

## Antwoorden bij de opdrachten Middle Ages (Engelstalige versie)

### Beda: Specimen answers

- 1 a He constantly praises Oswald: he describes him as a 'most Christian king' and draws attention to his generosity to the poor and the sick. Also, the heathen Britons and the relapsed English kings are depicted as bad people who do not deserve to be referred to in the same breath as the Christian kings and who should even be erased from history.
- b Examples of passages that depict Oswald as a good king and a good Christian:  
'Oswald gained from the one God who made heaven and earth greater earthly realms than any of his ancestors had possessed.'  
and 'Though he wielded supreme power over the whole land, he was always wonderfully humble, kind, and generous to the poor and to strangers.'  
Bede's presents Oswald as a devout Christian whose good deeds and unshakable faith were such that God granted him a great kingdom.
- c Bede says that the miracles were proof of or possibly reward for Oswald's devotion and faith: 'His great faith in God and his devotion of heart were also made clear after his death by certain miracles.'
- 2 Oswald's mother Acha was the sister of King Edwin of the House of Deira; his father Æthelfrith was a member of the House of Bernicia. Oswald was therefore able to claim both thrones by birth and to unite the two kingdoms.

### Beowulf: Specimen answers

- 1 At this time, monks and others within the church were almost the only people who could read and write. When the poem was written, the Anglo-Saxons had been Christians for about a hundred years. What they wrote was naturally dominated by Christian thinking. Whoever wrote down or copied *Beowulf* adapted it by removing heathen elements and/or adding more contemporary elements.
- 2 Grendel is described as greedy, the curse of the human race, spurned, etc. etc. In addition, a lot of attention is paid to his rage and the demonic pleasure he takes in killing people.
- 'his rage boiled over, he ripped open / the mouth of the building, maddening for blood'
  - 'and his glee was demonic'
  - 'he would rip life from limb and devour them / feed on their flesh'
- 3 b. Wiglaf underlines Beowulf's generosity towards his retainers, in order to make the point that they did not repay their lord as they should have done. A sharp contrast is made: Beowulf was noble and generous to his followers, but they failed to show the loyalty to be expected of them.
- c. He accuses them of disloyalty and cowardice for failing to defend their king, which was the ultimate form of shameful behaviour in the Anglo-Saxon world. Abandoning one's lord in the heat of battle was the most despicable thing a warrior could do and liable to result in exile (see the answer to the next question).
- d. The cowardly warriors have to leave the country because, by Anglo-Saxon moral standards, they had committed a serious crime: they had shown themselves unworthy as warriors by running away at a critical moment. Such behaviour was particularly shameful, given how generously Beowulf

rewarded them. Wiglaf sums up the Anglo-Saxon ethic, that a real warrior would rather die than live in shame.

a. Heaney, himself a professional poet, presumably chose the verse form as a means of reproducing the 'feel' and 'mood' of the original. Note the alliteration in lines such as 'the mouth of the building, maddening for blood,/pacing the length of the patterned floor' and 'Wiglaf, son or Weohstan, spoke/disdainfully and in disappointment'.

b. Swanton probably wanted his translation to be as accessible as possible to modern readers. He commented as follows on the art of translation: 'Ultimately translation cannot reproduce, or even adequately reflect, the style of the original without departing from its substance to an unacceptable degree.'

c. Any well-argued personal opinion.

