

Middle English

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Chapter 1

Corpus distributed in class

The primary course book will be "an introduction to middle English".

Middle English (defined as the period between the Norman conquest and the introduction of the printing press) is handed down to us entirely in hand-written manuscript of which several copies tend to exist.

Hunter.uma.es

The Hengwrt is the oldest preserved manuscript of the Canterbury tales¹. The manuscript is written in *Gothic Cursiva Anglicana Formata*. This script is part of the Gothic family (the exclusive family after the Norman conquest). Of this family there are two types, one of which is *Anglicana*. The script is written cursively though adapted for literature (though separation of the letters) (indicated by the *Formata* in the script name).

Common in old manuscripts is the concept of biting, which is where the two letters share a side, such as in æ.

Modern elements of English absent from Middle English include the term "who" as a relative pronoun, being substituted instead by "that". Similarly, do-support for verbs has not yet come into being.

¹Known in old manuscripts as "The book of the tales of Canterbury"