

Piers Plowman Electronic Archive Teaching Resources

Paleography and Textual Editing Activity #3: Paleography Practice

Below are suggested manuscripts to use for practice transcription in paleography classes. Using the first page is recommended because it contains the most familiar material.

For absolute beginners:

Pull up an image from Cr1, Robert Crowley's first 1550 printing of *Piers Plowman*. Have students transcribe the text, being careful to keep capitals, punctuation, and "u" and "v" as they appear in the printed text. You might also suggest that they transcribe long "s," round "s," and round "r" as they appear rather than regularizing them.

For intermediate beginners:

Pull up an image of Manuscript C (a B Text). Have students identify the style of handwriting and practice transcribing a few lines; with more advanced students, who won't need to compare notes with one another, you might divide the page up and ask each student to transcribe a different section.

For advanced students:

Pull up an image of Manuscript G (another B Text). Again, have the students identify the style of handwriting. Because it is in secretary hand, this manuscript is much more difficult to read. Make sure that students note the conflation of "y" and "p" and the potentially confusing forms of final "s" and "e."

Optional extension for textual editing students:

As students transcribe passages of the above texts, have them make note of what they would want to mark in a diplomatic or critical edition. Discuss how they would go about marking notable details like rubrication, marginalia, and alterations (by the scribe or, as in G, by a later hand), either in a traditional typescript or a digital presentation. In the case of a digital editing class, see the Archive's transcription protocols for examples of how such marking has been done in a TEI-compliant project.