

# The Medieval Period, Day Eight

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*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*

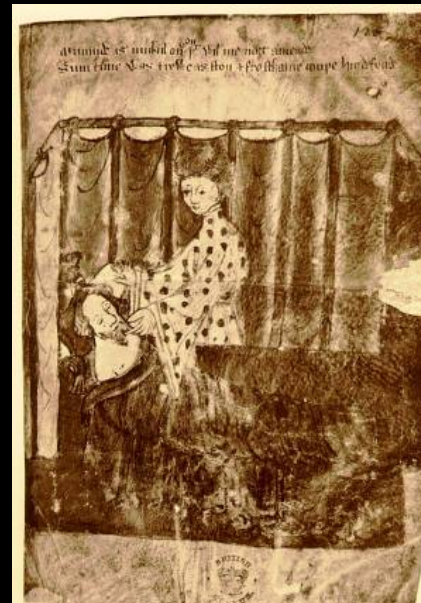
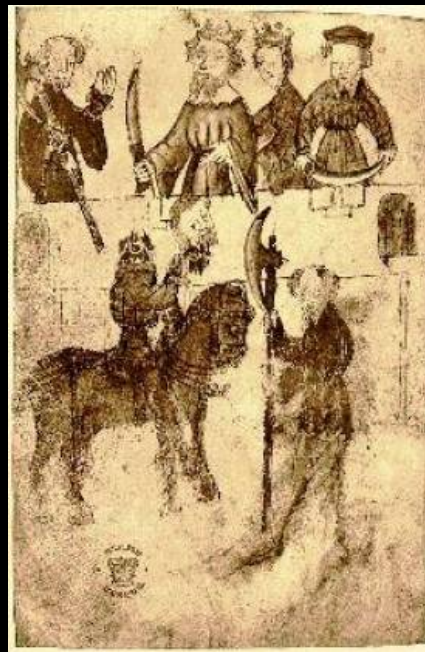
# Website Use Vote

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- The first vote has already been cast (To see the choice, visit our class portfolio)
- If you are in another class also using the student profile system, let me know **NOW** so we can avoid posting problems.

# Middle English Romance

## *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*



# What Happens?

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## ■ Part III (stanzas 46-79)

The lord's hunt wins deer, and Gawain wins a kiss from the lady. The lord gives Gawain the deer and receives a kiss in exchange from him. Gawain will not reveal the origin of the kiss. The bargain is renewed the next day: a wild boar and two kisses are exchanged. The bargain is renewed for a third day. This time, Gawain denies the lady's request for a love-gift and rejects the precious ring she offers him, but accepts a magic protective girdle from the lady as well as three kisses. Gawain hides the girdle and attends confession. That evening he exchanges only the kisses for the fox caught by the lord, and he prepares to set out for the Green Chapel the next morning.

## ■ Part IV (stanzas 80-101)

Gawain arms himself again, wearing the girdle, and sets out with a guide for the Green Chapel. The guide tries to persuade him to turn back; when he persists, the guide points out the place and rushes away. Gawain arrives at the Green Chapel and hears a horrible grinding noise. He calls out and is answered by the Green Knight who appears with a freshly sharpened axe. Gawain flinches at the blow aimed by the Knight, who pulls back the axe and mocks him. Gawain remains steady for a second feint of a blow by the Knight, and is finally nicked on his neck by the third. Gawain then springs away and arms himself and the Green Knight reveals he is in fact the lord of the castle where Gawain stayed and claims to have cut Gawain on the neck only because Gawain is wearing the magic girdle. Gawain is ashamed and flings it away. The Green Knight forgives him, offers him the girdle, and tries to persuade Gawain to come back to the castle and feast with him and his lady. Gawain refuses to come, but accepts the girdle as a token of shame. Gawain asks the Knight's name; the Knight reveals his name is Sir Bertilak of High Desert and claims that Gawain's own aunt, Morgan le Fay, motivated the Green Knight's challenge, to test the pride of Arthur's court and to hurt Guinevere. The two part, Gawain again makes his way through the wilderness to Arthur's court, where Gawain recounts his story and shows his wound and the girdle with shame. The entire court swears to wear green girdles in sympathy with Gawain. The poet declares that many such marvels have happened in Britain since its founding and ends the poem with a prayer to the suffering Christ.

# Gawain's Symbolic Gear

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What does the green girdle or baldric represent?