### **The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: specimen answers**

- 1
  - a. The account is concise, businesslike, objective, and even distant.
  - b. The Worcester passage is longer and more detailed. It does not limit itself to the bare facts, but is laced with matters of the author's opinion (all adversity is a consequence of human sin). The writer is full of praise for Abbott Leofric and blames the monastery's present plight on Leofric's successors. He even appeals to God to have pity on the monastery. Because of all the detail, the Worcester passage is in stark contrast to the briefer and apparently more objective entry in the *Peterborough Chronicle*.
- 2
  - a. Harold is referred to as 'our king' and 'king of the English'. Also, the writer recounts how Harold allowed Norman survivors to return home, thus portraying him as a man with a heart and a conscience (unlike William).
  - b. William is regarded as an invader: he attacks King Harold before the latter is able to assemble his forces and plunders parts of England that do not immediately bow to his rule. It is also pointed out how William levies high taxes and allows his deputies to oppress the English while he himself remains in France. The possibility that William might have won the battle and the English crown through his own qualities is not considered: his victory is presented as a punishment served on the English because of their sins.
  - c. The writer of the passage clearly did not support William. It is likely that this chronicle entry was penned shortly after the events described and that Worcester Abbey had suffered under the high taxes and strict rule of the new king.
- 3

Much of Peterborough Abbey was burnt down in about 1120. As a result, the *Chronicle* entries dealing with the period prior to 1120 had to be copied from other manuscripts and reflect these other sources. Another reason for the differences is that the Norman Conquest was already history for the writer of the *Peterborough Chronicle*: by 1120 people were used to Norman rule. So the writer may not have felt as resentful towards William as the writer of the *Worcester Chronicle*, and may simply have been recording events, without any inclination to pass judgement on them.
- 4

Any well-argued personal opinion.

### **Riddles: Specimen answers**

1. Cuckoo, pen (held by three fingers), horn.
2. Any creative answer.

### **King Horn: Specimen answers**

1. Passage 1: themes b and d.
2. Passage 2: themes a and c.
3. All the themes contribute to the complex storyline. Horn's disguise is essential: he has been banished from Westernesse and therefore must not be recognised. The main purpose of the various themes is to help build up tension. The reader wonders whether Rymenhild has realised that the fisherman is really Horn in disguise, and whether he will return in time from his revenge mission to save Rymenhild from the evil Fikenhild.
4. a. King Horn and the drinking horn (lines 1156, 1163/1164 and 1170)  
b. The double meaning of 'to fish': literally to catch fish and figuratively to try and find something out (lines 1147 and 1154).
5. To intimate his true identity to Rymenhild.
6. No. Rymenhild does not grasp Horn's hints.
7. Horn tells Rymenhild that he is dead.
8. Horn has already proved himself in Ireland, but there is still one thing more he must do: avenge the death of his father. This is a necessary step on the road to manhood, knighthood and happiness in love. The mission also introduces further tension, because, while Horn is away settling scores with the Saracens who killed his father, his future happiness is being threatened by the cunning Fikenhild.
9. Rymenhild is subordinate to Horn, reflecting the social position of women in the Middle Ages. Women were subordinate to men and the ideal woman was considered to be compliant and passive (compare *The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale*). In narrative terms, Rymenhild is also subordinate to Horn and especially to his journey to manhood: the story is ultimately about Horn, not Rymenhild.
10. a. Similarities: the situation. In fact, the ballad and the romance have only certain elements of the basic story in common.  
Stylistic differences: the ballad contains a lot of repetition and the question-and-answer game plays an important role. Also, the ballad gives no names, other than Horn's, while *King Horn* identifies almost every character by name.  
Differences in content: the ballad 'Hind Horn' lacks many of the intrigues, such as Horn's banishment and Fikenhild's treachery. Also, in 'Hind Horn', Horn's beloved immediately takes his hints and realises who he is. Overall, the story is 'coarser' than *King Horn*: Horn beds his beloved although she has just married another man.  
b. The main differences relate to the story being in different genres. Ballads are comparatively short and often have much simpler plots than romances. They were composed by and sung for ordinary

people, which perhaps explains the coarseness of the final stanza. The repetition and the question-and-answer game are typical of the ballad genre (see the chapter on that subject).

