

**Anglo-Saxon Chronicle** (see Chapter 2)

**Article system** (see Chapter 1)

**Cursor Mundi** (see Middle English literature)

**Danelaw** (see Chapter 2, Vikings, Viking incursions, and their consequences)

**Demonstrative system** (see Chapter 1)

**Domesday Book** (see Post-Conquest England)

### French cultural ascendancy

was a major reason why French was seen as a language of great prestige and an object of cultivation, associated as it was with chivalrous society at its best. French was used by the educated and in high society but was a matter of culture and fashion rather than an economic or political necessity as it had initially been. French continued to hold a position of prestige until well into modern times. In the meantime English has displaced French as the language of cultural ascendancy.

**Introduction to Middle English at:** <http://cw.routledge.com/textbooks/gramley/learning.asp>

### Magna Carta, The

was written, as was established custom, in Latin (see following text). It consisted of a list of freedoms recognized by the king. It defined rights under the law and recorded customary practices. Above all, it limited the king's power, effectively – though still only symbolically – establishing the rule of law. The short excerpt that follows is only one of sixty-three paragraphs in *Magna Carta*.

13. Et civitas London. habeat omnes antiquas libertates et liberas consuetudines suas, tam per terras, quam per aquas. Preterea volumus et concedimus quod omnes alie civitates, et burgi, et ville, et portus, habeant omnes libertates et liberas consuetudines suas.

13. And the city of London shall have all its ancient liberties and free customs, as well by land as by water; furthermore, we decree and grant that all other cities, boroughs, towns, and ports shall have all their liberties and free customs.

Neither the signing of the *Magna Carta* in 1215 nor the First Barons' War (1258–1265), motivated by John's renunciation of *Magna Carta*, stopped the inflow of French officials that had begun under John and was reinforced under his successor Henry III (1216–1272) (§4.1.2).

## Middle English literature

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(in English) was dominated initially by religious and didactic writing. Examples are *Ancrene Riwe* (aka *Ancrene Wisse*) (Herefordshire, c. 1230) and the *Ormulum* (twelfth century). Historical writing includes Robert Gloucester's *Chronicle* and *Cursor Mundi*.

ME literature was highly influenced by French traditions of writing as seen in *The Owl and the Nightingale* (c. 1200; §4.4 and text 4.8), and, indeed, quite a bit of English literature was written in French. However, the move to writing in English became distinct as time went by. The French traditions led to the virtual abandonment of alliterative poetry (§§5.2, 5.2.1+4, *Beowulf* and text 2.3, *Sir Gawain*, and *Piers Plowman*). A second important change in the later ME period was the appearance of individual authors such as *Chaucer* (Texts 5.2, 5.7a–b), Langland (see *Piers Plowman*, Text 5.12), *Wycliffe* (Texts 5.3, 6.16a), *Barbour* (Texts 5.8a–b), *Trevisa* (Texts 5.1, 5.10), and *Blin Hary* (Text 5.11) even though some literature, like, for example, *Sir Gawain* (Text 5.13), does not have an identifiable author. In addition, *Sir Gawain* represents the important medieval genre of the romance.

Holtei, Rainer (gen. ed.) (2002) *Online Companion to Middle English Literature*, at: <http://user.phil-fak.uni-duesseldorf.de/~holteir/companion/index.html>.

### The Owl and the Nightingale

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is a debate poem from the twelfth or thirteenth century. It is written in rhyming couplets of iambic tetrameter, putting it in the French rather than the native English poetic tradition. It consists of 1794 lines. This work is an exchange of recriminations between the two birds, a serious owl and a gay nightingale. Rather than resort to physical violence the two agree to enter into a debate, which itself proceeds along the lines of a medieval scholastic disputation. Consequently, the poem draws on all the current rhetorical devices and goes into topics such as music, ethics, marriage and adultery, and much more. The lines quoted in Text 4.8 are the introduction (§4.4).

### Ancrene Riwe (aka Ancrene Wisse)

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(Herefordshire, c. 1230), which explains religious rule and devotional conduct in eight sections dealing with various aspects of the life of religious sisters. It is a sophisticated work and a great example of early ME prose writing.

### The Lay of Havelock the Dane

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is a medieval romance about the legend of founding of Grimsby in Lincolnshire; it was written in the North Midlands before 1300 and combines the Celtic, English, Danish, and Norman influences in an extremely intricate plot. See the short sample in text 4.6.

### Robert Gloucester's *Chronicle*

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was written in the mid to late thirteenth century. He described the Barons' War (1264–1267) in more vivid detail, suggesting that he had witnessed it. It is of interest in the framework of this *History of English* because of the comments Gloucester makes about the use of English (§4.1.1 and Text 4.2).

### Cursor mundi

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(c. 1300) is a religious poetic history of the world in octosyllabic couplets running to 30,000 lines and written by an anonymous Northern English writer (§4.1.2 and Texts 4.3 and 4.9).

### The Ormulum

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(East Midlands) is an example of religious writing from the late twelfth century. It paraphrases the gospels and adds homilies on them. It is particularly interesting because of the system of spelling adopted in it (§4.2.3 and Text 4.5).

### Of Arthour and of Merlin

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(before 1325) is a ME poem of over 9000 lines, interesting in this context because of its comments of the relationship between French and English (Text 4.4).

### The Canterbury Tales, Geoffrey Chaucer

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(c. 1343–1400) are the best known and the best of ME writing. Their author, Chaucer, lived under circumstances (traveling for the king at home and abroad) that allowed him to become acquainted with people from all walks of life, which in turn allowed him to produce a witty and penetrating portrait of English society. In composing the tales he draws on both literary traditions and his own observations. But he avoids sermonizing. By choosing a group of pilgrims he creates a cast of characters that covers all sorts of personalities and vocations. By having them tell stories, he makes fun of human lust, vanity, and foolishness. Only a few of his pilgrims come away unblemished and escape the irony and ridicule he dishes out (§5.4.2 and Texts 5.2 and 5.7).

### Doctor of physick

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A physician, a person working in the area of medicine, but based on astrology (see there) and such medieval concepts as the **theory of the humors** (see there).

### Frere

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A frere, or friar, was a member of a religious order of men pledged to poverty. They moved about hearing confession or administering the sacrament and begged for their subsistence rather than being associated with a monastery. Chaucer paints a picture of an anything but pious frere who obviously enjoyed life and took sexual advantage of young women.

### Good wyf

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This was the wife of Bath, who Chaucer describes in a very tongue-in-cheek manner, emphasizing her libidinous life-style.

### *Piers Plowman*, William Langland

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was written shortly before the *Canterbury Tales*. This long religious allegory, at least a part of which is by William Langland (c. 1330–?), was written and rewritten between about 1360 and 1387. It does not follow the French

custom of rhyme, but continues to rely on alliteration. It has often been brought into connection with Lollardy though Langland seems to have dissociated himself clearly from this movement. In a number of steps (Latin *passus*) the protagonist, Piers Plowman, a humble man, undertakes a quest for truth in a series of dream-visions involving the search for three allegorical characters, Dowel (“Do-Well”), Dobet (“Do-Better”), and Dobest (“Do-Best”). Biblical background can be seen in one of the dreams in which Piers shows Will, the narrator, a tree whose fruit he wants to try; this refers to the Garden of Eden. In another dream Will dreams he is in Jerusalem and sees the crucifixion. The excerpt in Text 5.12 provides ample opportunity to see the regular use of alliteration (cf. *A Pilgrim’s Progress*; another dream-allegory frequently quoted from in Chapter 6 and Texts 6.2 and 6.19).

Passus I (“Step One”), 146–164

*FOR trewthe telleth that loue*

*Is triacle of hevene*

*May no synne be on him sene that useth that spise,*

*And alle his werkes he wroughte with loue as him liste;*

*And lered it Moises for the levest thing and moste like to heuene,*

*And also the plante of pees · moste precious of vertues.*

For Truth tells us that love

Is the trustiest medicine in Heaven;

No sin may be seen on him · by whom that spice is used.

And all the deeds he pleased to do were done with love.

And [he] taught it to Moses as a matchless thing, and most like Heaven,

And also the plant of peace, most precious of virtues.

*For hevene myghte noughte holden it it was so hevy of hym-self,*

*Tyle it hadde of the erthe yeten his fylle,*

*And what it haved of this folde flesshe and blode taken,*

*Was neuere leef upon lynde lighter ther-after,*

*And portatyf and persant as the poynt of a nedle,*

*That myghte non armure it lette ne none heigh walles.*

For heaven might not [be able to] hold it, so heavy it seemed,

Till it had with earth alloyed itself.

