An Introduction to Middle English

Simon Horobin and Jeremy Smith

Edinburgh University Press
## Contents

### Abbreviations

vii

### To readers

viii

### PART I

1 Introduction
   1.1 The purpose of this book
   1.2 How to use this book
   1.3 A note about technical terms
   Recommendations for reading

2 What did Middle English look like?
   2.1 Introduction
   2.2 A passage from *The Canterbury Tales*
   2.3 Linguistic analysis
   2.4 Evidence for Middle English
   2.5 Two illustrations
   2.6 Editing Middle English
   Exercises
   Recommendations for reading

3 Middle English in use
   3.1 Introduction
   3.2 Who used Middle English?
   3.3 For what was Middle English used?
   3.4 The dialects of Middle English
   3.5 Written standardisation
   3.6 The standardisation of speech
   Exercises
   Recommendations for reading
PART II

4 Spellings and sounds 40
   4.1 Some preliminaries: the relationship between speech and writing 40
   4.2 Reconstructing ME pronunciation 42
   4.3 Middle English sounds and spellings: an outline history 44
   4.4 Chaucerian transmission 46
   4.5 Middle English sound-systems 50
   4.6 Middle English writing-systems 60
Exercises 64
Recommendations for reading 65

5 The lexicon 69
   5.1 Some preliminaries: the word and its structure 69
   5.2 The origins of ME vocabulary 70
   5.3 Some notes on meaning 77
   5.4 Word geography 79
   5.5 Chaucer's lexicon 80
   5.6 Vocabulary and style 81
Exercises 84
Recommendations for reading 85

6 Grammar 89
   6.1 Some preliminaries 89
   6.2 Syntax 92
   6.3 Morphology 103
Exercises 118
Recommendations for reading 119

PART III

7 Looking forward 126
   7.1 Language change 126
   7.2 Language and text 133
Exercises 139
Recommendations for reading 139

Appendix: Middle English texts 142
Discussion of the exercises 170
References 173
Index 178