English-to-English Translations

## Beowulf, c. 975-1010 AD – Old English to modern English

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Hwæt! Wé Gárdena      in géardagum |  | Listen! We --of the [Spear-Danes](http://heorot.dk/beowulf-rede-notes.html#r1)      in the days of yore, |
| þéodcyninga      þrym gefrúnon**·** |  | of those clan-kings--      [heard](http://heorot.dk/beowulf-rede-notes.html#r2) of their glory**.** |
| hú ðá æþelingas      ellen fremedon**.** |  | how those nobles      performed courageous deeds**.** |
| Oft Scyld Scéfing      sceaþena þréatum |  | Often [Scyld, Scef's](http://heorot.dk/beowulf-rede-notes.html#r4) son,      from enemy hosts |
| monegum maégþum      meodosetla oftéah**·** | **5** | from many peoples      seized mead-benches; |
| egsode Eorle      syððan aérest wearð |  | and terrorised [the fearsome Heruli](http://heorot.dk/beowulf-rede-notes.html#r6)      after first he was |
| féasceaft funden      hé þæs frófre gebád**·** |  | found helpless and destitute,      he then knew recompense for that:- |
| wéox under wolcnum**·**      weorðmyndum þáh |  | he waxed under the clouds,      throve in honours, |
| oð þæt him aéghwylc      þára ymbsittendra |  | until to him each      of the bordering tribes |
| ofer hronráde      hýran scolde, | **10** | beyond the [whale-road](http://heorot.dk/beowulf-rede-notes.html#r10)      had to submit, |
| gomban gyldan**·**      þæt wæs gód cyning**.** |  | and yield tribute:-      that was a good king! |
| Ðaém eafera wæs      æfter cenned |  | To him a heir was      born then |
| geong in geardum      þone god sende |  | young in the yards,      God sent him |
| folce tó frófre**·**      fyrenðearfe ongeat**·** |  | to comfort the people;      He had seen the dire distress |
| þæt híe aér drugon      aldorléase | **15** | that they suffered before,      leader-less |
| lange hwíle**·**      him þæs líffréä |  | a long while;      them for that the Life-Lord, |
| wuldres wealdend      woroldáre forgeaf: |  | Ruler of Glory,      granted honour on earth: |
| Béowulf wæs bréme      --blaéd wíde sprang-- |  | [Beowulf (Beaw)](http://heorot.dk/beowulf-rede-notes.html#r18) was famed      --his renown spread wide-- |
| Scyldes eafera      Scedelandum in**.** |  | Scyld's heir,      in Northern lands**.** |
| Swá sceal geong guma      góde gewyrcean | **20** | So ought a young man      by good deeds deserve, |
| fromum feohgiftum      on fæder bearme |  | (and) by fine treasure-gifts,      while in his father's keeping, |
| þæt hine on ylde      eft gewunigen |  | that him in old age      shall again stand by, |
| wilgesíþas      þonne wíg cume**·** |  | willing companions,      when war comes, |
| léode gelaésten:      lofdaédum sceal |  | people serve him:      by glorious deeds must, |
| in maégþa gehwaére      man geþéön**.** | **25** | amongst his people, everywhere,      one prosper**.** |

Translation from [*http://www.heorot.dk/beowulf-rede-text.html*](http://www.heorot.dk/beowulf-rede-text.html), by Benjamin Slade (2012).

# Chaucer, The Canterbury Tales, 1478 – Middle English to modern English

From The General Prologue of *The Canterbury Tales*.

*Here bygynneth the Book of the Tales of Caunterbury.*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **1** | **Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote** | When April with its sweet-smelling showers |
| **2** | **The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,** | Has pierced the drought of March to the root, |
| **3** | **And bathed every veyne in swich licour** | And bathed every vein (of the plants) in such liquid |
| **4** | **Of which vertu engendred is the flour;** | By which power the flower is created; |
| **5** | **Whan Zephirus eek with his sweete breeth** | When the West Wind also with its sweet breath, |
| **6** | **Inspired hath in every holt and heeth** | In every wood and field has breathed life into |
| **7** | **The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne** | The tender new leaves, and the young sun |
| **8** | **Hath in the Ram his half cours yronne,** | Has run half its course in Aries, |
| **9** | **And smale foweles maken melodye,** | And small fowls make melody, |
| **10** | **That slepen al the nyght with open ye** | Those that sleep all the night with open eyes |
| **11** | **(So priketh hem Nature in hir corages),** | (So Nature incites them in their hearts), |
| **12** | **Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages,** | Then folk long to go on pilgrimages, |
| **13** | **And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes,** | And professional pilgrims to seek foreign shores, |
| **14** | **To ferne halwes, kowthe in sondry londes;** | To distant shrines, known in various lands; |
| **15** | **And specially from every shires ende** | And specially from every shire's end |
| **16** | **Of Engelond to Caunterbury they wende,** | Of England to Canterbury they travel, |
| **17** | **The hooly blisful martir for to seke,** | To seek the holy blessed martyr, |
| **18** | **That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke.** | Who helped them when they were sick. |

