

## Homework 5 Answers

### MIDDLE ENGLISH FUN WITH DICTIONARIES

A wonderful spin-off of the *Oxford English Dictionary* is the *Middle English Dictionary*, housed at the University of Michigan and accessible free online at <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/>. It can be a little persnickety to use, but it has much more information about Middle English words than the *OED* does. Compare the following words in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (which you can access through the Dacus Libraries Databases page) and the *MED* and determine what is different about the information contained in these two amazing resources. [You may have to use the spelling in brackets in the MED headword search.]

1. Boy [boi(e)]
2. Girl [girl(e)]
3. Child
4. Knave
5. Lad [lad(de)]

**In general you should have more examples for the Middle English period in the MED, more quotations, and sometimes different etymologies. The OED will, of course, have examples before and after the Middle English period, sometimes with usage advice, and often will have more compounds of the word.**

### FUN WITH MIDDLE ENGLISH

1. The result of the lengthening and shortening of OE vowels in the Middle English period can still be seen in word pairs such as *wise, wisdom* and *hide, hidden*. For each of the modern English words below that preserve an OE long vowel, supply another modern English word that has preserved a Middle English short vowel.

|       |                      |       |  |
|-------|----------------------|-------|--|
| Bathe | <b>Bath</b>          | Dear  | <b>Darling</b>   |
| Bleed | <b>Bled or blood</b> | Glaze | <b>Glass</b>   |
| Break | <b>Breakfast</b>     | Goose | <b>Gosling</b>   |
| Clean | <b>Cleanse</b>       | Shoe  | <b>Shod</b>  |
| Creep | <b>crept</b>         | White | <b>Whitsunday (you may have to be an Anglican to get this one)</b> |

2. Algeo's chapter 6 explains a number of important **consonant** changes that take place in Middle English. For each of the following words, identify the major ME consonantal change it represents. For instance, *swēord* > *sword* represents the loss of *w* between a consonant and a back vowel.

1. breðen > brethe (breathe): **ð starts to be written as 'th'; leveling of unstressed endings to ə.**
  2. ic > I: **Loss of the final -ċ in an unstressed word**
  3. geclēpde > yclept (named): **Prefix ge- depalatalizes to l- or y-; final -ə is unstressed and eventually disappears**
  4. hlāfdig > lady: **Loss of [h] before [l]; unstressed ending eventually levels.**
  5. sorgan > sorwe: **/ɣ/ goes to /w/ after an R or L**
3. Where do we see Old English diphthongs in Modern English? **We don't. They are all lost through regular sound changes and replaced by new ones during the Middle English period.**
  4. Why did Middle English start using the letters *v-* and *qu-* at the beginning of words? **Because of pressure from new French words that begin with phonemes that were not used at the beginnings of Old English words.**
  5. What Old English orthographic characters get lost during the Middle English period? What new orthographic characters emerge? Why do you think this happened? **Thorn (þ), eth (ð), and eventually æsch (æ) are lost; Middle English scribes do not understand their Anglo-Saxon runic origins. A new consonant, yogh (ȝ) emerges to reflect the palatalized g sound in Middle English. The use of qu- and w- for French phonemes comes into use for scribes.**
  6. How can you tell if a word of French origin came into Middle English from Anglo-Norman French or from Central Parisian French? **By the characteristic sound changes—see PowerPoint #2, slide 14 for examples.**
  7. What do the noun sets *mouse/mice*, *louse/lice*, and *house/houses* tell you about how noun inflections developed in the Middle English period? **While the Old English a-stem endings mostly dominated into Middle English, some Old English minor declension plurals survived into Middle and then Modern English.**
  8. Chancery Standard generally favors which dialect of Middle English? **East Midlands and the areas around London—more cosmopolitan than Chaucer's Kentish dialect.**
  9. From which dialect did the personal pronouns for third-person feminine and third-person plural derive? Why? **East Midlands, probably by the influence of Chancery Standard, for the third person feminine forms; Northern forms for the third-person plural, again probably from the influence of Chancery Standard.**

10. Following the models on page 134-35 of Algeo, conjugate these two verbs in Middle English: *demen* (to judge) and *melten* (to melt).

| <b>Infinitive</b>      | <b>Melten (strong): has ablaut</b> | <b>Demen (Weak)</b>     |
|------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------|
|                        | <i>Present Tense</i>               |                         |
|                        | <b>Indicative</b>                  |                         |
| <b>Singular 1st</b>    | <b>Melte</b>                       | <b>Deme</b>             |
| <b>2nd</b>             | <b>Meltest</b>                     | <b>Demest</b>           |
| <b>3rd</b>             | <b>Melteth</b>                     | <b>Demeth</b>           |
| <b>Plural</b>          | <b>Melte(n), meltes</b>            | <b>Deme(n), demes</b>   |
|                        | <b>Past Tense</b>                  |                         |
|                        | <b>Indicative</b>                  |                         |
| <b>Singular 1st</b>    | <b>Malt</b>                        | <b>Demed</b>            |
| <b>2nd</b>             | <b>Melte, mealte</b>               | <b>Demedest</b>         |
| <b>3rd</b>             | <b>Melt</b>                        | <b>Demed(e)</b>         |
| <b>Plural</b>          | <b>Melte(n)</b>                    | <b>Demed(e)(n)</b>      |
| <b>Past Participle</b> | <b>Molten</b>                      | <b>idemed or ydemed</b> |