

## Activity 18.7 - Dryden's version of lines from Chaucer's *Prologue*

The modern edition scans as a series of well-formed iambic pentameter lines of 10 syllables, provided that we take account of the pronunciation of some final or medial <e> syllables. A word-final <e> is elided before a vowel or <h>.

(This analysis does not imply that the verse would be read aloud as mechanically as it might suggest.)

But **first** / I **pray** / yow **of** / youre **cur** / **tei sye**  
 That **ye** / n'a **rette** / it **noght** / my **vi** / ley **nye**  
 Though **that** / I **pleyn** / ly **speke** / in **this** / ma **teere**  
 To **tel** / le **yow** / hir **wor** / des **and** / /hir **cheere**  
 Ne **thogh** / I **speke** / hir **wor** / des **pro** / pre **ly**.  
 For **this** / ye **know** / en **al** / so **wel** / as **I**  
 Who **so** / shal **telle** / a **tale** / af **ter** / a **man**  
 He **moot** / re **herce** / as **ny** / as **euere** / he **kan**      *euere* as one syllable  
 Eue / **rich** / a **word** / if it / be **in** / his **charge**  
 Al **speke** / he **neuer** / so **rud** / e **liche** / and **large**,      *neuer* as one syllable  
 Or **el** / lis **he** / moot **telle** / his **tale** / vntrewe  
 Or **feyn** / e **thyng** / or **fynd** / e **wor** / des **newe**.  
 He **may** / nat spare / al / **thogh** / he **were** / his **brother**      *brother* as one syllable  
 He **moot** / as **wel** / seye **o** / word **as** / a **nother**.  
 Crist **spak** / hym **self** / ful **brode** / in **hoo** / ly **writ**  
 And **wel** / ye **woot** / no **vi** / ley **nye** / is it.  
 Eek **Pla** / to **seith**, / who **so** / that **kan** / hym **rede**,  
 The **wor** / des **moote** / be **cos** / yn **to** / the **dede**.

Some lines of Dryden's version lack sufficient syllables and so cannot be read smoothly, because the spelling has omitted an <e>, which partly accounts for Dryden's criticism. The asterisk <\*> marks a deficient syllable in the following lines.

But **first**, / I **pray** / you, **of** / your **cour** / te **sy**,  
 That **ye** / ne ar **rete** / it **nought** / my **vil** / la **ny**,      the vowel of *ne* must be elided - *n'arrete*  
 Though **that** / I **plain** / ly **speak** / in **this** / mat / **tere**  
 To **tel** / len **you** / her **words**, / and **eke** / her **chere**:  
 Ne **though** / I **speak** / her **words** / \* **pro** / per **ly**,      one syllable deficient  
 For **this** / ye **kno** / wen **\*** / as **well** / as **I**,      one syllable deficient  
 Who shall / **tel len** / a tale / af **ter** / a **man**  
 He **mote** / re **hearse** / as **nye**, / as **ever** / He **can**:  
 \* **Ev** / erich **word** / of it / been **in** / his **charge**,  
 All **speke** / he, **never** / so **rude** /\* **ly**, / ne **large**.  
 Or **else** / he **mote** /\* **tellen** / his **tale** / unt **rue**,  
 Or **feine** /\* **things**, / or **find** /\* **words** /\* **new**:      this has only 7 syllables, omitting essential final  
 He **may** / not **spare**, / al **tho** / he **were** / his **brother**,      <e> syllables  
 He **mote** / as **well** / say **o** / words **as** / a **nother**.  
*Christ spake* / him **self** / full **broad** / in **ho** / ly **Writ**,  
 And **well** / I **wote** / no **Vil** / la **ny** / is it.  
 Eke **Pla** / to **saith**, / who **so** /\* **can** / him **rede**,  
 The **words** /\* **mote** / been **Cou** / sin **to** / the **dede**.