Worksheet 8.2 ME Morphology and Syntax

1. Interrogative and Relative Pronouns

Notice how the italicized pronouns are used in the following quotations from Chaucer.





1. What pronouns, simple and compound, does ME use as:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Interrogatives  (asking questions) | who (1)  to whom (5)  whos (8)  what (11)  which (15) |
| Indefinite relatives (introducing noun clauses) | who (2)  who so (3)  who that (4)  whos that (10)  what (11)  what so (13)  what that (14)  which (16)  which that 17)  that (18)  that (19)  that (20) |
| Relatives (introducing adjective clauses) | whom (6)  whom that (7)  whos (9)  whan (12) |

1. Describe one difference between ME and PDE in their use of *which*.

Which can be used in a question or a statement in ME. In PDE which is most commonly used in question.

1. Describe three differences between ME and PDE in their use of *that*.
2. In present day English that can be used as a conjunction
3. It can be used as a relative pronoun in present day English meaning it can refer to both people and things.
4. That can also be used an exclamation in present day English.
5. Word Order

Although the word order of Middle English is basically the same as that of the modern language, the sentences below exemplify some minor differences. The first five, which are from the *Peterborough Chronicle,* were written in the first half of the twelfth century. The second five, from Chaucer's "Tale of Melibee," were written in the last half of the fourteenth century. For each sentence, describe how the syntax differs from present-day use. Start with the word order and then the phrase level structures.

|  |
| --- |
|  |
| VSO; Definite article *se* before the royal title *kyng Heanri*. |
|  |
| SVO |
|  |
| VSO |
|  |
| SVO |
|  |
| OSV |
|  |
| SVO |
|  |
| SVO |
|  |
| SVO |
|  |
| OSV |
|  |
| VSO |

1. A Closer Look at an ME Text

Conduct a word-to-word examination of the OE and ME texts below and answer the questions on the next page.





The most obvious difference between the two is in vocabulary. In some cases, one English word is simply replaced with another English word (e.g. *æcere – feld* in verse 1). In other cases, a French borrowing has replaced and English word (e.g. *feonda > enemy* in verse 2). The words below are from the OE text. Find the correspondent words from the ME text.

wyrt > erbe (3)

wæstm > made

ætiewde > apperiden

ϸeowas > camen

unhold mann > an enemy

lætap > suffre

When we look at the grammar, we see a number of instances in which an inflectional form in the OE is replaced by a periphrasic from in ME:

heofona rice > the kingdom of heuenes (1)

ϸæm menn gelic > the strong man

oferseow > to over sow

onmiddan ϸæm hwæt >amid the what

weox >to grow

ϸæs hlafordes ϸoewas >the lord

seowe >to sow

dyde >did

awyrtwalien >to root out

secge >warrior

ϸæm ripertum >the ripe

weaxan >to grow

The inflectional demonstrative of OE is replaced with the definite article *the*. Find the OE inflectional demonstrative that match *the* in the ME text.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| OE Inflectional Demonstrative | ME definite article (Verse number) |
| seo | the (3) |
| se | the (3) |
| þa | the (9) |
| þæm | the (13) |
| þone | the (14) |

Similarly, the relative pronoun *ϸe* (1) gives way to *that* (1), still used today. We see leveling and loss of inflectional endings due to phonological reduction and the working of analogy. Find the ME words that match the OE words listed below:

heofone > heuenes (1)

slepon (strong verb) > slepten

cwædon >seiden

ϸinum >thi

cwædon > seiden

timan >tyme

lætap >suffre

minum >my

gadriap >gidere

bindaϸ >bynde

We also find changes in syntax, particularly word order.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| OE sentence | ME sentence |
|  | His enemy cam (SV) |
|  | thane the taris VO |
|  | thane the taris apperiden SV |
|  | the hosebonde man camen SV |
|  | and he seide to hem SVO |
|  | an enemy hath do this thing SVO |
|  | and the seruauntis seiden to him SVO |
|  | and he seide SV |
|  | lest perauenture ge in gaderynge SVO |
|  | the whete bi the roote SVO |

Finally, we also see changes in the way in which negative phrases and questions are constructed:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| OE Structure | ME Structure |
| *ne seowe* | not sowen |
| *ne seowe ƥu?* (VS) | thou not sowen |