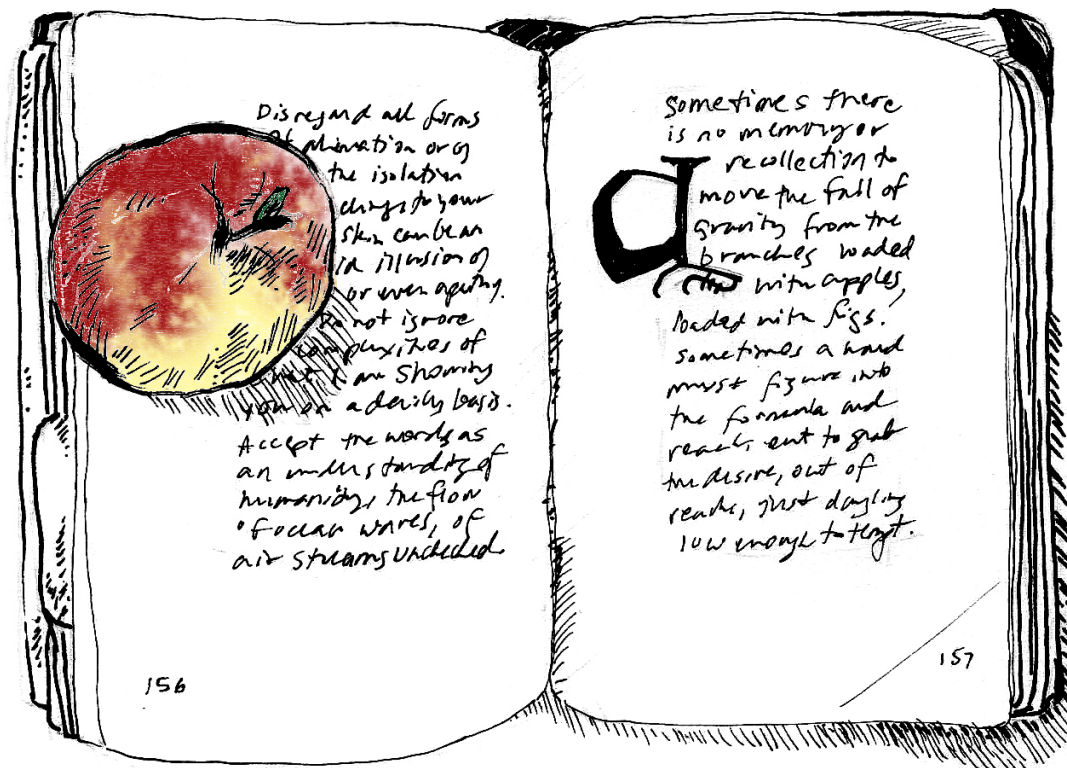


# Anglo-Saxon Short Poetry

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Disregard all forms  
of alienation or of  
the isolation  
things to your  
skin can bear  
in illusion of  
or even apathy.  
Do not ignore  
the fluxions of  
an showing  
in a devil's beard.  
Accept the words as  
an understanding of  
humanity, the flow  
of ocean waves, of  
air streams undecided.

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Sometimes there  
is no memory or  
recollection to  
move the fall of  
gravity from the  
branches waded  
with apples,  
loaded with figs.  
Sometimes a hand  
must figure into  
the formula and  
reach out to grab  
the desire, out of  
reach, just dangling  
low enough to tempt.

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# Anglo-Saxon Literature

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## Random Poetic Conventions Reviewed (*look for these attributes*)

- **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

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- **alliteration:** repetition of key sounds at the beginnings of words:  
the **w**est **w**ind blows tonight **w**ildly
- **blank verse:** Unrhymed verse set in **iambic pentameter**; often used in plays and long narrative poems; suitable for chanting. A classic example is from John Milton's epic poem *Paradise Lost*.

