

from the Prologue to the Canterbury Tales

Whan that April with his showres soote  
The droughte of March hath perced to the roote,  
And bathed every veine in swich licour,  
Of which vertu engendred is the flowr;  
Whan Zephyrus eek with his sweete breethe  
Inspired hath in every holt and heethe  
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne  
Hath in the Ram his halve cours yronne,  
And smale fowles maken melodye  
That sleepen al the night with open yë--  
So priketh hem Nature in hir corages--  
Thanne langen folk to goon on pilgrimages,  
And palmeres for to seeken straunge strondes  
To ferne halwes, couthe in sondry londes;  
And specially from every shires ende  
Of Engelond to Canterbury they wende,  
The holy blisful martyr for to seeke  
That hem hath holpen whan that they were seke.

differs greatly from the dialect spoken in the west of England (the original dialect of *Piers Plowman*), and from that of the northwest (*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*), and from that of the north (*The Second Shepherd's Play*), and these dialects differ from one another. In this book, the long texts composed in the more difficult dialects have been translated or modernized; and those which, like Chaucer, *Everyman*, the lyrics, and the ballads, appear in the original, have been respelled in a way that it is hoped will aid the reader. The remarks which follow apply chiefly to Chaucer's Midland English, though certain non-Midland dialectal variations are noted if they occur in some of the other selections.

#### I. THE SOUNDS OF MIDDLE ENGLISH: GENERAL RULES

The following general analysis of the sounds of Middle English will enable the reader who has not time for detailed study to read Middle English aloud so as to preserve some of its most essential characteristics, without, however, giving heed to many important details. Section II, Detailed Analysis, is designed for the reader who wishes to go more deeply into the pronunciation of Middle English.

Middle English differs from Modern English in three principal respects:

1. the pronunciation of the long vowels *a*, *e*, *i* (or *y*), *o*, and *u* (spelled *ou*, *ow*);
2. the fact that Middle English final *e* is often sounded;
3. the fact that all Middle English consonants are sounded.

##### 1. Long Vowels

Middle English vowels are long when they are doubled (*aa*, *ee*, *oo*) or when they are terminal (*he*, *to*, *holy*); *a*, *e*, and *o* are long when followed by a single consonant plus a vowel (*name*, *mete*, *note*). Middle English vowels are short when they are followed by two consonants.

Long *a* is sounded like the *a* in Modern English "father": *maken*, *maad*.

Long *e* may be sounded like the *a* in Modern English "name" (ignoring the distinction between the close and open vowel): *be*, *sweete*.

Long *i* (or *y*) is sounded like the *i* in Modern English "machine": *lif*, *whit*; *myn*, *holy*.

Long *o* may be sounded like the *o* in Modern English "note" (again ignoring the distinction between the close and open vowel): *do*, *soone*.

Long *u* (spelled *ou*, *ow*) is sounded like the *oo* in Modern English "goose": *hous*, *flowr*.

Note that in general Middle English long vowels are pronounced like long vowels in modern languages other than English. Short vowels and diphthongs, however, may be pronounced as in Modern English.

##### 2. Final e

In Middle English syllabic verse, final *e* is sounded like the *a* in "sofa" to provide a needed unstressed syllable: *Another Nonnē with hire haddē she*. But (cf. *hire* in the example) final *e* is suppressed when not needed for the meter. It is commonly silent before words beginning with a vowel or *h*.

##### 3. Consonants

Middle English consonants are pronounced separately in all combinations—*gnat*: *g-nat*; *knave*: *k-nave*; *write*: *w-rite*; *folk*: *fol-k*. In a simplified system of pronunciation the combination *gh* as in *night* or *thought* may be treated as if it were silent.

