

Examples of Modern Alliterative Verse

From *The Lord of the Rings* by JRR Tolkien

The Name List of the Ents

Learn now the lore of Living Creatures!
First name the four, the free peoples:
Eldest of all, the Elf-children;
Dwarf the delver, dark are his houses;
Ent the earthborn, old as mountains;
Man the mortal, master of horses:

Beaver the builder, buck the leaper,
Bear bee-hunter, boar the fighter;
Hound is hungry, hare is fearful...
Eagle in eyrie, ox in pasture,
Hart horn-crowned; hawk is swiftest,
Swan the whitest, serpent coldest...

Ent the earthborn, old as mountains,
the wide-walkers, water drinking;
and hungry as hunters, the Hobbit children,
the laughing-folk, the little people.

A Call to Arms

Arise now, arise, Riders of Théoden!
Dire deeds awake, dark is it eastward.
Let horse be bridled, horn be sounded!
Forth Eorlingas!

Battle Cry of Theoden

Arise, arise, Riders of Theoden!
Fell deeds awake: fire and slaughter!
spear shall be shaken, shield be splintered,
a sword-day, a red day, ere the sun rises!
Ride now, ride now! Ride to Gondor!

Eomer's Song

Out of doubt, out of dark to the day's rising
I came singing in the sun, sword unsheathing.
To hope's end I rode and to heart's breaking:
Now for wrath, now for ruin and a red nightfall!

Mounds of Mundburg

We heard of the horns in the hills ringing,
the swords shining in the South-kingdom.
Steeds went striding to the Stoningland
as wind in the morning. War was kindled.
There Théoden fell, Thengling mighty,
to his golden halls and green pastures
in the Northern fields never returning,
high lord of the host. Harding and Guthláf,
Dúnhere and Déorwine, doughty Grimbold,
Herefara and Herubrand, Horn and Fastred,
fought and fell there in a far country:
in the Mounds of Mundburg under mould they lie
with their league-fellows, lords of Gondor.
Neither Hirluin the Fair to the hills by the sea,
nor Forlong the old to the flowering vales
ever, to Arnach, to his own country
returned in triumph; nor the tall bowmen,
Derufin and Duilin, to their dark waters,
meres of Morthond under mountain-shadows.
Death in the morning and at day's ending
lords took and lowly. Long now they sleep
under grass in Gondor by the Great River.
Grey now as tears, gleaming silver,
red then it rolled, roaring water:
foam dyed with blood flamed at sunset;
as beacons mountains burned at evening;
red fell the dew in Rammas Echor.

Burial Song of Theoden

Out of doubt, out of dark, to the day's rising
he rode singing in the sun, sword unsheathing.
Hope he rekindled, and in hope ended;
over death, over dread, over doom lifted
out of loss, out of life, unto long glory.

Examples of Modern Alliterative Verse

From *Age of Anxiety*

By WH Auden (1948)

Now the news. Night raids on
Five cities. Fires started.
Pressure applied by pincer movement
In threatening thrust. Third Division
Enlarges beachhead. Lucky charm
Saves sniper. Sabotage hinted
In steel-mill stoppage. . . .

From *Junk*

By Richard Wilbur

An axe angles from my neighbor's ashcan;
It is hell's handiwork, the wood not hickory,
The flow of the grain not faithfully followed.
The shivered shaft rises from a shellheap
Of plastic playthings paper plates,
And the sheer shards of shattered tumblers
That were not annealed for the time needful.
At the same curbside, a cast-off cabinet
Of wavily warped unseasoned wood
Waits to be trundled in the trashman's truck.
Haul them off! Hide them! the heart winces
For junk and gimcrack for jerrybuilt things
And the men who make them for a little money,
Bartering pride like the bought boxer
Who pulls his punches, or the paid-off jockey
Who in the home-stretch holds in his horse.

Notice that in the second poem, the alliteration can be in either stress of the second half-line. This is common in modern alliterative poetry, but not in period Anglo-Saxon.