Of Mans / first Dis/obe/dience /and the / Fruit  
Of the / Forbid/den Tree, / whose mor/tal tast  
Brought Death into the World, and all our woe,  
With loss of Eden, till one great Man  
Restore us and regain the blissful Seat,  
Sing Heav'nly Muse

- > Notice the first two lines have been broken into units of feet:  
Iambic means two counts per foot; pentameter means five feet per line.

# Anglo-Saxon Literature

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- **cæsura:** a visual space in a line of poetry to represent a slight pause; these are strategic memory devices which enable retention of the full poem for the poet-performer; usually placed in the third or fourth foot of a line—the are rare in modern poetry
- **hemistich:** 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.

# *The Wanderer*

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**“The Wanderer” is an anonymous verse which dates from the second half of the Tenth Century.**

The dates regarding this work cause much discussion; a wide range of possibilities exist.

- The poem is related to you through an *apparent* third person narration which combines Christian and Pagan ideals, similar to the construction of the epic *Beowulf*. Some have argued this section is a personal experience related to the reader through a third person narration.
- Although this piece is shorter than the epic, “The Wanderer” does maintain non-rhyming lines and four beat per lines in the Old English as a proper Anglo-Saxon verse.
- One of the main themes it contains deals with the dissolution of groups through the loss of a father-figure, a lord of the mead-hall.

# *The Wanderer*

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**The overall construction of the poem raises issues of intentions.**

Possibilities are similar to the *Beowulf* situation, regarding the authorship of the piece.

- Either a scribe recorded the poem and added an opening stanza and a closing moralizing stanza in order to create a stronger sense of Catholic values —*or*—
- the original piece was composed by an Anglo-Saxon, in a non-clerical role, who was very much aware of the shift between the two cultures —*or*—
- a monk composed the entire piece based on his private experiences with the Anglo-Saxon/Christian cultural merge.
- The *Longman Anthology* states that critics have agreed somewhat that the piece is authentically Christian, in a *literal* sense, rather than an *allegorical* sense.

# The Wanderer

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**Partly, the questions of authorship and intention are raised by the rather confusing narrative strategy.**

The opening stanza and the closing stanza have an overt Catholic message which does not transition very effectively into the main pagan section of the work.

- The third person narrator is not shown participating in the action, but merely reporting the eye-witness accounts of a first person individual.
- Critics of course like to argue whether the opening narration and the main story are the *same* person or two different individuals.
- The main story is told to you by a character isolated from any type of society; considering the views expressed in *Beowulf*, a “lone-wolf” individual is not a revered icon for the Norse, the Celts, or the Anglo-Saxons. In a society very much wrapped in a tribal-network, even mere clusters of families become paramount for survival in the harsh wilderness. This man has none.
- He provokes the image of heavy melancholy and eternal loneliness: (*see lines 9-11*).

# *The Wanderer*

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**Looking at the personal narrative, it is divided into two parts with two distinct themes.**

*Part one* discusses current history, the series of events which led to the isolation.

- He does acknowledge fate (wyrd) controls all.
- The reader learns the speaker's "gold-friend" (l 22) has died years ago.
- Without male companionship, a warrior is frozen or as a ship trapped in the frozen sea.
- This primarily concerns itself with lamentation of the loss of a loved leader, a well-respected father-figure.
- The fate of an individual is discussed.



# *The Wanderer*

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*Part two* starts at line 62, discussing with metaphor how the world is temporal.

- The speaker begins relating advice or series of sayings related to the secondary theme.
- One gains the sense that the speaker is a ghost or a faded memory wandering the ruins of a failed society as a whole.
- The fate of society or a community is discussed here. The wandering speaker becomes an example of an every-man, a possibility for loss.

# *The Wanderer*

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**The setting is of course very strategic and well-crafted.**

Both parts discuss winter landscapes and cold environments in the wilderness.

*(See lines 101-105 for example.)*

- The world is shown in constant strife of wintery weather.
- In addition, the environment wins a horrific battle and chains victims; the metaphor is inclusive of the whole Earth: “Storms [...] fetter the world” (l 102).
- Nature is shown as a cruel figure, uncaring for one’s security; unpredictable. Nature is transformed to an enemy of Humankind.