#### II. THE SOUNDS OF MIDDLE ENGLISH: DETAILED ANALYSIS

##### 1. Simple Vowels

| Sound   | Pronunciation         | Example                    |
|---|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| long <i>a</i> (spelled <i>a</i> , <i>aa</i> )       | <i>a</i> in "father"  | <i>maken</i> , <i>maad</i> |
| short <i>a</i>                                      | <i>o</i> in "hot"     | <i>cappe</i>               |
| long <i>e</i> close (spelled <i>e</i> , <i>ee</i> ) | <i>a</i> in "name"    | <i>be</i> , <i>sweete</i>  |
| long <i>e</i> open (spelled <i>e</i> , <i>ee</i> )  | <i>e</i> in "there"   | <i>mete</i> , <i>heeth</i> |
| short <i>e</i>                                      | <i>e</i> in "set"     | <i>setten</i>              |
| final <i>e</i>                                      | <i>a</i> in "sofa"    | <i>large</i>               |
| long <i>i</i> (spelled <i>i</i> , <i>y</i> )        | <i>í</i> in "machine" | <i>lif</i> , <i>myn</i>    |
| short <i>i</i>                                      | <i>i</i> in "wit"     | <i>wit</i>                 |
| long <i>o</i> close (spelled <i>o</i> , <i>oo</i> ) | <i>o</i> in "note"    | <i>do</i> , <i>soone</i>   |
| long <i>o</i> open (spelled <i>o</i> , <i>oo</i> )  | <i>oa</i> in "broad"  | <i>go</i> , <i>goon</i>    |
| short <i>o</i>                                      | <i>o</i> in "oft"     | <i>pot</i>                 |
| long <i>u</i> when spelled <i>ou</i> , <i>ow</i>    | <i>oo</i> in "goose"  | <i>hous</i> , <i>flowr</i> |
| long <i>u</i> when spelled <i>u</i>                 | <i>u</i> in "pure"    | <i>vertu</i>               |
| short <i>u</i> (spelled <i>u</i> , <i>o</i> )       | <i>u</i> in "full"    | <i>ful</i> , <i>love</i>   |

Doubled vowels and terminal vowels are always long, while single vowels before two consonants other than *th*, *ch* are always short. The vowels *a*, *e*, and *o* are long before a single consonant followed by a vowel: *nāmē*, *sēkē* (sick), *hōly*. In general, words that have descended into Modern English reflect their original Middle English quantity: *liven* (to live), but *lif* (life).

The close and open sounds of long *e* and long *o* may often be identified by the Modern English spellings of the words in which they appear. Original long close *e* is generally represented in Modern English by *ee*: "sweet," "knee," "teeth," "see" have close *e* in Middle English, but so does "be"; original long open *e* is generally represented in Modern English by *ea*: "meat," "heath," "sea," "great," "breath" have open *e* in Middle English. Similarly, original long close *o* is now generally represented by *oo*: "soon," "food," "good," but also "do," "to"; original long open *o* is represented either by *oa* or by *o*: "coat," "boat," "moan," but also "go," "bone," "foe," "home." Notice that original close *o* is now almost always pronounced like the *oo* in "goose," but that original open *o* is almost never so pronounced; thus it is often possible to identify the Middle English vowels through Modern English sounds.

The nonphonetic Middle English spelling of *o* for short *u* has been preserved in a number of Modern English words ("love," "son," "come"), but in others *u* has been restored: "sun" (*sonne*), "run" (*ronne*).

For the treatment of final *e*, see above, General Rules, section 2.

##### 2. Diphthongs

| Sound   | Pronunciation  | Example   |
|---|--|---|
| <i>ai</i> , <i>ay</i> , <i>ei</i> , <i>ay</i> | between <i>ai</i> in "aisle"<br>and <i>ay</i> in "day" | <i>saide</i> , <i>day</i> , <i>veine</i> , <i>preye</i> |
| <i>au</i> , <i>aw</i>                         | <i>ou</i> in "out"                                     | <i>chaunge</i> , <i>bawdy</i>                           |
| <i>eu</i> , <i>ew</i>                         | <i>ew</i> in "few"                                     | <i>newe</i>   |

|        |                 |               |
|--------|-----------------|---------------|
| oi, oy | oy in "joy"     | joye, point   |
| ou, ow | ou in "thought" | thought, lowe |

Note that in words with *ou*, *ow* which in Modern English are sounded with the *ou* of "about," the combination indicates not the diphthong but the simple vowel long *u* (see above, Simple Vowels).

