

**A MIDDLE ENGLISH
VOCABULARY. DESIGNED FOR
USE WITH SISAM'S FOURTEENTH
CENTURY VERSE AND PROSE**

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A Middle English Vocabulary. Designed for Use with Sisam's Fourteenth Century Verse and Prose by J. R. R. Tolkien

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J. R. R. TOLKIEN

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ABBREVIATIONS

- Afr. Anglo-French.
allit. alliterative; (in) alliterative verse, &c.
a. in etymologies indicates uncertain or indirect relation.
constr. constructed with; construction.
Du. Dutch.
E.; Mod.E. (Modern) English.
E.D.D. The English Dialect Dictionary.
Fr. French.
Fris. (Modern) Frisian (dialects).
from is prefixed to etymologies when the word illustrated has additional suffixes, &c., not present in the etymon.
G. German.
Goth. Gothic.
Icel. (Modern) Icelandic.
Kt.; OKt. Kentish; Kentish dialect of Old English.
L.; Med.L. Latin; Medieval Latin.
MDu. Middle Dutch.
ME. Middle English.
MHG. Middle High German.
MLG. Middle Low German.
N.E.D. The Oxford (New) English Dictionary.
Nth.; ONth. Northumbrian; Northumbrian dialect of Old English.
NWM. North West Midland.
OE. Old English.
OFr. Old French.
OFris. Old Frisian.
OHG. Old High German.
OIr. Old Irish.
ON. Old Norse, especially Old Icelandic.
ONFr. Northern dialects of Old French.
OS. Old Saxon (Old Low German).
prec. preceding word.
red. reduced; reduction.
Swed. Swedish.
WS; OWS. West Saxon (dialect of Old English).
+ is prefixed where forms are theoretically reconstructed.
+ between the elements shows that a compound or derivative is first recorded in Middle English.

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NOTE

THIS glossary does not aim at completeness, and it is not primarily a glossary of rare or 'hard' words. A good working knowledge of Middle English depends less on the possession of an abstruse vocabulary than on familiarity with the ordinary machinery of expression—with the precise forms and meanings that common words may assume; with the uses of such innocent-looking little words as the prepositions *of* and *for*; with idiomatic phrases, some fresh-minted and some worn thin, but all likely to recur again and again in an age whose authors took no pains to avoid usual or hackneyed turns of expression. These are the features of the older language which an English reader is predisposed to pass over, satisfied with a half-recognition; and space seldom permits of their adequate treatment in a compendious general dictionary or the word-list to a single text. So in making a glossary for use with a book itself designed to be a preparation for the reading of complete texts, I have given exceptionally full treatment to what may rightly be called the backbone of the language.

Brief indications of the etymology of each word are given, with references in difficult cases to the Oxford English Dictionary (*N.E.D.*). Apart from their usefulness as a basis for exercises in phonology and the analysis of vocabulary, these will serve to differentiate words distinct in origin which coincide in some of their forms or spellings. The Old English or Old French forms cited are those that best illustrate the Middle English; in consequence the Old English forms frequently differ from normal West-Saxon, and the Old French forms are especially those of the French current in England (Anglo-French is rarely specified). Old Norse words have usually been cited in the normal spelling (e.g. of *Zotga's Old Icelandic Dictionary*). Accordingly, long vowels in Old Norse words are marked as in *bráðr*. In Old English words stable long vowels are marked as in *brād*; uncertain quantity or probable shortening in Old English times is marked as in *airād*; vowels that were lengthened in the Old English period (e.g. before *ld*, *nd*, *nd*) are marked as in *ald*, *alman*, *bladan*.

For the convenience of beginners the glossary is liberally supplied with cross references, and the prefixed Table summarizes the principal variations of form or spelling. Particular attention should be given to the following points of arrangement: (i) *J* has a separate alphabetical place following *G*; cross-references to *g* are not given: (ii) *P* has a separate alphabetical place following *T*; variation between *p* and *th* is disregarded, and initial *th* is entered under *P*: (iii) *U*, *V* are alternative forms of the same letter; variation between them is disregarded, and initial *U* is entered under *V*: (iv) *Y* initially has its usual place; but medial or final *Y* will be found in the alphabetical position of *L*.

