

# The Medieval Period, Day Nine

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*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*  
*According to You*

# Website Use Vote

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Results: 15 votes (out of 27 students)

Option A was the overwhelming winner.

A. The choice of how to use the student profiles space could be left undefined—each student could do what he or she thinks would contribute most to both personal and classmates' learning

When and how should I evaluate your contributions?

# Feedback on First Assignment: Good Examples

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## Sentence Structure & Word Order

“instead of emphasizing the loathing of God towards the monster with a separate sentence... Heaney chooses one sentence, creating a continuous image”

“the word order of the phrase... [God first, Grendel second]... places emphasis on God’s curse and anger rather than Grendel himself”

Heaney “first emphasizes the strength of the door before it opens”

## Vocabulary Choice

“Treharne...takes the emphasis off Grendel by calling him ‘he’ rather than Grendel”

“Treharne’s Grendel does not lope but advances, implying a more controlled action”

“Heaney writes ‘the bane of the race of men roamed forth, / hunting for a prey in the high hall’ (712-3), while Treharne writes ‘the evil ravager intended to ensnare one / of the race of men in that lofty hall’ (712-3). Heaney’s lines paint Grendel as more of an animal...while Treharne portrays Grendel as being more calculated”

## Compound Words, Apposition, and Alliteration

“the compound word allows Heaney to keep a steady rhythm in the line...[it] also lends itself to some nice alliteration”

“ ‘God-cursed’ starts a line of alliteration...not only does this include a ‘g’ alliteration but also a hard ‘c’ in between two of the ‘g’ sounds... like some kind of death gurgle”

“Treharne has words such as ‘wine-hall’, ‘gold hall’ and ‘hall thanes’...Heaney uses the compound words ‘mist-bands’, ‘God-cursed’, ‘cloud-murk’, and hall-defenders’...[Heaney] puts much of his focus on the setting that surrounds the action... Treharne puts more of her focus on... Grendel and his mission”

Treharne “utilizes apposition with several different descriptions of the hall...her poetic imagery captures the extravagance of Hrothgar’s hall”

Treharne’s “repetition of ‘gold’ and her alliteration on ‘g’ emphasizes the golden wealthy nature of the hall”

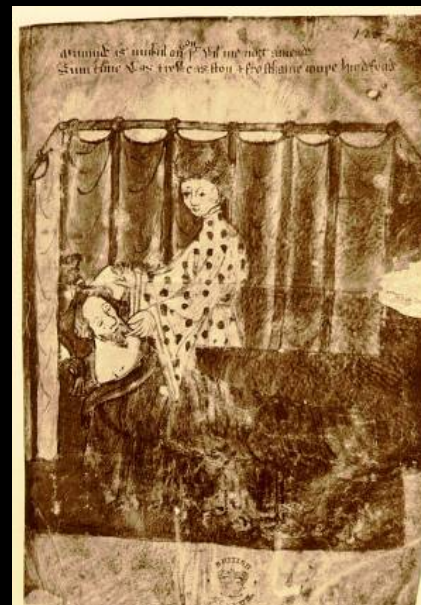
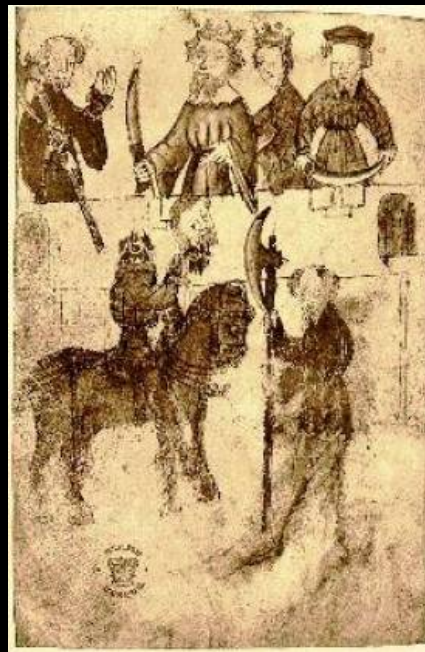
# Formal Expectations

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- Grammar (especially sentence formation and verb tense agreement)
- Quotation
- Citation
- Proofreading
  - Why do these practices matter?
  - Advice and materials to support improvement

# Middle English Romance

## *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*



# Group 1: Jake, John, Michelle, Sebastien, Bob

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- **Topic:** The Poet's Voice

- **Theme:** Voice Shift

[The shift in voice] give authenticity to the narrator and puts emphasis on specific moments.

More general activity/tone switches to specific, as each previous stanza has a lot of activity, and one after focuses on a specific person.

