

ANONYMOUS

BRITISH ISLES (CA. 750 CE)

LANGUAGE: ANGLO-SAXON

RIDDLE 51

Ic seah wrætlice wuhte feower
 samed sipian; swearte wæran lastas,
 swaþu swiþe blacu. Swift wæs on fore,
 fuglum framra; fleag on lyfte,
 deaf under ype. Dreag unstill
 winnende wiga se him wegas tæcneþ
 ofer fæted gold feower eallum.



There are almost a hundred surviving riddles written in Old English, or Anglo-Saxon, most of them collected in the tenth-century *Exeter Book*. Probably people enjoyed making up riddles orally as a guessing game. Minstrel-poets who accompanied themselves on the harp may have used riddles as short interludes between performances of longer epics such as *Beowulf*.

Pronunciation:

ð þ Each of these letters make a *th* sound.
 æ This letter makes a short *a* sound, as in *cat*.

TRANSLATOR'S GLOSSARY		
WORD	DEFINITION	POSSIBLE SYNONYMS
blacu (adj.)	the very darkest color; opposite of white	black
deaf (v.)	plunge headfirst into water	dove
dreag (v.)	make great efforts to achieve or obtain something	strove, ventured, labored, made an effort
eallum (adv.)	everyone with or in proximity to other people	all together, all with each other, all side by side
fæted (v.)	cover (a metal object) with a thin coating or film of a different metal	plated, coated
feower (n.)	equivalent to the product of 2 and 2; one more than 3, or 6 less than 10; 4	four
fleag (v.)	to pass through the air with wings	they flew
fore (n.)	the route or direction followed by a ship, aircraft, road, or river	course, route, way, track
framra (adj.)	capable of moving at a higher speed	faster than, quicker than, swifter than
fuglum (n.)	a warm-blooded, egg-laying vertebrate distinguished by the possession of feathers, wings, and a beak and (typically) by being able to fly	birds
gold (n.)	a yellow precious metal	gold
ic (pron.)	pronoun (first person singular) used by a speaker to refer to himself or herself	I
lastas (n.)	a mark or line of marks left by a person, animal, or vehicle in passing	tracks, marks, steps, prints, footprints
lyfte (prep. + n.)	something that is or appears to be enclosed or surrounded by the region of the atmosphere and outer space seen from the earth	in the sky, in the heavens, in the wide blue yonder
ofer (prep.)	expressing movement over a place or region	across
on (prep.)	moving in one side and out of the other side of an opening, channel, or location	through
samed (adv.)	with or in proximity to another person or people	together, with each other, side by side

WORD	DEFINITION	POSSIBLE SYNONYMS
se him (pron.)	used as the object of a verb or preposition to refer to a male person previously mentioned or easily identified	he
seah (v.)	perceive with the eyes; discern visually	saw, caught sight of, detected
sipian (v.)	make a journey of some length	traveling, voyaging, journeying, exploring
swapu (n.)	a way or track laid down for walking or made by continual treading	path, pathway, trail, track
swearte (adj.)	not reflecting much light; approaching black in shade	dark, illuminated, dusky, starless
swift (adv.)	happening quickly or promptly	swiftly
swipe (adj.)	very intense or extreme	deep, intense
tæcneþ (v.)	indicate a particular time, direction	pointing, marking
under (adv.)	extending or directly below something	under, below, underneath, beneath
unstille (prep. + n.)	continuing to work and not relax, refresh oneself, or recover strength	without rest, without relaxing, without taking a break
wæran (v.)	plural past tense of <i>to be</i>	were
wæs (v.)	first and third person singular past tense of <i>to be</i>	was
wegas (n.)	a road, track, path, or street for traveling along	way, route, road, track
wiga (n.)	the son of a monarch	prince, princeling
winnende (adj.)	a person who does not easily admit defeat in spite of difficulties or opposition	fighter, warrior, soldier, fighting, battling
wrætlice (n.)	an animal, as distinct from a human being	creatures, beings
wuhte (adj.)	inspiring a feeling of wonder or delight	wondrous, rare, magnificent, elegant
ype (n.)	a long body of water curling into an arched form and breaking on the shore	wave, surf, swell

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

PHRASE BY PHRASE

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REFLECTING AND FINDING MEANING

Group Member Names:

Date: _____

Pick a scribe for the group, and work together to answer the questions.

What are the best parts of this translation, and why do you think they are good?

What elements of the original poem did you lose in the translation? What did you manage to keep?

Did you achieve something new with your translation, and if so, does it make sense in the poem or not?
