

- 1.) The syllable contains a long vowel (thus, the first syllable in 'rīce' is long). The vowels in such syllables are said to be **long by nature**.
 - 2.) it contains a short vowel followed by two consonants (thus, the second syllable in 'gebungon' is long). The vowels in such syllables are said to be **long by position**.
- Sometimes, a word composed of two short syllables may bear accent in place of a single long syllable. Such words are said to have **resolved stress**.

4.) A Closer Look at Accent

- The strong accent borne by the main accented syllables in a line is called **primary accent**. In the analysis (or *scansion*) of OE poetry, this is traditionally marked with / or ´ (I will use /). Syllables bearing primary accent are often called **lifts**.
- Some syllables, especially the second elements of compounds, bear less stress but are not entirely unaccented. These bear **secondary accent**. These are marked with \ or ` (I will use \). Syllables bearing secondary accent are often called **half-lifts**.
- Syllables which bear no accent at all are (sensibly enough) said to be **unaccented** and are marked with an x. An unaccented syllable is often called a **drop**.
- Mitchell and Robinson give the following modern English sentence that contains all three levels of accent:

/ \ / x x /
Blindman's buff is a game.

- Primary accent in a word with resolved stress can be represented by $\overset{\cdot}{x}$ or \underline{x}

5.) The Five Types

- German philologist Eduard Sievers (1850-1932) demonstrated that any traditional West Germanic half-line (including an OE verse) will follow one of five accent patterns, designated **A**, **B**, **C**, **D**, or **E**. Of these, the most common is **A**. Remember that these patterns operate at the level of the *half-line*; consequently, a line of OE poetry may consist of any combination of two of these five types.
- The list on the following page gives the accent pattern of each Sievers type, along with a traditional modern English mnemonic and a scanned Old English example of a verse of that type. In many lines, a number of unaccented syllables are allowed to come after or before the first lift. These are given in parentheses. For a more detailed account, see Mitchell and Robinson, pp. 164-5.

The Five Old English Verse Types: A Summary Sheet

Type A: / x (x x x x) / x (lift, drop[s], lift, drop)*

	/ x / x
Modern English approximation:	'Anna angry'
	/ x / x
Old English example (10[b], 16b):	ēðel mǣrsað

Type B: (x x x x) x / x (x) / (drop[s], lift, drop[s], lift)

	x / x /
Modern English approximation:	'And Byrhtnoth bold'
	x x / x /
Old English example (10[b], 1a):	hit wæs gēara iū

Type C: (x x x x x) x / / x (drop[s], lift, lift, drop)

	x / / x
Modern English approximation:	'In keen conflict'
	x / / x
Old English example (Beowulf 4a):	oft Scyld Scēfing

Type D, variant 1: / (x x x) / \ x (lift, [optional drop{s},] lift, half-lift, drop)

	/ / \ x
Modern English approximation:	'Ding down strongly'
	/ / \ x
Old English example (10[b], 20b):	flēah cāsere

Type D, variant 2: / (x x x) / x \ (lift, [optional drop{s},] lift, drop, half-lift)

	/ / x \
Modern English approximation:	'Deal death to all'
	/ / x \
Old English example (Beowulf 18b):	blǣd wīde sprang

Type E: / \ x (x) / (lift, half-lift, drop[s], lift)

	/ \ x /
Modern English approximation:	'Each one with edge'
	/ \ x /
Old English example (10[b], 5b):	gēarmǣlum wēox.

Note: Certain types of words are more likely to bear primary stress than others. The first syllables of nouns, adjectives, and infinitives are most likely to be accented. Other words, such as finite verb forms and prepositions, are less likely to bear primary accent, but may do so in certain circumstances (see, for instance, the OE example under Type E, above). Articles, prefixes, suffixes, conjunctions, and pronouns are almost never accented.

* Sometimes one or two unaccented syllables precede the first lift in a type-A or type-D verse. This phenomenon is called **anacrusis**. For more details, see Mitchell and Robinson, pp. 165-6.

6.) Medieval Germanic Poetic Vocabulary: The Kenning

- As is the case in many cultures, Old English (and Old Saxon, Old Norse, etc.) poetry was characterised by a more archaic and figurative vocabulary than appears in most prose works.
- The best-known element of medieval Germanic poetic vocabulary was the **kenning**—a roundabout, often metaphorical expression used to describe a thing rather than a simple noun. Kennings could be compounds or multi-word phrases.
- Kennings used in *Beowulf* include hronrād ('whale-road' → ocean); bānhūs ('bone-house' → body); heofena helm ('the helmet/protection of the heavens' → God).
- In general, Old English kennings are fairly transparent; this is not always the case in the related poetic tradition of Scandinavia and Iceland. Try to figure out these Old Norse kennings:
 - *svanbekkr* (literally 'swan-bench')
 - *sólbryggja* (literally 'sun-pier' or 'sun-bridge')
 - *armbrandr* (literally 'arm-fire')

7.) Variation

- Another stylistic element characteristic of Old English poetry is **variation**, the use of multiple synonyms filling the same syntactic role (subject, object, etc.) in a sentence. You have already seen a noteworthy example in *Caedmon's Hymn* (Mitchell and Robinson, p. 234):

Þā middangeard **monncynnes Weard**,
ēce Drihten, æfter tēode
 fīrum foldan, **Frēa ælmihtig**.

The three noun phrases in boldface fulfill the same grammatical role in the sentence; they are all the subject of the verb 'tēode'. At the same time, the underlined words 'middangeard' and 'foldan' provide another example of variation; both are accusative objects of 'tēode', and are synonyms for the same thing (the world).