And when it had of this earth taken flesh and blood,

Never was leaf upon linden lighter thereafter,

And portable and piercing as the point of a needle,

No armor might obstruct it, nor any high walls.

Translated by: Donaldson, E. T. in Robertson, E. and S. H. A. Shepherd

#### Text 5.12: Piers Plowman (excerpt)

##### Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

is an Arthurian romance of unknown authorship. It was composed in the late fourteenth century and stands like *Piers Plowman* in the alliterative tradition. The language is that of the northwest Midlands. It consists of 2530 lines in 101 stanzas. As the excerpt below illustrates, the text draws on historical antecedents in

classical tradition, which was a common practice. The spellings <wat3> and <hat3> for <was> and <has> are peculiarities of *Gawain*.

*Syr Gawayn and the Grene Knyzt*

*Fytte the First*

I  
*Hit wat3 Ennias þe athel, & his highe kynde,  
 þat sipen depreced prouinces, & patrounes bicom  
 Welneze of al þe wele in þe west iles,  
 Fro riche Romulus to Rome ricchis hym swyþe,  
 With gret bobbaunce þat burze he biges vpon first,  
 & neuenes hit his aune nome, as hit now hat;  
 Ticius (turns) to Tuskan, & teldes begynnes;  
 Langaberde in Lumbardie lyftes vp homes;  
 & fer ouer þe French flod Felix Brutus  
 On many bonkkes ful broke Bretayn he sette3,  
 with wyne;  
 Where were, & wrake, & wonder,  
 Bi syþe3 hat3 wont þer-inne,  
 & oft boþe blysse & blunder  
 Ful skete hat3 skyfted synne*

First Section

I  
 It was Aeneas the noble and his high kindred,  
 Who afterwards conquered and became patrons  
 Of well nigh all the wealth of the West Isles,  
 As soon as rich Romulus turns him to Rome,  
 With great pride he at once builds that city,  
 And names it with his own name, which it now has;  
 Ticius turns to Tuscany, and founds dwellings;  
 Longobard raises homes in Lombardy;  
 And far over the French flood Felix Brutus  
 Establishes Britain joyfully on many broad banks,  
 with joy;  
 Where war and waste and wonder  
 By turns have since dwelt therein,  
 And often bliss and blunder  
 Full swiftly have shifted since

**Text 5.13:** Sir Gawain and the Grene Knight

## Spelling in Middle English (and beyond)

could no longer rely on the orthographic system introduced in connection with the standardization of West Saxon. Although the West Saxon scribal tradition continued to be practiced after the Conquest, the surviving standard was no longer prestigious and gradually grew outdated because of pronunciation variation. In addition, a number of conventions began to shift, probably largely due to contact with French. Although no standard emerged in the early ME period, it is possible to see some more or less general effects. One of these is that non-Latin letters fell into disuse. Eventually, <y> would be used as a consonant for /j/ and <3> would be fully retired. Examples: <i/j>: *geong* vs. *jonge*; and <g>: *ziff* vs. *gif*. <þ> and <ð> were being replaced by <th>: *þat* vs. *that* or *oðer* vs. *othere*. Winn <p> now became rare; and, <uu>, and <w> are used in its place. Independent of these considerations <k> was coming to be used for /k/, especially near a front vowel, where <c> + <e, i> would lead to misinterpretation as /s/ rather than /k/. Example of <k> with front vowels: *priketh*, *seeken*. Among the grapheme combinations OE <hw> for /hw/ was somewhat illogically reversed to <wh>, probably under the influence of other combinations (see *ModE spelling*) which used <h> as a diacritic, especially. <th>, <ch>, and <sh/sch>. In the North and East Anglia <qu, u> and in east Midlands <w-> were also used for /hw/. By the late twelfth/early thirteenth centuries <c, sc> had been replaced elsewhere by “French-inspired spellings” <ch, sch> (Blake 1996: 130f).

An account of changes in the spelling of the vowels is considerably more challenging since there were significant regional differences in pronunciation. A few examples will have to suffice. OE <y>, originally rounded front /y(:)/, had become <e> in the southeast, but rounding was retained in the southwest where,

a French spelling, but also <ui> and <uy> occurred. High back rounded /u:/ was frequently spelled <ou> in French fashion, especially in French borrowings *licour*, *flour*. And the raising of OE *ā* to /ɔ:/ led to the use of <o> or <oo> *goon*, *hoot*; and <æ> began increasingly to alternate with <e> or <a> *ferd* ~ *ferd* or *sæhte* ~ *sæhte* (Blake 1996: 118).

As was the case in OE, in ME, too, there were regional differences which showed up in spelling.

Northern	Southern	ModE
<i>Sanges sere of selcuth rime,</i>	<i>Mony songes of dyuerse ryme</i>	Many a song of different rime,
<i>Inglis, frankys, and latine,</i>	<i>As englishe frensshe &amp; latyne</i>	In English, French, and Latin.
<i>to rede and here Ilkon is prest,</i>	<i>To rede &amp; here mony are prest</i>	Each one to read and hear is pressed*
<i>þe thynges þat þam likes best.</i>	<i>Of þinges þat hem likeþ best</i>	The things that please them all the best.

**Text 4.9:** Parallel excerpts from *Cursor Mundi*, Northern (Cotton) and Southern (Trinity) versions

**Pronunciation** (through spelling):

- Northern English has /a/ for OE *ā*, where Southern English has /ɔ:/ (*sanges-songes*; also S: *mony*)
- Northern <s>, probably /s/ for Southern <ssh> /ʃ/ (*Inglis-englishe*; *frankys-frensshe*)

**Spelling (with no consequences for pronunciation):**

- Northern English tends to <i> for Southern <y>, but cf. l. 4 (*thynges-þinges*)
- Northern has <th> twice and <þ> twice; Southern has only <þ>

Blake, N. (1996) *A History of the English Language*. Houndsmill: Palgrave.

### French influence

on the spelling of English became an important and lasting factor in the ME period. The most significant influence was on vocabulary, but French also reinforced or initiated structural innovations and influenced spelling. Examples: <qu> for OE <cu> or <cw> *quod*, *quen*; <ch> instead of OE <c> for /tʃ/ *chapel*, *pynchen*; <sch> or <sh> instead of OE <sc> for /ʃ/ *friendschipe* or *shoures*; and the distinction between /f/ and /v/ as well as between /s/ and /z/, which were positional variants of <f> and <s> in OE, is now made by <f> vs. <v/u> *over* vs. OE *ofer*. The new letter <z> was introduced where OE usage would have made do with <s> as *lazar* “leper” < *Lazarus*. Gradually, <th> replaced <þ> and <ð>, but then as now no orthographic distinction was made between /θ/ and /ð/. And, finally, the representation of the vowels underwent changes due in part to French. Examples: <ou> instead of OE <u> for /u:/ *shoures*, *oure*; <æ> was to disappear in favor of either <e> or <a>.

### Ormulum (§4.2.3)

written in the second half of the twelfth century, is one of the key texts in respect to spelling in ME. This early northeastern text (the author Orm wrote it in Bourne, Lincolnshire) reveals the author’s efforts at using a more standardized form of the written language even though Orm does not seem to have had imitators. He took great care to distinguish the three sounds, /g, j, dʒ/ otherwise represented by OE <ȝ> by using two

(or including a special <g> with a flat top, three) distinct graphemes. Orm distinguished between /g/ using <g> and /j/ or /x/ using <ʒ>. Example: *grimme* “grim, fierce” vs. *ʒiff* “if” (Text 4.5: Admonition from the Ormulum, second half of twelfth century).

Especially fascinating is his system of indicating long vowels by letting them be followed by a single consonant only while short vowels were followed by doubled consonants. Examples: *þiss boc iss nemmedd Orrmulum forrþi þatt Orrm itt wrohhte*. “This book is named Ormulum for Orm created it” (“Preface to Ormulum, ll. 1–2), where all the vowels are short except those in *boc*, the <u>’s of *Orrmulum*, and <i> in *forrþi*; the <e> of *wrohhte* is presumably short. Short and long vowels, which had not been orthographically distinguished in OE, were differentiated here: the short ones were followed by double consonant-letters and the long ones by only one, e.g. l. 5 *follc* (“folk, people”) /ʋ/ vs. l. 7 *god* (“good”) /oː/. This indicates that the long-short consonant distinction of OE had presumably been lost (Blake 1996: 125). Orm also sometimes used single accents to mark long vowels (l. 2 *tór* “difficult”) or double ones (l. 7 *üt* “out”).

Blake, N. (1996) *A History of the English Language*. Houndsmill: Palgrave.