J. R. R. T.

PRINCIPAL VARIATIONS OF FORM OR SPELLING

1. a varies with o (before m, n); as land, lang, lamb—land, long, lomb; man, name—(Western) mon, nome.
2. a (= ā) varies in Northern texts with (i) ai, ay; as (a) fare, fare—fayre (ð) fayre—farest, fairest: (ii) with Southern o, oo; see 14.
3. ai, ay varies with (i) ei, ey; as maytene—meytene: (ii) a; see 2: (iii) o, oo; see 2.
4. au (before m, n) varies with a (chiefly in French words); as daunce—daunce.
5. be-, prefix varies with bi-; as begynne—biginne.
6. a varies with k; as hac, court—hak, koet.
7. des-, prefix varies with die-; as des-, disavantage.
8. e (= ē) varies in Northern texts with ei, ey; as wel(e)—weill, weyl; stele—stell. See 13, 20.
9. ei, ey varies with (i) ai, ay (cf. 3); as weie, wey(e)—way(e): (ii) hence in Northern texts with a; as strat-ly—streyte: (iii) with o; see 8.
10. er varies with later ar; as fer, bertely—far, bertely.
11. f varies with u (= v): (i) initially (Southern); as fuder—uder: (ii) finally (Northern); as haf(e)—hane.
12. ght varies with ht, cht (Scottish), ht, st; as nyght—nist, nycht, nyht, seuenist.
13. i (now) varies with y, passim: i, y varies with (i) e in Northern texts; as hider, liuen, myddel—heder, leue, medll: (ii) with e, (South) Western u; as hil, fyre—hell, uerut—hel, furst.
14. o, oo (= ō) varies in Northern texts with (i) a; as hot, boot—hate: (ii) hence also with ai (see 2): (iii) with oi, oy; see next.
15. o, oo (= ō) varies in Northern texts with (i) on, u; as god, good—goud, god(e): (ii) oi, oy; as noue, noon—noyne.
16. (s)ch varies with (s)sh, ss; as schewe—shewe, sewe; fle(s)ch—flesh.
17. þ varies with th, passim.
18. u (in au, eu, ou) varies with w, passim; see 21.
19. u, v (= u) varies with o (esp. before m, n); as sun(ne)—sonne; but—bot(e); see also 15.
20. u, v (= ū) varies in Western texts with (i) e, eo; as erthe—(Western) earthe, vthe: (ii) with i, y, e; see 13.
21. w varies medially with gh, j (s); as wren, own—oghun, oynec, oune; initially (Scottish) with v; as woundit—voundit.
22. y (consonant) varies initially with j; as ye—je; medially with i, (i)gh, (i)j; as say, se(j)gh, se(j)pe, raw.
23. single consonant varies with double; as sud—siddle.
24. single vowel varies with double; as breed—brecle, breadth; wod—wood, mad.

