was Shakespeare's? With which does Caxton agree?

4. What is Caxton's form of the past participle of *understand* (29, 38)? What is the current form? Look up *understand* in the Oxford English Dictionary and read the note on the forms of the verb which appears at the beginning of the treatment.

5. Comment on Caxton's use of *shewed* (13). If you were writing a sentence with *shall be show–*, would you use *–ed* or *–n* to complete the verb form? Do all your classmates agree with your choice?

6. What is unusual about the construction of *me semed* (17)? Look up the treatment of *methinks* in either the Oxford Dictionary or Webster.

7. The verb *do* was sometimes used as a *causative*. Find out what this term means. Assuming that there is such a use in line 34, give the modern equivalent for *ded do shewe*.

8. What is unusual about the use of *much* (10)? Think of such nouns as *books, trees, salt, sugar*. With which do you use *much*? What do you use with the others? What seems to govern the distribution of the two words? Does the possibility of using numbers with certain of the nouns have any bearing on the distribution?

9. What would you use today in place of *tweyne* (24)? In what part of speech function is *twain* used in Modern English?

10. Find out what you can about the history of the plural forms of the noun *egg*.

III. *Pronunciation*

1. Note the way in which the plural noun inflections are written. What letters other than *e* precede the *s*? What might this suggest about the pronunciation? Does everyone today pronounce the plural inflection of *rose* with the same vowel?

2. Look up the word *metathesis*. Which word in lines 45-50 is an illustration of this?

3. What pronunciation of *hundred* does the spelling in line 19 suggest? Is the pronunciation current today?

4. How does Caxton spell the equivalent of Modern English *could*? Of *should* and *would*? Do you think that the spellings represent his pronunciation? Can you see any reasons for the differences between *could* and the other two?

IV. *Graphics*

1. At times Caxton places a macron over a letter. Note lines 5, 25. Are there any other instances? What seems to be the significance or value of this mark?

2. What is the distribution of the letters *u* and *v* in this selection? What sound values do they have? Does this explain why a *W* (double *u*) is actually a double *v*?

3. Note the abbreviation *yt* in line 27. What word does it stand for? If the *y* represents a consonant sound, what would it be? In that case, how should *ye* in *ye olde mill* be pronounced?

4. Note the spelling *doubt* (26). Is the *b* pronounced? Look up the word in the Oxford Dictionary for an explanation of this spelling. In what sense is Caxton's spelling of *adventure* an example of the same tendency or development? In what sense does the later history of the word differ?

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, THE SECOND QUARTO OF *HAMLET**

Introduction

The language of Shakespeare is called Early Modern English. It may at first seem surprising that language over three hundred and fifty years old is called "modern." It is indeed true that there are great differences between the language of Shakespeare's day and that of today. But the fact that by his time the major changes in pronunciation and grammar which distinguish Chaucer's Middle English from the English of today had already taken place justifies us in the use of the term. The biggest changes that have occurred since Shakespeare's time have been in vocabulary. But there have also been alterations in other aspects of the language, as the sample presented here will show.

The Second Quarto of *Hamlet* was published in 1604, 128 years after Caxton set up his press at the sign of the Red Pale in Westminster. During that period the most important revolution in communication since the invention of the alphabet had occurred. Books, which in Chaucer's day were rare and expensive works of handicraft, had now become common objects cheap enough for all but the poorest to buy. For a penny one could buy a broadside ballad from an itinerant peddler like Autolycus in *The Winter's Tale*. The ready availability of print made for literacy among a much larger proportion of the populace, and schools grew up to teach children of all classes how to read and write. The effect of all this was to give a much greater importance to the written language. Also it exerted a powerful restraint upon change, especially in the writing system. In fact, it is not too much to say that we still use the spelling system of Caxton's English in spite of many changes of details

By Shakespeare's time, the "usuall speach of the Court and that of London and the shires lying about London" (to quote a critic of 1589) was considered standard, at least for literature, and was on the way to becoming a national standard for all educated men. Shakespeare adopted it for all his characters except a few specifically identified as comic rustics. Distinctions of class and social status were clearly marked in language; note in the passage from *Hamlet* below that the "clown" (ignorant rustic) speaks rather differently from the two gentlemen, Hamlet and Horatio. The normative concept of a single "correct" form of English had not yet been widely adopted. But its beginnings can be seen: in *Love's Labour's Lost*, Shakespeare satirizes pedants in the person of the schoolmaster Holofernes, who insists that *debt* be spelled with a *b* (it was *dette* in Chaucer) and that the *b* be pronounced.

