

This is an exercise in revisioning modern writing into an earlier time's grammar. It's a bit like doing a translation but in reverse. The task is to look at how the medieval culture of England approached the task of storytelling in, what they viewed, as the most effective way.

## An Exercise in Reverse Translation: Medieval Rhythm and Word Crafting

If you were reading an original text from Medieval England, you would notice that it doesn't rhyme. The Angles, Saxons, and Jutes (the people who migrated to England after the Romans left) didn't believe in rhyming. They used alliteration instead. So, instead of a familiar nursery rhyme like "Old King Cole" sounding like...

*Old King Cole was a merry old soul  
And a merry old soul was he;  
He called for his pipe, and he called for his bowl  
And he called for his fiddlers three.  
Every fiddler he had a fiddle,  
And a very fine fiddle had he;  
Oh there's none so rare, as can compare  
With King Cole and his fiddlers three.*

**...it would be written as...**

*Cole was king,  
mirthful he was and merry.  
His pipe and bowl called for he.  
And his fiddlers three in number also called he.  
And fine was their trilling  
Cole especially;  
And none the world over could compare.*

Also, everything important must be repeated three times: before it happens, while it happens, and after it happens. This is actually a reflection of how things worked in Anglo-Saxon times: story-telling was an integral part of the culture - especially during those long winter nights - and the professional story-teller, the scop (pronounced, "shope", to rhyme with "hope") was an essential piece of the fabric of medieval culture.

The written version of the tale isn't necessarily how it was performed, however. The scop had to keep his audience interested (it doesn't matter if you're inviolate, you don't want to make a bunch of drunken Viking-relatives angry!) and would alter the story on the fly, expanding upon a verse here, skipping a few there...

Beowulf was an ideal Anglo-Saxon king, actually: wise and strong in peace or in war, and generous. You demonstrated your wealth by giving it away in those days, passing the treasures on to others, who then promptly give them away to someone else. There was no stigma to receiving wealth, either; rewards were given to show thanks, so if you were getting treasure you deserved it!

### Now it's your turn:

Compose a variation of a nursery rhyme or a rhyme telling of your adventures and heroism. Be sure to use the style of the poet in Beowulf. Your version must be at least 6-7 lines.

Find some popular nursery rhymes here: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_nursery\\_rhymes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_nursery_rhymes)