

Alphabets

Principles of writing can be realized in a wide variety of ways. Some languages use a *syllabary*; some use *ideograms* or a *logogram system of characters*; others, like English use an *alphabet*. There are also *rebus*-supported systems of writing.

Syllabaries

make use of graphic symbols that stand not for a single sound (or phoneme), but for a combination of sounds, usually a consonant + vowel combination, which together make up a syllable. Japanese uses a syllabary, as does Cherokee. Example: the following comes from a chart of the syllabary used to write the Cherokee language. As you can see, the first line combines an initial /ts/ and the second line an initial /w/ with the vowels in each column: a – e – i – o – u – v). All told the Cherokee syllabary consists of some 85 syllabograms.

G tsa	V tse	h tsi	K tso	ɖ tsu	C tsv
G wa	ᵛ we	ᵛ wi	ᵛ wo	9 wu	6 wv

Ideograms

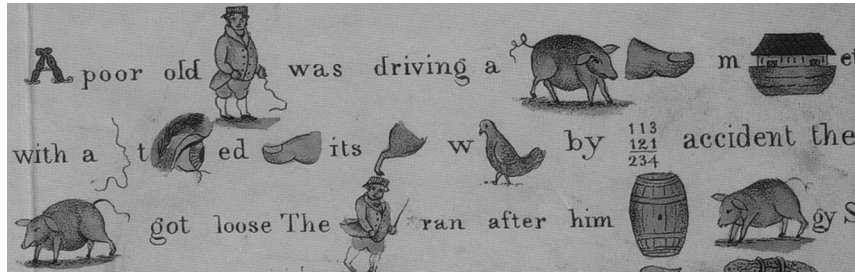
are characters said to correspond to “ideas” (meanings) rather than to pronunciations. Chinese is the best known example of a language with a writing system made up of ideograms. The total number of characters that are available for Chinese may lie close to 50,000 even though normally well-educated users of Chinese can manage very well with between three and four thousand. Example:

字 is the character for *hànzì* “Chinese character.”

Rebus

English stands in distinct contrast to Chinese inasmuch as it uses a phonetic writing system or *alphabet*. English does, of course, use holistic symbols such as <#> or <%> or <\$>, and, indeed, it always has as we see in the use of <7>, a character from the *Tironian notes* (devised by Marcus Tullius Tiro, 103–4 BE), the

secretary of Cicero, in his stenographic short-hand), which stands for *ond* “and” in much the way that & (&ersand) does today. English sometimes indulges in the fun of a text containing rebus forms (a rebus is picture or symbol that resembles the intended sound or spelling). Example:



(A poor old man was driving a pig to market with a whip tied to its leg when by some accident the pig got loose. The man ran after him, but piggy es[caped] ...)

While the example just given is a bit older, we should not forget that people still love the ludic element in such texts and play it out in *texting* or e-mail language.

An alphabet

is a system of written symbols that represent sounds. In our case, an alphabet, but which one? For there are quite a few. Examples: α β γ δ ε (Greek); а б в г д е (Cyrillic); א ב ג ד ה (Hebrew); or a b c d e (Latin)?

The alphabet of Old English

OE used *runes* in the very early period, but OE spelling adopted the Latin alphabet with the phonetic values of the letters associated with it and added new letters to represent some of the sounds that differed from Latin. These graphs include *thorn* <þ>, which is used for present-day <th>, as is <ð>, called *eth*. In text 2.1 <þ> occurs initially only, as in *þis* “this” or *þā* “the/those (nominative plural)”; and <ð> elsewhere, e.g. *frīð* “peace, refuge” or *oðerne* “other, second, next.” Both of them are pronounced either as voiceless/θ/ or voiced /ð/ depending on their position in a word and the stress pattern of the word. *Wynn* <ƿ> for /w/ is a further graph used in OE, but not present in the Latin alphabet. A final, slightly unusual letter is <æ> as in *þær* “there, then.” It is called “ash” and is pronounced as a low front vowel, for which the *International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)* uses the same symbol /æ/. Very limited use was made in OE of distinct capital letters. However, the differentiation began to grow as the Carolingian script spread in the period after the ninth century. The parallel existence of both uncial (majuscule) script and Carolingian minuscule script led to a capital-lower case distinction (see color plate no. 2.1 Mercy and Truth [Carolingian minuscule]).