### Chancery English

the language of the government administration in London, was available as the basis for spelling from about 1400 on. The clerks of the Chancery were trained into a system of writing which was highly standardized. Furthermore, clerks from outside the Chancery were also schooled there. Since the documents produced in the Chancery had high prestige and were circulated throughout the kingdom, people everywhere were exposed to this kind of language. Yet absolute uniformity was not demanded, and the actual process of standardization was slow in developing. Example: *if/lyf* was normal after 1430, but *yif/lyef/ʒef* continued to occur after this date (Blake 1996: 176ff). A study of the *Paston letters* show the spread of standardized spellings. In the period 1469–1479 the letter written by Edmond Paston for his mother, Margaret, reveals the move from initial <x> to initial <sch> and then soon after to initial <sh> in the word *shal(l)* (ibid.: 180). Despite the spread of spelling standards, a fair amount of variation persisted right up into Shakespearean times and well beyond (see *EModE spelling*).

### Bible translations

A brief look at two English translations of a short passage from the Bible (Genesis 1: 3) into English shows some of the changes in orthography. The first is a *Wycliffe* translation (1385; see color plate no. 5.2 Wycliffe. Gospel of St. John); the second comes from the King James Version (*KJV*) (1611, i.e. the Shakespearean period, but reflecting conservative usage):

ME: Wycliffe: *And God seide, Ligt be maad, and ligt was maad.*

EModE: KJV: *And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.*

(Genesis 1:1–5 from: [http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Bible\\_\(Wycliffe\)/Genesis#Chapter\\_1](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Bible_(Wycliffe)/Genesis#Chapter_1))

The text can be understood by a ModE-speaking readership, but there are quite a number of unfamiliar-looking words. They reflect both differing pronunciations and different conventions of spelling. In a few cases the syntax is in need of comment (see Text 5.3). Spelling:

*seide*: interchangeability of <ai> and <ei>

*ligt*: use of <ʒ> for [ç]

*maad*: use of double letter-vowels to indicate a long vowel, here: /ä/



In Genesis 2:7 we find the following: “*Therfor the Lord God formede man of the sliym of erthe, and brethide in to his face the brething of lijf; and man was maad in to a lyuyng soule.*” According to Samuels <ij>, as in *lijf* is typical of the Central Midland spelling system (Taavitsainen 2000: 143), which was based on the dialects of Northamptonshire, Huntingdonshire, and Bedfordshire. This orthography was current before 1430 and continued to be written till the late fifteenth century. It was distinct and well defined, i.e. not like “the ‘colourless’ system, which forms a continuum in which the local elements are muted” (ibid.: 135). Examples of Central Midland Standard:

Central Midlands	ModE	Central Midlands	ModE	Central Midlands	ModE
<b>sich</b>	such	<b>mych</b>	much	<b>stide</b>	stead
<b>ʒouun</b>	given	<b>ony</b>	any	<b>siʒ</b>	saw

Plus: *ech(e)*, *aftir*, *ʒit*, *ʒitt*, *ʒorup*, *ʒorouʒ*, *eyr(e)*, *eir(e)*, “air,” *bitwix*, *brenn*, *bisy*, *ize*, *ʒze* “eye,” *fier*, *heed*, *lyve*, *moun* (“may” plural), *puple*, *peple*, *renn*, *togidere* (ibid.: 137).

Over a longer period of time the Central Midlands type of English was prominent in scientific writing centered in Oxford, but also – due to Wycliffe’s importance for it – in the Lollard movement. As such, Central Midlands written English was definitely a rival standard to Chancery English

Blake, N. (1996) *A History of the English Language*. Houndsmill: Palgrave.

Taavitsainen, I. (2000) “Scientific Language and Spelling Standardisation 1375–1550,” in: L. Wright (ed.) *The Development of Standard English 1300–1800*. Cambridge: CUP, 131–154.

### Caxton and the advent of printing

were perhaps the most significant factors in leading to the standardization of spelling. Printers, the first and best known of whom was William Caxton (c. 1415–1422–1492), could only profit from standardization of the language in vocabulary and grammar, but above all orthography. However, the relatively uniform spelling that emerged in printed works long existed side by side with the often very idiosyncratic practices (see below on Samuel Johnson).

Regularization of spelling was the first stage in the standardization process. While Elizabethan spelling was still extremely varied – and tolerant of variety – the Restoration (after 1660) put an end to (most of) the variation in orthography.

### EModE spelling (§6.3.1.1)

culminated in the adoption of fully standardized spelling and punctuation. There still was some variation (cf. *bere* and *beare*; *standard* and *standerd*), but by this time spelling was already very regular and quite similar to present-day conventions. This does not mean, however, that EModE and ModE spelling were identical. What is characteristic about orthography in the EModE period is that it underwent a high degree of regulation in the hands of the printers. For modern eyes, sixteenth and seventeenth-century spelling seems strange and irregular at times. On the whole, however, there was a great deal of agreement coupled with a fair amount of toleration of alternative spellings.

Public spelling was determined by printers, who failed to make the adjustments that would have brought English orthography more closely into line with the traditional values of the letters in the Latin alphabet.



Quite the contrary, respect for learning and a recognition of the etymologies of numerous words led to changes that made their spellings more Latin-like, e.g. *dette* became *debt* (< Latin *debitus*), *amonest* became *admonish* (< *admonire*), *vittles* became *victuals* (< *victualia*) (cf. Blake 1996: 203f). Not only did the older and the newly introduced spellings often exist side by side, private spelling practices also often contained archaic and idiosyncratic forms which even such luminaries as Dr. Johnson practiced. Although known for “fixing” the standard, Johnson deviated considerably from it in his letter-writing orthography. The spelling used in letter-writing is characterized by points (i–iii) (Osselton 1998b: 40ff):

- (i) contractions, e.g. &℥, *w<sup>ch</sup>*, *y<sup>m</sup>*, *lic<sup>ce</sup>*, *punishmt*, *tho*, *thro*, *thot*, etc. (from letters of Addison’s, first decade of eighteenth century); some went back to medieval manuscripts; but the practice continues today (see 13.2.2). Contractions reached their peak in the early eighteenth century;
- (ii) phonetic spellings, e.g. *don’t*, *I’ll*, *twill*; possibly as markers of style;
- (iii) retention of older spellings, e.g. *diner* for *dinner* (Johnson); *cutt* (Pope), esp. the diversity in the spelling of past tense and past participle forms in {ed}, e.g. *saved*, *sav’d*, *save’d*, *sav d*; *lackd*, *lackt*, *lack’t*.
- (iv) a further convention no longer practiced is the use of diacritic (macron or cedilla) over a vowel to represent a following <n> or <m>. This was carried over from manuscript traditions. Example: <-ô> for <-on> as in *Skelō* for *Skelton*.

The following text, a short selection from William Lily’s grammar (posthumous 1523), illustrates early EModE spelling usage.

*In speache be these eight partes folowinge:* [list of the parts of speech]

*Of the Nounne.*

*A Nounne is the name of a thinge, that may be seene, felte, hearde, or understande; As the name of my hande in Latine is Manus: the name of an house is Domus: the name of goodness is Bonitas.*

*Of Nounes, some be Substantiues, and some be Adiectiues.*

EModE used the “long <f> in non-final position, a practice that continued well into the eighteenth century. There are numerous cases of final silent <e>s that are no longer written (*nounne*, *thinge*). The word *Adiectiues* illustrates <i> for <j>, non-initial <u> for <v>, and the capitalization of (important) nouns, a practice that was common from the mid-seventeenth to the mid-eighteenth century and lingered on, at least in letter-writing, until the end of the eighteenth (Osselton 1998a: 459). The following passage, one hundred and eighty years later, is taken from Isaac Newton’s *Opticks*.

Exper. 8... *The Book and Lens being made fast, I noted the Place where the Paper was, when the Letters of the Book, illuminated by the fullest red Light of the solar Image falling upon it, did cast their Species* [“image”] *on that Paper most distinctly ...*

(cf. text 6.5: Isaac Newton. *Opticks*, 1704)

The title of his book also illustrates the use of <-icks>, where ModE has <-ics>. Final /-ɪk/ was also spelled <-ique> in words borrowed from French, cf.

8 July. *To Whitehall to chapel, where I got in with ease by going before the Lord Chancellor with Mr Kipps. Here I heared very good musique, the first time that I remember ever to have heard the organs and singing-men in surplices in my life.*

(cf. text 6.1: Samuel Pepys: Excerpts from his diary, 1660)

ModE retains <-ique> only in a few words to signal final stress as in *mystique* (as opposed to *myſtic*). For a closer look at sixteenth and seventeenth century spelling see texts 6.8 (Sidney's *Arcadia*), 6.14 (Bradford on Plimoth Plantation) and the accompanying exercises.