### **Sir Gawain: specimen answers**

First passage:

- 1 He is very chivalrous. In other words, he behaves exactly as one would expect of a knight: he is polite towards her, he flirts with her a little and he promises to serve her.
- 2 She leads the conversation, actively trying to seduce Gawain. However, she does not seem disappointed that he rejects her advances.
- 3 His quest matters more than anything else, as indicated by the passage '[he] had little love / To spare from his sorrowful quest, which he might not / forestall.' Furthermore, he has made a vow of chastity, which he is not prepared to break. It might also be that he doesn't dare accept the lady's advances, because of his agreement with the lord of the castle.
- 4 Any well-argued answer.
- 5
  - a line 3 snug/streams, while/walls  
line 4 coverlets/canopied  
line 5 drowsing/dimly  
line 6 small/sound  
line 8 lifts/little, corner/curtain  
line 10 lady/lovely/look  
line 11 draws/door  
line 13 sinks/soundlessly  
line 14 steps/steals  
line 15 brushes/back, curtain/cautiously/creeps
  - b Beowulf
  - c Like the closing scene of a soap opera, the final four lines leave the audience wondering what is going to happen in the next part.

Second passage:

- 6 At first, he is not very chivalrous: despite his magic belt, he is scared and he fails to keep the agreement, insofar as he flinches when the Green Knight swings his axe. Only once the belt has done its job does Gawain become talkative again. When it comes to light that the belt belongs to the Green Knight, Gawain recognises that he hasn't behaved nobly and regrets what he has done.
- 7 In both encounters, Gawain shows reluctance: first to be seduced by the beautiful lady, and later, to be slain by the Green Knight. In both cases, his reputation is consequently questioned and he is goaded for his reluctance: the lady challenges Gawain by referring to his reputation as a lover, while the Green Knight challenges him by drawing attention to his reputation as a knight.
- 8 It is his own belt. The Green Knight has set the whole thing up with the sole aim of testing Gawain.
- 9 Any well-argued answer.
- 10 In both romances, the story revolves around the central character reaching maturity by overcoming challenge and adversity. Magic also plays an important part in both stories. However, the stories are products of contrasting traditions: *King Horn* springs from the folk culture of the day, while *Sir*

*Gawain* is based on French Arthurian romances. There are also important differences in the style and length of the two poems.

- 11 The Green Knight says that he was bewitched by the famous witch Morgan le Fay. She wanted to know whether the reputation of Arthur's knights was deserved, and to frighten Guinevere by confronting her with the Green Knight. The Green Knight probably wanted to help Gawain by sending his wife to give him the magic belt. It is not clear whether the spell is broken once Gawain has passed the test.

### **The Fox and the Wolf: Specimen answers**

1. No pain or worries, plenty to eat and drink and no work, ever.
2.
  - a. He is greedy: because he is thirsty, he jumps into the bucket without thinking and consequently finds himself at the bottom of the well. Once there, however, he proves to be crafty. He is able to get out by lying and spinning yarns.
  - b. The wolf is greedy too, but also very gullible. He is willing to stake everything on Reynard's empty promises. He pays a high price for his foolishness, however.
3.
  - a. He has always been bad. He is responsible for the deaths of more than a thousand sheep and is cursed by the widows of the animals he has killed. He also suggests that he was unreasonably angry with Reynard (although in fact he had good reason to be).
  - b. Reynard had an affair with Ysengrim's wife.
  - c. At first he had been understandably angry with Reynard, but now, in his confession, he asks Reynard to forgive him for responding as he did, because he is so anxious to reach the 'paradise' at the bottom of the well. The irony is that Ysengrim is asking for forgiveness, when it was Reynard that sinned.
  - d. Reynard gets into the bucket at the bottom of the well and Ysengrim into the one at the top. The wolf is heavier than the fox, so the wolf goes down into the well and the fox is lifted up. The wolf only realises what is happening when it is too late. Ysengrim is left alone at the bottom of the well; from the wolf's 'confession', Reynard has learned a lot of things that show Ysengrim in a bad light and secured forgiveness for his affair with Ysengrim's wife.
4. Possible answers: don't be greedy, don't be taken in by smooth talk, don't believe everything people tell you, etc.
5. In both stories, a fool is taken in by the lies and empty promises of a cunning adversary. Nicholas in *The Miller's Tale* is like Reynard the fox, while the carpenter is like Ysengrim the wolf. Furthermore, both Nicholas and Reynard use things that are written in the Bible as part of their deceit. Nicholas tells the carpenter that a second Great Flood is coming (although the Bible says that there will not be one), while Reynard claims that paradise is at the bottom of the well (which isn't true either). The similarities can be explained by the fact that both stories are about the same personality types, such as the deceived husband (often an older, none-too-bright man) and the crafty deceiver. Also, both stories contain elements of the *fabliau* tradition. In the *Miller's Tale* these elements are central, but they are present in *The Fox and the Wolf* as well: Reynard has had an affair with Ysengrim's wife.

