

An Overview of the Origins of English

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Conquest & Language – pre-English

- 55 B.C.E. – **Romans** arrive
- 410 – **Romans** depart

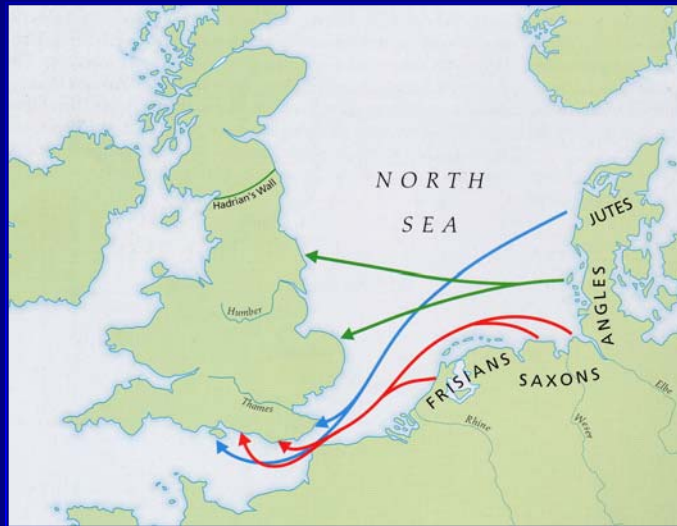
- Few borrowings (c. 20) from the indigenous **Celtic**, e.g.:
 - *carr* ‘rock’, *dunn* ‘grey’, *brock* ‘badger’
- A few Celtic-based place names, e.g.:
 - Rivers: *Thames*, *Avon* ‘river’, *Wye*
 - Towns: *Dover* ‘water’, *London* (tribal name), *Kent*

- A number of cultural borrowings (c. 200) from **Latin**, e.g.:
 - Food: *pise* ‘pea’, *win* ‘wine’, *cyse* ‘cheese’, *plante* ‘plant’
 - Clothing: *belt* ‘belt’, *cemes* ‘shirt’, *sutere* ‘shoemaker’
 - Others: *weall* ‘wall’, *stræt* ‘road’, *pund* ‘pound’, *munuc* ‘monk’



Conquest & Language – “Ingvaemonic”

- c. 449 – **Jutes** settle in Kent
- 449 – **Angles** settle in Northumbria & Mercia
- 477 – **Saxons** settle in Sussex, Essex, Middlesex and Wessex
 - Each tribe spoke a dialect of **Ingvaemonic**, a sub-group of West-Germanic





Conquest & Language – Old English

- Four distinct dialects formed:
 - **Kentish** (Jutes); few extant texts
 - **Northumbrian** (Angles), dominant in late 7th century
 - **Mercian** (Angles), dominant in early 8th century
 - (West) **Saxon**, dominant in 9th & 10th centuries; most extant texts are Saxon
- **Northumbrian:** Nu scylun hergean hefaenricaes uard,
(8th C) Metudæs maecti end his modgidanc,
Uerc uuldurfadur, sue he uundra gihuaes,
Eci dryctin, or astelidæ.
- **West Saxon:** Nu we sceolan herigean heofonrices weard,
(11th C) Methodes mihte 7 his modgeþanc,
Wera wuldorfæder, swa he wuldres gehwæs,
Ece drihten, ord onstealde.
- **Translation:** *Now we shall praise the keeper of the heavenly kingdom,
the power of the lord of destiny and his imagination,
the deeds of the glorious father, when of every glorious thing
he, the eternal lord, ordained the beginning*



Features of the Old English Lexicon

- Widespread use of compounding:
 - *dæg* ‘day’ + *red* ‘red’ = *dægred* ‘dawn’
 - *beor* ‘beer’ + *scipe* ‘ship’ = *gebeorscipe* ‘banquet’
 - *ban* ‘bone’ + *hus* ‘house’ = *banhus* ‘body’
 - *fisces* ‘fish’ + *epel* ‘home’ = *fisceseþel* ‘sea’
 - *seol* ‘seal’ + *bæþ* ‘bath’ = *seolbæþ* ‘sea’
- ... and affixation:
 - *gan* ‘go’
 - *ingan* ‘go in’
 - *oþgan* ‘go away’
 - *upgan* ‘go up’
 - *utgan* ‘go out’



Personal Pronouns – Old English

	Nominative	Accusative	Dative	Genitive
1 st singular	<i>ic</i>	<i>me</i>	<i>me</i>	<i>min</i>
2 nd singular	<i>þu</i>	<i>þe</i>	<i>þe</i>	<i>þin</i>
3 rd singular (M)	<i>he</i>	<i>hine</i>	<i>him</i>	<i>his</i>
3 rd singular (F)	<i> heo </i>	<i>hi</i>	<i>hire</i>	<i>hire</i>
3 rd singular (N)	<i>hit</i>	<i>hit</i>	<i>him</i>	<i>his</i>
1 st plural	<i>we</i>	<i>us</i>	<i>us</i>	<i>ure</i>
2 nd plural	<i>ge</i>	<i>oew</i>	<i>eow</i>	<i>eower</i>
3 rd plural	<i>hi</i>	<i>heo</i>	<i>him</i>	<i>hira</i>



An Old English Text – what is it?