Osselton, N.E. (1998a) "Spelling-Book Rules and the Capitalization of Nouns in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," in: M. Rydén, I. Tieken-Boon van Ostade, and M. Kytö. *A Reader in Early Modern English*. Frankfurt: Lang, 447–460.

Osselton, N.E. (1998b) "Informal Spelling Systems in Early Modern English: 1500–1800," in: M. Rydén, I. Tieken-Boon van Ostade, and M. Kytö *A Reader in Early Modern English*. Frankfurt: Lang, 33–45.

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#### The Great Vowel Shift (GVS) and spelling (§6.3.1.2)

brought significant change to pronunciation. The GVS is a chain shift involving the long vowels of ME. It is not fully clear just when this shift began though it is generally assumed to have begun in the ME period (Lass 1999: 72f; Bailey/Maroldt 1977: 31; see §5.3.2). However, the full extent of the shift is best located in the EModE Period. This may be assumed on the basis of the mismatch between spelling and pronunciation that came about in the course of the shift. Continental values for <a> are generally low front vowels while English "long" <a> is a raised and usually diphthongized vowel: long /eː/ or diphthongized /eɪ/ as in *bake*, *make*, *rake*. This conclusion depends on the existence of a sound-to-spelling relationship that is largely congruent with the Continental phonetic values of the vowel-letters. English spelling was largely fixed by the early sixteenth century and represents the stage of pronunciation reached at or before that time, but this no longer applied by the end of the EModE Period.

Initially digraphs were introduced to express a more specifically English phoneme. This seems to have been the case with <ea> for /eː/ as in *meat* /mɛːt/ and was thus distinct from <ee> for /e:/ as in *meet* /meːt/. In the course of the GVS the /eː/ - /e:/ contrast was lost and the new merged class was raised to /iː/, which is the present pronunciation (with exceptions). The earlier distinction is, however, still apparent in the unpredictability of <ea> as /iː/, which is the major pattern, or as /e/, a wide-spread though minor spelling pattern. Examples: <ea> as /iː/: *beach*, *bead*, *each*, *feature*, *plead*, *read* (present tense) *teak*, etc.; <ea> as /e/: *bread*, *head*, *read* (past tense and past participle).

Bailey, C.-J. N. and K. Maroldt (1977) "The French Lineage of English" In: J.M. Meisel (ed.) *Langues en contact – Pidgins – Creoles – Language in Contact*. Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 21–53.

Lass, R. (1999) "Phonology and Morphology," in: R. Lass (ed.) *The Cambridge History of the English Language*. vol. 3. 1476–1776, Cambridge: CUP, 56–186.

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#### Standardization of spelling (§6.4.2)

The emergence of modern scientific ways of thinking and of seeing the world led to the founding of the Royal Society in 1660/1662. Its earliest members, including John Wilkins, Robert Hooke, Christopher Wren, John Evelyn, and Robert Boyle, promoted all branches of knowledge, and their curiosity about how the world works extended to language, which showed up when the Society named a committee of twenty-two including Dryden and Evelyn to make suggestions for the improvement of English. While an academy was never founded, Evelyn (1620–1706) formulated an impressive program, comprising "a dictionary, a grammar, a spelling reform, lists of technical terms and dialect words, translations of ancient and modern writers, and works to be published by members themselves to serve as models for good writing" (Söderlind 1998: 473). The intention of the Royal Society was fully within the current of thought in the EModE period and on into the ModE era. Spelling was regulated fairly early on, but vocabulary and grammar were still felt to be in need of regulation on into the eighteenth century.

Söderlind, J. (1998) “The Attitude to Language Expressed by or Ascertainable from English Writers of the 16th and 17th Centuries,” in: M. Rydén, I. Tieken-Boon van Ostade, and M. Kytö (eds.) *A Reader in Early Modern English*. Frankfurt: Lang, 461–474.

### ModE spelling (§12.5)

is only gradually different from that of the EModE period. Among the uniformly accepted changes we find the move to use lower case letters for all but proper nouns, adjectives, and verbs (e.g. <Britain, Welsh, Anglicize>). The “long” <f>, as in <[speech]>, disappeared as did the <k> at the ends of words like <physick>. These are some of the more immediately noticeable changes. A thorough review of the regularities of ModE sound-to-spelling conventions cannot be made here, but some general remarks are called for. The *consonants* of English, in most accents 24 in number, must be represented by 21 graphs. Unfortunately, use of the letters is not optimal. For example, <c> may represent both /k/ (*cat, cot*) and /s/ (*ceder, cider*) and <g> may stand for both /g/ (*gone, gun*) and /dʒ/ (*gin, gene*). This “wastes” the distinctive function of <k>, which could be reserved for /k/ and of /j/, which could be for /dʒ/. Furthermore, <q>, which occurs exclusively before in native words is completely redundant for /k/. Indeed, the combination <qu> was an innovation taken from French after the Norman Conquest, when it eventually displaced OE <cw> as in *cwic* “quick.” The use of digraphs (two graphs in a fixed combination) is one way of expanding potential of the alphabet. The most commonly used graph in English digraphs is <h>, as in <sh> for /ʃ/ (*shin*), <th> for /θ/ (initially in lexical words such as *thin*) and /ð/ (initially in grammatical words like *then*), and <c> for /dʒ/ (*chin*). The combination <ch> is not quite so simple: In native words it represents /dʒ/ as just illustrated (also: *cherry, church, bench*). In words borrowed from Greek <ch> stands for /k/. Examples: *character, trachea*. More recent borrowing from French with <ch> are pronounced as /ʃ/. Examples: *chandelier, Chicago*. Other digraphs with <h>: Some accents such as ScE regularly distinguish <wh> for /hw/ (*where*) as opposed to <w> for /w/ (*wear*). <gh> is a relic of /x/ or /ç/ (once pronounced in *right*, but now lost except in a few traditional dialects, especially in Scotland); it is also used in borrowed words to differentiate hard /g/ (Italian *ghetto*) from soft /dʒ/ (*gentle*). Greek borrowings contain <ph> for /f/ (*photo*) and <rh> /r/ (*rhotic*), but neither is really necessary for any purpose other than signaling the Greek source of the words. Sometimes <kh> is used in transliterations of Russian /x/ (*Khrushchev*, but pronounced as /k/ in English), and of <zh> for Russian /ʒ/ (*Zhukov*). Other combinations with <h> include <bh> (/b/ in Hindi *bhang*) and <dh> (/d/ in Hindi *dhoti* or Arabic *dhow*). Historically justified spelling remain in the language. Example: ME *knyght* /kniçt/ retains the initial <kn-> in ModE, where it distinguishes now homophonous (identical in sound) *knight* from *night* in spelling only.

The *vowels* of English are much more complex. Here a repertoire of 16 (GenAm) to 20 (RP) vowels have to be represented by a mere six vowel-letters (<a, e, i, o, u, y>). The solutions that have evolved include (1) using digraphs such as <ea, oi, ie, ue> and many others and (2) indicating length or diphthongization with a following single consonant + a vowel letter as opposed to shortness, which is indicated by a following single consonant and nothing or a double consonant. The first of these strategies (digraphs) has the distinct disadvantage of involving a large number of exceptions. Examples:

Table Spelling-to-sound variation: the digraph <ea>

the major pattern	<ea>	/iː/	as in	<i>breathe, lead</i> (verb), <i>appease, ease, release</i> , etc.
the minor pattern	<ea>	/e/	as in	<i>breath, bread, lead</i> (noun), <i>dead, death</i> , etc.
incidental cases	<ea>	/ɜː/	as in	<i>earth, earn, learn, search</i>
	<ea>	/eɪ/	as in	<i>great, steak</i>

The second of the two strategies is more systematic, but still involves numerous exceptions as the following tables reveal. All the tables revolve around the pronunciation associated with the individual occurrence of the simple graphemes <a, e, i/y, o, u>. Note that C stands for any consonant-letter; V, for any vowel-letter; and Ø, for no following sound in the same word.

Table a The “long” vowels, spelling and pronunciation

Spelling	Pronunciation	Examples	Some exceptions
<a> + C + V	/eɪ/	<i>rate, rating</i>	<i>have, garage</i>
<e> + C + V	/iː/	<i>mete, scheming, extreme</i>	<i>allege, metal</i>
<i/y> + C + V	/aɪ/	<i>ripe, rhyme, divine</i>	<i>machine, river, divinity</i> <sup>1</sup>
<o> + C + V	RP /əʊ/; GenAm /oʊ/	<i>joke, joking, verbose</i>	<i>come, lose, gone, verbosity</i> <sup>1</sup>
<u> + C + V	/(j)uː/	<i>cute, renewal</i>	–

<sup>1</sup> Words that end in <-ity>, <-ic>, <-ion> (*divinity, mimic, collision*) have a short vowel realization of <a, e, i, o, u> as a result of historical processes (Venezky 1970: 108f).