Middle English

added the letter *yogh* <ȝ> for /j/, /g/, and /l/. In the long term the Latin alphabet was adopted in its classical form with 23 letters. During the EModE period printers ceased to use the letters unfamiliar to present-day readers of English even though <y> sometimes served as a replacement for earlier <þ> (see Text 6.2, where *gy* stands for both *the* and *thee*).

In EModE

<i/j> and <u/v> stood in complementary distribution: initial <v> was used not only where ModE has <v> as in *vallies* but also where it has <u> as in *Vranias*; medial <u> appears in both *huntresse* and *loue* (see text 6.8). The letter <j> was still rare at the beginning of the period; instead <i> was used for both the vowel (*him*) and the consonant (*Iesus*). Furthermore, we often find <y> where ModE has <i>: Text 6.3 has both *hys* and *his*.

The present English alphabet of 26 letters was finally established when it added three new distinct graphemes: <w> replaced wynn and a once truly double <u>; and the two pairs of complementary allo-graphs <i/j> and <u/v> became as distinct graphemes <i> and <u> for vowels and <j> and <v> for consonants from the end of the Renaissance on.

Other letters than the familiar twenty-six do, in fact, crop up, but these are either printers ligatures like <œ> for <oe> as in <fœtus> and <æ> for <ae> as in <mediæval> or they are graphs (letter forms) borrowed along with foreign words. Examples: <ç>, <à>, and <ï>, all from French as in *façon*, *vis-à-vis*, and *naïve*; <ñ> from Spanish as in *señor*; or <ö> from German as in *föhn*.

Runes, runic alphabet, aka the futhorc

The futhorc (from the names of the first six runes, as given in the table below) make up an alphabet used, among others, by the Germanic peoples mostly for inscriptions. Some of the letters resemble ones in the Latin alphabet; other may have come from Northern Italian alphabets. The following table reproduces the futhorc (see also color plate no. 2.3 Runic pin).

ƿ feoh (f)	ᚱ ur (u)	ᚥ thorn (þ, th)	ᚷ ós (o)	ᚹ rad (r)	ᚫ cen (c/k)	ᚨ gyfu (ǵ, g/i)	ᚦ wynn (w)	ᚼ hægl (h)
ᚢ nyd (n)	ᚦ is (i)	ᚦ ger (j)	ᚢ eoh (eo)	ᚢ peorð (p)	ᚢ colh (x, k)	ᚢ sigel (s)	ᚢ Tiw (t)	ᚢ beorc (b)
ᚢ eh (eoh) (e)	ᚢ mann (m)	ᚢ lagu (l)	ᚢ ing (ŋ)	ᚢ éðel (f)	ᚢ dæg (d)	ᚢ ac (a)	ᚢ æsc (æ)	ᚢ yr
ᚢ ior (ia, io)	ᚢ ear (ea)							

Relatively few texts written using the futhorc have been passed on. Text 2.2 is one such example, taken from the Ruthwell Cross (erected in the seventh century) in Southern Scotland and bearing an excerpt from the poem “The Dream of the Rood.”

Aspect

(mode of action) is a feature of the verb (or predicate) that marks “situation-internal time,” which stands in contrast to *tense* (Comrie 1976: 5). Aspect in English may be *habitual*, *hot-news*, *perfect(ive)*, *progressive*, *punctual*, or *stative*. In OE aspect was more likely to be marked lexically (lexical aspect). What this means is that different facets or aspects of meaning could be expressed by using prefixes. One of the most prominent of these is {ge-}, which often emphasized the completed or perfective nature of the action designated by a verb. In Text 2.5 we find *wunian* in l. 5 in the simple meaning of “dwell, live,” but *gewunian* in l. 6, where it is the suitable way of emphasizing the idea of togetherness or completeness. In l. 8 we find first *ferdon* “go,” but immediately afterwards *geferdon* “enter.” Other examples, with further prefixes, are *brecan* “break” – *abrecan* “smash”; *slean* “hit” – *ofslean* “kill”; or *bærnan* “burn” – *forbærnan* “burn up” (cf. Samuels

1972: 163ff). These prefixes were, however, generally in decline and were gradually replaced by new developments in the language in the ME and EModE periods. **Grammatical aspect** slowly emerged. Example: *besettan* “own, keep, occupy” vs. *settan* “set, cause to sit,” but ModE **simple** *they set it down* vs. **progressive** *they were setting it down* and **perfect** *they have set it down*.

Comrie, B. (1976) *Aspect*. Cambridge: CUP.

