

Sievers Types



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Overview: Basic Patterns

Table 1: The basic Sievers types

Type	Pattern	Examples	
A	/ x / x	eorlic ellen; glǣdne Hrōðgār; wīde sīðas	(cf. 2 trochees)
B	x / x /	ond Halga til	(cf. 2 iambs)
C	x / / x	gebūn hæfdon	(cf. iamb + trochee)
D ₁	/ / \ x	frēan Scyldinga	(cf. spondee + trochee)
D ₂	/ / x \	wēold wīdeferhð; hār hilderinc	(cf. spondee + iamb)
E	/ \ x /	healærna mǣst	(cf. spondee + iamb)

- ▶ Classical terminology unsuitable given
 - ▶ The variable number of syllables to a dip
 - ▶ (The principle that foot boundaries must coincide with word boundaries)

But we can speak of rising and falling feet.

Overview: Extended Patterns

Table 2: Sievers types with optional anacrusis and extended dips

Type	Pattern	Examples
A	$[x\ x] / x\ (x\ x\ x\ x) / x$	hǣþene æt hilde
B	$(x\ x\ x\ x)\ x / x\ (x) /$	and tō þære hilde stōp
C	$(x\ x\ x\ x\ x)\ x / / x$	hē lēt hēo þæt land būan
D ₁	$[x\ x] / (x\ x\ x) / \backslash x$	Offa þone sǣlidan
D ₂	$[x\ x] / (x\ x\ x) / x\ (x) \backslash$	eald enta ġeweorc
E	$/ \backslash x\ (x) /$	wǣlræste ġecēas

Type A1: /x/x

► Two lifts, no half lifts

(1) / × / ×
gomban gylðan

Beowulf 11a; basic pattern

(2) / × / ×
Scyldes eafera

Beowulf 19a; resolved second lift

(3) × / × × × / ×
Gewāt him þā tō waroðe

Beowulf 234a; anacrusis, longer first dip, resolution

Type A2 (Heavy Verse): /\

- A half-lift in either or both dips

(4) glædman Hrōðgār

Beowulf 367b; a secondary and a tertiary stress

(5) witenā wēlhwylic

Beowulf 266a; resolved first lift

(6) sigerōf kyning

Beowulf 619b; resolved first lift

(7) fyrdsearu fūslicu

Beowulf 232a; both half-lifts resolved

Type A₃ (Light Verse): xx/x

- ▶ No “first” lift
- ▶ At least two unstressed syllables before the remaining lift
- ▶ Limited to on-verse
- ▶ Single alliteration

(8) × × × × / ×
Næs þæt þonne mǣtost

*Beowulf*_{1455a}

(9) × × × × × / ×
ðāra þe hē geworhte

*Beowulf*_{1578a}

Type B: x/x/

- ▶ Rarely more than one resolved lift
- ▶ Variable number of unstressed syllables in the first dip; rarely more than two in the second

(10) x / x /
ond Grendles hond *Beowulf* 927b; basic pattern

(11) x / x /
tō sele þām hēan *Beowulf* 919b; first lift resolved, contraction maintained

(12) x / x /
on nicera mere *Beowulf* 845b; both lifts resolved

(13) x x x x / x /
swylce hīe æt Finnes hām *Beowulf* 1156a; longer first dip

(14) x x x / x /
Scolde his aldorġedāl *Beowulf* 805b; longer first dip, parasiting vowel suppressed

(15) x x x x x / x x /
þāra þe hit mid mundum bewand *Beowulf* 1461b; longer dips

Type C: x//x

- ▶ Variable number of unstressed syllables in the first dip; just one in the second
- ▶ Rarely a resolved second lift
- ▶ Second lift is often carried by a short syllable (the second element in a compound)

