

English Prosody and Poetics, 1300-1600

Texts:

The Vision of Piers Plowman, ed. A. V. C. Schmidt (2nd ed.) (London: Everyman, 1995)

The Riverside Chaucer, ed. Larry D. Benson (3rd ed.) (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987)

1. Introduction to Verse History and Historical Poetics

Jarvis, "For a Poetics of Verse"

Martin, *The Rise and Fall of Meter*, Introduction

Taylor, *Hardy's Metres and Victorian Prosody*, Ch. 1

Weiskott, "Introduction" (excerpt) (not for circulation)

*Exercise: Scan "A Slumber Did my Spirit Seal" and "Jabberwocky" on *For Better for Verse*
(prosody.lib.virginia.edu)

Learning objectives: Theoretical understanding of the history of metrical study and the key concepts 'rhythm' and 'meter'; comparison of intrinsic (formal/practical) and extrinsic (historical/cultural) approaches to metrical form; practical understanding of modern syllabic meters

2. The Alliterative Tradition in its Eighth Century

Langland, *Piers Plowman*, ed. Schmidt, Prologue and Passūs 1-2

St. Erkenwald, ed. Burrow and Turville-Petre

Eric's One-Page Guide to Alliterative Meter

Lawton, "The Unity of Middle English Alliterative Poetry" (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2846614>)

Pearsall, "The Alliterative Revival"

Steiner, *Reading Piers Plowman*, Introduction

Weiskott, "The *Erkenwald* Poet's Sense of History" (not for circulation)

Weiskott, "Phantom Syllables in the English Alliterative Tradition"

*Exercise: Scan *Piers Plowman*, Prologue 1-19

Learning objectives: Theoretical understanding of the history and cultural contexts of the alliterative meter in the late medieval period; comparison of competing explanations for the existence of fourteenth-century alliterative poetry; comparison of the use of the alliterative meter in two compositions, *Piers Plowman* and *St. Erkenwald*; practical understanding of alliterative b-verse meter

3. Chaucer's Tetrameter

Chaucer, *The Book of the Duchess*

Harley Lyric 4, "Alysoun" (<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/c/cme/HarLyr/1:4?rgn=div1;view=fulltext>)

Harley Lyric 30, "The Man in the Moon"

(<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/c/cme/HarLyr/1:29?rgn=div1;view=fulltext>)

Butterfield, "Chaucer's French Inheritance"

Butterfield, "The Construction of Textual Form"

Cable, "Foreign Influence, Native Continuation, and Metrical Typology"

*Exercise: Scan Harley Lyric 4, "Alysoun"

Learning objectives: Theoretical understanding of the history and cultural contexts of the tetrameter or octosyllable in the fourteenth century; comparison of more and less strictly syllabic accentual English meters; practical understanding of template meter or *dolnik*

4 & 5. Chaucer's Pentameter, Tail Rhyme, and Prose

Chaucer, *General Prologue* I 1-34

Chaucer, *The Cook's Prologue and Tale*

Chaucer, *The Prioress's Prologue and Tale*

Chaucer, *The Prologue and Tale of Sir Thopas* (through VII 966)

Chaucer, *Parson's Prologue*

Riverside Chaucer, pp. xlii-xlv (paperback xxxviii-xli) (*Versification* only)

Brantley, "Reading the Forms of Sir Thopas"

(https://muse.jhu.edu/journals/chaucer_review/v047/47.4.brantley.pdf)

Cole, "Chaucer's Metrical Landscape"

Duffell, "Chaucer's Pentameter" (http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/chaucer_review/v049/49.2.duffell.pdf)

Duffell, "'The Crafte So Long to Lerne'" (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/25096094>)

Pearsall, "Chaucer's Meter"

*Exercise: Scan *Cook's Tale*

Learning objectives: Theoretical understanding of the history and cultural contexts of Chaucer's decasyllable/pentameter in the fourteenth century; comparison of Chaucer's several meters and two staged discussions of form (after *Sir Thopas* and in the *Parson's Prologue*); understanding of the relationships between metrical form and manuscript form in *Sir Thopas*; comparison of Chaucer's metrical choices in the larger context of his 'metrical landscape'; practical understanding of Chaucer's decasyllable/pentameter

6. Chaucer's Pentameter in the Fifteenth Century

Hoccleve, *Regiment of Princes*, 1-112 and 4978-5019

(<http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/blyth-hoccleve-regiment-of-princes>)

Lydgate, *Siege of Thebes*, Prologue

(<http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/edwards-lydgate-siege-of-thebes-prologue>)

Duffell, "Lydgate's Metrical Inventiveness and his Debt to Chaucer"

(<http://mtw160-198.ippl.jhu.edu/journals/parergon/v018/18.1.duffell.pdf>)

Myklebust, "Misreading English Meter," Ch. 1

*Exercise: Scan *Siege of Thebes*, Prologue 1-65

Learning objectives: Theoretical understanding of the history and cultural contexts of Chaucer's decasyllable/pentameter in the fifty years following Chaucer's death; comparison of Chaucer's metrical habits to those of his literary heirs, Hoccleve and Lydgate; understanding of the critical uses of, and historical problems with, the concept of a 'Chaucerian tradition' extending into the fifteenth century; practical understanding of Lydgate's decasyllable/pentameter

7. (Chaucer's) Pentameter in the Sixteenth Century

Shakespeare, "Sonnet XVII" and "Sonnet LIX"

Surrey, "The Soote Season"

Wyatt, "They Flee from Me"

Wyatt, "Whoso List to Hunt"

Gascoigne, *Certayne Notes*, pp. 291-300

Duffell, "The Italian Line in English after Chaucer"

Hardison, Jr., "Crosscurrents in English Sixteenth-Century Prosody"

Puttenham, *Arte of English Poesie*, pp. 48-51

*Exercise: Scan "Whoso List to Hunt"

Learning objectives: Theoretical understanding of the history and cultural contexts of the decasyllable/pentameter in the sixteenth century; comparison of Chaucer's metrical habits to those of Wyatt, Surrey, and Shakespeare; understanding of Duffell's concept of 'the Italian line in English,' with reference both to Chaucer and later versifiers; critical scrutiny of sixteenth-century perceptions of earlier and contemporary meter as expressed by Gascoigne and Puttenham; practical understanding of Wyatt's decasyllable/pentameter