Table b The “short” vowels, spelling and pronunciation

Spelling	Pronunciation	Examples	Some exceptions
<a> + C + C/Ø	/æ/	<i>rat, rattle</i> <sup>1</sup>	<i>mamma</i>
<e> + C + C/Ø	/e/	<i>set, settler</i>	–
<i/y> + C + C/Ø	/ɪ/	<i>rip, ripping, system</i>	–
<o> + C + C/Ø RP	/ɒ/	<i>comma</i>	<i>gross</i>
GenAm	/ɑː/		
+ C + C/Ø	/ʌ/	<i>cut, cutter</i>	<i>butte</i>
	/ʊ/ <sup>2</sup>	<i>bush, put, butcher</i>	

<sup>1</sup> In RP and RP-like BrE numerous words follow a special rule for <a>, which is frequently pronounced as /ɑː/ when followed by <f, s, th> (*after, ask, bath*), <m, n> + C (*sample, dance*), or <lf> (*calf, half*).

<sup>2</sup> “Short” <u> continued to be pronounced as /ʊ/ if it occurred next to a “labial,” that is a consonant produce with lip-rounding, viz. /b, p, f, tʃ/. All the same, there are a few exceptions such as *putt* /pʌt/ vs. *put* /pʊt/. See *FOOT-STRUT split*.

Tables c–d give the rules for vowel + <r> in three different graphological contexts:

Table c Vowels before <r> + one letter-vowel and zero or two letter-vowels (Venezky 1970: Chapter 7)

Spelling	RP	GenAm	Examples	Some exceptions
<ar> + V + (V/Ø)	/eə(r)/	/er/	<i>ware, wary, warier</i>	<i>are, aria, safari</i>
<er> + V + (V/Ø)	/ɪə(r)/	/ɪr/	<i>here, cereal</i>	<i>very</i>
<ir/yr> + V + (V/Ø)	/aɪə(r)/	/aɪr/	<i>fire, inquiry, tyre</i>	–
<or> + V + (V/Ø)	/ɔː(r)/	/ɔːr/	<i>lore, glorious</i>	–
<ur> + V + (V/Ø)	/ʊə(r)/	/ʊr/	<i>bureau, spurious</i>	<i>bury, burial</i>

Table d Vowels before &lt;r&gt; or &lt;rr&gt; + letter-vowel + consonant (Venezky 1970: Chapter 7)

Spelling	RP and GenAm	Examples	Some exceptions
<ar(r)> + VC	/æ/	<i>arid, marriage</i>	<i>catarrh, harem</i>
<er(r)>	/e/	<i>peril, errand</i>	<i>err</i>
<ir(r) / yr(r)>	/ɪ/	<i>empiric, irrigate, lyric</i>	GenAm <i>squirrel</i>
<or(r)>	RP	/ɒ/;	
	GenAm	/ɑː/	<i>worry, horrid</i>
<ur(r)>		/ɜː/	<i>urine</i>
		/ʌr	RP <i>hurry, turret</i>

Table e Vowels before &lt;r&gt; + zero or &lt;r&gt; + consonant (Venezky 1970: Chapter 7)

Spelling	RP and GenAm	Examples	Some exceptions
<ar> + ø/C	/ɑː/	<i>par, part</i>	<i>scarce</i>
<er>	/ɜː/	<i>her, herb</i>	<i>concerto, sergeant</i>
<ir / yr>	/ɜː/	<i>for, bird, Byrd</i>	–
<or>	/ɔː/	<i>for, fort</i>	<i>attorney</i>
<ur>	/ɜː/	<i>cur, curd</i>	–

Venezky, R.L. (1970) *The Structure of English Orthography*. The Hague: Mouton.

### Spelling reform (§12.5.1)

has been called for over and over despite the widespread acceptance of an essentially unified norm of StE orthography. Yet, we should not forget that Standard English spelling – be it British- or American-oriented – continues to give general preference to etymological spellings, which help to increase inter-linguistic intelligibility, and it retains “silent” letters such as the <r> in words like <car> or <card> thus allowing a more universal acceptance of spelling, in this case between rhotic such as RP and non-rhotic accents such as StAmE.

Attempts at reform include any one of numerous projects to bring spelling into a closer relation to pronunciation. Some modest changes have been successful, but the abstractness of the present system and distance from actual pronunciation allows it to more easily represent many accents. The usual basis for reform suggestions emphasizes a different principle, viz. to come as close as possible to a one-to-one relationship between each phoneme of the language and the letter or combination of letters employed to represent it. In other words, with the exception of a few shorthand systems of writing such as Pitman shorthand, the alphabetic principle has been maintained. And in most cases the Latin alphabet has been used, but again there have been exceptions such as Lodwick’s universal alphabet (Abercrombie 1972: 51; §8.2.6).

Spelling reforms are not merely haphazard and unsystematic. The reforms initiated by *Noah Webster* in the United States are the one aspect of the standard language that he is especially closely associated with. He ardently supported his changes, which he undertook step by step in his spelling book (which with sales of over 60,000,000 by the 1960s; see color plate no. 12.3 Webster’s *American Spelling Book*). Slowly, he changed the spelling of words from one edition to the next so that they became “Americanized.” He chose *s* over *c* in words like *defense*, he changed the *-re* to *-er* in words like *center*, he dropped one of the <l>s in

*traveler*, and at first he kept the *u* in words like *colour* or *favour* but dropped it in later editions. He also changed “tongue” to “tung.” Much, but not all, of what he proposed was accepted and is now normal AmE usage. The effects of his major changes can be seen in connection with the principles of **simplification**, **regularization**, **derivational unity**, **reflection of pronunciation**, **indication of stress**, and **pronunciation spellings**. As we will see they are not haphazard, nor are they restricted exclusively to AmE. There are, nevertheless, a number of individual, unsystematic **individual differences** and **nonce spellings**, esp. in advertising. Much of the variation lies in the greater willingness on the part of AmE users to accept the few modest reforms that have been suggested.

### Simplification

is a principle common to both the British and the American traditions, but is sometimes realized differently. It concerns the doubling of letters, Latin spellings, and word endings such as in <catalogue> vs. <catalog>.

**Double letters** are more radically simplified in AmE, which has *program* instead of *programme*, also measurement words ending in <-gram(me)> such as *kilogram(me)* etc., where the form with the final <-me> is the preferred, but not the exclusive BrE form. Other examples: BrE *waggon* and AmE *wagon*; AmE *counselor*, *woolen*, *fagot* and AmE/BrE *counsellor*, *woollen* and *faggot*. On occasion BrE has the simplified form as is the case with *skilful* and *wilful* for AmE *skillful* and *willful*. BrE *fulfil*, *instil*, *appal* may be interpreted as simplification, but AmE double <-ll-> in *fulfill*, *instill*, *appall* may have to do with where the stress lies (see **indication of stress**).

**Latin spellings** are simplified from <ae> and <oe> to <e> in words taken from Latin and Greek (*heresy*, *federal* etc.) in all varieties of English, but this rule is carried out less completely in BrE, where we find *mediaeval* next to *medieval*, *foetus* next to *fetus* and *paediatrician* next to *pediatrician*. In contrast, AmE has simple <e> compared to the non-simplified forms of BrE in words like *esophagus/oesophagus*; *esthetics/aesthetics* (also AmE); *maneuver/manoeuvre*; *anapest/anapaest*; *estrogen/oestrogen*; *anemial/anaemia*; *egislaegis* (also AmE); *amebalaamoeba*. Note that some words have only <ae> and <oe> in AmE, e.g. *aerial* and *Oedipus*.

**Word endings** in AmE may drop of the <-ue> of <-logue> in words like *catolog*, *dialog*, *monolog* (but not in words like *Prague*, *vague*, *vogue*, or *rogue*). Note also the simplification of words like (BrE) *judgement* vs. (AmE) *judgment*; *abridg(e)ment* and *acknowledg(e)ment*.

**Simplification vs. derivational uniformity:** BrE simplifies <-ection> to <-exion> in *connexion*, *inflexion*, *retroflexion* etc. AmE uses *connection* etc. thus following the principle of derivational unity: *connect* > *connection*, *connective*; *reflect* > *reflection*, *reflective*.