### 3. Consonants

In general, all consonants except *h* were always sounded in Middle English, including consonants that have become silent in Modern English, such as the *g* in *gnaw*, the *k* in *knight*, the *l* in *folk*, and the *w* in *write*. In noninitial *gn*, however, the *g* was silent as in Modern English "sign." Initial *h* was silent in short common English words and in words borrowed from French, and may have been almost silent in all words. The combination *gh* as in *night* or *thought* was sounded like the *ch* of German *ich* or *nach*. Note that Middle English *gg* represents both the hard sound of "dagger" and the soft sound of "bridge."

## III. PARTS OF SPEECH AND GRAMMAR

### 1. Nouns

The plural and possessive of nouns end in *es*, formed by adding *s* or *es* to the singular: *knight*, *knights*; *roote*, *rootes*; a final consonant is frequently doubled before *es*: *bed*, *beddes*. A common irregular plural is *yēn*, from *yē*, eye.

### 2. Pronouns

The chief differences from Modern English are as follows:

| Modern English | Middle English                                    |
|----------------|---|
| I              | I, <i>ich</i> ( <i>ik</i> is a northern form)     |
| you (singular) | <i>thou</i> (subjective); <i>thee</i> (objective) |
| her            | <i>hir(e)</i> , <i>her(e)</i>                     |
| its            | <i>his</i>  |
| you (plural)   | <i>ye</i> (subjective); <i>you</i> (objective)    |
| their          | <i>hir</i>  |
| them           | <i>hem</i>  |

In formal speech, the second person plural is often used for the singular. The possessive adjectives *my*, *thy* take *n* before a word beginning with a vowel or *h*: *thyn yē*, *myn host*.

### 3. Adjectives

Adjectives ending in a consonant add final *e* when they stand before the noun they modify and after another modifying word such as *the*, *this*, *that*, or nouns or pronouns in the possessive: *a good hors*, but *the (this, my, the kinges) goode hors*. They also generally add *e* when standing before and modifying a plural noun, a noun in the vocative, or any proper noun: *goode men*, *oh goode man*, *faire Venus*.

Adjectives are compared by adding *er(e)* for the comparative, *est(e)* for the superlative. Sometimes the stem vowel is shortened or altered in the process: *sweete*, *swettere*, *swettest*; *long*, *lenger*, *lengest*.

### 4. Adverbs

Adverbs are formed from adjectives by adding *e*, *ly*, or *liche*; the adjective *fair* thus yields *faire*, *fairly*, *fairliche*.

### 5. Verbs

Middle English verbs, like Modern English verbs, are either "weak" or "strong." Weak verbs form their preterites and past participles with a *t* or *d* suffix and preserve the same stem vowel throughout their systems, though it is sometimes shortened in the preterite and past participle: *love*, *loved*; *bend*, *bent*; *hear*, *heard*; *meet*, *met*. Strong verbs do not use the *t* or *d* suffix, but vary their stem vowel in the preterite and past participle: *take*, *took*, *taken*; *begin*, *began*, *begun*; *find*, *found*, *found*.

The inflectional endings are the same for Middle English strong verbs and weak verbs except in the preterite singular and the imperative singular. In the following paradigms, the weak verbs *loven* (to love) and *heeren* (to hear), and the strong verbs *taken* (to take) and *ginnen* (to begin) serve as models.

|              | Present Indicative   | Preterite Indicative  |
|--------------|--|---|
| I            | <i>love</i> , <i>heere</i><br><i>take</i> , <i>ginne</i>   | <i>loved(e)</i> , <i>herde</i><br><i>took</i> , <i>gan</i>                          |
| thou         | <i>lovest</i> , <i>heerest</i><br><i>takest</i> , <i>ginnest</i>   | <i>lovedest</i> , <i>herdest</i><br><i>tooke</i> , <i>gonne</i>                     |
| he, she, it  | <i>loveth</i> , <i>heereth</i><br><i>taketh</i> , <i>ginneth</i>   | <i>loved(e)</i> , <i>herde</i><br><i>took</i> , <i>gan</i>                          |
| we, ye, they | <i>love(n)</i> ( <i>th</i> ), <i>heere(n)</i> ( <i>th</i> )<br><i>take(n)</i> ( <i>th</i> ), <i>ginne(n)</i> ( <i>th</i> ) | <i>loved(e)</i> ( <i>en</i> ), <i>herde(n)</i><br><i>tooke(n)</i> , <i>gonne(n)</i> |

