



DC English IV

World/British Literature

Teacher: Mr. Smith, room 1217

contact information

e: davidsmith@tomballisd.net

w: davidglensmith.com/Tomball

t: @prufrocksblues

i: [mr_smith_eng2332](#)

Anglo-Saxon Literature

Specifically, for the Anglo-Saxon culture, their writings developed from an ancient oral tradition of story-telling.

Random Poetic Conventions (mnemonic and literary devices)

aided memorization of long texts and complex plot-narratives.

Even in modern times, writers use these concepts.

Just as **diction** and **sentence syntax** are primarily used to influence mood,

accented syllable

alliteration

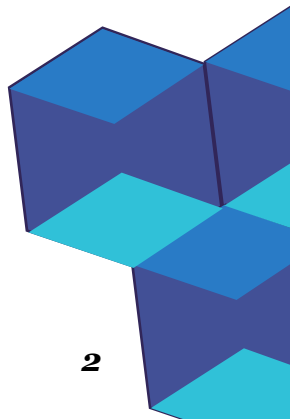
assonance

blank verse

cæsure

kenning

metaphor



Anglo-Saxon Literature

- **accented syllables:** based on a unit of four, every line contains beats for a sense of musical rhythm in the poem; nursery rhymes or jump rope rhymes are good examples in Modern English:

Jack and **Jill** went **up** a **hill** (7)

to **fetch** a **pail** of **water** (7)

Jack fell **down** and **broke** his **crown** (7)

and **Jill** came **tumbling** **after**. (7)

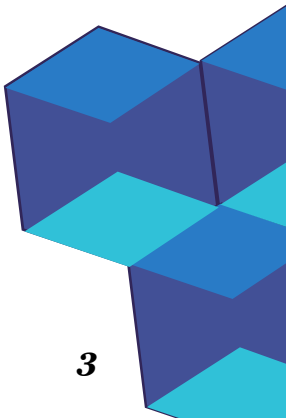
Peter, **Peter** **pumpkin** **eater** (8)

Had a **wife** and **couldn't** **keep** her (8)

Put her **in** a **pumpkin** **shell** (7)

And there **he** kept **her** very well (8)

> Syllable counts and particular rhythms may vary per line, per poem.



Anglo-Saxon Literature

- **assonance:** repetition of similar vowel sounds within a line of poetry;
this element can be used to indirectly control
 - > mood and atmosphere
 - > characterization
 - > theme

Edgar Allan Poe used this technique to control the sense of time in his Gothic **prose** writing. Long ‘o’ and ‘u’ vowels produce slower sounding words; shorter ‘i’ and ‘e’ sounds create quick, terse sounds: *bit, bet*.

Paired vowels control tempo as well: *beat, boot, bail*.

On a more advanced understanding of this device, strategic stressed syllables affect placement of these sounds within the verse.

Anglo-Saxon Literature

For example, from Seamus Heaney's *Beowulf*:

“In **o**ff the **mo**ors, **d**own **throu**gh the mist bands
G**o**d-cursed G**re**ndel came **gre**edily **lo**ping.
The **ba**ne of the **ra**ce of men **ro**amed **fo**rth
hunting for **a** **prey** in the high hall” (ll. 710-713).

Anglo-Saxon Literature

- **alliteration:** repetition of key sounds at the beginnings of words:
the **w**est **w**ind blows tonight **w**ildly

again from Heaney's *Beowulf*:

“Then out of the night / came the **sh**adow-**s**talker, **s**tealthy and **s**wift”
(ll. 703-704).

- **blank verse:** Unrhymed verse set in **iambic pentameter**; often used in plays and long narrative poems; suitable for chanting.

iambic: two counts per metric foot; pentameter: five feet per line

again, Heaney's version:

“Then down the brave man lay with his bolster
under his head and his whole company
of sea-rovers at rest beside him” (ll. 688-690).

Anglo-Saxon Literature

- **caesura:** a visual space in a line of poetry to represent a slight pause; these are strategic mnemonic devices which enable retention of the full poem for the poet-performer; usually placed in the third or fourth foot of a line—some modern poets still use this technique. Likewise, the rhythmic pause helps create a greater sense of unity within the work.

“In off the moors,
God-cursed Grendel
The bane of the race of men
hunting for a prey
down through the mist bands
came greedily loping.
roamed forth
in the high hall” (ll. 710-713).

In modern works, punctuation like commas or dashes, colons and semicolons reinforce these verbal pauses. In Modern English we tend to pause roughly after every fourth syllable.

Anglo-Saxon Literature

- **hemistitch:** a half-line of verse; what results when a cæsura is placed within a line; for spatial reasons, a double-line can be used as well to represent the division. An example from another Middle Ages poem,

Piers Plowman:

In a somer seson || Whan soft was the sonne,
I shope me in shroudes, || As I a shepe were,
In habite as an hermite || Unholy of workes,
Went wyde in this world || Wonderes to here.

- **kenning:** elaborate, decorative **epithets** or **metaphors** characterizing a specific person, place, object, or historical event: “whale-road” for the sea.