### Regularization

is evident in AmE, which regularizes <-our> to <-or> and <-re> to <-er> as in *honor*, *neighbor* or in *center*, *theater*. This seems justified since there are no systematic criteria for distinguishing between the two sets in BrE: *neighbour* and *saviour*, but *donor* and *professor*; *honour*, and *valour*, but *metaphor*, *anterior*, and *posterior*; *savour*, and *flavour*, but *languor* and *manor*; etc. Within BrE there are special rules to note: the endings <-ation> and <-ious> usually lead to a form with <-or-> as in *coloration* and *laborious*, but the endings <-al> and <-ful>, as in *behavioural* and *colourful*, have no such effect. Even AmE may keep <-our> in such words as *glamour* (next to *glamor*) and *Saviour* (next to *Savior*), perhaps because there is something “better” about these spellings for many people. Words like *contour*, *tour*, *four*, or *amour*, where the vowel of the <-our> carries stress, are never simplified.

BrE *goitre*, *centre*, and *metre* become AmE *goiter*, *center* (but the adjective form is *central*). BrE has *metre* “39.37 inches,” but *meter* “instrument for measuring.” The <-er> rule applies everywhere in AmE except where the letter preceding the ending is a <c> or a <g>. In these cases <-re> is retained as in *acre*, *mediocre*,



and *ogre* in order to prevent misinterpretation as <c> as “soft” /s/ or <g> as /dʒ/. AmE spellings *fire* (but note: *fiery*), *wire*, *tire* etc. are used to insure interpretation of these sequences as monosyllabic. The fairly widespread use of the form *theatre* in AmE runs parallel to *glamour* and *Saviour*, as mentioned above: it may be an attempt to suggest superior quality or a more distinguished tradition for some people.

### Derivational uniformity

Leads AmE spelling to change BrE *defence*, *offence*, *pretence* to *defense*, *offense*, *pretense*, which follows the principle of derivational uniformity: *defense* > *defensive*, *offense* > *offensive*, *pretense* > *pretension*, *practice* > *practical*. (Cf. BrE *connexion* vs. AmE *connection* above). Note, however, AmE has *analyze* and *paralyze* despite *analysis* and *paralysis*.

### Reflection of pronunciation

The forms *analyze* and *paralyze*, which end in <-ze>, may violate derivational uniformity, but they do reflect the pronunciation of the final fricative, which is clearly a lenis or voiced /z/. This principle has been widely adopted in spelling on both sides of the Atlantic for verbs ending in <-ize> and the corresponding nouns ending in <-ization>. The older spellings with <-ise> and <-isation> are also found in both AmE and BrE. AmE *Advertise*, for example, is far more common than *advertize* (also *advise*, *compromise*, *revise*, *televise*). The decisive factor here seems to be publishers’ style sheets, with increasing preference for <z>. One special case is that of the alternation between voiceless consonants in nouns (*teeth* /-θ/, *half* /-f/, *use* /-s/) vs. the corresponding verbs with a voiced consonant (*teethe* /-ð/, *halve* /-v/, *use* /-z/). BrE spelling respects this distinction in the pair *practice* (n.) vs. *practice* (v.) despite the lack of a voicing difference. AmE usually spells both with <c>, both being voiceless.

### Indication of Stress

determines the doubling or not of final consonants (especially of <l>) in AmE when an ending beginning with a vowel <-ing>, <-ed> follows. If <-er> is added to a multisyllabic word ending in <l>, the <l> is doubled if the final syllable of the root carries the stress and is spelled with a single letter-vowel (<e, o> as opposed to a digraph). If the stress does not lie on the final syllable, the <l> is not doubled, cf.

<i>re'bel</i>	>	<i>re'belling</i>	<i>'revel</i>	>	<i>'reveling</i>
<i>re'pel</i>	>	<i>re'pelled</i>	<i>'travel</i>	>	<i>'traveler</i>
<i>com'pel</i>	>	<i>com'pelling</i>	<i>'marvel</i>	>	<i>'marveling</i>
<i>con'trol</i>	>	<i>con'trolling</i>	<i>'trammel</i>	>	<i>'trammeled</i>
<i>pa'trol</i>	>	<i>pa'troller</i>	<i>'yodel</i>	>	<i>'yodeled</i>

BrE uniformly follows the principle of **regularization** and doubles the <l> (*revelling*, *traveler*, etc.). AmE spelling reflects pronunciation (cf. AmE *fulfill*, *distill* etc. or AmE *installment*, *skillful* and *willful*, where the <ll> occurs in the stressed syllable).

### Pronunciation spellings

are best-known in the case of <-gh>. AmE tends to use a phonetic spelling so that BrE *plough* appears as AmE *plow* and BrE *draught* (“flow of air, swallow or movement of liquid, depth of a vessel in water”), as AmE *draft*. The spellings *thru* for *through* and *tho'* for *though* are not uncommon in AmE, but are generally



restricted to informal writing (but with official use in the designation of some limited access expressways as *thruways*). Spellings such as *lite* for *light*, *hi* for *high*, or *nite* for *night* are employed in very informal writing and in advertising language. But from there they can enter more formal use, as is the case *lite*, which is the recognized spelling in the sense of low-sugar and low-fat foods and drinks. In other words, an originally advertisement-driven spelling (<light> → <lite>) has gained independent status in its new spelling guise.

### Hyphenation

varies in the way it is used in spelling compounds – be it as two words, as a hyphenated word, or as a single unhyphenated word. In general, AmE avoids hyphenation, cf. BrE *make-up* (“cosmetics”) and AmE *make up* and BrE *neo-colonialism*, but AmE *neocolonialism*. No hard and fast rules exist, and usage varies considerably, even from dictionary to dictionary within both AmE and BrE.

### Individual words

have different spellings without there being any further consequences. The following list includes a few of the most common differences in spelling, always with the BrE form listed first:

<i>aluminium</i> / <i>aluminum</i>	( <i>bank</i> ) <i>cheque</i> / <i>check</i>	<i>gaol</i> (also <i>jail</i> ) / <i>jail</i>
<i>jewellery</i> / <i>jewelry</i>	( <i>street</i> ) <i>kerb</i> / <i>curb</i>	<i>pyjamas</i> / <i>pajamas</i>
<i>storey</i> (of a building) / <i>story</i>	<i>sulphur</i> / <i>sulfur</i>	<i>tyre</i> / <i>tire</i>
<i>whisky</i> / <i>whiskey</i>		

Finally, it should be noted that AmE usage is not completely consistent; for example, we find <advertise-ment> with <s> and many people write <Saviour> (a reference to Jesus, with a capital) with < and <theatre> with <-re> as if the BrE spelling lent the word more standing. Much of AmE variation lies in the greater willingness on the part of its users to accept the few modest reforms that have been suggested. Canadians seem to be of two minds about this with the consequence that we find far more variation, which Canadians may, in fact, see as Canadian.

### The new spelling

of the Simplified Spelling Society of Great Britain uses the Latin alphabet, which has, however, been modified to insure greater consistency. It is illustrated in the following rendering of the beginning of Lincoln “Gettysburg Address” (Text 12.7):

*But in a larjer sens, we kanot dedikaet – we kanot konsekraet – we kanot haloe – dhis ground. Dhe braev men, living and ded, huu strugld heer, hav konsekraeted it far abuv our puur pouer to ad or detrakt.*

(MacCarthy 1972: 71)

Conventional spelling:

*But in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract.*

**Text 12.7:** Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address (excerpt) in the New Spelling

What has been undertaken in the example is the use of <k> only for /k/: *kanot*, *konsekraet*, *detrakt*. /dʒ/ is always <j> as in *larjer*. /θ/ remains <th> (not shown), but /ð/ is spelled as <dh>, as in *dhis* “this”; final silent <e> is dropped as in *sens*. The <e> is sufficient to render /e/ and is consequently also used in <ded> for standard <dead>. In *konsekraet* the use of <ae> for /e/ insures the proper vowel quality, as do <ee> for /i:/, <uu> for /u:/, or <ou> for /aʊ/. In other words the basic phonetic principle of English orthography is extended.

**William the Conqueror (see *Post-Conquest England*)**  
**Ormulum, The (see *Middle English literature*)**

## Phrasal verb (pattern), The

is a combination of a verb and, most usually, an adverbial particle. Verbs of this sort have increased in both the number that exist and the frequency of occurrence over time. Examples: *drink up*, *look out*. Phrasal verbs did occur in OE, but far less frequently than in ModE. Examples: OE: 7 þæs ymbe III niht **ridon** twegen eorlas **up** (*Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (Abingdon II) for the year 871) “And then three nights later two earls rode up”; ModE: *There’s a bloke here behind taking down every blessed word you’re saying* (Shaw, *Pygmalion*: Act I). More common in OE texts were verbs with prefixes (cf. Hiltunen 1983). Examples: *gewunian*, “live communally,” *geferdon*, “go in,” *abrecan*, “smash; lit. “break up,” *ofslean* “kill”; lit. “knock off” (see **aspect**; also **a-prefixing** and **perfect(ive) aspect**).