Samuels, M.L. (1972) *Linguistic Evolution with Special Reference to English*. Cambridge: CUP.

Punctual aspect

marks a verb as designating a singular, complete act. In English this is the case with dynamic verbs; and the simple, unmarked form of the verb is used for this. Example: *The phone rang*. As it turns out, the simple form is also employed for habitual, iterative (repeated), or characteristic acts. Example: *The phone rang*. The distinction between punctual and habitual-iterative-characteristic is often only clear from the context or the use of the appropriate adverbials. Example: *The phone rang just after eight* (punctual) vs. *The phone rang for five minutes* (iterative).

Stative aspect

is a use of verbs to designate a state. Examples: cognitive verbs like *know* or *understand*, verbs of perception like *see* and *hear* are typically used for states and cannot (normally; see Filppula, Klemola, and Paulasto 2009) occur in the progressive form. Examples: *We know* (never: **are knowing*) *what happened*. *They saw* (not: **were seeing*) *damage*. Some verbs, such as ones of position, vary according to the nature of their subject. Example: *She's lying on the sofa*, but not **London's lying on the Thames*.

Comrie, B. (1976) *Aspect*. Cambridge: CUP.

Filppula, M., J. Klemola, and H. Paulasto (2009) “Digging for Roots. Universals and Contact in Regional Varieties of English,” in: M. Filppula, J. Klemola, and H. Paulasto (eds.) *Vernacular Universals and Language Contacts. Evidence from Varieties of English and Beyond*. London: Routledge, 231–261.

Bede (see Chapter 1)

■ Cædmon's Hymn

was a late seventh century composition credited to **Cædmon** (died c. 680), a lay brother and older contemporary of **Bede**. He was said to have been a herdsman and was associated with the monastery at Streonæshalch (present-day Whitby Abbey). Only the nine lines of this hymn have survived. All the many versions that have survived are contained in manuscripts of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*, but were probably added later. Two versions, a West Saxon and an Anglian, are compared in §2.4.5. and Text 2.6. See more under **Old English literature**.

■ Carolingian reforms

are associated with Alcuin of York (c. 735–804). Alcuin became Charlemagne's principal court advisor, teaching both the later emperor and his sons Pepin and Louis at the palace school in Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle) between 782 and 790. He was especially instrumental in raising the level of Latin by returning to what was believed to be the classical form of the language.

Church music, medieval music

has been passed on to us chiefly within the traditions of the Church, and that was principally in the form of the Gregorian chants. As this suggests, these chants have been widely credited to Gregory I (papacy 590–604), the pope who sent St. Augustine as a missionary to Canterbury. Eventually, polyphonal music began to develop and non-religious forms of music became more common. The catalog of the abbey library at Reading, England lists a number of antiphoners (sung or chanted responses within the order of the service) that the monastery possessed, thus showing it to be wealthy. In addition to Church music there was sure to have been secular music as we know from the troubadours who were active in the High Middle Ages (1000–1300). See color plate no. 2.2 Medieval church music.

Demonstratives (see Chapter 1)

Early Christian England

was significant from the point of view of language. With the introduction of Christianity, which followed within about fifty years of Pope Gregory's sending of St. Augustine of Canterbury (597), *monasteries* were established, which were to be centers of learning. While pride of place went to Latin learning, OE was also prominent. Early sets of laws, which reveal the importance of the Church, are exemplified in Text 2.1. Among the cultural consequences of Christianization belongs the production of manuscripts in the scriptoria of the monasteries, especially at Jarrow, Lindisfarne, and Canterbury. *Bede* (672 or 673–735) was one of the earliest figures in England. Many of these contain examples of elaborate art work in the form of *illuminations* (see color plate 3.2 Book of Lindisfarne). Monastic and Christian life also led to a spread of *church music* (see color plate no. 2.2).

Monasteries

were centers not only of learning, but also of wealth, which led to two consequences. (1) Over time the standards in the monasteries became somewhat lax in maintaining the ideal of communal prayer and work (*ora et labora*) and in regard to the vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience. There was consequently the need for monastic reform such as that which was initiated in Cluny in Burgundy at the beginning of the tenth century with the reinforcement of the Rule of St. Benedict. In one of the earlier reform efforts, the *Carolingian reform* under Charlemagne, scholars from England were instrumental in intellectual renewal in all of Europe. (2) The wealth of the monasteries attracted raids from the sea by the marauding *Vikings*.