### **Internet assignment: specimen answers**

6. a. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm
- b. In both fables, the wolf is the victim of the sly fox. In the Grimms' tale, the foolish wolf is killed by an angry farmer, while the fox escapes.
- c. The English fable is in the form of a poem; the brothers Grimm told their story in prose.

### **Sir Patrick Spens: specimen answers**

1. a. It looks ahead to the shipwreck and the death of the crew.  
b. The eclipse of the moon in stanza 7.
2. Right. The person who sits at the king's right hand is the most important person at the table after the king.
3. Line 2. If the letter had not been so important, he would have left it to a clerk.
4. a. Sir Patrick Spens first began to smile, and then to cry.  
b. He smiled because he was honoured to receive a personal letter from the king. He then cried because the content of the letter made it clear that he should perform a disagreeable task.
5. The late autumn (or possibly the winter): there were heavy storms.
6. From stanza 6 it is apparent that Sir Patrick Spens is a good leader. Despite their fears (which Sir Patrick shares) the crew do as he recommends.
7. The eclipse of the moon. Seafaring people in particular believed that this was a bad omen for a journey.
8. The Scottish nobles were 'dandies' – superficial, fashion-conscious people – who didn't want to come on deck for fear of getting their shoes wet. They were not tough fighting types!
9. That their ship was wrecked.
10. The two stanzas share the same structure: the fine ladies of the Scottish court (the first two lines of each stanza) will never see their husbands again (second two lines).  
The striking stylistic device is the repetition of 'long' (it occurs four times) to emphasise the hopelessness of the situation.
11. The word 'good' is not used in the same way: in line 2 it means 'skilful' (able, experienced) and in the final stanza it means 'of high social class'.
12. The line can be explained in two ways:
  - a. Literally. The ship went down with Sir Patrick on the bridge to the end, while the scared nobles were below deck in their cabins. So, under water, Sir Patrick's body was higher than theirs; the nobles were beneath his feet.
  - b. Figuratively. Now that all are dead, the heroic figure of Sir Patrick Spens, who remained faithful and loyal throughout his life, is superior to the worthless nobles who considered themselves his social superiors.
13. Sir Patrick Spens was given a task that all the courtiers – and Sir Patrick himself (see stanza 5) – knew would end badly.
14.
  1. Simple story
  2. Simple language
  3. An unhappy ending (betrayal and death)

4. Superstition
  5. Repetition
  6. Story jumps from one image to another without explanation
  7. Four-line stanzas with an ABCB rhyming pattern
  8. Mainly iambic rhythm: 4-3-4-3.
15. 'O our Scots nobles were right loath/To wet their cork-heeled shoes': the nobles are described by reference to their expensive, fashionable clothing. They were mainly concerned about not getting wet and spoiling their expensive clothes. Their liking for ostentatious shows of wealth is also apparent from the lines: 'O long, long, may their ladies sit/With their fans in their hands' and 'O long, long, may their ladies stand/With their gold combs in their hair.' The message is that the costly possessions and arrogance of the nobles were no help to them: the lords drowned and their ladies were left alone. Wealth and status could not protect them from mortality and unhappiness. The assertion that they were more worried about their appearance than the impending disaster conveys a negative image of them.
  16. Sir Patrick is shown in a positive light. He fulfils his obligation, doing what is asked of him by the king even though he knows it will work out badly. He is therefore 'superior' to the wealthy lords and ladies.

