RIDDLES

There are riddles in Old English poetry dating back to the seventh and eighth centuries C.E. The subject matter of the riddles is drawn from everyday life. A number of the riddles are written in the first person, the speaker personifying the subject of the riddle. Sometimes the clues are paradoxes, statements that appear to be self-contradictory, yet actually are true.

The wave, over the wave, a weird thing I saw,

through-wrought, and wonderfully ornate; a wonder on the wave – water became bone.

Anglo-Saxon poetry does not rhyme, but has very strong rhythms, suitable for chanting. There are four accented syllables or beats in each line, with a pause (caesura) after the second beat. Alliteration is used to link the two halves of the line. One or more accented syllables in the first half of a line almost always alliterate with the first accented syllable in the second half.

Here is an example of a modern riddle:
The land was white
The seed was black
It'll take a good scholar
To riddle me that.
(Hint: It's black and white and red all over.)

Jennifer Hind, "Riddles," *The Royal Gazette*, Bermuda, 2003.

Scan the display ads in today's edition of *your newspaper* and clip out a picture of an item that appeals to you. Paste the picture in the space below, and write a modern riddle to describe it. Make sure you put in enough clues to make it solveable.

Use metaphors and puns to make your riddle interesting. In the modern riddle at left, there is a pun: the white background of the paper – ground – land, and a metaphor: words are seeds of ideas. In the second *red* is a pun of *read*.

Now try re-writing your riddle in the Anglo-Saxon style.			