

# HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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| <p><b>PROTO-ENGLISH</b><br/>BEFORE 600 AD</p>          | <p>The language we call English was first brought to the north sea coasts of England in the 5th and 6th centuries A.D., by seafaring people from Denmark and the northwestern coasts of present-day Germany and the Netherlands. These immigrants spoke a cluster of related dialects falling within the Germanic branch of the Indo-European language family.</p> <p>Their language began to develop its own distinctive features in isolation from the continental Germanic languages, and by 600 A.D. had developed into what we call Old English or Anglo-Saxon, covering the territory of most of modern England.</p>   |   |
| <p><b>OLD ENGLISH (ANGLO-SAXON)</b><br/>600-1100AD</p> | <p>New waves of Germanic invaders and settlers came from Norway and Denmark starting in the late 8th century. The more violent of these were Vikings. The invading Germanic tribes spoke similar languages, which in Britain developed into what we now call Old English.</p> <p>Native English speakers now would have great difficulty understanding Old English. Nevertheless, about half of the most commonly used words in Modern English have Old English roots. The words <i>be</i>, <i>strong</i> and <i>water</i>, for example, derive from Old English. Old English was spoken until around 1100.</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Beowulf</i></li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>NORMAN CONQUEST OF 1066</b></p>                  |  |   |
| <p><b>MIDDLE ENGLISH</b><br/>CA. 1100-1500</p>         | <p>The Norman Invasion and Conquest brought new rulers and new cultural, social and linguistic influences to the British Isles. The Norman French ruling minority dominated the church, government, legal, and educational systems for three centuries. The Norman establishment used French and Latin, leaving English as the language of the illiterate and powerless majority.</p> <p>During this period English adopted thousands of words from Norman French and from Latin, and its grammar changed rather radically. By the end of that time, however, the aristocracy had adopted English as their language and the use and importance of French gradually faded. The period from the Conquest to the reemergence of English as a full-fledged literary language is called Middle English.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>The Canterbury Tales</i></li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>MODERN ENGLISH</b><br/>1500-PRESENT</p>          | <p>Early Modern (1500-1650)<br/>Late Modern (1650-Present)</p> <p>William Caxton set up the first printing press in Britain at the end of the 15th century. The arrival of printing marks the point at which the language began to take the first steps toward standardization and its eventual role as a national language.</p> <p>The Great English Vowel Shift, which systematically shifted the phonetic values of all the long vowels in English, occurred during this period. Word order became more fixed in a subject-verb-object pattern, and English developed a complex auxiliary verb system. A rush of new vocabulary entered the language.</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Paradise Lost</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Shakespeare</i></li> <li>▪ <i>King James Bible</i></li> </ul> |

# THE LORD'S PRAYER

## OLD ENGLISH

*Matthew 6.9 (11th c.)*

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 todæg and forgyf us ure gyltas swa swa we forgyfað urum gyltendum and ne gelæd þu us on costnunge ac alys us of yfele soþlice. (Corpus Christi College MS 140, ed. Liuzza (1994))

## MIDDLE ENGLISH

*Matthew 6.9 (Wycliffe's translation, c. 1380)*

Oure fadir that art in heuenes, halewid be thi name; thi kyndoom come to; be thi wille don in erthe as in heuene: gyue to us this dai oure breed ouer othir substaunce; and forgyue to us oure dettis, as we forgyuen to oure gettouris; and lede us not in to temptacioun, but delyuere us fro yuel.

## EARLY MODERN ENGLISH

*The King James Bible (1611)*

Our father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever, Amen.