Shakespeare's plays were for the theater, not the library. They have been preserved because enterprising publishers printed cheap editions (called *quartos*

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Hora. I my Lord, and of Calues-skinnes too.

Ham. They are Sheepe and Calues which seeke out assurance in that, I wil speak to this fellow. Whose graue's this sirra?

Clow. Mine sir, or a pit of clay for to be made.

Ham. I thinke it be thine indeede, for thou lyest in't.

Clow. You lie out ont sir, and therefore tis not yours; for my part I doe not lie in't, yet it is mine.

Ham. Thou dooſt lie in't to be in't & say it is thine, tis for the dead, not for the quicke, therefore thou lyest.

Clow. Tis a quicke lye sir, twill away againe from me to you.

Ham. What man dooſt thou digge it for?

Clow. For no man sir.

Ham. What woman then?

Clow. For none neither.

Ham. Who is to be buried in't?

Clow. One that was a woman sir, but rest her soule shee's dead.

Ham. How absolute the knaue is, we muſt speake by the card, or equiuocation will vndoo vs. By the Lord *Horatio*, this three yeeres I haue tooke note of it, the age is growne so picked, that the toe of the peasant coms so neere the heele of the Courtier he galls his kybe. How long hast thou been Graue-maker?

Clow. Of the dayes i'th yere I came too't that day that our last king *Hamlet* ouercame *Fortenbrasse.*

Ham. How long is that since?

Clow. Cannot you tell that? euery foole can tell that, it was that very day that young *Hamlet* was borne: hee that is mad and sent into *England.*

Ham. I marry, why was he sent into *England?*

Clow. Why because a was mad: a shall recouer his wits there, or if a doo not, tis no great matter there.

Ham. Why?

Clow. Twill not be seene in him there, there the men are as mad as he.

Ham. How came he mad?

Clow. Very strangely they say.

Ham. How strangely?

Clow. Fayth eene with loosing his wits.

Ham. Vpon what ground?

Clow. Why heere in Denmarke: I haue been Sexton here, man and boy thirty yeeres.

Ham. How long will a man lie i'th earth ere he rot?

Clow. Faith if a be not rotten before a die, as we haue many pockie corses, that will scarce hold the laying in, a will last you some eyght yeere, or nine yeere. A Tanner will last you nine yeere.

Ham. Why he more then another?

Clow. Why sir, his hide is so tand with his trade, that a will keepe out water a great while; & your water is a sore decayer of your whorson dead body, heer's a scull now hath lyen you i'th earth 23. yeeres.

Ham. Whose was it?

Clow. A whorson mad fellowes it was, whose do you think it was?

Ham. Nay I know not.

Clow. A pestilence on him for a madde rogue, a pourd a flagon of Renish on my head once; this same skull sir, was sir *Yoricks* skull, the Kings Iester.

Ham. This?

Clow. Een that.

Ham. Alas poore *Yoricke*, I knew him *Horatio*, a fellow of infinite iest, of most excellent fancie, hee hath bore me on his backe a thousand times, and now how abhorred in my imagination it is: my gorge rises at it. Heere hung those lyppes that I haue kist I know not how oft, where be your gibes now? your gamboles, your songs, your flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table on a roare, not one now to mocke your owne grinning, quite chopfalne. Now get you to my Ladies table, & tell her, let her paint an inch thicke, to this fauour she must come, make her laugh at that.

Prethee *Horatio* tell me one thing.

Hora. What's that my Lord?

Ham. Doost thou thinke *Alexander* lookt a this fashion i'th earth?

Hora. Een so.

Ham. And smelt so pah.

Hora. Een so my Lord.

Ham. To what base vses wee may returne, *Horatio*? Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of *Alexander*, till a find it stopping a bunghole?

Hora. Twere to consider too curiously to consider so.