Fæder ure, þu þe eart on heofonum,
si þin nama gehalgod.

To becume þin rice.

Gewurþe ðin willa on eorðan swa swa on heofonum.

Urne gedæghwamlican hlaf syle us to dæg.

And forgyf us ure gyltas,

swa swa we forgyfað urum gyltendum.

And ne gelæd þu us costnunge,

ac alys us of yfele.



Translation into Modern (?) English

Our Father, who art in Heaven,
hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.



Recognizable (?) Cognates with Modern English

<i>Fæder</i>	‘father’	<i>ure</i>	‘our’
<i>on</i>	‘in’	<i>heofonum</i>	‘heaven’
<i>nama</i>	‘name’	<i>becume</i>	‘come’
<i>þin / ðin</i>	‘thy (your)’	<i>willa</i>	‘will’
<i>eorðan</i>	‘earth’	<i>us</i>	‘us’
<i>dæg</i>	‘day’	<i>forgyf</i>	‘forgive’
<i>gyltas</i>	‘guilt, trespass’	<i>yfele</i>	‘evil’
<i>eart</i>	‘is’ (2 nd sg.)		



Conquest & Language – Latin

- 597 – Augustine sent to Kent from **Rome** to introduce **Christianity** to the English
- Numerous borrowings, many relating to religion, e.g.:
 - Religious: *alter* ‘altar’, *apostol* ‘apostle’, *cylpe* ‘fault’, *mæsse* ‘mass’
 - Others: *calend* ‘month’, *epistol* ‘letter’, *fenester* ‘window’
- Semantic shifting of extant Old English words in religious contexts, e.g.:
 - ‘**heaven**’, ‘**hell**’, ‘**God**’, ‘**sin**’



Traces of the First Vowel Shift

- *i*-umlaut – c. 7th century:
 - Condition: vowel in **stressed** syllable + **high-front** vowel [i]
 - Mutation: vowels in stressed syllable **fronted** and **raised**
- Example: ‘**foot**’ */**fo:t**/ (sing.), /**fo:tiz**/ (plur.)
 - i) in the plural, [o:] → [e:] (which later shifted to [i:])
 - ii) **-iz** ending dropped as sing and plural distinct, to give /**fo:t**/, /**fe:t**/
- Verb-forming suffix: ***-ian** e.g. *food/feed*
Adjective-forming suffix: ***-ip** e.g. *strong/strength*
- An example of **vowel harmony**



Conquest & Language – Old Norse

- 787 – Frequent raids by **Vikings**, leading to:
- 886 – Introduction of **Danelaw**; contact with **Old Norse**
- 991 – **Danish** rule of England for 25 years





Conquest & Language – Old Norse

- Numerous borrowings, e.g.:
 - Common words: *both, same, get, give, take, they*
 - General: *want, knife, die, fellow*
 - Towns: *Derby, Rugby, Althorp, Braithwait, Lowestoft*
 - Introduction of consonant cluster: *sk-*, e.g. *skirt, sky, skin, skill*
- Competition between Old English (OE) and Old Norse (ON) forms:
 - OE retained: path / *reike* (ON); sorrow / *site* (ON);
 - OE replaced: egg / *ey* (OE); sister / *sweostor* (OE);
 - Co-existing: ill (OE) / *sick* (ON); hide (OE) / skin (ON);
heal (OE) / hail (ON); church (OE) / kirk (ON)
- Many Old Norse borrowings **did not find literary use** until **12th century** or later, and then mainly in Northern texts



Conquest & Language – Old Norse

- Many inflections lost:
 - Possible emergence of **pidgin** facilitating communication between **Old Norse** speakers of the Danelaw and **Old English** speakers of Northumberland and Mercia
 - **Morphology** replaced by **word order**
 - Transition from **SOV** to **SVO** established
- 3rd person plural pronouns replaced:
hi, heo, him, hira → *they, them*, (to) *them, their*
- 1st, 2nd & 3rd person plural of copula:
sindon → *are*
- 3rd person singular present tense verb ending: **-s**



Gradual Emergence of Middle English

- 1066 – **Norman** rule of England begins
- 1264-5 – Rise of English nationalism: **Barons' War**
- 1337-1453 – **Hundred Years War** with France
- 1362 – **English language** used for first time in Parliament