Old Norse language contact led to the adoption of new phrasal verbs like *farenn forþ* and *Zedenn forþ* “travel, go” (Blake 1996: 126) and may have helped strengthen a tendency toward the decline of many of the older prefixes and their replacement with phrasal verbs (Hiltunen 1983: 43f; but see Thim 2008). While some prefixes such as {over-} and {under-}, as in *overwork* and *underpay*, have remained and are, indeed, productive (Schröder 2008), very many have disappeared, esp. the once common {ge-, a-, of-} quoted above.

In ModE phrasal verbs are usually subclassified in two groups: (1) phrasal verbs as such and (2) prepositional verbs. The first differ from the second in being either transitive or intransitive and – in the case of transitive verbs – in allowing the phrasal particle to either precede or follow a noun object. Examples: Intransitive phrasal verb: *Hey, look out! The light’s turning red*. Transitive phrasal verb with a noun object: **Look up** the term in a dictionary; or: **Look** the term **up** in a dictionary. Transitive phrasal verb with a pronoun object: **Look it up** (not \***Look up it**!) Prepositional verbs must be transitive and the prepositional element must precede the object. Example: **Look at** clouds (not \***Look** the cloud **at**!) (§4.2.1+8).

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Geipel, J. (1971) *The Viking Legacy: The Scandinavian Influence on the English and Gaelic Languages*. Newton Abbot: David and Charles.

Hiltunen, Risto (1983) *The Decline of the Prefixes and the Beginnings of the English Phrasal Verb. The Evidence from Some Old and Early Middle English Texts*. Turku: Turun Yliopisto.

Schröder, A. (2008) “Investigating the Morphological Productivity of Verbal Prefixation in the History of English,” In: *AAA – Arbeiten aus Anglistik und Amerikanistik* 33, 47–69.

Thim, S. (2008) “The Rise of the Phrasal Verb in English: A Case of Scandinavian Influence?” in: K. Stierstorfer (ed.) *Anglistentag 2007, Münster. Proceedings*. Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 291–304.

## Post-Conquest England

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had a population (based on the *Domesday Book* of 1086) of between a million and a quarter and two million inhabitants. The *Domesday* listings did not cover the major cities such as London or Winchester nor the religious of the monasteries nor those living in castles (rather than on the land). The size of the population had decreased in comparison with Roman Britain, which is estimated to have had four million. Yet in the next one and a half to two centuries it was to grow again to between five and seven million by the time of the *Great Famine*, the *Hundred Years' War* and the outbreak of the bubonic plague or *Black Death*. In consequence of these catastrophes there was once again a drop in population of at least 20%.

### The Norman Conquest

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began with the victory of **William Duke of Normandy** over Harold II of England at the Battle of Hastings in September 1066, where Harold was killed (cf. *Wessex and Danish dynasties*). The initial Norman victory was rigorously consolidated over the next twenty years as the *Domesday Book* makes sufficiently clear. William cemented his power and position by installing Normans in virtually all the important offices of Church and State thus creating a small (Norman-)French ruling class in a country of English-speaking subjects. This situation removed most of the literate English speakers from positions of authority and insured that English would be the Low language and French would be the High language together with Latin as the High language of written record in what was a *diglossic* situation with, however, two functionally distinct High languages. This had far-reaching consequences for the vocabulary of English, which was to borrow highly from Latin and French (§§4.1.1–2 and 4.2.4), esp. after French-English bilingualism receded with the linguistic assimilation of the upper orders to English.

### The Domesday Book

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(from the OE *dom* “accounting”) was a list of all the landholders in England compiled in 1085–1086. Some thirteen to fourteen thousand holdings were listed and revealed that the great majority were in the hands of the Normans who had replaced the original Anglo-Saxon landholders. **King William** was interested in assessing the tax potential and in documenting land-ownership. This provided an astonishing detailed picture of society: how many lords, villagers, cottagers, and slaves; how much land was forest, meadow, pasture and where the mills and fisheries were. The *Domesday Book* reveals that the royal family and the church abbots controlled just over half the land directly. The remainder was held by just under 200 tenants, particularly a dozen plus barons. It was this class that would eventually offer the most opposition to royal prerogative and power (see *Magna Carta; Barons' Revolt*).

The Domesday Book offers excellent testimony to the hierarchy of the feudal system, at the head of which was the king. He granted land to tenants such as the barons to reward them for their service to him in the Conquest. They then granted it to sub-tenants who did the same until we find rent-paying peasants at the bottom, who worked the land of the lords. Slaves worked the land as well, but could not hold any on their own.

### French cultural ascendancy

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was a major reason why French was seen as a language of great prestige and an object of cultivation, associated as it was with chivalrous society at its best. French was used by the educated and in high society but was

a matter of culture and fashion rather than an economic or political necessity as it had been before. French continued to hold this position until well into modern times. In the meantime English has displaced French as the language of cultural ascendancy.

### Magna Carta

was written, as was established custom, in Latin (see text below). It consisted of a list of freedoms recognized by the king. It defined rights under the law and recorded customary practices. Above all, it limited the king's power, effectively, though still only symbolically, establishing the rule of law. The short excerpt that follows is only one of sixty-three paragraphs in *Magna Carta*.

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| <p>13. Et civitas London. habeat omnes antiquas libertates et liberas consuetudines suas, tam per terras, quam per aquas. Preterea volumus et concedimus quod omnes alie civitates, et burghi, et ville, et portus, habeant omnes libertates et liberas consuetudines suas.</p> <p>13. And the city of London shall have all it ancient liberties and free customs, as well by land as by water; furthermore, we decree and grant that all other cities, boroughs, towns, and ports shall have all their liberties and free customs.</p> |
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Neither the signing of the *Magna Carta* in 1215 nor the First Barons' War (1258–1265), motivated by John's renunciation of *Magna Carta*, stopped the inflow of French officials that had begun under John and was reinforced under his successor Henry III (1216–1272). See 4.1.2.

### The Great Famine of 1315–1317

marked the end of the Medieval Warm Period and the beginning of what is sometimes called the Little Ice Age. The consequence of this climate change was poorer harvests and colder winters. This led, from 1315 to 1317 to famine. Following on the population growth of the previous two centuries, this caused starvation and/or weakened health, which may be argued to have made the population more susceptible to the Black Death, which spread throughout Europe from 1348 on. The Great Famine itself reduced the European population by as much as 10%.

### The Black Death or bubonic plague,

spread by rat-borne fleas, reached England in 1348, where in the course of the next several decades it led, according to conservative estimates, to a population loss of at least 20%. The plague weakened and killed 80% of its victims within eight days of outbreak. It is known to lead to losses in a magnitude of up to 75%. A common assumption is a drop in population size of about one-third though some go higher (Goldberg 1996; Benedictow 2004). In some places so many people were affected that the very fabric of society was threatened: the sick could not be cared for, and the dead could not be buried (cf. Russell 1948). The lack of sufficient labor might also lead to food shortages. This strengthened the position of the peasantry (cf. *Peasants' Revolt of 1381*). This ultimately changed social structures as replacements for traditional leadership had to be recruited outside the nobility. The first occurrence subsided in 1350. Further outbreaks in the late ME period occurred in 1361–62, 1369, 1379–83, 1389–93, and throughout the first half of the fifteenth

century. Full population recovery took about 150 years. The plague continued to recur until the nineteenth century; see also the mention of it in *Pepys' Diary* for 1665 (Text 6.1).

Benedictow, O.J. (2004) *The Black Death 1346–1353: The Complete History*. Woodbridge: Boydell.

Goldberg, J. (1996) "Introduction," In: M. Ormrod and P.G. Lindley. *The Black Death in England*. Stamford: Paul Watkins, 4.