Ham. No faith, not a iot, but to follow him thether with modesty enough, and likelyhood to leade it. *Alexander* dyed, *Alexander* was buried, *Alexander* returneth to dust, the dust is earth, of earth wee make Lome, & why of that Lome whereto he was conuerted, might they

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because of their size), and a pair of his actor comrades got out a memorial volume (the First Folio) after his death. The plays have been read as well as acted constantly ever since. Usually the language of everyday conversation goes its own way with little influence from the written language. But works so widely and universally read as Shakespeare and the King James Bible (published in 1611) may help preserve linguistic features that otherwise might change. Written documents can have little influence on pronunciation, however. A passage in Shakespeare's English pronounced as it was in his day is intelligible to modern speakers of English, but it sounds strange--especially so to speakers of standard British English. To Americans and Irishmen, whose versions of English have been more conservative, it sounds more familiar. In any case, the overall rhythm of Elizabethan English is little different from that of today, so that Shakespeare and the Bible can be read in modern pronunciation without spoiling their fine verse and prose rhythms.

EXERCISES

I. *Vocabulary*

1. Find out from the Oxford English Dictionary or from a good edition of Shakespeare the meanings of the following words as they are used in this passage: (references are to page and line of the facsimile)

quicke	1/9	corses	2/3
equiuocation	1/18	chopfalne	2/23
picked	1/19	fauour	2/24f
kybe	1/20	curiously	2/35
pockie	2/2f		

2. Do you know any present-day fixed phrases or idioms in which the Shakespearean meanings of *quicke* and *fauour* are preserved?

3. With the aid of a good dictionary, explain the meaning of the following idiomatic phrases:

...eake by the card	1/17
...marry	1/28
will scarce hold the laying in	2/3
my gorge rises at it	2/19f
were wont to set the table on a roare	2/22

4. Explain the pun at 1/37. Is it still a good pun in present-day English?

II. *Grammar*

1. What is unusual about the following verb forms, in comparison with present-day English?

lyest	1/5	kist	2/20
tooke	1/19	lookt	2/28
hast	1/21	Doost	2/28
lyen	2/8	smelt	2/30
bore	2/18	returneth	2/38

2. What is the word order of questions in lines 1/11, 1/24, 1/33, 2/9, 2/10, 2/28? How many of these would be grammatical in present-day English?

3. Collect examples of *will*. Are there any of *shall*? How many of the *will's* indicate future time? What is the meaning of *will* in 2/3, 2/4, 2/6? Of *wil* in 1/3?

4. Fill in the second person pronouns in the following chart.

PERSON SPOKEN TO → / SPEAKER ↓	Clown	Hamlet	Horatio	Yoricke
Hamlet				
Clown				
Horatio				

Can you make a rule explaining the choice between *thou* and *you* forms?

5. What use of the verb is illustrated by the following?

be	1/5	be	2/2	be	2/21
rot	2/1	die	2/2		

6. What is the construction of *you* at 2/3, 2/4? at 2/23? Is either of these standard present-day usage?

7. Comment on the grammar of the following:

this three yeeres	1/18	nine yeere	2/4 (twice)
thirty yeeres	1/last	23. yeeres	2/8
eyght yeere	2/3f		

Is there any difference observable between Hamlet's usage (1/18) and the Clown's? How does the usage illustrated here compare with present-day usage?

8. Comment on the grammar of the following verb phrases:

twill away againe	1/10	were wont to set	2/22
is to be buried	1/15	let her paint	2/24
is growne	1/19		

9. Collect examples of relative clauses. What relative pronouns are used? How does the pronoun usage compare with today's? What is unusual about line 2/8? Under what circumstances can the relative pronoun be omitted in standard present-day English?

III. *Pronunciation*

1. Note the three spellings of the pronoun *he: a, he, hee.* What is revealed about pronunciation? How does Hamlet's practice differ from that of the Clown? Compare also the spellings for *me, we,* and *she.*

2. What is revealed about pronunciation by the following?

in't	1/5 etc.	tis	1/6	twill	1/10
out ont	1/6	it is	1/7, 1/8	Twere	2/35

Find other examples of contraction that indicate pronunciations and compare them with present-day usage.