### **Internet assignment: specimen answers**

17.
  - a. Bob Dylan
  - b. 1963
  - c. Both use a question-and-answer routine between a mother (father?) and son. Also, both have a tragic end. There is also a lot of repetition.
  - d. Bob Dylan's poem uses longer stanzas (9 to 10 lines). It also lacks the dispassionate tone of *Edward, Edward*: indeed, it is very critical of contemporary society!
  - e. After describing all manner of injustice in the early stanzas, in the final stanza Dylan starts talking about action. He is like a prophet going round warning everyone that there is great social unrest that is liable to come to a head.

### **Specimen answers Robin Hood**

1. Cattle
2. Deer
3. Sherwood Forest
4. 23
5. Stanza 25: 'I tell thee, good fellow, .....company'.
6. Three short trumpet blasts
7. He says that with the sheriff's money they can drink all day long.
8. He brought / he set
9. c
10. "He who laughs last laughs longest."

### **Internet assignments: specimen answers**

11.
  - a. Robin Hood in Tights
  - b. Mel Brooks

- c. It was a parody.
- 12. a. Walt Disney  
b. It was a cartoon film.
- 13. Ivanhoe (1819)
- 14. 2006
- PS All answers obtained using Google/Wikipedia.

## **Geoffrey Chaucer: Specimen answers Canterbury Tales**

### **The Knight**

1. The tale of the Knight follows straight on from the *General Prologue*. Many of the pilgrims use their personal *Prologues* to pass comment on the tales that precede their own, but there is no tale before the Knight's. Furthermore, the Knight is presented as an intelligent, but calm and reserved man. He is not the type to talk at length about himself, as some of the others do in their *Prologues*.

### **The Miller**

1. With an ugly warty nose, a big mount and a short, fat body, he cannot be said to be good looking, and his character is therefore likely to be as blemished as his appearance.
2. Yes. The Miller is not well behaved: he likes to fight, is argumentative and tells dirty stories. He also swindles his customers.
3. a. When her husband is away, he grabs her and tries to kiss her. When she resists, he says he will die if he can't have her and promises her all kinds of nice things.  
b. Alison is married to a dozy old man and was interested in Nicholas from the start; there was little conviction in her initial resistance to his advances. She threatens to scream, but doesn't actually do so.
4. In the *Prologue* we are told that the Miller likes to tell dirty tales ('tavern stories, filthy in the main'). Furthermore, he has red hair, which in the Middle Ages was often seen as a sign of a lecherous character.

### **The Wife of Bath**

1. a. The book is about sinful women; he is reading it to teach her a lesson.  
b. She is exactly the sort of woman who is described in the story: she gets through one man after another, is very self-willed and won't be told what she can and can't do.
2. a. In a rage, she tries to destroy his book. She also pretends she is dying and accuses him of having killed her in order to get her property, then hits him in the face. She isn't really the ideal woman.  
b. She gets her own way. Her husband promises that he will never hit her again and from that time on she is in control and the marriage works well.
3. The Wife of Bath repeatedly succeeds in moving from a situation where she is subordinate to one where she is in control. She refuses to accept the traditional husband-wife relationship, in which the man is in control.
4. a. Again we have a husband and wife who are not getting on. And once more the couple's problems are resolved by the man submitting to his wife's will.

b. He realises that that is what she wants, and he is willing to let her have her way. He has also learnt from his earlier error. Then he wanted a girl that didn't want him; now he is stuck with a woman he doesn't want. There is also a suggestion that he could not make a decision himself, since neither option was very attractive.

5. The popular ideas about women are 'confirmed' by the story: the Wife of Bath is exactly the sort of woman that seduces men and makes their lives difficult. On the other hand, she is a character that the audience tends to sympathise with, and she and her husband are ultimately happily married, so the portrayal doesn't simply reinforce stereotypes.

