

Dear Parents,

Below you will find a list of assignments for May 4 – May 8. During this week, Ms. Angie will handle the zoom meeting for studied dictation at 11:00 AM on Wednesday and Ms. Tammy will handle the zoom meeting for literature on at 11:00 AM Tuesday. You may send materials to Ms. Kathy but, if you have questions, please ask one of us. Please keep her family in your prayers

The last Studied Dictation of the Year, May 6 Assessment, Words 92, Grammar 22

Dick chose one of them at random, and the pair hurried, with echoing footsteps, along the hollow of the chapel roof. The top of the arched ceiling rose like a whale's back in the dim glimmer of the lamp. Here and there were spy-holes, concealed, on the other side, by the carving of the cornice; and looking down through one of these, Dick saw the paved floor of the chapel—the altar, with its burning tapers—and stretched before it on the steps, the figure of Sir Oliver praying with uplifted hands.

The English literature readings are on the pages given in this PDF.

- Monday:    Read *Black Arrow* (6 pages) Written Narration  
              Read *English Literature* Chapter XIX (pages 3-4) Oral Narration
- Tuesday:    Read *Black Arrow* (6 pages) Oral Narration  
              Read *English Literature* Chapter XIX (pages 5-6) Written Narration
- Wednesday: Read *Black Arrow* (6 pages) Written Narration  
              Read *English Literature* Chapter XX (pages 7-8) Oral Narration
- Thursday:    Read *Black Arrow* (6 pages) Oral Narration  
              Read *English Literature* Chapter XX (pages 9-10) Written Narration
- Friday:        Read *Black Arrow* (6 pages) Written Narration  
              Read *English Literature* Chapter XX (pages 11-12) Oral Narration

Poem: The poem is divided into 3 weeks. The amount due (7 lines) is separated by a gap.

“The True Knight” by Stephen Hawes

For knighthood is not in the feats of war,  
As for to fight in quarrel right or wrong,  
But in a cause which truth can not defarre:  
He ought himself for to make sure and strong,  
Justice to keep, mixt with mercy among:  
And no quarrel a knight ought to take  
But for a truth, or for a woman's sake.

For first good hope his Leg-Harness should be,  
His Habergeon, of perfect righteousness  
Gird fast with the Girdle of chastity.  
His rich Placard should be good business  
Broidered with alms so full of largess;  
The Helmet, meekness, and the Shield, good faith,  
His Sword God's word, as Saint Paul saith.

Also true widows he ought to restore  
Unto their right, for to attain their dower;  
And to uphold, and maintain evermore  
The wealth of maidens, with his mighty power.  
And to his sovereign at every manner hour  
To be ready, true, and eke obeisant  
In stable love fixt, and not variant.

Copywork: May 4, May 6, May 8

Written Assignment for the Week due May 8: pick one of your written narrations. Correct errors and polish it into a narration with well-written paragraphs.

Chapter XIX "Piers the Ploughman"

During the long years after the Norman Conquest when English was a despised language, it became broken up into many dialects. But as time went on and English became once more the language of the educated as well as of the uneducated, there arose a cultured English, which became the language which we speak today.

In the time of Edward III England was England again, and the rulers were English both in heart and in name. But England was no longer a country apart, she was no longer a lonely sea-girt island, but had taken her place among the great countries of Europe. For the reign of Edward III was a brilliant one. The knightly, chivalrous King set his country high among the countries of Europe. Men made songs and sang of his victories, but the wars and triumphs of the King pressed hardly on the people of England, and ere his reign was over misery, pestilence, and famine filled the land.

So many men had been killed in Edward's French and Scottish wars that there were too few left to till the land. Then came a terrible disease called the Black Death, slaying young and old, rich and poor, until nearly half the people in the land were dead.

Then fewer still were left to do the work of the farms. Cattle and sheep strayed where they would, for there were none to tend them. Corn ripened and rotted in the fields, for there were none to gather it. Food grew dear as workers grew scarce. Then the field laborers who were left began to demand larger wages. Many of these laborers were little more than slaves, and their masters refused to pay them better. Then some left their homes and went away to seek new masters who would be willing to pay more, while others took to a life of wandering beggary.

The owners of the land had thought that they should be ruined did they pay the great wages demanded of them. Now they saw that they should be ruined quite as much if they could find no one at all to do the work. So laws were made forcing men to work for the same wages they had received before the plague, and forbidding them to leave the towns and villages in which they had been used to live. If they disobeyed they were imprisoned and punished.