3. Does there seem to be any significance for pronunciation in the following contrastive spellings?

pourd	2/12	abhorred	2/19
lookt	2/28	picked	1/19

What is the present-day situation with regard to the pronunciation of *aged, learned, peaked?*

4. What might the following spellings reveal about the pronunciation of Shakespeare's day?

doost	1/8, 2/28	Prethee	2/26	thether	2/36
gamboles	2/21	een (e	1/36, 2/29, 31		

IV. *Graphics*

1. Find as many instances as you can of words spelled in more than one way in this passage (example: ſpeak 1/3 : ſpeake 1/17). What comment can you make about the standardization of spelling in Shakespeare's time?

2. Contrast the functions of final *–e* in these two groups of words:

ſeeke	1/2	make	2/25
thinke	1/5	thine	1/5
againe	1/10	nine	2/4
heele	1/20	bunghole	2/34
leade	2/37	made	1/4
		ouercame	1/23
		come	2/25

Which set is nearer to present-day spelling practice? Can you account for the change?

3. Using the following forms, make a rule for the use of *u* and *v*.

Calues	1/2	vndoo	1/18
graue's	1/3	very	1/26
thou	1/5	vs	1/18
quicke	1/9	vſes	2/32
equiuocation	1/18		
muſt	1/17		

Test your rule on all other instances of these two letters in the passage.

4. What is unusual about the *w* in *wee* 2/38? What does it suggest about the origin of the letter *w?* How do you explain its name?

5. Make a rule for the use of the two varieties of *s* on the basis of the following forms and test it on all other instances of these two characters in the passage.

ſeeke	1/2	ſcull	2/8
ſirra	1/3	baſe	2/32
ſpeak	1/3	graue's	1/3
whoſe	1/3	tis	1/6
abſolute	1/17	skull	2/13
ſhee's	1/16	yours	1/6
peſant	1/20	lyppes	2/20

6. How many instances of the letter *j* are there in the passage? What letter commonly is used where we would use *j?* See the Oxford Dictionary for the origin of this letter.

7. Find all the instances of possessive nouns (example: *fellowes* 2/10) in the passage. How many of them use the apostrophe? How is the apostrophe used? What is present-day practice with possessives? Is it consistently observed today?

8. Take all the words in Hamlet's long speech in the middle of the second page and make two lists, the first containing those words with acceptable modern spellings and the second containing the rest. On the basis of these lists write a succinct paragraph describing the differences between Shakespeare's spelling and ours.

ALEXANDER POPE, *EPISTLE TO BATHURST**

Introduction

It was a widespread feeling among educated men in the eighteenth century that the English language was in need of a thorough overhauling and that some authority should be set up to bring its hitherto unrestrained development under control. In 1712, Pope's contemporary, Jonathan Swift, addressed to his friend the Earl of Oxford, one of the principal ministers of the Tory government, *A Proposal for Correcting, Improving, and Ascertaining the English Tongue*, in which he suggested the establishment of an academy to "fix on rules" for bringing the language into order. Forty years later the Earl of Chesterfield, in an essay heralding the imminent publication of Dr. Johnson's *Dictionary*, wrote:

> It must be owned that our language is at present in a state of anarchy; and hitherto, perhaps, it may not have been the worse for it. During our free and open trade, many words and expressions have been imported, adopted, and naturalized, from other languages, which have greatly enriched our own. Let it still preserve what real strength and beauty it may have borrowed from others, but let it not, like the Tarpeian maid, be overwhelmed and crushed by unnecessary foreign ornaments. The time for discrimination seems to be now come. Toleration, adoption and naturalization, have run their lengths. Good order and authority are now necessary.[1]

Chesterfield's solution was to appoint Johnson a dictator, and he promised to surrender "all [his] rights and privileges in the English Language . . . to the said Mr. Johnson, during the term of his dictatorship."

One reason for this concern about change—usually equated with degeneration—in English was the fact that a body of English literature extending over nearly four centuries was readily available to readers, who, lacking historical dictionaries and glossaries as well as college courses in English, found the older language difficult, even sometimes unintelligible. They feared that the passage of time would render their own contemporaries equally difficult for readers of the future. As Pope put it (*Essay on Criticism*, 482-3):

> Our sons their fathers' failing language see,
> And such as Chaucer is, shall Dryden be.

