

The History of the English Language

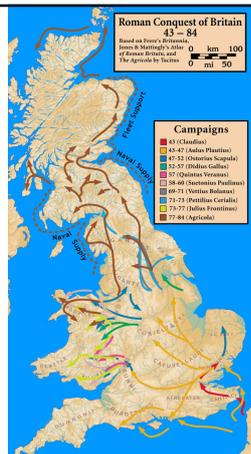
Dr. Gloria Cappelli

Celtic tribes reach Britain 500B.C. (Iron Age)
Indoeuropean language
Celts were so **fragmented** and given to **fighting** among themselves



Romans invaded Britain (55-43 B.C. – 410A.D.)

They brought **Latin** to the British islands (also an **Indoeuropean** language)

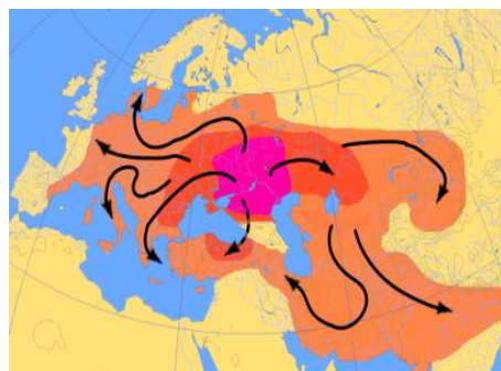


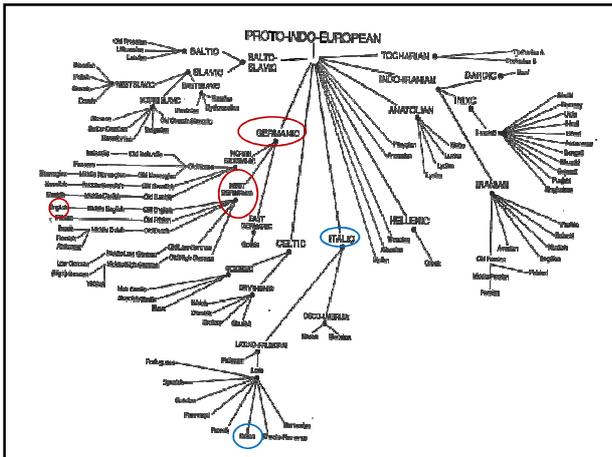
Indoeuropean?

Many languages spoken in the world (Europe, India, Asia...) are **genetically related**: they belong to **different language families** derived from a **hypothetical common source**

Indoeuropean?

The **Indo-European languages** comprise a family of **several hundred related languages** including most of the major languages of Europe, the northern Indian subcontinent (South Asia), the Iranian plateau (Southwest Asia), and much of Central Asia
Indo-European (Indo refers to the Indian subcontinent) has **the largest numbers of speakers** of the recognised families of languages in the world today



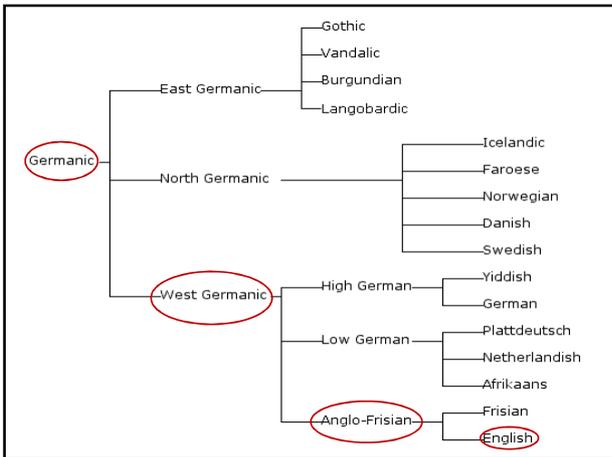


Germanic Languages?

East Germanic was spoken by peoples who migrated back to **south-eastern Europe**. No East Germanic language is spoken today, and the only written East Germanic language that survives is **Gothic**

North Germanic evolved into the modern **Scandinavian languages** of Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, and Icelandic (but not Finnish, which is related to Estonian and is not an Indo-European language)

West Germanic is the ancestor of modern German, Dutch, Flemish, Frisian, and **English**



Celtic influences on English

Bannock (cake)	Clout (hit)
Crock (container)	Darn (mend)
Mug	Knob
	Pool
Binn (bin)	Luh (lake)
	Thames
	Avon (water)
	Ex (as in Exeter - water)

From the original Briton settlers' language

Celtic influences on English

bag	bargain	barrel
basket		
bijou	budget	
	car	ribbon

Galic words brought by the **Normans** in 1066

Celtic influences on English

clan	slogan (a war-cry)	plaid
		whisky
shamrock		gag
	log	

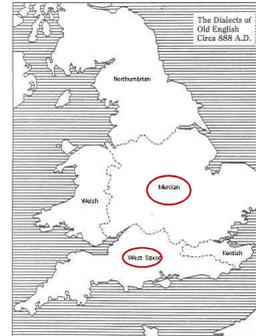
From **Scottish** and **Irish**

Old English (460 – 1066A.D.)

