

## Grammatical Gender

Old English and other Indo-European languages had a three-fold distinction of a grammatical category called gender. It's not the same as what is commonly called gender, where a rooster might be masculine, a mare feminine, and a farm neuter. Instead, in Old English the way words were assigned to a gender had little to do with biological sex or social constructions. The association between word and gender is more random. The first group of words below, for example, are all feminine nouns (*o*-stems, see our textbook) preceded by their demonstratives.

sēo sāwol	the soul
sēo firen	the crime
sēo giefu	the gift
sēo cwēn	the queen

The following are neuter (*a*-stems):

þæt lim	the limb
þæt wīf	the woman
þæt word	the word
þæt cynn	the kin

And masculine (*a*-stems):

se æcer	the acre
se wulf	the wolf
se fugol	the fowl
se mearh	the horse

For each group, write out the appropriate inflection for the definite article and the noun as directed in the box to the right. You will need to consult the textbook for the correct forms for both the article and noun ending.

sēo sāwol	dative singular	þære sawle
sēo firen	accusative singular	_____
sēo giefu	nominitive plural	_____
sēo cwēn	genitive plural	_____

þæt lim	dative singular	_____
þæt wīf	accusative singular	_____
þæt word	nominitive plural	_____
þæt cynn	genitive plural	_____

se æcer	dative singular	_____
se wulf	accusative singular	_____
se fugol	nominitive plural	_____
se mearh	genitive plural	_____