No academy was formed, and Johnson was never formally proclaimed dictator,

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*Comments and exercises prepared by the Committee on Historical Linguistics, National Council of Teachers of English, 508 South Sixth Street, Champaign, Illinois 61820. Facsimile of manuscript HM 6008 [137538] Pope, [Alexander] *Of the Use of Riches, An Epistle . . .* London, 1732, pp. 17-20, is reproduced by permission of *The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.*

[1] From *The World*, 28 November 1754, quoted in *English Examined: Two centuries of comment on the mother-tongue*, compiled and introduced by Susie I. Tucker. (Cambridge University Press, 1961), pp. 90-91.

What but a Want, which perhaps thinks mad,
Yet many feel, the Want of what he had.
Cutler, and Brutus, dying both exclaim,
"Virtue! and Wealth! what are ye but a Name?

Say, for such Worth are other Worlds prepared,
Or are they both, in this their own Reward?
A knotty point! to which shall I reply?
How shall I prove it? and why not deny?
Say, shall my little Bark attempt the Main,
Or tell a Tale? — A Tale — It follows that.

A plain, good Citizen, of sober fame,
In Cheapside dwelt, and Balaam was his name;
Religious, punctual, frugal, & so forth —
His Word wd pass for more than he was worth.
One solid Dish his week-day meal affords;
An added Pudding solemnized the Lord's:
Constant at Church, & Change; his Gains were sure,
His Gifts were rare, save Farthings to the Poor.

The Devil was piqued such Saintship to behold,
And long'd to tempt him, like good Job of old:
But Satan now is wiser than of yore,
And tempts by making rich, not making poor.

Roused by the Prince of Air, the Whirlwinds sweep
The Surge, and plunge his Mother in the Deep;
Then full against his Cornish Lands they roar,
And two rich Shipwrecks bless the lucky Shore.

Sir Balaam now, he lives like other Folks;
He takes his chirping Pint; he cracks his Jokes.
"Live like yourself" was soon my Lady's word,
And lo! two Puddings smoked upon the Board.

Asleep, and naked, as an Indian lay,
An honest Factor stole a Gem away:
He pledged it to the Knight, the Knight had wit,
So kept it dear, but basely kept it not;
To some Lucrative Office it would rise,
Some Gainful Post, or Place of Profit lies:
"I'll now give Sixpence where I gave a Groat,
"Where once I went to Church, I'll now go twice,
"And am so clear, too, of all other Vice."

The Scepter saw his Time; the work he plyd,
Stocks & Subscriptions pour on every side,
And all the Demon makes his full descent
In one abundant Hour of Cent per Cent.

Behold, Sir Balaam turns a man of spirit,
Ascribes his Gettings to his Parts & Merit,
What Late he called a Blessing, now was Wit,
And Gods good Providence, a Lucky Hit.
Things chang'd their Names, & took another Turn;
His Counting-house employ'd the Sunday-morn;
Seldom at Church, 'twas such a busy Life,
Duely sent his Family and Wife:
There (to the Devil ordain'd) one Christmas-tide
My good old Lady catch'd a cold, & dy'd.

A Nymph of Quality admires our Knight,
He marries, bows at Court, grows Polite:
Leaves the dull City, & joins (to please the Lady)
The well-bred Cuckolds in St. James's Air.
First, for his Son, a gay Commission buys;
Who Drinks, whores, fights, Kicks a Bully dies.
His Daughter flaunts a Viscount's tawdry Wife,
She bears a Coronet & P-x for Life.
In Britain's Senate He a seat obtains,
And one, more Pensioner of St. Stephen gains.
~~My Lord (whom to pay Debts his Country sold)~~
~~Bought the Grace~~
~~My Lord Grows Great, is Cheated, Sells in Peace~~
~~Then to the Last Determines to be Rich~~
He must repair it; Sells a Bribe for France,
The House impeaches Co— by Vanity.
The Court forsakes him, & Sir Balaam hangs.
Wife, Son, & Daughter, Satan! are Thy Prize,
And Sad Sir Balaam curses God & Dies.

Finis.

