

Middle English Vocabulary

Basic Middle English Word List for London Dialect

Since there is no standardized spelling in the fourteenth century, be alert for words that look like one thing but mean another. Also watch for metathesis (inverted letters) such as spelling the word "Bird" as "Brid." A final warning: quoting sources written in Middle English will annoy your computer's spell-check. Allow extra time for proof-reading.

- ! **al, al be, al be that:** although, even if
- ! **als, also:** also, as
- ! **anon:** at once, immediately
- ! **aventure:** chance
- ! **bet:** better
- ! **but, but if:** unless
- ! **can, kan, conne, con, konne:** to be able, to know, to know how; to learn, to understand.
- ! **cas, caas:** case, situation, event; chance, accident; fate
- ! **certes:** certainly
- ! **clepe(n):** call, name, mention
- ! **conseil:** council; to counsel or advise; secret(s), confidence(s)
- ! **corage:** heart; spirit; courage; desire
- ! **curious:** careful, diligent; skillful; eager; skillfully made
- ! **daunger:** lordship, power, control; ungraciousness, disdain
- ! **degree:** rank, status, social condition
- ! **del, deel:** bit, part
- ! **deme, deeme:** judge, decide; suppose (Mn. E. "deem")
- ! **do, doon:** to do, cause. doon make: cause to be made
- ! **drede:** doubt "it is no drede" (there is no doubt).
- ! **eek, eke:** also
- ! **er, ere:** before
- ! **estaat:** state, condition; rank, standing
- ! **everich:** every; each
- ! **eyen, eien, yen:** eyes (see also "ye" for the singular)
- ! **falle:** fall; befall, happen
- ! **fare:** fare, go; act, behave
- ! **fayne:** glad; as an adverb, gladly, willingly, eagerly
- ! **for:** because (of); for; in order that
- ! **foul:** disagreeable; evil; miserable
- ! **fre, free:** noble, gracious, generous; free
- ! **fro:** from (as in "to and fro")
- ! **gan, gan to:** did (past tense aux. verb); began to
- ! **gentillesse:** refined character, high breeding, nobility, courtesy

! **go, goon**: to walk, to go
! **grace**: a favor; grace; mercy, pardon; honor, distinction
! **gyse**: guise; manner, way, fashion, custom
! **han**: have (contracted form of Old and Middle English "haven")
! **hap**: chance, luck; good fortune; occurrence (as in Mn. English "happenstance")
! **hatan**: called, named; ordered; hated
! **hende**: clever, noble, courteous (Mn. English "handy")
! **hente(n)**: to seize, grasp
! **highte**: is called, is named; was called, was named
! **ilke**: same
! **intil**: unto; as far as
! **kinde**: nature, race, stock, species, sort; natural disposition
! **koude**: knew; knew how to; could
! **lat**: let
! **leef, lief, leve**: dear, beloved; pleasant, agreeable
! **lewed**: ignorant, unlearned; coarse, rude; wicked
! **like(n), lyke(n)**: to like, enjoy (often in impers. constructions; e.g., me liketh: it pleases me).
! **list, lest**: to please (often occurs in impers. constructions; e.g., "me list," it pleases me)
! **lite, lyte**: little
! **lust**: pleasure; desire
! **maistry**: domination, mastery
! **micel, michel, mickel**: much, many
! **mo**: more
! **moot, moote**: may, must ought to
o **so moot I, also moot I, ever moot I**: as I hope
o **also so moote I thee**: as I hope to prosper
! **most, moste**: must; most
! **mowe**: may (pres. plural of mowen)
! **namely**: especially
! **nas**: was not (contraction of ne was.)
! **nat**: not
! **ne**: not, nor
! **nerre**: were not (contraction of ne were)
! **niste**: knew not (contraction of ne wiste)
! **nolde**: would not (contraction of ne wolde)
! **not, noot**: knows not (contraction of ne woot)
! **nyce**: ignorant, foolish, weak; wanton; precise, scrupulous

! **nys, nis**: is not (contraction of ne is)
! **nyste**: knew not, did not know (contraction of ne wiste)
! **paraventure**: perhaps
! **povre**: poor (like French pauvre)
! **quit, quite**: (infinitive) to reciprocate, repay; (past part.) repaid
! **quod**: said
! **rede, reede**: advice, counsel; to advise, to counsel. (Cf. Old English raed)
! **sen, syn**: since
! **sely**: blessed, innocent; good; kind; happy; poor; wretched; hapless (Cf. Mn. Irish seelie, Mn. English silly)
! **sentence**: opinion, sentiments; moral meaning, significance
! **siker**: certain, sure, true
! **sikerly**: certainly, surely, truly
! **sit**: sits (contraction of sitteth)
! **sith, sithen**: since (not to be confused with Darth Vader's domain)
! **solas**: comfort, solace; amusement, entertainment; pleasure
! **solempne**: formal; solemn, serious; ceremonious; festive; merry
! **sore, soore**: bitterly, sorely
! **sooth, sothe**: truth (Mn. English "Soothsayer")
! **soothfastnesse**: truth; truthfulness
! **stint, stente, stynthe**: cease, stop; restrain
! **sterste**: jump, leap, spring, move suddenly (like Mn. English "start," and "startle.")
! **sweven**: a dream, a nocturnal vision
! **swich**: such
! **thee, then**: to prosper (infinitive)
! **ther, there**: there; where
! **thilke**: the same (contraction of "the ilke")
! **tho**: then
! **trowe(n)**: to believe
! **unnethe**: scarcely, hardly; with difficulty
! **verray**: true (Cf. Mn. French "Vrai" and Mn. English "very")
! **war**: aware; wary; prudent
! **wende(n)**: to go, pass, walk (infinitive).
! **wende**: thought, supposed (past tense Old English wenan, Mn. English "ween")
! **whilom**: once, once upon a time; formerly
! **wight**: a person; a creature
! **wiste**: knew
! **wol**: will

- ! **wood**: mad, crazy; madly
- ! **woot**: knows (from "wit")
- ! **wyse**: wise; way, manner
- ! **y-**: as a verb prefix, it indicates the past participle.
- ! **yaf**: gave
- ! **ye, ey, yghe**: eye
- ! **yep**: new; keen; fresh (primarily Northumbrian)
- ! **yif**: if; give
- ! **ywis**: certainly, surely

*The choice of words for this list originates in materials provided by Professors Martha Bayless and James Boren at the University of Oregon English Department, and by Professor Shearle Furnish of West Texas A& M University.