- Why was English **not replaced** by French?
 - *c.* **2% Norman** population
 - **Deteriorating relations** with France after 150 years
 - The monarch and court spoke French, but by late 12th century, **inter-marriage** common; children of nobles were native English speakers

- **Anglo-Saxon** literary styles disappeared in 11th century, but were briefly **adopted again in 13th century**, perhaps due to nationalism



The Middle English Lexicon

- In **Old English**, <3% of lexicon borrowed;
But in late **Middle English** (late 14th century), **c.25%** borrowed.
 - In Modern English, **c.70%** borrowed.
- Widespread borrowing from **Old French**:
 - Replacements: *leod* → *people*; *wlitig* → *beautiful*
 - Semantic shift: *doom* / *judgment*; *pig* / *pork*; *stench* / *aroma*
 - Co-existing: *help* / *aid*; *freedom* / *liberty*; *hide* / *conceal*
- Numerous borrowing from **Latin**, some possibly via French:
 - Religious: *scripture*, *infinite*, *immortal*
 - Legal: *legal*, *homicide*, *prosecute*, *conviction*
 - Learning: *equator*, *history*, *magnify*, *mechanical*
 - e.g. The Wycliffe Bible (c.1380)



The Middle English Dialects

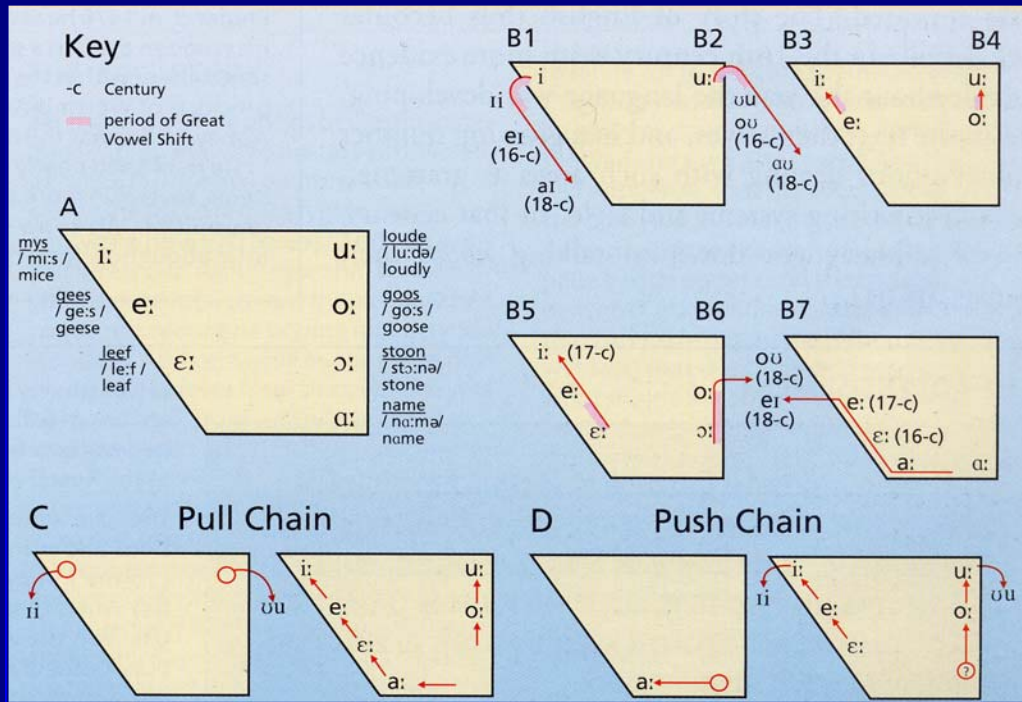
- The dialects of **Middle English** correlate well to those of **Old English**:
 - **Kentish**
 - Northumbrian, now called **Northern**
 - Mercian, split into **West** and **East Midland**
 - West Saxon, now called **Southern**
- The standardization of literary English:
 - The influence of **London** grew from the mid-14th century
 - **Migration** brought the London dialect into **contact** with other dialects and writing styles, particularly from the **East Midlands**;
 - **Printing**, brought to London by William Caxton in 1476, allowed the East Midland-influenced literary style to become a **national standard** from which emerged **Modern English**





The Great Vowel Shift

- One shift or two independent shifts? – raising + diphthongization





The Advent of Modern English – Chaucer to Shakespeare

- Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales* (c.1400):
O mooder Mayde! O mayde Mooder free!
O bussh unbrent brennyng in Motses sighte
That ravysheedst doun fro the Deitee
Thurgh thyn humblesse the Goost that in th'alighte ...
- Shakespeare, *Macbeth* (1605–6):
Now o'er the one half-world
Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse
The curtain'd sleep; now witchcraft celebrates
Pale Hecate's offerings; and wither'd murder ...