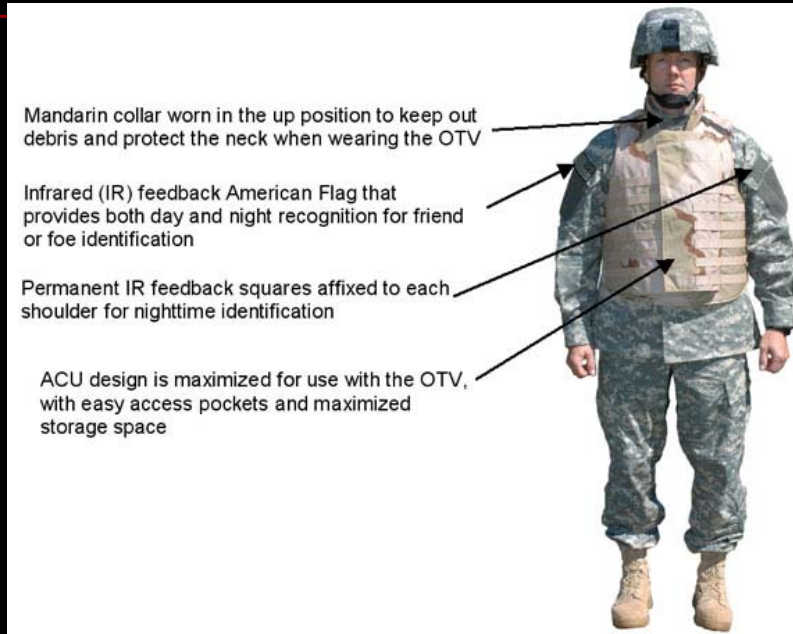
Check stanzas 73-74, 81, 95-96, 98, 100-101

Does its meaning change?

How does it compare to other symbolic gear in this text?



# Modern Symbolic Gear



How does what you wear or carry define who you are?



# Identity Theft *circa* 1386



- GEOFFREY CHAUCER, Esquire, of the age of forty and upwards, armed twenty-seven years, being asked whether the arms, Azure, a bend Or, belonged to Sir Richard Scrope, said yes, for he saw him so armed in France before the town of Retters, and Sir Henry Scrope armed in the same arms with a white label, and with banner; and the said Sir Richard armed in the entire arms, and so during the whole expedition, until the said Geoffrey was taken.
- Being asked how he knew that the arms appertained to Sir Richard said, that he had heard old knights and esquires say that they had had continual possession of the said arms; and that he had seen them displayed on banners, glass, paintings, and vestments, and commonly called the arms of Scrope.
- Being asked whether he had ever heard of any interruption or challenge made by Sir Robert Grosvenor or his ancestors, said no, but that he was once in Friday Street, London, and walking through the street, he observed a new sign hanging out with these arms thereon, and inquired 'what inn that was that had hung out these arms of Scrope?'
- And one answered him, saying, 'They are not hung out, Sir, for the arms of Scrope, nor painted there for those arms, but they are painted and put there by a Knight of the county of Chester, called Sir Robert Grosvenor;' and that was the first time that he ever heard speak of Sir Robert Grosvenor, or his ancestors, or of any one bearing the name of Grosvenor.
  - from the Geoffrey Chaucer Website, in the Life of Chaucer section, under [Scrope-Grosvenor Trial](#).  
(see our Resources page to find out more, including Chaucer's own coat of arms)



# Putting the 'Cheval' (horse) back into Chivalry



**It has been estimated that one Mounted Officer on horseback has the effect of ten officers on foot, depending on the demeanor of the crowd” –NYPD Mounted Unit website**



# Boston's Symbolic Beast: The Sacred Cod



The cod is five feet long and carved in pine. The fish is suspended above the entrance to the hall in the visitors gallery, and the Speaker of the House faces the cod during the meetings. The Sacred Cod is a symbol of the bygone importance of the fishing industry in Massachusetts. The carved fish is more than 200 years old, and remains an ancient symbol of prosperity for the people in the state.

Do we expect our legislators to abide by a code of *Gadidæry*?

# Group Discussion Exercise

Goal: to demonstrate excellent participation, to develop a better understanding of the text, and to practice focusing on an issue and tracing it through the text.

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Directions: Your small group will be assigned one topic to discuss and then to present to the rest of the class. In your group, read through the topic and look through the recommended passages. (If you noted other passages in your reading that are relevant, feel free to consider these as well.) Together, complete the exercise below:

- Considering the topic's questions, identify a central theme, analogy, image, argument, assumption, or tension within the poem. Then choose one stanza that is particularly important to developing this theme (or analogy, image, etc.).
- Select three or four lines that you think are especially important within this stanza, and explain both why these lines are important and what specific role (if any) alliteration plays in these lines.
- Find two or three words in your chosen stanza that are emotionally or ideologically significant in the poem. Explain why these words are important in this stanza, and find at least one other place in the poem where these words occur.
- Think about how the bob and wheel functions in this stanza, and how it relates to the central theme (etc.) of the stanza.

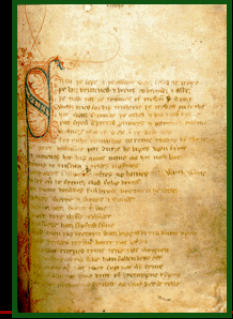
As your discussion progresses, write down on one sheet of paper:

- (1) the names of the students in your group
- (2) your chosen theme
- (3) the number of your chosen stanza
- (4) the numbers of your chosen lines and explanation of their importance/alliterative effects
- (5) your chosen words, their importance, and their other appearance, and
- (6) your comments on the bob & wheel.

Make sure everyone in your group has a chance to contribute to your discussion and presentation.

# Next Class: Presentations!

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- Identify yourself and cast your vote on how to use our website!

Log-in TODAY to make sure you don't encounter any difficulties right before the deadline (Tuesday).

- Re-read *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*; you can also explore the Middle English text on-line or read translations of the other texts within the manuscript...