### **The Pardoner**

1. Certificates bearing the papal seal, as a defence against anyone who might give him trouble in the course of his work. Certificates from popes, cardinals, patriarchs and bishops to produce at critical moments. Glass bottles containing bones and fragments of cloth to pass off as relics.
2. a. The passage is full of evidence that the Pardoner is very free with the truth. A few examples:  
line 339 '*Flaunt* the papal seal.'  
line 343 'I tell stories, as occasion calls.'  
line 346-47 'I speak some words in Latin to put a saffron tinge upon my preaching.'  
line 351 'Relics they are, *at least for such are known*.'  
line 389 'That trick's been worth a hundred marks a year.'  
line 394 'I preach and tell a hundred lying mockeries more.'  
line 399 'And all my antics are a joy to see.'  
line 402 'Out come the pence, and *especially for myself*.'  
line 403 'My exclusive purpose is to win.'  
line 404 'What matter how their souls may fare?'  
line 405 'They can go blackberrying, for all I care!'  
b. He uses difficult language (including Latin phrases), shows off his pardons and false relics and promises people forgiveness for their sins.
3. a. He is honest with the pilgrims, but deceives the simple country folk. He is simply telling the pilgrims a tale – and from his *Prologue* we can easily see how good he is at spinning a yarn – whereas when he is with the villagers he is trying to make sales.  
b. There are several reasons why he might try to sell them pardons. Perhaps he is so used to concluding his stories by offering things for sale that he does it out of habit. Or maybe he has such confidence in his salesmanship that he genuinely thinks he can persuade some of them. Or it could be that he is trying to prove the effectiveness of his methods: if he can persuade even these people to buy something, that would be quite an achievement.

### **Extra assignments: specimen answers**

1. The answer will of course depend on your chosen character and your own creativity. Aspects that most answers are likely to include are the way that the character dresses, his/her occupation, how he/she speaks, things he/she habitually carries and how he/she behaves. Ask your teacher to assess your answer.
2. Your answer should cover the similarities and the differences. Points to consider include the relationship between the man and the woman who is out of his reach as depicted in literature and in

the film, and the outcome. What does hopeless love lead to in literature? What would have happened if the man had not fallen in love with the woman in question?

3. Any well-argued opinion.
4. Any well-argued opinion.

### **Le Morte d'Arthur: specimen answers**

1. A new king has to be found, because the old one has died.
2. To prevent war between the various lords who are gathering troops to press their claim to the throne, Merlin predicts that a miracle will occur, by which the new king will make himself known.
3. Yes. After matins on Christmas morning, a stone with a sword in it suddenly appears in the churchyard. He who can pull the sword from the stone will be the rightful king of England. It also transpires that Arthur is the rightful king.
4. Arthur has a fairly subservient role. He is Sir Ector's foster son, and not yet a knight. He is a sort of page, an assistant to his foster brother Sir Kay.
5. He is obedient and inventive, but perhaps also naive and ignorant: he has no idea of the significance of what he has done.
6. Sir Kay comes over as something of an opportunist. One might even say he is sneaky: he recognises the sword that Arthur has brought him and claims that, as he has the sword, he is the rightful king.
7. Any well-argued opinion.
8. Each feels slighted because he has not been chosen as the rightful king; all are also opposed to a youth of humble birth becoming king. They do not realise that Arthur is the son of the previous king.
9. Any well-argued opinion is acceptable; however, it is odd that the nobles continue to protest when they know that Arthur has been appointed king by a higher authority.
10. Merlin gets the Archbishop of Canterbury to call the nobles together. The archbishop apparently has considerable power in the kingdom. Frequent reference is made to people praying and to church festivals. Such festivals are used to pinpoint events on the calendar.
11. The Church played an important role in mediaeval society. It was also important that Arthur and his knights were portrayed as devout Christians, since they serve as role models.