Yet these new laws were broken again and again, because bread had now become so dear that it was impossible for men to live on as little as they had done before. Still many masters tried to enforce the law, and the land was soon filled not only with hunger and misery, but with a fierce class hatred between master and man. It was the beginning of a long and bitter struggle, and as the cry of the poor grew louder and louder, the hatred and spirit of revolt grew fiercer. But the great of the land seemed little touched by the sorrows of the people. While they starved and died, the King, surrounded by a glittering court, gave splendid feasts and tournaments. He built fair palaces and chapels, founded a new round table, and thought to make the glorious days of Arthur live again.

And the great among the clergy cared as little for the poor as did the great among the nobles. Many of them had become selfish and worldly, some of them wicked, though of course there were many good men left among them too.

The Church was wealthy but the powerful priests kept that wealth in their own hands, and many of the country clergy were almost as miserably poor as the people whom they taught. And it was through one of these poor priests, named William Langland, that the sorrows of the people found a voice.

We know very little about Langland. So little do we know that we are not sure if his name was really William or not. But in his poem called “The Vision of Piers the Ploughman” he says, “I have lived in the land, quoth I, my name is long Will.” It is chiefly from his poem that we learn to know the man. When we have read it, we seem to see him, tall and thin, with lean earnest face, out of which shine great eyes, the eyes that see visions. His head is shaven like a monk’s; he wears a shabby long gown which flaps in the breeze as he strides along.

Langland was born in the country, perhaps in Oxfordshire, perhaps in Shropshire, and he went to school at Great Malvern. He loved school, for he says:

“For if heaven be on earth, and ease to any soul,  
It is in cloister or in school. Be many reasons I find  
For in the cloister cometh no man, to chide nor to fight,  
But all is obedience here and books, to read and to learn.”

Perhaps Langland’s friends saw that he was clever, and hoped that he might become one of the great ones in the Church. In those days (the Middle Ages they were called) there was no sharp line dividing the priests from the people. The one shaded off into the other, as it were. There were many who wore long gowns and

shaved their heads, who yet were not priests. They were called clerks, and for a sum of money, often very small, they helped to sing masses for the souls of the dead, and performed other offices in connection with the services of the Church. They were bound by no vows and were allowed to marry, but of course could never hope to be powerful. Such was Langland; he married and always remained a poor “clerk.”

But if Langland did not rise high in the Church, he made himself famous in another way, for he wrote *Piers the Ploughman*. This is a great book. There is no other written during the fourteenth century, in which we see so clearly the life of the people of the time.

There are several versions of *Piers*, and it is thought by some that Langland himself wrote and re-wrote his poem, trying always to make it better. But others think that some one else wrote the later versions.

The poem is divided into parts. The first part is “The Vision of Piers the Ploughman,” the second is “The Vision Concerning Do Well, Do Bet, Do Best.” In the beginning of *Piers the Ploughman* Langland tells us how

“In a summer season when soft was the sun,  
I wrapped myself in a cloak as if I were a shepherd  
In the habit of a hermit unholy of works,  
Abroad I wandered in this world wonders to hear.  
But on a May morning on Malvern Hills  
Me befell a wonder, a strange thing. Methought,  
I was weary of wandering, and went me to rest  
Under a broad bank by a burn side.  
And as I lay, and leaned, and looked on the waters  
I slumbered in a sleeping it sounded so merry.”

If you will look back you will see that this poetry is very much more like Layamon’s than like the poetry of Havelok the Dane. Although people had, for many years, been writing rhyming verse, Langland has, you see, gone back to the old alliterative poetry. Perhaps it was that, living far away in the country, Langland had written his poem before he had heard of the new kind of rhyming verses, for news traveled slowly in those days.

Two hundred years later, when “The Vision of Piers the Ploughman” was first printed, the printer in his preface explained alliterative verse very well.

“Langland wrote altogether in metre,” he says, “but not after the manner of our rimers that write nowadays (for his verses end not alike), but the nature of his metre is to have three words, at the least, in every verse which begin with some one letter. As for example the first two verses of the book run upon’s,” as thus:

‘In a somer season whan sette was the sunne  
I shope me into shrobbes as I a shepe were.’

The next runneth upon ‘h,’ as thus:

‘In habite as an Hermite unholy of workes.’

This thing being noted, the metre shall be very pleasant to read. The English is according to the time it was written in, and the sense somewhat dark, but not so hard but that it may be understood of such as will not stick to break the shell of the nut for the kernel’s sake.”

This printer also says in his preface that the book was first written in the time of King Edward III, “In whose time it pleased God to open the eyes of many to see his truth, giving them boldness of heart to open their mouths and cry out against the works of darkness. . . . There is no manner of vice that reigneth in any estate of man which this writer hath not godly, learnedly, and wittily rebuked.”

I hope that you will be among those who will not “stick to break the shell of the nut for the kernel’s sake,” and that although the “sense be somewhat dark” you will someday read the book for yourselves. Meantime in the next chapter I will tell you a little more about it.