The narrator puts himself in the story: he has seen and heard. The narrator has to be there in order to pull you into the story—[the text] uses the language/shift to reassure [you] that he was there.

# Group 1: Jake, John, Michelle, Sebastien, Bob

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## ■ Stanza 2

Shifts voice to focus on Arthur, Narrator has heard  
emphasis on sight and hearing

## ■ Stanza 7

Shifts voice to focus on Green Knight, Narrator has  
seen

emphasis on sound

[emphasis on] physical senses make [the GK] larger  
than life, overwhelming the senses. **Alliteration**  
contributes to the effect of strength and size. The  
Green Knight's imposing stature and physique are  
accentuated through the use of alliteration.

## ■ Stanza 27

Focus on Gawain

Grotesque exaggeration

Green=wild nature

“marvels have by men been seen” (2.4)

“a sight strange to see” (2.9)

“if you will listen... I have heard” (2.11)

“Another noise that was new” (7.3)

“the music but a moment ended” (7.5)

“men gaped... face and form... green all over  
glowed” (7.18-21)

“the mightiest on middle-earth in measure of  
height / from his gorge to his girdle so  
great and so square / and his loins and his  
limbs so long and so huge” (7.8-10)



# Group 1: Jake, John, Michelle, Sebastien, Bob

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## ■ Chosen Words, Significance & Other Occurrences

The use of the word "girdle" is used in stanza 7 to symbolize size, strength, and power, whereas in stanza 73 (p.94), "girdle", meaning the green garment given to Gawain by the lady, represents weakness, the fallibility of man, and man's giving into temptation.

The use of the word "breast" in stanza 7 also implies strength and power, and a meaning with some sense of positive inspiration. Whereas, stanza 69 (p.90), the word "breast" is now use in a negative connotation as representing weakness or temptation.

The poet uses both words, but the symbolism has polar opposite meanings.



# Group 1: Jake, John, Michelle, Sebastien, Bob

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## ■ Bob and Wheel

The bob and wheel is used as a means of effect and tone. The bob part is used to describe the green knight, but then the wheel is like a message to stop and pay attention. He is large, etc. (bob portion), but even more fantastical---he is green (the wheel portion). The poet seems to use the bob to describe the green knight and speed up the tempo, then the wheel is a screeching halt to pay attention even closer to a more fantastical piece of information!

# Group 2: Jessica, Ed, Crystal, Jenny, Winnie

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- **Topic:** Lyric Cycles
- **Theme:** Connection of religious cycle, season cycle and Gawain's thought cycle

# Group 2: Jessica, Ed, Crystal, Jenny, Winnie

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## Stanza 23

The stanza alludes to Zephyrus, God of the Wind (Roman, Pagan mythology) and Michaelmas (Christian mythology). The stanza moves chronologically forward via seasons; religiously, it also moves from early to more current Christianity. The stanza is like a summary of seasons.

# Ed: Seasons

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- Summer, lines 1-5
- Fall, lines 6-14
- Winter, lines 15-20

# Jenny: Alliteration, throughout the stanza

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There is alliteration in almost every line.

At the beginning of the stanza, on 'summer season', most words start with 's'. Also, harvest alliterates on 'h' and winter on 'w'.

3 sets of alliterative terms followed by a line with 4 alliterative terms

# Crystal: Catholic text and Religious Chronology

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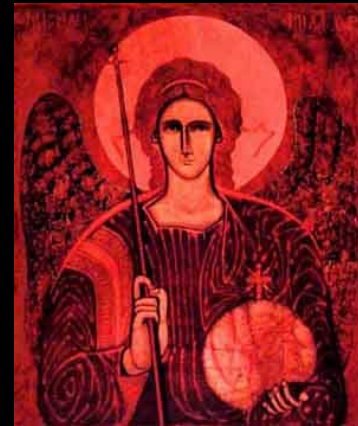
Progression of seasons and color within the church

Zephyr (2)

Harvest (6)

Michaelmas (17)

Trinity, 3 religions, 3 seasons



# Group 2: Jessica, Ed, Crystal, Jenny, Winnie

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- Chosen Lines
- Chosen Words, Significance & Other Occurrences



# Winnie: **Bob and Wheel**, lines 16-20

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- Focus on Gawain and the passage of time, the cycle of Gawain's memory
- Gawain thinks about his journey through the full circle of the seasons
- Like the couplets of a sonnet
- Circle of life, inevitability of death, winter

# Group 3: Hillary, Nell, Caitlin, Nora

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■ **Topic:** Who is Gawain?

■ **Theme:** Gawain's Development.