Illuminations

were used to enhance manuscripts of every kind, both music and writing. Such manuscripts were very expensive because of the time and craftsmanship required. Parchment, i.e. animal skin, was used for the individual leaves. Examples can be seen among the color plates nos. 2.1, 2.2, 3.2, 5.2, and 5.3. Even after the development of printing, illuminations continued to be added by hand. Eventually, such embellishments were reproduced in the printing process.

Identity

Language is one of many links to and signals of identity. This is facilitated by the fact that there is a choice between languages and varieties of languages. Depending on where speakers are they can move closer to their addressees or distance themselves from them (cf. Chapter 1, *accommodation*). Identity is especially closely connected to the idea of solidarity and power. Dimensions that are frequently investigated are class, education, age, gender, ethnicity, and region/nation. National identity and national forms of English, for one, have a great deal of saliency. Example: the widely recognized distinction between NAmE and BrE. Although IrE is a part of BrE and CanE is a part of NAmE, there is reluctance on the part of many to see IrE and CanE as regions of the respective larger grouping, especially since the standard language, i.e. StE, has been a constant sort of support for movement to consolidate national power (Chapter 8; see also *Literacy, education, and urbanization*).

Introduction to Old English at: <https://www.routledge textbooks.com/textbooks/9781138501096/learning-resources.php>

Mood in OE

may need a brief explanation since its use in ModE is not especially prominent. The verbs were inflected for mood in two relatively distinct paradigms as indicative or subjunctive. The former is used for assertions that can be evaluated as true or not. This is the default case and can be found everywhere throughout OE texts. Example: *þis syndon þā dōmas, þe Æðelbirht cyning āsette on Augustinus dæge* “These **are** the laws which King Æðelbirht **set up** in St. Augustine’s days” (Text 2.1 “Æðelbirht’s Laws” [title], 602 or 603). Although no hard and fast rule may be applied, the subjunctive, in contrast, calls the truth value of a statement into doubt. The subjunctive was used, among other things, to express conjecture, wish or volition, commands, the possible, but not certain truth of a situation, or hypothetical contexts. Because the subjunctive is used widely to express desired, but not yet achieved actions or states, its domain is frequently the unreal. Example: *Gif man mægð-man nēde genimeð, þān āgende L scillingas and æft et þān āgende sinne willan et gebiege* (text 2.1 “Æðelbirht’s Laws” [Law 82], 602 or 603) “If someone abducts a virgin/maiden by force, 50 shillings for the person she belongs to, and then he **may buy** her back as desired.” Example of volition: *sī þīn nama gehālgod* from the Lord’s Prayer (Matt. 6:9) “May your name be honored,” where *sī* is the present subjunctive of *be*.

Gradually, the subjunctive was displaced by periphrastic forms using the *modal auxiliaries*. Most of these verbs were historical *preterite-present verbs* and include *cunnan* “know, be able to”; *māgan* “be able to”; *sculan* “have to”; and *þurfan* “need.” A further prominent modal is *willan*, which is an irregular verb with patterning similar to some of the modals. Example: *Eal þæt his man āper oððe ettan oððe erian mæg, þæt lið wið ðā sē* (inserted in: *Compendious History of the World* by Orosius, translated under *King Alfred*) “All that a man **can** either graze or plough extends alongside the sea.”

Table The modal verb *magan* (> ModE *may*)

	<i>Present tense indicative</i>	<i>Past tense indicative</i>
1st person sg.	<i>ic mæg</i>	<i>ic meahte</i>
2nd person sg.	<i>þū meahst</i>	<i>þū meahtest</i>
3rd person sg.	<i>hē / hēo / hit mæg</i>	<i>hē, hēo (hit) meahte</i>
1st, 2nd, 3rd plur.	<i>wē / gē / hī magon</i>	<i>wē / gē / hī meahton</i>

Furthermore, there is a third mood with distinctive forms: the **imperative**. Examples, singular: *hīere* “hear; plural: *hīerað* “hear ye; y’all hear.” Examples in sentences, singular: *Sing mē frumsceaft* (from the ninth century translation into OE of Bede’s *Historia* on Caedmon, In: C.T. Onions (ed.) (1959), *Sweet’s Anglo-Saxon Reader in Prose and Verse*, 14th ed, Oxford: Clarendon) “Sing to me about the Creation”; plural: *lēofan men, gecnāwað þæt sōð* (“Sermo Lupi ad Anglos”, 1010–1016, by Wulfstan II, Archbishop of York) “Dear people, know what is true.”