The present plural ending *eth* is southern, while the *e(n)* ending is Midland and characteristic of Chaucer. In the north, *s* may appear as the ending of all persons of the present. In the weak preterite, when the ending *e* gave a verb three or more syllables, it was frequently dropped. Note that in certain strong verbs like *ginnen* there are two distinct stem vowels in the preterite: even in Chaucer's time, however, one of these had begun to replace the other, and Chaucer occasionally writes *gan* for all persons of the preterite.

|          | Present Subjunctive  | Preterite Subjunctive   |
|----------|--|---|
| Singular | <i>love</i> , <i>heere</i><br><i>take</i> , <i>ginne</i>             | <i>lovede</i> , <i>herde</i><br><i>tooke</i> , <i>gonne</i>             |
| Plural   | <i>love(n)</i> , <i>heere(n)</i><br><i>take(n)</i> , <i>ginne(n)</i> | <i>lovede(n)</i> , <i>herde(n)</i><br><i>tooke(n)</i> , <i>gonne(n)</i> |

In verbs like *ginnen*, which have two stem vowels in the indicative preterite, it is the vowel of the plural and of the second person singular that is used for the preterite subjunctive.

The imperative singular of most weak verbs is *e*: (*thou*) *love*, but of some weak verbs and all strong verbs, the imperative singular is without termination: (*thou*) *heer*, *taak*, *gin*. The imperative plural of all verbs is either *e* or *eth*: (*ye*) *love(th)*, *heere(th)*, *take(th)*, *ginne(th)*.

The infinitive of verbs is *e* or *en*: *love(n)*, *heere(n)*, *take(n)*, *ginne(n)*.

The past participle of weak verbs is the same as the preterite without inflectional ending: *loved*, *herd*. In strong verbs the ending is either *e* or *en*: *take(n)*, *gonne(n)*. The prefix *y* often appears on past participles: *yloved*, *yherd*, *ytake(n)*.

Research has shown that teaching students to read in their primary language improves their reading achievement *in English*.

*Why do you think that is?*  
(discuss in groups)

# The lingo...

## Bilingual education models:

- Transitional bilingual education (TBE)  
Early (1-2 yrs) & Late (3-4 yrs) exit
- Developmental bilingual education (DBE aka “maintenance”)
- Two-way immersion (“dual language”)  
50-50 and 90-10 models

## “English-only” models:

- Mainstream placement (“submersion”) \*might be illegal\*
- Sheltered English
- English as a second language (ESL)  
Pull-out or in-class

## Instructional support for ELLs:

- Sheltered instruction (see SIOP)
- SDAIE (Specially designed academic instruction in English)
- ESL techniques

## "Sheltered" strategies

### English only:

- Graphic organizers (tables, charts, semantic maps) that make content and the relationships among concepts and different lesson elements explicit;
- Redundant key information presented visually, such as pictures, objects, and physical gestures related to lesson content;
- Identifying, highlighting, and clarifying difficult words and passages within texts to facilitate comprehension, and more generally greatly emphasizing vocabulary development;
- Helping students consolidate text knowledge by having the teacher, other students, and ELLs themselves summarize and paraphrase;
- Giving students extra practice in reading words, sentences, and stories in order to build automaticity and fluency;
- Additional time and opportunities for practice, either during the school day, after school, or for homework;
- Highly engaging extended interactions with teacher and peers;
- Adjusting instruction and speech in general (vocabulary, rate, sentence complexity, and expectations for student language production) according to students' oral English proficiency;
- Targeting both content and English language objectives in every lesson, the latter in order to promote English language development explicitly and directly;
- Use of familiar content and explicitly linking new learning to student background knowledge and experience;
- Predictable and consistent classroom management routines, aided by diagrams, lists, and easy-to-read schedules on the board or on charts, to which the teacher refers frequently.

### L1 support (teachers need to be able to have sufficient L1 knowledge)

- Clarifications and explanations in L1
- Preview-review (The teacher introduces new concepts in the primary language, prior to the lesson in English, then afterward reviews the new content, again in the primary language.)
- Focusing on similarities and differences between L1 and English (e.g., cognates, orthographic features)
- Teaching a strategy in L1, followed by student applying it in English.