Russell, J.C. (1948). *British Medieval Population*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

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### The Hundred Years' War

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was actually a series of wars between France and England starting in 1337 and ending in 1453 with England's loss of virtually all of its holdings in France. The individual conflicts were

- the Edwardian War (1337–1360); especially well known is the Battle of Crécy, in which the English prevailed thanks to their use of the longbow, a long-distance weapon that relegated the mounted knight to military insignificance; English forces took possession of much of Normandy as well as of Calais; England prevailed;
- the Caroline War (1369–1389), in which French military leadership greatly surpassed that of England; the French slowly began recapturing towns; France prevailed;
- the Lancastrian War (1415–1429), which began with a momentous English success at Agincourt (1415) and the retaking of Calais and Rouen soon after, but ended with almost total reversals of England's successes with the appearance of Joan of Arc (1412–1431) at the head of the French army in 1429;
- French victory (1429–1453), which was initiated by Joan of Arc, who was burned at the stake in Calais in 1431; French forces began to drive back the English so that by the end of the war only Calais remained in English hands.

The results of the war were

- loss of English claims/possessions in France – except for Calais (and the Channel Islands); note that France and Scotland both stood in opposition to England; furthermore, this was no longer a knightly conflict, but one using standing armies (with peasant soldiers); foreign mercenaries also terrorized the countryside; English soldiers slaughtered farmers' cattle, getting the name "boeuf-manges," or "beef-eaters";
- a thinning of the higher feudal ranks; demographically the Hundred Years' War – together with the Black Death – decimated the English nobility, thus making the rise of commoners easier, i.e. increased social mobility; as a result, a new class of people were able to enter public service, essentially de-aristocratizing it.
- the growing importance of English: By 1362 French had lost its primacy to English; Londoners now came from all over England.

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### The Peasants' (a.k.a. Tyler's) Revolt of 1381

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(see color plate 5.1) was the largest peasant uprising of the medieval period. As many as 100,000 peasants marched on London under the leadership of Wat Tyler (?–1381) and others such as John Ball, a Lollard, and Jack Straw. The revolt was a reaction against the rising taxes and more restrictive working conditions of the peasant farmers. Taxes (poll taxes) were levied to help finance the *Hundred Years' War*, and this led to great dissatisfaction and revolt. The king (actually Chaucer's patron John of Gaunt, who was the

regent for young King Richard II, reign 1377–1400) had introduced a poll tax in 1377 and again in 1379 to finance the war against France. A new poll tax in 1380 was perceived as unjust and much too high. This led to massive opposition to royal authority as peasants marched on London protesting against corrupt officials and demanding better terms and conditions for labor. The rebels stormed the Tower of London, executed the Lord Chancellor, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Lord Treasurer. So well coordinated was this uprising that it can be assumed that it was not spontaneous and was backed by powerful opponents of the king. Young King Richard made concessions, which in the end he did not honor. All the same, this may be seen as the beginning of the end of serfdom in England, which would mean better wages and more freedom. This social upheaval was part of the rise of capitalism; it would contribute to the renewal of learning (the *Renaissance*; §6.1.2), and it was manifest in a variety of movements of *religious dissent* (§5.2.1).

### The Wars of the Roses (1455–1485)

were in part a reaction against the chaotic conditions resulting from the *Hundred Years' War*. Before and then during the period of conflict, the House of Lancaster, represented by a red rose, provided three kings starting with Henry IV (Bollingbroke) in 1399 and followed by his son Henry V and then his son Henry VI, whose right to the throne was contested by Richard, Duke of York from the House of York, represented by a white rose. He was killed in battle, but his son Edward IV took the throne in 1460 and reigned until 1483. He was succeeded by Edward V, who has often been presumed to have been murdered along with his brother in the Tower of London by Richard III (Gloucester). When he was killed in battle, Henry Tudor, a Lancastrian, took the throne as Henry VII thus effectively ending the wars and establishing a dynasty which ruled until the death of Elizabeth I in 1603.

Dynastic struggles were prominent in the Wars of the Roses, but they were also coupled with political upheaval and a change in the balance of power as seen in

- support for York from the commercial classes in London;
- Lancaster's devastation of Southern England;
- Parliamentary support for York (i.e. Edward IV);
- weakening of feudal power; strengthening of the merchant classes;
- the end of England's continental power and claims;
- the emergence of the House of Tudor under Henry Tudor, a Lancastrian;
- centralized power under the Tudors: Henry VII, Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary I, Elizabeth I.

### Reduction of strong verb classes

There is widespread agreement about the forms of the ModE principal parts in StE. In *non-standard GenE* (e.g. 10.2.3, Table 10.3) and in the *traditional dialects* (8.2.7.1), however, their development has often been different. All in all this has to do with the leveling of the four *ablaut* distinctions in the principal parts of strong verbs in OE (see *verb classes of OE*). The resulting forms may retain three, two, or no different vowels. Examples: *sing-sang-sung*; *sting-stung-stung*; *set-set-set*. Some verbs vary between regular and irregular principal parts in standard ModE. Examples: *dreamt* and *dreamed*; *dove* and *dived*, *woke* and *waked*. The divergence of non-standard and regional forms from *StE* results from a different choice of form for the past tense, viz. generalization of *druncon* rather than *dranc* (see *principal parts*).



These forms have as a group undergone a high degree of regularization as a large number of OE irregular (or strong) verbs have become ModE regular (or weak) ones (see verb classes of OE and of ModE). Example: *helpan-healp-hulpon-holpen* has become *help-helped-helped* in StE. Of the more than 300 strong verbs of OE only around half are still irregular. The present irregular verbs consist of those with no variation (*put-put-put*), with two forms (*send-sent-sent*), and those with three distinct forms (*draw-drew-drawn*). Only the verb *be* has retained four distinct forms (*be-was-were-gone*). While most of the changes in principal parts led to regularization, there are occasional examples of the adoption of irregular forms for a verb that might be expected to be regular. Example: *dig-dug-dug*, a verb presumably borrowed from French (*diguer* “to hollow out, to make a dike”).

### Preterite-present verbs

are a small group of verbs whose original past (aka preterite) form took on a present tense meaning in Proto-Germanic. As one result, the third person singular has no ending, which was the pattern with the past tense of the strong verbs. Consequently, ModE verbs of this class also have no {-s} in the third person singular. OE examples: *witan* “know” with first and third person singular *wat* but plural *witon*; *āgan* “have” with *āh* and plural *āgon*; *cunnan* “be able” with *cann* and plural *cunnon*; *magan* “be able” with *mæg* and plural *magon*; *sculan* “have to” with *sceal* and plural *sculon*. New weak class past tense forms emerged to fill the gap; they were most often, but not exclusively formed on the pattern of the weak verbs with the inflection {-te}, for the verbs listed above: *wiste*, *āhte*, *cūðe*, *meahte*, and *sceolde*. ModE no longer has the vowel distinctions, but does have non-inflected forms throughout the present tense. The ModE preterite present verbs are all modal auxiliaries. Examples: *can*, *may*, *must*, *shall*, *will*.

As the two lists for OE and ModE (both not complete) reveal, the actual members of the preterite-present group differ. *Witan* and *āgan* have dropped out of the language, as have several others. On the other hand, ModE – though not StE – is in the process of adding a new preterite-present verb: *got*. Example: *But I don't got it in me no more to fight* (R. Skloot (2010) *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*. NY: Crown, 11), where *got* is used as an infinitive and the third person singular present tense is the question as to whether the speaker **got** it her or not. Furthermore, non-standard GenE *got*, esp. in the form *gotta*, is often modal, cf. *He gotta do it*.

### Participles

occur in two forms. One is the present participle, which ends in ModE in {-ing}. Examples: *being*, *going*, *running*, or *looking*. The other is the past participle, which is the final principal part (of four among the OE strong verbs or of three among the ModE principal parts). Examples: *been*, *gone*, *ran*, or *looked*. Both have function of the major lexical word classes verb and adjective. In OE adjectival participles took the appropriate inflections. Example: *þæt ge mid urum sceattum to scype gangon unbefohtene* “that you, unfought against, should go to your ship” (Text 3.3 “The Battle of Maldon,” late eleventh century). Here *unbefohtene* ends in the nominative plural strong *adjective* ending. Used as a *verb* form we might find something like the following passive (according to Ælfic: *ic eom gelufod* “I am loved.” The present participle does not really enter into what might truly be considered the progressive; rather, it is adjectival. Example: *murnende mod* “grieving mood” (*Beowulf*, l. 50). Not until the EModE period did the frequency of *periphrastic structures*, in which the participles took on a clearly verbal function, increase significantly.

### Renaissance, The (see Chapter 6)



## Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*

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a nineteenth century highly romanticized historical novel, dramatically exploits the theme of foreign domination of England and points out the cultural distinctions between the manor house with its terms of French origin and the field with its Saxon vocabulary. Examples: Saxon *deer* and French *venison*; *swine* and *pork*; *cow* and *beef* (see also ***French cultural ascendancy***).

**Word formation processes** (see Chapter 1)

**Word order** (see Chapter 1)