Offa’s Dyke

is frequently presumed to be a defensive wall intended – since it runs between England and Wales – to keep out the Welsh. Although the Dyke is very long, approximately 200 km (120 mi), it seems to have been more a symbol of power than a true military wall. It is attributed to Offa, a late eighth-century king of Mercia and is a testimony to his dominance and resources.

Old English literature

has survived in the form of relatively few texts from a restricted number of fields and genres. There are a number of law codes (see Text 2.1), quite a few religious texts (Texts 2.2, 2.4, 2.6, and 3.8), some very important historical writing, above all *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (2.5.3 and Texts 2.5, 3.1, 3.8, and 4.1), and a few miscellaneous texts such as the riddles of the Exeter Book (Texts 3.5 and 3.7) or “Battle of Brunanburh” and “Battle of Maldon” (Texts 3.2 and 3.3). Further significant writing includes *The Wanderer* (§2.5.2), works by the author *Cynewulf*, and the epic poem *Beowulf* (§2.5.1), which stands within the pagan tradition. Some of the relevant background is touched on in the section on *Early Christian England*: the monasteries, *Carolingian Reform*, *King Alfred*, and *Ælfric*.

“The Wanderer”

is an anonymous religious poem in typical OE poetic style (see *Beowulf* for details). It may have been originally composed as early as 600 (in the time of Augustine’s mission to the Anglo-Saxons), but could also have a later origin. It recounts the thoughts of an old man at the end of a long life. He thinks back on his own past glory as a warrior and ponders all the loss he feels, but takes comfort in salvation through faith in God.

Æðelbriht’s Laws

are the oldest surviving laws from the OE period (602 or 603). Æðelbriht, an early convert to Christianity and an important overlord, or *bretwalda*, over Kent and Essex, may perhaps have had significant influence on East Anglia. His legitimacy was claimed by tracing his descent back to *Hengist*. His laws stipulated indemnification for damages done to another, which is the principle of *wergild* (< *wer* “man” and *gild* “money”), whereby the higher the standing of the injured party, the steeper the fine. Text 2.1 lists some of his ninety laws.

“Dream of the Rood”

is a well-known alliterative religious poem probably from the seventh or eighth century. Its authorship is unknown though both *Cædmon* and *Cynewulf* have been suggested. *Rood* (OE *rod*) was the word used for “cross” and *dream* refers to the vision of the cross by the narrator as well as the thoughts on the part of the *rood* on becoming the cross of Christ. The poem contains pagan elements such as the image of a warrior-hero and the animistic quality of the speaking cross. A runic inscription containing several lines from the poem can be found on the Ruthwell Cross (see §2.4 and Text 2.2).

Beowulf

is the title given to the longest (3182 lines) surviving poetic work written in OE. It is not known who wrote it, nor when it was written. The stories in it are set in Scandinavia, before 600 CE and as early as the late fifth century though the writing itself stems from 700 at the earliest (the only surviving manuscript is from about 1000). The pagan background of the poem speaks for an early date of composition. The story revolves around the conflict between the hero Beowulf and Grendel, Grendel’s mother, and a dragon. Beowulf successfully defends his kingdom, Geatland, but suffers a fatal wound in his final combat. The poem is composed of long lines, i.e. lines divided in two by a break or caesura. Each half has two stressed syllables and the two halves are linked together by alliteration. Example: *Béowulf was bréme / blæd wide spráng* “Beowulf was famous / (his) glory widely spread” (Text 2.3, line 19). Furthermore, kennings were widely used in *Beowulf*. A kenning is a poetic, metaphorical figure and can be seen in the name *beo-wulf* “bee hunter,” meaning “bear.”

Caedmon’s Hymn

is a late seventh-century composition by Caedmon (c. 657–684), the earliest known English poet. He was an animal husbandman at Streonæshalch (Whitby Abbey), where he supposedly learned to compose poetry in a dream (so *Bede*). His Hymn exists in several different versions. The manuscript from 737 gives us some idea of Anglian usage, and this can be compared to West Saxon usage. The choice of words in the two versions is identical with the exception of l.5, which has Anglian *scop aelda barnum* “created, the High Lord, for men”, but West Saxon *sceop eorðan bearnum* “created the earth for men.” The major differences are to be found in the vowels. It is widely recognized that West Saxon underwent a process of diphthongization that does not show up in northern texts. Vowel qualities also seem to have varied. Some apparent differences are, however, probably only spelling conventions. Since the two texts come from different regions and from different times, the variation may be due to either factor or both. (see Text 2.6 and the discussion there; Blake 1996: 69–73; 115–119).

