

## First Comprehensive Reads

First readers will review the edition for content and scholarship, completeness, appropriate audience, and basic formatting. The goal of this read is to assess the content quality of the edition, ensure it meets the needs of its student audience, enforce basic tenets of the Style Guide, and make suggestions for major revisions. Parts of this read overlap with that of the external reviewer (though less specialized) and with fundamental Style Guide conformity that will be reinforced later in later steps. Such overlap should catch all major concerns in the edition.

Readers should use the checklist to guide them. Answer all its questions, noting major comments, corrections, and suggested additions. More detailed comments should be made in the edition itself, by adding marginal comments. If there's more than one reviewer, they should comment on the same documents to avoid duplicating work.

Below are points now mostly included in the linked checklist.

### INTRODUCTION:

Does the introduction address all of the following? Identify any missing pieces:

- Content: brief synopsis of text(s), authorship, date of publication
- Language and Structure: language/dialect, meter and rhyme scheme (if applicable)
- Context: source texts, historical/cultural context, and significance; optional: thematic material
- Manuscript History: major MS and/or early print witnesses, and modern editions
- Description of base MS: size, binding, collation, hand, scribe(s) (if known), any relevant signatures and other identifying marks.
  - If the copytext is an early print edition: printer, typeface, date of publication, and any running titles/headers
- Editorial Practice: rationale for emendation, large-scale text divisions, extra-textual elements, translation philosophy (if applicable)

Does it cite relevant scholarship? Any major scholarship missing? It may include a Further Reading Bibliography, but not required

Check citations:

- Are there any quotations, paraphrases, or specific facts that should be cited but are not?
- Are there any citations that should be footnoted but are parenthetical instead? If so, insert a comment alerting the Managing Editor. NB: the only exception is the Text itself; those citations should be parenthetical.
- For the Managing Editor only: For any cross-references (citations of other places within the same volume), turn track changes off and then replace the reference in all caps (i.e., SEE), adding “p./pp.,” “line(s),” or “n.” [for note] as appropriate. This will help the Managing Editor spot all the cross-references and add in the correct page/note numbers

once pagination is set after Second Read. Remember to turn track changes on again afterwards!

- NB: You don't need to look at footnoted citations, other than for the two questions above. Staff will thoroughly confirm citations in the later Bib Check stage.

Does the structure of the intro make sense? Is there a logical progression from section to section?

Is the prose written in a formal academic register? Idiomatic American English (no Britishisms)? Acceptable in spelling and grammar?

**TEXT:** Read the Text side-by-side with the E-Notes.

For Drama texts, does the text open with a Character List? Do all speakers in the Text appear in the Character List? Check that characters are listed in order of appearance; for cycle plays, each individual play should start with a Character List.

Does the transcription follow METS standardization? Frequent mistakes:

- Uses ME characters like þ or ȝ, instead of their modern equivalents
- Uses *ff* to indicate capital *F*, instead of just *F*
- Lack of *u/v* and *i/j* regularization
- Fails to distinguish between *the* vs. *thee*, *of* vs. *off*
- Lack of acute-accented final e for syllabic e's (*é*)
- Inconsistent capitalization of religious terms
- Roman numerals: 1-99 should be spelled out in ME; 100+ should be transcribed but must be glossed

Check glossing:

- Are the glosses accurate? Spot-check against the *MED*:  
<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary>. If not, add a comment and (where necessary) include the correct MED citation.
- Do glosses appear sufficiently frequently for student readers who may be encountering ME for the first time? Suggest additional glosses by adding comments in the Text.
- Do glosses make sensible semantic units? I.e., if only parts of a phrase are glossed, recommend glossing the whole phrase (this is esp. important for prose texts, where we have limited room for glosses)
  - Glossing should follow the syntax of the ME, even complicated syntax, as much as is reasonable. Try to resist rearranging the order of phrases within a sentence. Otherwise it makes it difficult for staff to place gloss indicators for online export
  - If the VE gives a more idiomatic modern English gloss that doesn't gloss the ME literally, we'd prefer for them to gloss the whole line and footnote it

- Gloss whole place names. Ex: *Flume Jordan* should be glossed “River Jordan,” not just “River”
- Names with epithets, if glossed, need to be glossed in full
- For prose Texts, check that catchphrases in footnotes are correct. NB: only multi-word ME phrases will need catchphrases in the footnote; single word glosses shouldn’t include a catchword.

If there are lost, damaged, or otherwise missing lines, are they indicated with dotted lines? Do they include a (see t-note) tag in the glosses? Does the cited T-Note explain why the passage is compromised?