*Translation from http://sites.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/teachslf/gp-par.htm*

# Shakespeare’s Henry V: St. Crispin’s Day Speech, 1600 – Elizabethan English to modern English

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Original Text | Modern Text |
|  | **WESTMORELAND**  Oh, that we now had here  But one ten thousand of those men in England  That do no work today. | **WESTMORELAND**  Oh, if only we had with us here ten thousand of those men back home in England who aren’t working today. |
| **20** | **KING HENRY**  What’s he that wishes so?  My cousin Westmoreland? No, my fair cousin.  If we are marked to die, we are enough  To do our country loss; and if to live,  The fewer men, the greater share of honor. | **KING HENRY**  Who wishes that? My cousin Westmoreland? No, my dear cousin. If we are slated to die, the fewer, the better for our country, and if we’re slated to live, the fewer men, the greater the share of honor for each of us. |
| **25** | God’s will, I pray thee wish not one man more.  By Jove, I am not covetous for gold  Nor care I who doth feed upon my cost;  It yearns me not if men my garments wear;  Such outward things dwell not in my desires. | In God’s name, I beg you not to wish for one more man. By God, I am not selfish when it comes to money: I don’t care who eats at my expense. It doesn’t bother me when people borrow my clothing—I don’t care about these concrete things. |
| **30** | But if it be a sin to covet honor,  I am the most offending soul alive.  No, faith, my coz, wish not a man from England.  God’s peace, I would not lose so great an honor  As one man more, methinks, would share from me, | But if it is a sin to be selfish about honor, I am the most guilty soul alive. No, my cousin, don’t wish that even one man who is now in England were here instead. By God, I wouldn’t lose as much honor as a single man more would cost me, |
| **35** | For the best hope I have. Oh, do not wish one more!  Rather proclaim it, Westmoreland, through my host,  That he which hath no stomach to this fight,  Let him depart. His passport shall be made,  And crowns for convoy put into his purse. | I think—not even if it meant giving up my best hope for victory. Oh, do not wish one more! Instead, make this known throughout the army: whoever has no spirit for this fight, let him depart. He will be given safe conduct and money for his passage home. |
| **40** | We would not die in that man’s company  That fears his fellowship to die with us.  This day is called the feast of Crispian.  He that outlives this day and comes safe home,  Will stand o' tiptoe when the day is named | We would not want to die in the company of a man who fears to die with us. This day is called the Feast of Saint Crispian: he who lives to see this day out and comes home safe will stand tall when this day is named |
| **45** | And rouse him at the name of Crispian.  He that shall see this day, and live old age,  Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbors  And say, “Tomorrow is Saint Crispian.”  Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars, | and raise himself up at the mention of Crispian. He who survives this day and lives to see old age shall yearly entertain his neighbors on the even, saying, “Tomorrow is Saint Crispin’s Day.” He’ll roll up his sleeve and show his scars, |
| **50** | And say, “These wounds I had on Crispin’s day.”  Old men forget; yet all shall be forgot  But he’ll remember with advantages  What feats he did that day. Then shall our names,  Familiar in his mouth as household words, | saying, “I got these wounds on St. Crispin’s Day.” Old men forget. But these men will remember every detail of what they did today long after they’ve forgotten everything 60else. And as the wine flows, our names, familiar as household words, will be invoked again: |
| **55** | Harry the King, Bedford and Exeter,  Warwick and Talbot, Salisbury and Gloucester,  Be in their flowing cups freshly remembered.  This story shall the good man teach his son,  And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by, | Harry the King, Bedford and Exeter, Warwick and Talbot, Salisbury and Gloucester. Good men will tell their sons this story and the Feast of St. Crispin will never go by, |
| **60** | From this day to the ending of the world,  But we in it shall be rememberèd—  We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;  For he today that sheds his blood with me  Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile, | from this day to the end of time, without our being remembered: we few, we happy few, we band of brothers—for whoever sheds his blood with me today shall be my brother. However humble his birth, |
| **65** | This day shall gentle his condition;  And gentlemen in England now abed  Shall think themselves accursed they were not here,  And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks  That fought with us upon Saint Crispin’s day. | this day shall grant him nobility. And men back in English now safe in their beds will curse themselves for not having been here, and think less of their own manhood when they listen to the stories of those who fought with us here on St. Crispin’s Day. |

William Shakespeare, Henry V, c. 1599. Act IV Scene iii 18–67  
Translation from Sparknotes: *http://nfs.sparknotes.com/henryv/page\_184.html*