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle

is a major historiographic undertaking initiated by Alfred the Great about 890. It served to legitimize his reign by tracing his descent back to biblical origins, and it drew on Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* (finished in 731) and may also rely on material from lost West Saxon annals which ended in 754. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* invoked a common secular historical tradition in a move that went beyond mere military unification toward a consciousness of ethnic identity in the time of threat to the Wessex by the Danes. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* was continued in English after the Norman Conquest at Peterborough until 1154. A wide variety of texts and differing versions have survived into the present. See Texts 2.5, 3.1, 3.6, 3.9, and 4.1).

Cynewulf

(beginning of the ninth century) wrote religious poetry of which four fragments (*The Ascension*, *Juliana*, *Elene*, and *The Fates of the Apostles*) have survived (in the *Vercelli Book* and the *Exeter Book*; see *Codex Exoniensis* and §3.5.2) if we are to credit to him these poems, which are signed with his name in *runic* letters. He apparently lived in Northumbria or Mercia. However, both exactly where and when he lived remain controversial. It can be deduced from his poetry, which reveals Latin sources, that he was a man of learning.

Codex Exoniensis,

one of most important manuscripts of OE literature (Exeter Cathedral Library MS 3501) and the largest still in existence, is a collection of tenth-century writing in the West Saxon standard. The book was probably put together in the latter half of the tenth century and was presented to the Exeter Cathedral library by the bishop of Exeter, Leofric, in the middle of the eleventh century. As such, it is a product of the Benedictine Revival. This *Exeter Book* contains both religious and everyday writing including such key texts as *The Wanderer* (text 2.4), *The Seafarer*, and *Widsith*, but also some 95 riddles (§3.5.2 and Text 3.5 and also Text 3.7). Many of the latter are familiar from traditions outside of England and the English language, but many are unique to this collection.

Sutton Hoo

is a place located in Suffolk where the most extensive archeological finds from the early Germanic period in England (sixth to ninth centuries) have been excavated starting in 1938. This use of this area reflects its importance in the period of invasion and conquest. This location is considered to contain the grave of a very powerful and wealthy king. Items of durable materials such as weapons (axes, swords, helmets, and shields) and household items and jewelry (bowls, shears, cups, boxes, clasps, buckles, drinking horns, and spoons) and some remnants of cloth, have been found there – all of which are among the earliest extant findings from Anglo-Saxon England (fifth or sixth century). Its location near the sea is significant since it also contains, besides several burial mounds, a ship burial and testifies to the strong connections of the invaders with the sea.

Verb classes and principal parts of OE

determine the forms of the verb base to which conjugational inflections may be added. There are four such forms for the **strong verbs** of OE and three for the **weak verbs** (as in ModE): the infinitive, the past (for OE strong verbs two forms), and the past participle.

The weak (aka consonantal) verbs

are what today are called the regular verbs, that is, the ones that have a regular past tense and past participle, namely ModE {-ed}. In OE the vast majority of verbs were weak, though not regular in the sense we are familiar with since they also included cases of vowel and consonant change. The past and past participle endings were most often the inflections {-ode} and {-od} respectively; some, however, took the endings {-te}

or {-t}. Examples: *wunian* “help” and *lufian* “love,” in the first case, and *mētan* “meet” and *bringan* “bring,” in the other:

Infinitive	Past	Past participle
(ge-)wunian	(ge-)wunode	(ge-)wunod
lufian	lufode	(ge-)lufod
mētan	mētte	(ge-)mēt
bringan	brōhte	(ge-)broth

Table The weak verb inflections in the past tense indicative

1st/3rd person singular	<i>ic, hē, hēo (hit) lufode</i>
2nd person singular	<i>þū lufodest</i>
1st/2nd/3rd person plural	<i>wē gē hī lufoden</i>

The strong (aka vocalic) type of verb

depended on a variety of patterns of vowel change and had one further distinctive form due to the fact that the first and third person past singular had differing vowels. Examples: OE *drincan-dranc-druncon-(ge-)druncen*; ModE: *drink-drunk-drunk*. As for the two distinct past tense forms: the first (*dranc* above) was for the first and third persons singular, and the second past form (*druncon* above) was for the second person singular and the plural in all persons, cf.

