

# History of english language

[Linguistics](#), [Language](#)



ISL Linguistic Date: 12 January 2013 History of the English Language • Indo-European Language Family Tree • World Englishes History of the English Language Source: <http://www.danshort.com/ie/timeline.htm> The figure below shows the timeline of the history of the English language. \* The earliest known residents of the British Isles were the Celts, who spoke Celtic languages—a separate branch of the Indo-European language family tree. \* Over the centuries the British Isles were invaded and conquered by various peoples, who brought their languages and customs with them as they settled in their new lives. There is now very little Celtic influence left in English. The earliest time when we can say that English was spoken was in the 5th century CE (Common Era—a politically correct term used to replace AD). Source: <http://www.studyenglishtoday.net/english-language-history.html> \* The English language belongs to the West Germanic branch of the Indo-European family of languages. The closest undoubted living relatives of English are Scots and Frisian. \* Frisian is a language spoken by approximately half a million people in the Dutch province of Friesland, in nearby areas of Germany, and on a few islands in the North Sea. The history of the English language has traditionally been divided into three main periods: 1. Old English (450-1100 AD) 2. Middle English (1100-circa 1500 AD) 3. Modern English (since 1500). Over the centuries, the English language has been influenced by a number of other languages. Old English (450 - 1100 AD): \* During the 5th Century AD three Germanic tribes (Saxons, Angles, and Jutes) came to the British Isles from various parts of northwest Germany as well as Denmark. \* These tribes were warlike and pushed out most of the original, Celtic-speaking inhabitants from England into Scotland, Wales, and

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Cornwall. One group migrated to the Brittany Coast of France where their descendants still speak the Celtic Language of Breton today. \* Through the years, the Saxons, Angles and Jutes mixed their different Germanic dialects. This group of dialects forms what linguists refer to as Old English or Anglo-Saxon. \* The word "English" was in Old English "Englisc", and that comes from the name of the Angles. The Angles were named from Engle, their land of origin. \* Before the Saxons the language spoken in what is now England was a mixture of Latin and various Celtic languages which were spoken before the Romans came to Britain (54-5BC). The Romans brought Latin to Britain, which was part of the Roman Empire for over 400 years. \* Many of the words passed on from this era are those coined by Roman merchants and soldiers. These include wine (wine), candle (candle), belt (belt), wall (wall). \* The arrival of St. Augustine in 597 and the introduction of Christianity into Saxon England brought more Latin words into the English language. \* They were mostly concerned with the naming of Church dignitaries, ceremonies, etc. Some, such as church, bishop, baptism, monk, eucharist and presbyter came indirectly through Latin from the Greek. Around 878 AD Danes and Norsemen, also called Vikings, invaded the country and English got many Norse words into the language, particularly in the north of England. \* The Vikings, being Scandinavian, spoke a language (Old Norse) which, in origin at least, was just as Germanic as Old English. \* Words derived from Norse include: sky, egg, cake, skin, leg, window (wind eye), husband, fellow, skill, anger, flat, odd, ugly, get, give, take, raise, call, die, they, their, them. ("The Origin and History of the English Language", Kryss Katsiavriades) Several written works have survived from the Old

English period. The most famous is a heroic epic poem called "Beowulf".

Middle English (1100-circa 1500 AD): \* After William the Conqueror, the Duke of Normandy, invaded and conquered England in 1066 AD with his armies and became king, he brought his nobles, who spoke French, to be the new government. \* The Old French took over as the language of the court, administration, and culture. \* Latin was mostly used for written language, especially that of the Church. The English language, as the language of the now lower class, was considered a vulgar tongue. \* By about 1200, England and France had split. English changed a lot, because it was mostly being spoken instead of written for about 300 years. \* The use of Old English came back, but with many French words added. \* This language is called Middle English. Most of the words embedded in the English vocabulary are words of power, such as crown, castle, court, parliament, army, mansion, gown, beauty, banquet, art, poet, romance, duke, servant, peasant, traitor and governor. ("Language Timeline", The British Library Board) \* Because the English underclass cooked for the Norman upper class, the words for most domestic animals are English (ox, cow, calf, sheep, swine, deer) while the words for the meats derived from them are French (beef, veal, mutton, pork, bacon, venison). ("The Origin and History of the English Language", Kryss Katsiavriades) \* The Middle English is also characterized for the beginning of the Great Vowel Shift which occurred during the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries. \* .

It was a massive sound change affecting the long vowels of English. \* The long vowels shifted upwards; that is, a vowel that used to be pronounced in one place in the mouth would be pronounced in a different place, higher up

in the mouth. \* The most famous example of Middle English is Chaucer's "The Canterbury Tales". Modern English (1500 to the present): \* Modern English developed after William Caxton established his printing press at Westminster Abbey in 1476. Johann Gutenberg invented the printing press in Germany around 1450, but Caxton set up England's first press.

The Bible and some valuable manuscripts were printed. \* The invention of the printing press made books available to more people. The books became cheaper and more people learned to read. Printing also brought standardization to English. \* By the time of Shakespeare's writings (1592-1616), the language had become clearly recognizable as Modern English. \* There were three big developments in the world at the beginning of Modern English period: 1. The Renaissance 2. The Industrial Revolution 3. The British Colonialism. It was during the English Renaissance that most of the words from Greek and Latin entered English. This period in English cultural history (early 16th century to the early 17th century) is sometimes referred to as "the age of Shakespeare" or "the Elizabethan era", taking the name of the English Renaissance's most famous author and most important monarch, respectively. \* During the reign of Queen Elizabeth I there was an explosion of culture in the form of support of the arts, popularization of the printing press, and massive amounts of sea travel. England began the Industrial Revolution (18th century) and this had also an effect on the development of the language as new words had to be invented or existing ones modified to cope with the rapid changes in technology. \* New technical words were added to the vocabulary as inventors designed various products and machinery. These words were named after the inventor or given the name of their choice

(trains, engine, pulleys, combustion, electricity, telephone, telegraph, camera etc). Britain was an Empire for 200 years between the 18th and 20th centuries and English language continued to change as the British Empire moved across the world - to the USA, Australia, New Zealand, India, Asia and Africa. \* They sent people to settle and live in their conquered places and as settlers interacted with natives, new words were added to the English vocabulary. For example, 'kangaroo' and 'boomerang' are native Australian Aborigine words, 'juggernaut' and 'turban' came from India. (See more borrowings from different languages. )