GLOSSARY

- A.** *pron.* he, XIII a 27, 47, 48; they, XIII a 13, b 22, 36, 39, 61, 64, 66. [Unaccented form of ME. *he*. See *Hare*, *Ham*.]
- A.** *n.* *def.* have, i 127. [Reduced unaccented form of *have*; see *Habbe(s)*.]
- A(n)**, *adj.* one, IV b 34; *indef. art.* a(n), i 21, VIII b 7, &c. See *Ane*, *On(e)*.
- A(n)**, *prep.* on, in, &c. II 137, III *introd.*, 22, VIII a 43, XIII a 11, b 19, 34, &c.; *a blade*, with blood, XV g 16; *a nyghtes*, at night (OE. *an niht*, *nihtes*), VIII b 16; *a þre*, in three, XIII b 49 (see *Alo*, *Atwyncce*); *a Goddes half*, for God's sake, XII b 80. [Weakened form of *On*, *g.v.*; *an* in III is possibly dialectal; *a* is used only before following consonant.] See *Ane*.
- Abandounes**, *v.* to abandon, resign, x 50. [OFr. *abandonner*.]
- Abashed**, *pp.* perturbed, XVI 177 (note to XVI 149). [AFr. *abais*; OFr. *abais*, *abais*.]
- Abate**, *v.* to lessen, XIV b 19; reduce, VIII a 209 (*imper.* 49); *dur.* XVII 445; *Abatid* (*of*), *pp.* ceased, VII 104. [OFr. *abatir*.]
- Abedde**, *adv.* in bed, XII a 147. [OE. *an bedde*.] See *Bedd(e)*.
- Abhomynable**, *adv.* abominable, XI b 90. [OFr. *abominable*.]
- Abide**, *Abyde*, *Habide*, *v.* (i) *intr.* to wait, remain, stay, II 84, IX 197, XVII 231; larry, II 348; *imper.* wait!, v 149; halt!, XVI 113; (ii) *trans.* to await, XVII 334; withstand, endure, XIV b 31; **Abode**, *pa. t.* XIV c 68, XVII 371; **Abyde**, *pp.* in *ys abyde*, has survived, XIII b 50. [OE. *abidan*.] See *Hide*.
- Abite**, *v.* outward appearance, XI b 99. [OFr. (*h*) *abit*.]
- Abla**, *adv.* able, VI 259, XI b 92. [OFr. (*h*) *abile*.] See *Vnable*.
- Abone**, *adv.* above, XVII 146. See *Abone(n)*.
- Abosted**, *pa. t.* *sg.* threatened boastfully, VIII a 148. [ME. *a-* + *Bostic*, *q. v.*]
- Abone(n)**, **Abovin**, **Abuf**, *adv.* above, overhead, on top, v 149, VII 105, 135, IX 56, x 61; on the surface, VII 160; *prep.* above, higher than, XI b 181, XVII 83; *quasi-adv.* in *de at here abone*, get the upper hand of them, XIII a 61. [OE. **an-bufan*, *abufan*.] See *Abone*.
- Abonseyd**, *adv.* afloressid, IX 207. [Prec. + *pp.* of *Seie*.]
- Aboute(n)**, **Abowte**, **Obout** (XIV a), (i) *adv.* about, round, on all sides, here and there, to and fro, I 225, v 165, VIII a 297, XI b 279, XII a 143, b 117, XIV a 15, XV f 3, XVII 303, 321, &c.; round about, VII 83, &c.; round it, II 359; *ad aboute round*, all round about, XII a 79; (ii) *prep.* about, round, &c. (often following *n.* or *pron.*), I 54, II 274, 284, v 95, XIV b 68, &c.; *on*, XI b 236; *in*, XI b 293, 296; *about ad.* in all directions, II 387; *aboute with þe to (en-lynde)*, XVI 7. [OE. *anbutan*, *abutan*.]
- Abrod**, *adv.* out wide, XII a 176. [OE. *on + drād*.]
- Abuf**. See *Abone*.
- Abugge**, *v.* to pay for (*it*), VIII a 73, 119. [OE. *abuggan*.] See *Bigge*.
- Ac**, *conj.* but, II 56, III 24, VIII 67, &c. [OE. *ac*.]
- Acheue**, *v.* achieve, VI 115. [OFr. *acheuer*.] See *Chese*.