Table The strong verb inflections in the past tense indicative

1st/3rd person singular	<i>ic, hē hēo hit dranc</i>
2nd person singular	<i>þū drunce</i>
1st/2nd/3rd person plural	<i>wē gē hī druncon</i>

The strong verbs undergo vowel gradation or **ablaut**. Seven classes are commonly recognized. Examples:

I. “bid”	<i>bīdan-bād-bidon-biden;</i>
II. “offer”	<i>bēodan-bēad-budon-boden;</i>
III. “bind”	<i>bindan-band-bundon-bunden;</i>
IV. “bear”	<i>beran-bær-bæron-boren;</i>
V. “give”	<i>giefan-geaf-gēafon-giefen;</i>
VI. “stand”	<i>standan-stōd-stōdon-standen;</i>
VII. “fall”	<i>feallan-fēoll-fēolloon-feallen.</i>

The irregular (aka anomalous) verbs

are a third set of verbs recognized for OE. The most central of them is the verb *bēon/wesan* “be,” which remains the most irregular in ModE as well. Next to the present indicative *eom, eart, is, sind(on)* “am, art, is, are” there is an alternative paradigm *bēo, bist, bið, bēoð*. The past has first and third person singular *wæs*,

second person singular *wære* and plural *wæron*. The subjunctive has its own paradigms: present singular *sȳ* and plural *sȳn* or *bēo* and *bēon* and past singular *wære* and plural *wæren*.

Table The irregular verb *bēon*

Mood	Indicative			Subjunctive		
Tense	present	present	past	present	present	Past
1st person singular	<i>ic eam</i>	<i>bēo</i>	<i>wæs</i>	<i>sȳ</i>	<i>bēo</i>	<i>wære</i>
2nd person singular	<i>þū eart</i>	<i>bist</i>	<i>wære</i>			
3rd person singular	<i>hē/hēo/hit is</i>	<i>bið</i>	<i>wæs</i>			
All persons plural	<i>wē/gē/hī sind(on)</i>	<i>bēoð</i>	<i>wæron</i>	<i>sȳn</i>	<i>bēon</i>	<i>wæren</i>

Other irregular verbs

include *habben* “have,” *dōn* “do,” *gān* “go,” and perhaps *willan* “will, wish” as well as the **preterite-present verbs** (see paradigm in **mood in OE**; cf. the ModE modal auxiliaries).

Quite a few verbs have differing vowels (and consonants) in the first as opposed to the second and third person present singular. Examples: *cēosan* “choose” with *ic cēose*, but *þū cȳst* and *hē/hēo cȳst*; *sēan* “see” with *ic sēo*, but *þū syhst* and *hē/hēo syhð*. Such alternatives may be explained by *i*-mutation in the pre-OE period. This process led to the raising of *e* to *i* due to the assimilatory influence of an *i* or *j* in the following syllable. The verb *beran* “bear” had a third person singular present-tense Proto-Germanic ending *{-īpi} thus leading to the raising of the second person singular to *bir(e)ð*. The phonetic value of the vowel spelled as <y> was unstable, but can be regarded for our purposes as *i*.

Vikings, Viking incursions, and their consequences

The Vikings were Germanic peoples of Scandinavia who raided, traded, and settled throughout Europe from the late eighth into the mid-eleventh centuries. They looted and burned monasteries in England and settled in parts of England, Scotland, and Ireland. Large parts of northern and eastern England eventually came under Danish rule (Danelaw) and Danish kings ruled England for much of the early eleventh century.

The Vikings were in many ways similar to the Saxons: both were Germanic peoples with a warrior tradition. The telling difference lay in the time and degree to which they had become settled. The Saxons had been in England for more than 300 years (starting in 449) when the Vikings began their raids in 787. The Saxons had been officially Christianized for well over a hundred years and the monasteries, as centers of learning and literacy, had become a well-established part of English life. The Viking invaders were pagans, and more significant than that, had no respect for Latin learning. In the long term they also settled on the land; eventually they, too, were Christianized (see King Alfred) and began to participate in the world of churches, monasteries, and learning. In the meantime, however, valuable manuscripts were destroyed and traditions of learning brought to a violent end. Lindesfarne was destroyed in 793; other monasteries in Britain and Ireland were also attacked in the following years.

Word order in English (see Chapter 1)