A few grey hairs his rev'rend temples crown'd,
'Twas very want that ſold them for two pound.
What ev'n deny'd a cordial at his end,
Baniſh'd the Doctor, and expell'd the friend?
What but a want, which you perhaps think mad,
Yet numbers feel, the want of what he had.
Cutler and Brutus, dying both exclaim,
"Virtue! and Wealth! what are ye but a Name?"

Say, for ſuch worth are other worlds prepar'd?
Or are they both, in this, their own reward?
That knotty point, my Lord, ſhall I diſcuſs,
Or tell a Tale? — A Tale — it follows thus.

Where * London's Column pointing at the ſkies
Like a tall a Bully, lifts the head, and lyes:
There dwelt a Citizen of ſober fame,
A plain good man, and Balaam was his name.
Religious, punctual, frugal, and ſo forth —
His word would paſs for more than he was worth.
One ſolid diſh his week-day meal affords,
An added pudding ſolemniz'd the Lord's.

* The Monument built in Memory of the Fire of London, with an Inſcription importing that City to have been burn'd by the Papiſts.

Conſtant at Church, and Change; his gains were ſure,
His givings rare, ſave farthings to the poor.
The Dev'l was piqu'd, ſuch ſaintſhip to behold,
And long'd to tempt him like good Job of old:
But Satan now is wiſer than of yore,
And tempts by making rich, not making poor.
Rouz'd by the Prince of Air, the whirlwinds ſweep
The ſurge, and plunge his Father in the deep;
Then full againſt his Corniſh lands they roar,
And two rich Ship-wrecks bleſs the lucky ſhore.
Sir Balaam now, he lives like other folks,
He takes his chirping pint, he cracks his jokes:
"Live like your ſelf," was ſoon my Lady's word;
And lo! two puddings ſmok'd upon the board.
Aſleep and naked as an Indian lay,
An honeſt Factor ſtole a Gem away:
He pledg'd it to the Knight; the Knight had wit,
So kept the Diamond, and the Rogue was bit:
Some Scruple roſe, but thus he eas'd his thought,
"I'll now give ſix-pence where I gave a groat,
"Where once I went to church, I'll now go twice,
"And am ſo clear too, of all other Vice."

The

The Tempter ſaw his time; the work he ply'd;
Stocks and Subſcriptions pour on ev'ry ſide;
And all the Demon makes his full deſcent,
In one abundant Show'r of *Cent. per Cent.*
Sinks deep within him and poſſeſſes whole,
Then dubs *Director* and ſecures his Soul.
Behold Sir Balaam now a man of ſpirit,
Aſcribes his gettings to his parts and merit,
What late he call'd a Bleſſing, now was Wit,
And God's good providence, a lucky Hit.
Things change their titles as our manners turn,
His Compting-houſe imploy'd the Sunday-morn;
Seldom at church, ('twas ſuch a buſy life)
But duly ſent his family and wife.
There (ſo the Dev'l ordain'd) one Chriſtmas-tide,
My good old Lady catch'd a cold, and dy'd.
A Nymph of Quality admires our Knight;
He marries, bows at Court, and grows polite:
Leaves the dull Cits, and joins (to pleaſe the fair)
The well-bred Cuckolds in St. James's air:
Firſt, for his ſon a gay commiſſion buys,
Who drinks, whores, fights, and in a duel dies.

His

His daughter flaunts a Viſcount's tawdry wife,
She bears a C—onet and P—x for life.
In Britain's Senate he a ſeat obtains,
And one more Penſioner St. Stephen gains.
My Lady falls to Play: ſo bad her chance,
He muſt repair it; takes a bribe from France;
The Houſe impeach him, Co * * by harangues,
The Court forſakes him, and Sir Balaam hangs:
Wife, ſon, and daughter, Satan! are thy prize,
And ſad Sir Balaam curſes God and dies.

though his *Dictionary of the English Language*, published in two great folio volumes in 1755, became a favorite authority almost at once and remained so for a hundred years or more. At just about the same time there appeared a series of English grammars, most of them based upon the grammarical system of Latin and quite prescriptive in tone. Partly because of the influence of these writers and partly because of the intellectual tone of the century, the eighteenth century was a period of consolidation and settling down, falling between the extensive changes in grammar and vocabulary of the preceding two centuries and the rapid growth of the English-speaking world during the nineteenth century, with its inevitable effects on vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation.

