Basic Middle English Word List for London Dialect*

Since there is no standardized spelling in the fourteenth century, be alert for words that look like one thing but mean another. Also watch for *metathesis* (inverted letters) such as spelling the word "Bird" as "Brid" or "whale" as "hwale." A final warning: quoting sources written in Middle English will annoy your computer's spell-check. Allow extra time for proofreading.

al, al be, al be that: although, even if

als, also: also, as

anon: at once, immediately

aventure: chance

bet: better

but, but if: unless

can, kan, conne, con, konne: to be able, to know, to know how; to learn, to understand.

cas, caas: case, situation, event; chance, accident; fate

certes: certainly

clepe(n): call, name, mention

conseil: council; to counsel or advise; secret(s), confidence(s)

corage: heart; spirit; courage; desire

curious: careful, diligent; skillful; eager; skillfully made

daunger: lordship, power, control; ungraciousness, disdain

degree: rank, status, social condition

del, deel: bit, part

deme, deeme: judge, decide; suppose (Mn. E. "deem")

do, doon: to do, cause
doon make: cause to be made

drede: doubt "*it is no drede*" (there is no doubt).

eek, eke: also

er, ere: before

estaat: state, condition; rank, standing

everich: every; each

eyen, eien, yen: eyes (see also "*ye*" for the singular)

falle: fall; befall, happen

fare: fare, go; act, behave

fayne: glad; as an adverb, gladly, willingly, eagerly

for: because (of); for; in order that

foul: disagreeable; evil; miserable

fre, free: noble, gracious, generous; free

fro: from (as in "to and fro")

gan, gan to: did (past tense aux. verb); began to

gentilesse: refined character, high breeding, nobility, courtesy

go, goon: to walk, to go

grace: a favor; grace; mercy, pardon; honor, distinction

gyse: guise; manner, way, fashion, custom

han: have (contracted form of Old and Middle English "*haven*")

hap: chance, luck; good fortune; occurrence (as in Mn. English "happenstance")

hatan: called, named; ordered; hated

hende: clever, noble, courteous (Mn. English "handy")

hente(n): to seize, grasp

highte: is called, is named; was called, was named

ilke: same

intil: unto; as far as

kinde: nature, race, stock, species, sort; natural disposition

koude: knew; knew how to; could

lat: let

leef, lief, leve: dear, beloved; pleasant, agreeable

lewed: ignorant, unlearned; coarse, rude; wicked

like(n), lyke(n): to like, enjoy (often in impers. constructions; e.g., *me liketh*: it pleases me).

list, lest: to please (often occurs in impers. constructions; e.g., "*me list*," it pleases me)

lite, lyte: little

lust: pleasure; desire

maistry: domination, mastery

micel, michel, mickel: much, many

mo: more

moot, moote: may, must ought to [idiomatic phraes] *so moot I, also moot I, ever moot I*: as I hope also *so moote I thee*: as I hope to prosper

most, moste: must; most

mowe: may (pres. plural of *mowen*)

namely: especially

nas: was not (contraction of *ne was*.)

nat: not

ne: not, nor

nere: were not (contraction of *ne were*)

niste: knew not (contraction of *ne wiste*)

nolde: would not (contraction of *ne wolde*)

not, noot: knows not (contraction of *ne woot*)

nyce: ignorant, foolish, weak; wanton; precise, scrupulous

nys, nis: is not (contraction of *ne is*)

nyste: knew not, did not know (contraction of *ne wiste*)

paraventure: perhaps

povre: poor (like French *pauvre*)

quit, quite: (infinitive) to reciprocate, repay; (past part.) repaid

quod: said

rede, reede: advice, counsel; to advise, to counsel. (Cf. Old English *raed*)

sen, syn: since

sely: blessed, innocent; good; kind; happy; poor; wretched; hapless (Cf. Mn. Irish *seelie*, Mn. English silly)

sentence: opinion, sentiments; moral meaning, significance

siker: certain, sure, true, noble (distantly related to Mn. English "secure" and "sacred")

sikerly: certainly, surely, truly

sit: sits (contraction of *sitteth*)

sith, sithen: since (not to be confused with Darth Vader's domain)

solas: comfort, solace; amusement, entertainment; pleasure

solempne: formal; solemn, serious; ceremonious; festive; merry

sore, soore: bitterly, sorely

sooth, sothe: truth (Mn. English "Soothsayer")

soothfastnesse: truth; truthfulness

stint, stente, stynthe: cease, stop; restrain

sterte: jump, leap, spring, move suddenly (like Mn. English "start" and "startle")

swich: such

thee, theen: to prosper (infinitive)

ther, there: there; where

thilke: the same (contraction of "*the ilke*")

tho: then

trowe(n): to believe

unnethe: scarcely, hardly; with difficulty

verray: true (Cf. Mn. French "*Vrai*" and Mn. English "very")

war: aware; wary; prudent

wende(n): to go, pass, walk (infinitive).

wende: thought, supposed (past tense Old English *wenan*, cf. Mn. English "ween")

whilom: once, once upon a time; formerly

wight: a person; a creature

wiste: knew

wol: will

wood: mad, crazy; madly

woot: knows (from "wit")

wyse: wise; way, manner

y-: as a verb prefix, it indicates the past participle.

yaf: gave

ye, ey, yghe: eye

yep: new; keen; fresh (primarily Northumbrian)

yif: if; give

ywis: certainly, surely