


Middle English Vocabulary



Also, English has many
phonemes - not hard to say
foreign words

Adjectives usually before nouns

an erpely servaunt

an earthly servant

occasionally after the noun in poetry

shoures soote

showers sweet

in Phrases

With more than one adjective, sometimes one before the noun, the rest after it

a gode wyt and a retentyff
a good wit and a retentive

In possessive, no apostrophe
oper mens prosperite

The 's sometimes became -is
go to þe raven is neste
go to the raven's nest

ME Possessive Phrases

possessive + noun + noun modifiers

the Dukes place of Lancastre

the Duke of Lancaster's place

**double possessive (both of and possessive
pronoun) came in with ME**

the capteyn...toke away .j. obligacion of myn

**the captain...took away one obligation of
mine**

Tenses

Progressive tense (be + pres. participle) also developed (sometimes with in or on)

**For now is gode Gawayn goande ryȝt here
For now is good Gawain going right here
I am yn beldynge of a pore hous
I am (in) building of a poor house**

FORMATION OF NEW WORDS: COMPOUNDING

- Mostly nouns and adjectives

Nouns:

Noun + noun cheesecake, toadstool, bagpipe, nightmare

Adjective + noun sweetheart, wildfire, quicksand

Adverb + noun insight, afternoon, upland

Noun + verb (new to ME) sunshine, nosebleed

Verb + noun (also new) hangman, pastime, whirlwind

Verb + adverb (new) runabout, lean-to

Adverb + verb (new) outcome, outcast, upset

French and Latin compounds (noun + adj) knight-errant,
heir-apparent, sum total

Adjectives

Noun + adjective threadbare, bloodred, headstrong

Adjective + noun (rare) everyday

Verbs

Adverb + verb outline, uphold, overturn, underwrite

Noun + verb (new) manhandle

‘Invisible’ Compounds

Cockney (cock + egg), gossamer (goose + summer)

Compounds treated as single words

Dismal (Lat. Dies mali ‘evil days’)

Porcupine (Fr. Porc espin ‘spiny pig’)

The 'do' explosion

Substitute for a previous verb

camels may forbere drynk and
so may not the hors do

camels can forgo drink and
thus can not the horse do

As a causative (like make or have)

al hys halles I wol do peynte
with pure gold

all his halls I will have painted
with pure gold

Next to a main verb (emphatic? Not really)

unto the mayde that hir doth
serve

to the maid that her does serve

Negative and interrogative clauses began in ME, still not as
common as simple verb

my maister dyd not graunt it

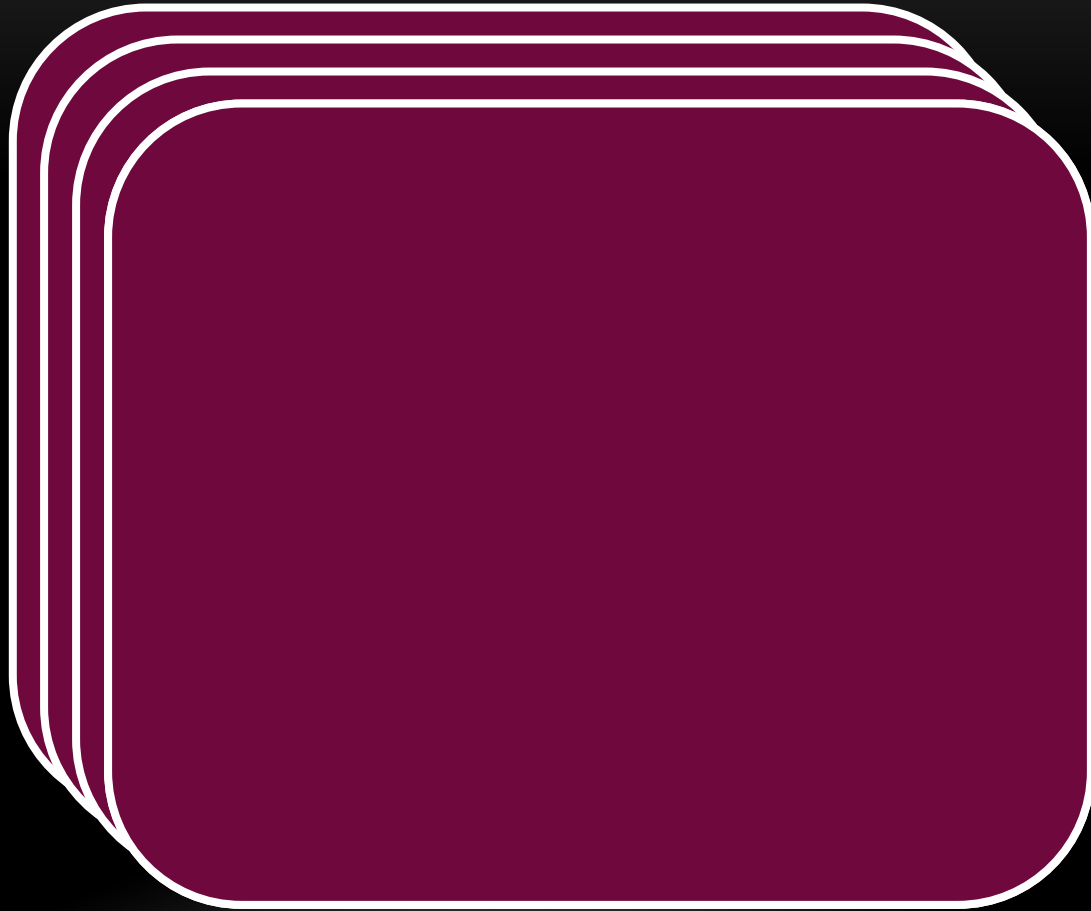
Fader, why do ye wepe?



What was the position
of adjectives in ME period?

**What can you say about
ME Possessive Phrases?**

How was Vocabulary changed in ME period?



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