(16) x / / x
on weġ þanon

Beowulf 844b; basic pattern

(17) x / / x
æt Wealhþeôn

Beowulf 629b; contraction suppressed

(18) x x x x x / / x
þonne hē on þæt sinc starað

Beowulf 1485b; longer first dip

(19) x x / / x
ac hē sigewæpnum

Beowulf 804a; first lift resolved

(20) x x x x / / x
Nō ic mē an herewæsmun

Beowulf 677a; first lift resolved

Type D: // \x

- ▶ Second foot often a compound or derived form
- ▶ Second dip of D_1 has just one unstressed syllable, first dip of D_2 up to two
- ▶ Either lift may be resolved; rarely both
- ▶ Half lift usually not resolved; in D_1 may be just a short syllable
- ▶ Second lift in D_1 may be a short syllable
- ▶ May be “expanded” with (usually) one unstressed syllable after the first lift, requiring double alliteration (D^*_1 , D^*_2)

Type D_I: // \ x

(21) $\begin{array}{cccc} / & / & \backslash & \times \\ \text{g} & \text{ū} & \text{ð} & \text{fremmendra} \end{array}$

Beowulf 246a; basic pattern

(22) $\begin{array}{cccc} / & / & \backslash & \times \\ \text{c} & \text{ea} & \text{ṭer} & \text{būendum} \end{array}$

Beowulf 768a; parasiting vowel suppressed

Type D₂ //x\

(23) wēold wīdeferhǫ

Beowulf 702a; basic pattern

(24) bād bolgenmōd

Beowulf 709a; basic pattern

(25) maga māne fāh

Beowulf 978a; resolved first lift

(26) Duru sōna onarn

Beowulf 721b; resolved first lift, longer dip

Type D*_I: /x/\x

(27) / × / \ ×
ēode yrremōd

Beowulf 726a

(28) / × / \ ×
eorlum ealuscerwen

Beowulf 769a; resolved second lift

(29) × / × / \ ×
onbræd þā bealohyðig

Beowulf 723a; anacrusis, resolved second lift

Type D*₂: /x/x\

(30) / × / × \
lēoda landgeweorc

Beowulf 938a

(31) × / × / × \
ġehnǣġde helle ġāst

Beowulf 1274a; anacrusis

Type E: /\x/

- ▶ Either lift may be resolved; rarely both
- ▶ Dip usually a single unstressed syllable, sometimes two
- ▶ Some verses ambiguous between D2 and E; alliteration, syntax, content may help

(32) $\begin{array}{cccc} \diagup & \diagdown & \times & \diagup \\ \text{dēa} & \text{ðf} & \text{ǣge} & \text{dēog} \end{array}$

Beowulf 850a; contraction maintained

(33) $\begin{array}{cccc} \diagup & \diagdown & \times & \diagup \\ \text{sund} & \text{nytte} & \text{drēah} & \end{array}$

Beowulf 2360b; contraction maintained

(34) $\begin{array}{cccc} \diagup & \diagdown & \times & \diagup \\ \text{wælf} & \text{āgne} & \text{wint} & \text{er} \end{array}$

Beowulf 1128a; parasitic vowel suppressed

Anacrusis

Verses of types A (/x/x) and D (//\x) may start with one or two unstressed syllables, which are considered extrametrical:

(35) [×] [/] [×] [/] [×]
 swā sǣ bebūgeð *Beowulf*_{1223b} (type A₁)

(36) [×] [/] [×] [/] \ [×]
 befongen frēawrāsnum *Beowulf*_{1451a} (type D*₁)

(37) [×] [×] [/] [×] [×] [/] [×]
 ġē æt hām ġē æt herġe *Beowulf*_{1248a} (type A₁)

Foot Boundaries

Table 3: Foot boundaries according to Sievers

A	/ x / x	eorlic ellen; glædne Hrōðgār; wīde sīðas
B	x / x /	ond Halga til; swā giōmormōd
C	x / / x	gebūn hæfdon; be ġðlāfe
D ₁	/ / \ x	frēan Scyldinga; hār hilderinc
D ₂	/ / x \	wēold wīdeferhð
E	/ \ x /	healærna mæst

- ▶ Verses like *ond Halga til* and *be ġðlāfe* favour a feet division based on word boundaries (see esp. Russom).
- ▶ Some scholars abandon Sievers's types altogether (see again Russom).

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