Chapter XX "Piers the Ploughman Continued"

When Langland fell asleep upon the Malvern Hills he dreamed a wondrous dream. He thought that he saw "a fair field full of folk," where was gathered "all the wealth of the world and the woe both."

"Working and wondering as the world asketh,  
Some put them to the plough and played them full seldom,  
In earing and sowing labored full hard."

But some are gluttons and others think only of fine clothes. Some pray and others jest. There are rogues and knaves here, friars and priests, barons and burgesses, bakers and butchers, tailors and tanners, masons and miners, and folk of many other crafts. Indeed, the field is the world. It lies between a tower and a dungeon. The tower is God, the dungeon is the dwelling of the Evil One. Then, as Langland looked on all this, he saw

"A lady lovely in face, in linen-clothed,  
Come adown from the cliff and spake me fair,  
And said, 'Son, sleepest thou? Seest thou this people  
All how busy they be about the maze?'"

Langland was "afeard of her face though she was fair." But the lovely lady, who is Holy Church, speaks gently to the dreamer. She tells him that the tower is the dwelling of Truth, who is the lord of all and who gives to each as he hath need. The dungeon is the castle of Care.

"Therein liveth a wight that Wrong is called,  
The Father of Falseness."

"Love alone," said the lady, "leads to Heaven,"

"Therefore I warn ye, the rich, have ruth on the poor.  
Though ye be mighty in councils, be meek in your works,  
For the same measure ye meet, amiss or otherwise,  
Ye shall be weighed therewith when ye wend hence."

“Truth is best in all things,” she said at length. “I have told thee now what Truth is, and may no longer linger.” And so she made ready to go. But the dreamer kneeled on his knees and prayed her stay yet awhile to teach him to know Falsehood also, as well as Truth.”

And the lady answered:

“Look on thy left hand and see where he standeth,  
Both False and Flattery and all his train.”

“I looked on the left hand as the Lady me taught.  
Then was I ware of a woman wondrously clothed,  
Purpled with fur, the richest on earth.  
Crowned with a crown. The King hath no better.  
All her five fingers were fretted with rings  
Of the most precious stones that a prince ever wore;  
In red scarlet she rode, beribboned with gold,  
There is no queen alive that is more adorned.”

This was Lady Meed or Bribery. “Tomorrow,” said Holy Church, “she shall wed with False.” And so the lovely Lady departed.

Left alone the dreamer watched the preparations for the wedding. The Earldom of Envy, the Kingdom of Covetousness, the Isle of Usury were granted as marriage gifts to the pair. But Theology was angry. He would not permit the wedding to take place. “Ere this wedding be wrought, woe betide thee,” he cried. “Meed is wealthy; I know it. God grant us to give her unto whom Truth wills. But thou hast bound her fast to Falseness. Meed is gently born. Lead her therefore to London, and there see if the law allows this wedding.”

So, listening to the advice of Theology, all the company rode off to London, Guile leading the way.

But Soothness pricked on his palfrey and passed them all and came to the King’s court, where he told Conscience all about the matter, and Conscience told the King.

Then quoth the King, “If I might catch False and Flattery or any of their masters, I would avenge me on the wretches that work so ill, and would hang them by the neck and all that them abet.”

So he told the Constable to seize False and to cut off Guile's head, "and let not Liar escape." But Dread was at the door and heard the doom. He warned the others, so that they all fled away save Meed the maiden."

"Save Meed the maiden no man durst abide,  
And truly to tell she trembled for fear,  
And she wept and wrung her hands when she was taken."

But the King called a Clerk and told him to comfort Meed. So Justice soon hurried to her bower to comfort her kindly, and many others followed him. Meed thanked them all and "gave them cups of clean gold and pieces of silver, rings with rubies and riches enough." And pretending to be sorry for all that she had done amiss, Meed confessed her sins and was forgiven.

The King then, believing that she was really sorry, wished to marry her to Conscience. But Conscience would not have her, for he knew that she was wicked. He tells of all the evil things she does, by which Langland means to show what wicked things men will do if tempted by bribery and the hope of gain.

"Then mourned Meed and plained her to the King." If men did great and noble deeds, she said, they deserved praise and thanks and rewards.

"Nay." quoth Conscience to the King, and kneeled to the ground, "There be two manner of Meeds, my Lord, by thy life, that one the good God giveth by His grace, giveth in His bliss to them that will work while that they are here."

"What a laborer received," he said, "was not Meed but just Wages. Bribery, on the other hand, was ever wicked, and he would have none of her."

In spite of all the talk, however, no one could settle the question. So at length Conscience set forth to bring Reason to decide.

When Reason heard that he was wanted, he saddled his horse Suffer-till-I-See-My-Time and came to court with Wit and Wisdom in his train.

The King received him kindly, and they talked together. But while they talked Peace came complaining that Wrong had stolen his goods and ill-treated him in many ways.