Most of the **OE corpus** is written in the **Wessex dialect**. Under the ruling of King Alfred, Wessex became the leading political and cultural force (end of 9th c.)

However, **modern Standard English descends from Mercian** (dialect spoken near London in the Middle Ages).

Old English (460 – 1066A.D.)



Old English

The OE corpus includes:

- **Caedmon's Hymn** (first Christian poem)
- **Beowulf** is the first great narrative poem in OE
- **Anglo-Saxon Chronicle** (from several sources) started by King Alfred (871-ca 1154)

Much of the OE **prose** was translated from Latin and was religious in nature, cf.

- Venerable Bede's Ecclesiastical History (*Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, 673-735)

Caedmon's Hymn

**Nu scylun hergan hefaenraeas uard
metudæs maecti end his modgidanc
uerc uuldurfadur sue he uundra gihuaes
eci dryctin or astelidæ
he aerist scop aelda barnum
heben til hrofe haleg scepen.
tha middungeard moncynnæs uard
eci dryctin æfter tiadæ
firum foldu frea allmectigprimo cantauit Cædmon istud
carmen.**

Now let me praise the keeper of Heaven's kingdom,
The might of the Creator, and his thought,
The work of the Father of glory, how each of wonders
The Eternal Lord established in the beginning.
He first created for the sons of men
Heaven as a roof, the holy Creator,
Then Middle-earth the keeper of mankind,
The Eternal Lord, afterwards made,
The earth for men, the Almighty Lord.

Beowulf



Beowulf

“Beowulf”, written about 700-750A.D., and later revised in about A.D. 1000, is considered the greatest single literary work of Old English.

Old English – Lexical Influences

- OE vocabulary: almost purely Germanic
- The 'Germanic' language replaced Latin (esp. in everyday communication)
- **Few words** survive in present day English. **But about half of the most commonly used words** have Old English roots

Old English – Lexical Influences

- E.g. 'be', 'water', and 'strong' derive from Anglo-Saxon roots
- Also cf.

mann >> man	wif >> wife/woman
cild >> child	hus >> house
god >> good	etan >> eat
drincan >> drink	libban >> live
foethan >> fight	

Old English – Lexical Influences

Borrowings of Germanic origin in contemporary English:

- (1) **Dutch**, including **Flemish** and **Low German**: *bluff, boss, brandy, bully, cookie, cruise, dope, drill, drum, golf, landscape, skipper, sledge, sleigh, slim, snap...*
- (2) **German**: *Fahrenheit, hamburger, hamster, kindergarten, kitsch, leitmotiv, schwa...*
- (3) **Icelandic**: *geyser, saga...*

Old English – Lexical Influences

Borrowings of Germanic origin in contemporary English:

- (4) **Norse**: *anger, blink, blur, call, die, dirt, doze, egg, fellow, flat, flaw, gasp, gaze, glitter, happen, harsh, kick, kilt, law, leg, loan, nasty, odd, raise, root, scalp, seat, skid, skill, skin, skull, sky, sniff, squeal, take, they, ugly, want, weak, window...*
- (5) **Norwegian**: *fjord/fiord, ski, slalom...*

Old English – Lexical Influences

Latin loan words in Old English:

prestige borrowings

(esp. for animals, food, drink, household items, clothing, buildings and settlements, military domain, commerce, ecclesiastical domain...):

catte (*cat*), plante (*plant*), win (*wine*), cyse (*cheese*), disc (*dish*), belt (*belt*), weall (*wall*), ceaster (*town*), diht (*saying*), mangian (*trade*), ceapian (*buy*), maesse (*mass*), munuc (*monk*)...

Old English – Lexical Influences

Viking raids brought **many 'North Germanic' words** into the language, particularly in the north of present-day England

Examples:

- '**dream**', which had meant 'joy' until the Vikings imparted its current meaning on it from the Scandinavian cognate '**draumr**'
- **sk-words**: sky, skin, skill, scrub, skirt
- **g-words**: get, give, egg

Old English – Lexical Influences

Scandinavian place names:

- by farm, town: Grimsby, Whitby
- thorpe village: Althorpe, Linthorpe
- thwaite isolated piece of land: Applethwaite, Braithwaite

Other:

- son Stevenson, Johnson
- pronouns/adj. they, them, their
- verb to be are
- prepositions 'to' and 'fro'

Old English – Lexical Influences

More Scandinavian loan words:

anger, bag, bank, birth, cake, crawl, fog, gap, happy, husband, kid, knife, leg, neck, outlaw, race, scare, seat, sister, smile, steak...