GLOSSARY

- Accordingly, adv.** accordingly, IV *b* 33. [From pres. p. of *Acorde*.]
- Acord(s), Accord, n.** agreement, VI 149, XI *a* 32; concurrence, united will, XVII 30; *made acorde of care and me*, associated me with, caused me to know, care, VI 11. [OFr. *acord(s)*.]
- Acorde(n), v. trans.** to reconcile, V 337; *to acorde me with*, to associate myself with, V 313; *butr. agree*, XI *b* 118, XII *b* 145, XIII *b* 52. [OFr. *acorder*.] *See* Corden.
- Accountes, n. pl.** settlement of accounts, VIII *a* 83. [OFr. *acout, acunt*.]
- Acorda.** *See* Axe(n).
- Actif, Actyf, adv.** active, VIII *a* 145, XI *b* 74, 101. [OFr. *actif*.]
- Aday, adv.** in *dyne aday*, est at (mid-day) meal, VIII *a* 303. [OE. or *daȝe*, by *day*.]
- Ademand, n.** loadstone (magnetic iron ore), IX 123, 125, &c. [OFr. *adema'nt*; *nt*, L. *adamantem* (acc.), properly 'diamond'. The application to 'loadstone' was due to false association with L. *ad-amra*. The mediaeval 'adamant' in consequence often combined the properties of diamond and loadstone.] *See* Diamond.
- Admytte, v.** to admit XVII 52; [L. *admittere*.]
- Adoun, Adown, adv.** down, II 223, 435, VIII *a* 31, &c. [OE. *af-dune, adūne*.] *See* Down(e).
- Adrad, pp.** afraid, XII *b* 133;
- Adrad, XVII 201.** [OE. *af-drādū, afdrādū*, pp.] *See* Dred(e).
- Adreynt, pp.** drowned, II 397. [OE. *ā-dreacan*, pp. *ā-draect*.]
- Adressed, pp.**; *therupon him hath adressed*, has fastened himself to it, XII *b* 83. *See* Dresse. [OFr. *adresser*.]
- Adversouris, n. pl.** adversaries, X 144. [OFr. *adversier* with alteration of suffix.]
- Afelde, adv.** to the fields, VIII *a* 136, 183. [OE. *afelda*.] *See* Feld(e).
- Afeld(e), adv.** afraid, I 4, 67, 263, VIII *a* 116, XVII 216, &c. [OE. *ā-fērad*.] *See* Ferde.
- Affalte, v.** train, tame, VIII *a* 33 (note). [OFr. *afalt(e), ar*.]
- Affecyon, n.** affection, (worldly) desire, IV *b* 52, 71. [L. *affection-em* through OFr.]
- Affirme, v.** affirm, IX 77, XI *a* 50; confirm, IX 305. [OFr. *afformer*.]
- Affa, v.** to have (faith in), XVI 29. [OFr. *affer*.]
- Affores (thaw), pres. pl. (cgl.)** endeavour, IV *b* 20. [OFr. *afforcer*.]
- Affray, n. fest.** XIII *a* 143. [OFr. *af'fray*.]
- Afine, adv.** to the end, II 277. [OFr. *afin*.]
- Afore, adv.** beforehand, XVII 164. [OE. *af-feran*.]
- Aforth, v.** to afford, VIII *a* 192. [OE. (late) *gefordian*, to manage.]
- Afright, pp.** *Not afright*, undeterred, XVII 141. [OE. *ā-fyrht*.]
- After (-re, -re, -re), adv.** after, behind, II 378, VII 24, XVI 376, &c.; afterwards, then, VII 46, VIII *a* 5, &c.; *be the which . . . after*, in accordance with which (mixed Fr. and E. constr.), IX 301; *pres. after*, next to, I 215, XI *b* 27, &c.; according to, IX 120, 201, XI *b* 180, &c.; for (after *deince, and*, &c.), VII 20, VIII *a* 291, XV *b* 5, XVI 342, &c.; *conf. after*, XVII 148. *After þan*, afterwards, II 597. [OE. *after*; *after þām*.]
- Afterward, Afterward(e), &c.** *adv.* afterwards, II 164, IV *b* 59, XI *b* 147, &c.; *Esforward*, III 16, 35, 38, 48. [OE. *afterward* (Kl. *after*-).]
- Agayn(e), Agane, adv.** back, again, IV *b* 83, XVI 11, XVII 180, 479, &c. *See* Agayn.
- Agaynes, prep.** against, IV *b* 18, 19. [Proc. + adv. *-es*.] *See* Agaynes.