Pope's language is an excellent illustration of this 18th century desire for stability. Very early in his career he set himself the goal of being "correct." By this he seems to mean accurate and concise in language, tightly controlled in versification, and tautly balanced in rhetoric. His satirical epistle *Of the Use of Riches, An Epistle to the Right Honorable Allen Lord Bathurst* was published in 1732. The selection here presented in facsimile—the sad tale of the *nouveau riche* Sir Balaam—occupies the last part of the poem, lines 333-94. As a satire, it is in what Pope's contemporaries would call a "low" style, with colloquialisms and slang in the diction and an easy conversational syntax. It presents few problems to the modern reader, in spite of the fact that it is over 200 years old. But even without such graphic clues as the long ſ and the internal use of capitals, it bears the unmistakable marks of its period in its language. Some of these will be brought out in the exercises to follow.

EXERCISES

(Numbers following citations refer to page and line of the facsimile.)

I. *Vocabulary*

1. Look up the following words in a good diction... (the Oxford English Dictionary if it is available) and find the meaning which seems nearest to what Pope here intends. If the meaning is now obsolete, mark it *Obs.*

piqu'd	(18/3)	chance	(20/5)
bit	(18/18)	wit	(18/17; 19/9)
Play	(20/5)	importing	(17/footnote)

2. What is the modern form of *Cent. per Cent.*? How does the source of the term explain Pope's form?

3. List any words in the passage which you believe are now obsolete. Check your judgment in an up-to-date dictionary.

II. *Grammar*

1. What is Pope's form of the past particip of *bite* (18/18)? What is the preferred form today? Which is older? Look up *write* in the Oxford English Dictionary and see if its history is similar.

2. Comment on Pope's past tense form of *catch* (19/16). How is the form *caught* to be accounted for? Which is older? Which is standard today—or is there a free choice?

3. What is the construction of *a Viscount's tawdry wife* (20/1)? What kind of verb is *flaunts* in this sentence? Can it be used that way today?

4. Explain the grammar of *The House impeach him* (20/7). What is modern American and British usage with regard to the verb forms that go with nouns like *government, Congress, administration, cabinet* when they refer to political bodies?

III. *Pronunciation*

1. On the basis of the rimes of lines 18/1-2 and 18/5-6, what conjecture can we make about Pope's pronunciation of *poor*? of *sure*? Are these pronunciations current today?

2. What is Pope's pronunciation of *folks* (18/11)? Is this the currently accepted one? What is the cognate German word and how is it pronounced?

3. Comment on the rimes of lines 17/17-18, 18/13-14, 18/19-20, 19/7-8, 19/11-12.

4. What pronunciation of *devil, every*, and *shouer* do the spelling and scansion of lines 18/3, 19/2, and 19/4 indicate? Are these pronunciations standard today?

5. Pope regularly puts an apostrophe in past tense forms like *long'd, smok'd*. What is the significance of this for pronunciation? How does Pope's practice compare with Shakespeare's?

IV. *Graphics*

1. What is the principal difference between Pope's use of capital letters and modern practice? Can you find a rational system in his usage, or is it merely capricious?

2. How do the following spellings differ from the modern preferred forms:

lyes	(17/14)	Compting-house	(19/12)
Rouz'd	(18/7)	imploy'd	(19/12)
Dæmon	(19/3)	dy'd	(19/16)

If the Oxford Dictionary is available, check it to see if these spellings were standard in Pope's day.

3. Compare the manuscript with the printed text to determine the reference of the abbreviations y^e (17/13, 19/19) and y^n (18/5). The manuscript also has y^t in one of the versions of line 17/14. What is the explanation of these abbreviations? Are any of them used today?

4. What is the distribution of the two forms *s* and *ſ* in the printed text? Is the practice of the manuscript the same as that of the printed version?

5. Compare the manuscript and the printed text with regard to other spelling differences than those referred to in questions 3 and 4. How are these variations to be accounted for? What do you think may have been the role of Pope's printer or publisher in this regard? Would you expect to find as much, less, or more variation in comparing Shakespeare's manuscript with the text? a modern writer's? What conclusion can you come to about the history of standardized spelling in English?