Lowest of the knights of the Round Table, Gawain sheds this role eventually through his bravery and actions

# Group 3: Hillary, Nell, Caitlin, Nora

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## Stanza 16

I am the weakest, I am aware and in wit feeblest,  
and the least loss, if I live not, if one would learn the truth.  
Only because you are my uncle is honour given me:  
save your blood in my body I boast of no virtue  
(12-15)

**Alliteration** emphasizes his point and desires, i.e., that he is the weakest, but will be able to defend his king. Alliteration drives the point home, and put emphasis on the words.

# Group 3: Hillary, Nell, Caitlin, Nora

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## ■ Chosen Words, Significance & Other Occurrences

Truth—Telling the truth is a central theme

Blood—Spilling>Arthur's blood, the colour red

Virtue—Boasts of having none, but in the end reveals that he is a worthy, loyal knight who protects the virtues of chivalry and courtly love

# Group 3: Hillary, Nell, Caitlin, Nora

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## ■ Bob and Wheel

The bob and wheel closes the stanza, as well as points out the decisions made.

# Group 4: Denez, Keith, Molly, Chris

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- **Topic:** Lovely and Loathly Ladies
- **Theme:** Gawain's Development

# Group 4: Denez, Keith, Molly, Chris

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## Stanza 4

Guinevere's description blends into her background. The women are an accessory to the feast. Women lose the debate for the presents. An observer to the festivities, [Gawain] doesn't interact as much in this [stanza]. There is not much detail. He is not alone; he has not defined himself yet. The mood is dictated by the surroundings.

## Stanza 39&40

[These stanzas] compare [Bertilak's lady] to Guinevere and the old lady with her. They are surrounded by beautiful women. There are games for a hood of the lord's (Who could be the most fun?). Women are in love with Gawain. The stanza graphically describes women and Gawain's relation with them. They were expecting Gawain. It is more intimate because of the relation. The mood is dictated by Gawain and the action.



# Group 4: Denez, Keith, Molly, Chris

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## ■ Stanza 39

...from her closet she came with many comely maidens.  
She was fairer in face, in her flesh and her skin,  
her proportions, her complexion, and her port than all others,  
and more lovely than Guinevere to Gawain she looked

(15-18)

“thick waist / with bulging buttocks spread” (39-40)

What are the effects of **alliteration**?

# Group 4: Denez, Keith, Molly, Chris

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## ■ Chosen Words, Significance & Other Occurrences

“gay”

“grace” “gracious”

“games”

These words are found in both stanzas  
4 and 40.

Why do young women get  
compared to old women?  
Desire to compliment lady of  
the house?

Why does Gawain get ‘stuck in  
the moment’ in terms of  
eyeing women in stanza 39  
and not in 4?

Are games about battling sexes  
or having fun?

# Group 4: Denez, Keith, Molly, Chris

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## ■ Bob and Wheel

Summary of the scene

Women seduce men in a negative way in the end

# Group 5: Roger, Daniel, Joy, David

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■ **Topic:** Let's Make a Deal

■ **Theme:** Honor

# Group 5: Roger, Daniel, Joy, David

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## ■ Stanza 13-14:

It is the basis for the entire story. Without it there would be no tale. The characters enter into these pacts to challenge the honor and integrity of others and to preserve their own honor. The characters risk their honor, their lives, their word. The characters also enter into the pact to avoid a war; they deal with the challenge on an individual level. The pacts test the characters' skill in keeping their word and their bravery. Arthur is a winner because he avoided the challenge completely

## ■ Stanza 45:

The pact that the lord and Gawain make is significant because the lord has the ability to know if Gawain is showing his gains at the castle, but Gawain can't be sure if the lord is sharing everything that he gains while hunting. The lord has the upper hand and is testing the word of Gawain. In this case, Gawain has more at stake than the lord. He risks his life on his word on a pact within another lord's castle, while his pact with the Green Knight seems only to risk his honor.

The men involved in these pacts base them entirely on each other's words. Nothing is in writing. In stanza 45, a drink seals the deal.

It seems that, since this is all centered around honor and word, the winner is the one who is most true to his word. Gawain was almost true to his word, but both the lord and the Green Knight didn't really have a word to keep. They were there to see if Gawain kept his word to them. Their challenges were there to test his character.

# Group 5: Roger, Daniel, Joy, David

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- Chosen Lines
- Effect of Alliteration
- Chosen Words, Significance & Other Occurrences
- Bob and Wheel

# Next: A Middle English Pilgrimage!

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- Let's practice reading the first 22 lines of the *Canterbury Tales* out loud together.
- You can use on-line translation and pronunciation guide on the Geoffrey Chaucer website as you read for Thursday. Make sure you have the required edition as you'll need the essays and notes.
- Remember to pick up your returned assignment on the way out.