GLOSSARY

Agaynste, *prep.* against, XVI 280; *to take a*, to gaze on, XVI 92. [Extended from *prec.*]
Agast, *pp.* afraid, XIV c 51, XVII 184, 297; astonished, XVII 449. [*a-* + OE. *gasted*, afflicted.] See *Gastli*.
Age, *n.* age, time of life, VI 52, XII *introd.*; mature age, IX 22; old age, VII 6, XIV c 206, &c. [OFr. *age*.]
Age, *pp.* gone by, XII a 34. [OE. *ā-gān*.]
Agreto, *adv.* collectively, as a body, VI 100. [OE. *ag* + *grēat*.]
Agreued (*for*), *pp.* weighed down (with), V 302; annoyed (by), 188. [OFr. *agreuer*.]
Aȝain, *adv.* again, back, V 22, 157, 332; Aȝo, XIII a 8; Aȝein, Aȝyn, I 230, VIII a 44, XII a 28, &c.; Aȝen, IX 132; Oȝain, II 141, 161. [OE. *angān*, *angere*.]
Aȝyn, Aȝen, Aȝein, Aȝe, Oȝain, *prep.* against, III 58, V 48, IX 19; towards (of time), II 497, XI 6 18. [As *prec.*] See *Aȝyn*.
Aȝynes, *prep.* against, contrary to, VIII a 309, 311, 315; Aȝynen, XIII 6 17; Aȝons, I 260, 264, VIII 6 78; Aȝonna, XI a 29. [*Prep.* + *adv.* -*es*.] See *Aȝynnes*.
Aȝust, *prep.* against, IX 92, 312, XI 6 43, 46, 97. [Extended from *prec.*] See *Aȝynste*.
Aȝoz, *adv.* without fear, V 267. [ON. *agi* + OE. *āsc*.] See *Awe*.
A-hungryn, *adv.* hungry, XVII 499. [*a-* + OE. *hungrig*.]
Al, **Al**, *adv.* always, ever, IV a 1, 14, VII 18, X 61, XV a 10, 17, &c.; *for ay*, for ever, XVII 26. [ON. *al*.]
Al, *n.* fear, in *for lene or ay*, in any event, II 571. [OE. *ege*.]
Aye. See *Aȝyn*.
Ayenyte, *n.* remorse. See III *introd.* [OE. *angān* + *āte*.]
Ayere, **Aire**, *n.* air, IV 6 5, VII 107, 110. [OFr. *air*.]
Aire, *n.* hair, VIII 6 62. [OFr. (*h*)*air*.]

Ays. See *Ese*.
Aithor, **Ayper**, **Athir**, **Eyper**, *adv.* and *pron.* both, VII 65; *either*, V 113; *ayfor ayfor*, each other, XIII 6 57; *athir athir in*, one in the other, X 22. [OE. *ayfor*, both; *ā(w)for*, *either*.] See *Euper*.
Ayther, **Aper**, *conj.* or, VI 131; *ayther . . . or*, *either . . . or*, XVII 477. [As *prec.*] See *Or*²; *Oper*, *conj.*
Aywhere, *adv.* on all sides, V 113. [OE. *ayhwere*.]
Aketh, *pres. pl.* ache, VIII a 263 (see *Wambe*). [OE. *akan*.]
Akyng, *n.* aching, XI 6 126.
Al, *adv.* all, I 120, II 114, III 6, &c.; *Alle*, I 10, &c.; *al*, III 55, &c.; *al(l)a* (*al*), a whole, VII 185, VIII a 253, XIII a 32, 44, XIV c 41; *al(l)e maner(e)*, all kinds of, II 589, XI a 12 (cf. *Alkyn*); *al(l)e þing(e)*, see *þing*; *all way*, *now*, see *Alway*, *Way*; *all it* (*þei, we*), all of it (them, us), XV p 16, IX 104, XVII 456, &c.; *here name of alle*, the names of them all, I 37; *of al and sum*, in general and particular, in full, VI 124; *as is all*, XVI 303, &c.; every one (with *ig.* verb), VI 87. [OE. *al(l)*.] See *Algate*, *Alkyn*, *Alsaune*, &c.
Al, **All(e)**, *adv.* entirely, quite, very, I 108, II 76, V 304, VIII a 138, &c.; in comb. with *To-* II 81, 106, 162, IV a 78, VII 147; with *For*, II 398, XV c 29. *Al away*, quite away, IV a 72; *al one*, alone, V 87, XII a 121, 6 15; *al een*, all one (and the same thing), XI a 41; *al to*, up to (the number of), III 26; *all be (were)* *it þat*, although, IX 50, 171, 302, 312; *all þe*, although, XVII 231. [OE. *al(l)*.]
Al, **All(e)**, *n.* all, everything, III 43, 51, &c.; *about al*, in all directions, II 387; *ouer al*, everywhere, II 208 (OE. *ofer all*). [OE. *al(l)*.]
Aldai, **Al day**, *adv.* all day, V