

Twelfth-century Middle English texts.

1. Last addition to the *Peterborough Chronicle*, from 1132 to 1154.
Date: 1154 or very shortly after.
Place: Peterborough, at the extreme northeastern end of Northamptonshire.
Dialect: East Midlands.
Manuscript: contemporary, virtually autograph.
Content: account of events in King Stephen's reign; highly critical, thus probably written after his death; apparently shortly after, and all at one time.
Important historical source, well written.
 2. *Poema Morale*.
Date: second half of the 12th c.
Place: Hampshire.
Dialect: Southern, very early (OE *ā* retained).
Manuscript: late 12th c., written by a southern Midlands scribe; there are also four later manuscripts.
Content: a sermon in rhymed verse (some 270 lines in the oldest manuscript).
 3. *Ancrene Riwe* ('Guide for Female Hermits').
Date: last third of the 12th c.
Place: Herefordshire.
Dialect: Southwest Midlands, early (OE *ā* retained).
Manuscript: first third of the 13th c.; there are also several later manuscripts.
Content: a Rule of life for female contemplatives, written in a remarkably accomplished and beautiful prose style.
 4. The "Katherine Group": *Lives* of Sts. Katherine, Margaret, and Juliana; *Hali Meidhad* ('Holy Virginity'); and *Sawles Warde* ('Guardian of the Soul').
Date, place, dialect: as for (3).
Manuscript: early to mid-13th c.
Content: religious reading for the communities living according to (3).
- [Note: several other short works—four prayers and *De Wohunge of Ure Lauerd* ('The Wooing of Our Lord')—clearly belong to the same body of literature and date from the 12th c.; but they do not exhibit the extraordinary linguistic consistency of (3) and (4), which in spite of having been written by two different scribes, possibly several decades apart, are linguistically *identical*.]

5. *The Owl and the Nightingale*.

Date: probably 1190's, but possibly early 13th c.

Place: probably somewhere in the southeast (but see below).

Dialect: mixed; it looks as if a Southeastern original had been copied in the Southwest Midlands. (Note that OE \bar{a} is rounded.)

Manuscripts: two from the second half of the 13th c.; neither is the SWM copy of the original.

Content: a witty and sophisticated literary debate in rhymed verse.

6. *Lazamon's Brut*.

Date: late 12th or early 13th c.

Place: northern Worcestershire.

Dialect: West Midlands. (Note that OE \bar{a} is rounded.)

Manuscripts: two from the second half of the 13th c.

Content: a vast chronicle of the history of Britain in alliterative verse (16,000 lines). *Lazamon* is a good storyteller and gives us the earliest English version of the legends about King Arthur.

7. *The Ormmulum*.

Date: ca. 1200.

Place: northern Lincolnshire.

Dialect: Northeast Midlands.

Manuscript: autograph.

Content: an unimaginably vast allegorical life of Christ with commentary, written in blank verse. (*Orrm* left us about 20,000 lines; if he finished the work it must have been about eight times that long.) Even for those who like medieval religious literature, *Orrm* is unbearably tedious; but his compulsive attempt to devise a completely unambiguous orthography and write perfectly regular verse makes the *Orrmulum* a goldmine for historical phonologists.