Wrong well knew that the complaint was just, but with the help of Meed he won Wit and Wisdom to his side. But Reason stood out against him.

“Counsel me not,” quoth Reason, “Truth to have  
Till lords and ladies all love truth  
And their sumptuous garments be put into chests,  
Till spoiled children be chastened with rods,  
Till clerks and knights be courteous with their tongues,  
Till priests themselves practice their preaching  
And their deeds be such as may draw us to goodness.”

The King acknowledged that Reason was right, and begged him to stay with him always and help him to rule. “I am ready,” quoth Reason, “to rest with thee ever so that Conscience be our counsellor.”

To that the King agreed, and he and his courtiers all went to church. Here suddenly the dream ends. Langland cries:

“Then waked I of my sleep. I was woe withal  
That I had not slept more soundly and seen much more.”

The dreamer arose and continued his wandering. But he had only gone a few steps when once again he sank upon the grass, and fell asleep and dreamed. Again he saw the field full of folk, and to them now Conscience was preaching, and at his words many began to repent them of their evil deeds. Pride, Envy, Sloth and others confessed their sins and received forgiveness.

Then all these penitent folk set forth in search of Saint Truth, some riding, some walking. “But there were few there so wise as to know the way thither, and they went all amiss.” No man could tell them where Saint Truth lived. And now appears at last Piers Ploughman, who gives his name to the whole poem.

“Quoth a ploughman and put forth his head,  
I know him as well as a clerk knows his books.  
Clear Conscience and Wit showed me his place  
And did engage me since to serve him ever.  
Both in sowing and setting, which I labor,  
I have been his man this fifteen winters.”

Piers described to the pilgrims all the long way that they must go in order to find Truth. He told them that they must go through Meekness; that they must cross the ford Honor-your-father and turn aside from the brook Bear-no-false-witness, and so on and on until they come at last to Saint Truth.

“It were a hard road unless we had a guide that might go with us afoot until we got there,” said the pilgrims. So Piers offered, if they would wait until he had ploughed his field, to go with them and show them the way.

“That would be a long time to wait,” said a lady. “What could we women do meantime?”

And Piers answered:

“Some should sew sacks to hold wheat.  
And you who have wool weave it fast,  
Spin it speedily, spare not your fingers  
Unless it be a holy day or holy eve.  
Look out your linen and work on it quickly,  
The needy and the naked take care how they live,  
And cast on them clothes for the cold, for so Truth desires.”

Then many of the pilgrims began to help Piers with his work. Each man did what he could, “and some to please Piers picked up the weeds.”

“But some of them sat and sang at ale  
And helped him to plough with ‘Hy-trolly-lolly.’”

To these idle ones Piers went in anger. “If ye do not run quickly to your work,” he cried, “you will receive no wage; and if ye die of hunger, who will care.”

Then these idle ones began to pretend that they were blind or lame and could not work. They made great moan, but Piers took no heed and called for Hunger. Then Hunger seized the idle ones and beat and buffeted them until they were glad to work.

At last Truth heard of Piers and of all the good that he was doing among the pilgrims, and sent him a pardon for all his sins. In those days people who had done wrong used to pay money to a priest and think that they were forgiven by God.

Against that belief Langland preaches, and his pardon is something different. It is only,

“Do well and have well, and God shall have thy soul.  
And do evil and have evil, hope none other  
That after thy death day thou shalt turn to the Evil One.”

And over this pardon a priest and Piers began so loudly to dispute that the dreamer awoke,

“And saw the sun that time towards the south,  
And I meatless and moneyless upon the Malvern Hills.”

That is a little of the story of the first part of Piers Ploughman. It is an allegory, and in writing it Langland wished to hold up to scorn all the wickedness that he saw around him, and sharply to point out many causes of misery. There is laughter in his poem, but it is the terrible and harsh laughter of contempt. His most bitter words, perhaps, are for the idle rich, but the idle poor do not escape. Those who beg without shame, who cheat and steal, who are greedy and drunken have a share of his wrath. Yet Langland is not all harshness. His great word is Duty, but he speaks of Love too. “Learn to love,” quoth Kind, “and leave off all other.” The poem is rambling and disconnected. Characters come on the scene and vanish again without cause. Stories begin and do not end. It is all wild and improbable like a dream, yet it is full of interest.

But perhaps the chief interest and value of Piers Ploughman is that it is history. It tells us much of what the people thought and of how they lived in those days. It shows us the first mutterings of the storm that was to rend the world. This was the storm of the Reformation which was to divide the world into Protestant and Catholic. But Langland himself was not a Protestant. Although he speaks bitter words against the evil deeds of priest and monk, he does not attack the Church. To him she is still Holy Church, a radiant and lovely lady.