- For prose Texts, check that any (see note) or (see t-note) tags appear at the end of footnoted glosses. They should NOT appear in the main text.

Does the Text flow in roughly coherent sentences? Check that the Text’s grammar and punctuation make sense to a modern audience.

For Managing Editor only: Do any non-English languages appear in the Text? If so, italicize all instances. Then, create a new Word doc in the Production Files folder titled “Notes for Formatter” and list there the specific location of each instance and what language it is. If you’re unsure of the language, check the E-Notes; if those don’t specify, insert a question for the VE.

- Does any French appear in what is otherwise a non-French Text? If so, ask the VE whether each instance is Old French (ca. 842-ca. 1400), Middle French (ca. 1400-1600), or Anglo-Norman. Once this is clarified, add to the “Notes for Formatter” the specific locations of each instance of French and which type of French it is.

If you believe certain words or passages need new explanatory notes, add comments in the Text. For types of METS E-Notes, see **Explanatory Notes** below.

Are (see note) tags minimal? They should appear only if the reader would not understand the literal meaning of the text without the note.

## **EXPLANATORY NOTES:**

Check that E-Notes address the following content. If you’d like to suggest any additional notes in these categories, add comments in the E-Notes document.

- Specialized ME terminology (e.g., chivalric, liturgical, legal contexts), usually citing the *MED*
- Proverbs or proverbial phrases, citing Whiting.
- References to other texts or figures (Classical, Scriptural, historical), including source texts

- References to the Middle English literary canon (e.g., Chaucer, Gower, Langland, Malory, *Gawain*-poet)
- Genre conventions – verbal tags, or tropes like the disguised knight or the Nine Worthies
- Place names, sometimes identifying their modern analogues
- Thematic concerns of the text, at the editor's discretion

In Prose texts especially, check that any headings follow house style: they should indicate Book #, Chapter #, Paragraph #, as needed with these words fully spelled out. Arabic (not Roman) numbers should be used.

Do the notes accommodate student audiences who may not have medievalist specialist knowledge? This may mean including or adding notes for “basics” like chivalric/feudal terminology, lesser-known religious figures, theological concepts, liturgical hours, racial terms, etc.

Do the notes cite relevant scholarship? Are there items left uncited that should be cited?

For the Managing Editor only: For any cross-references (citations of other places within the same volume), turn track changes off and then replace the reference in all caps, adding “p./pp.,” “line(s),” or “n.” [for note] as appropriate. This will help the Managing Editor spot all the cross-references and add in the correct page/note numbers once pagination is set after Second Read. Remember to turn track changes on again afterwards!

#### **TEXTUAL NOTES:**

In Prose texts especially, check that any headings follow house style: they should indicate Book #, Chapter #, Paragraph #, as needed with these words fully spelled out. Arabic (not Roman) numbers should be used.

For the Managing Editor only: For any cross-references (citations of other places within the same volume), turn track changes off and then replace the reference in all caps, adding “p./pp.,” “line(s),” or “n.” [for note] as appropriate. This will help the Managing Editor spot all the cross-references and add in the correct page/note numbers once pagination is set after Second Read. Remember to turn track changes on again afterwards!

#### **BIBLIOGRAPHY:**

Skim through the entries under the Bibliography's three sections and make sure that the correct kinds of sources appear under each. Move them if they're in the wrong section. In general:

- **Manuscripts & Documents** should include any documents with shelfmarks -- mostly manuscripts and early print editions, but also historical documents like the Rolls Series. If a textual witness is available online, include the URL in the bib entry. See [Style Guide](#), “A manuscript”.

- **Primary Sources** should include all literary texts/editions, especially medieval, scriptural, and Classical; facsimiles of MSS; and historical documents like state records or registers, parliamentary rolls, calendars, royal letters, and treasury accounts.
- **Secondary Sources** should include works of scholarship like monographs, collections of essays, journal articles, as well as reference sources like dictionaries, encyclopedias, databases, annotated bibliographies, and catalogs.

#### **GLOSSARY:**

Spot check that definitions match in-text glosses. To find a word in the Text, type Ctrl+F and type the word into the search box.

Spot check entries for accuracy of parts of speech. If needed, consult the *MED*:

<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary>

#### **ADDITIONAL BACK MATTER:**

Read through headnotes for clarity and correctness, making sure that formatting like italics is applied where necessary.

Spot check that references to the Text(s) are accurate. A more complete check will occur in the Glossary/Index check later.

If there are additional citations, check if they appear in the Bibliography. If not, insert a comment telling the VE to do so. You'll also need to alert the bib checker to confirm these citations – open the “Notes for Formatter” document and add a section for the bib checker. Make sure to note which section and page the citation appears on.