OE is the language spoken by Angles, Saxons, Jutes, with Scandinavian influences

Old English (460 – 1066A.D.) Structural development

Word-building in OE: Affixation and compounding

- godspel >> god 'good' + spel 'tidings' (*gospel*)
- frumweorc >> frum 'beginning' + weorc 'work' (*creation*)
- sunnandæg >> sunna 'sun's' + dæg 'day' (*Sunday*)
- Mynstermann >> mynster 'monastery' + mann 'man' (*monk*)
- dægred >> dæg 'day' + red' (*dawn*)
- eorþcraft >> eorþ 'earth' + 'craft' (*geometry*)

Old English (460 – 1066A.D.) Structural development

Word-building in OE:

Kennings: for alliteration and metrical structure in poetry); vivid figurative descriptions (from Old Norse poetic treatises). They were used to describe things allusively, often in compounds

- hronrad >> whale + road 'sea'
- anpaðas >> one + paths 'a route along which only one person may pass at a time' (connotation of danger)
- banhus >> bone + house 'a person's body'
- modcraeft >> mood + craft 'intelligence'

Old English (460 – 1066A.D.) Structural development

Syntax in OE:

OE grammar was **similar to that of Latin** and present-day German

A **synthetic language**: nouns, verbs, adjectives, definite article and pronouns were highly **inflected**

The def. article, nouns, adjectives, pronouns were inflected for **number**, **case** (grammatical function), **gender**, i.e. different morphemes/endings signalled this information.

Verbs had different endings depending on **number**, **person**, **tense**, and **mood**

Old English (460 – 1066A.D.) Structural development

Syntax in OE:

Word order in OE was much **more varied** than in Modern English

- *Was he the man in secular life settled*
- *he never any poem learned* (in contemporary E. - from Caedmon story, from a translation of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, in Cambridge Encyclopaedia).

In OE, **the varying forms of nouns, adjectives, articles tell us how the parts of the sentence relate to each other**

Old English (460 – 1066 A.D.) Structural development

Syntax in OE:

- In Modern E, the difference between (1) and (2) is a matter of word order:

- (1) **the woman** saw **the man**
 (2) **the man** saw **the woman**

- cf. OE

- (1) **seo/NF cwen** geseah **þone/AM guman**
 (2) **se/NM guma** geseah **þa/AF cwen**
 (1.a) **þone guman** geseah **seo cwen**
 (masculine object + feminine subject)

Old English (460 – 1066 A.D.) Structural development

Syntax in OE:

- Among the most typical kinds of **word order** in OE: **SOV** (esp. in dependent clauses)
- Stylistic variation **OVS/XVS** (X= other constituent)
- Questions** were formed with **subject-verb inversion**
- Negative sentences** were formed with the particle 'ne' at the beginning of the clause + V + S

Old English (460 – 1066 A.D.) Structural development

Syntax in OE:

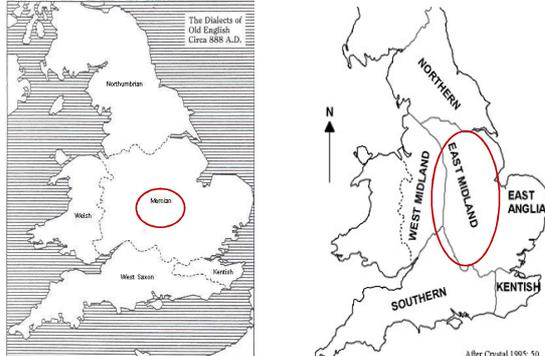
- Little by little (esp. over the OE and ME periods) **English developed from a synthetic to an analytic type of language**

Middle English (1066-1500 A.D.)

1066 A.D.

William the Conqueror, Duke of Normandy, invaded and conquered England.

Standard Middle English developed out of the East Midland dialect



Middle English (1066-1500 A.D.) Lexical Influences

150 years of French dominance

- ME vocabulary > 10,000 French loan words (most dominant influence on the growth of ME vocabulary)
- Two French varieties:
 - Anglo-Norman (from Norseman)
 - Central France (mid 12th c.)

Middle English (1066-1500 A.D.) Lexical Influences

Abstract terms constructed using such **new French affixes** such as

- *con-* *trans-* *pre-*
- *-ance* *-tion* *-ment*

Middle English (1066-1500 A.D.) Lexical Influences

Semantic fields of **prestige borrowings**:

- **relationships**: *uncle, aunt, cousin, nephew, niece...*
- **Religion**: *abbey, bapt* Designations of **tradesmen and artisans**: *butcher, barber, carpenter, tailor...*
- **Non-nuclear family** *sm, cathedral, charity, communion, convent, virtue, friar, heresy, mercy, miracle, saint, salvation, trinity...*
- **Administration**: *baron, council, court, government, liberty, mayor, minister, noble, parliament, prince, royal...*

Middle English (1066-1500 A.D.) Lexical Influences

Semantic fields of **prestige borrowings**:

- **Food and drink**: *beef, biscuit, salad, appetite, bacon, toast, mustard, vinegar, salmon...*
- **Fashion**: *button, embroidery, dress, pearl, satin, jewel, diamond...*
- **Learning and art**: *image, music, noun, painting, paper, geometry, physician, romance, sculpture...*

Middle English (1066-1500 A.D.) Lexical Influences

Dichotomy between

low Saxon **privileged French**

Culinary lexical pairs:

ox	beef
sheep	mutton
pig/swine	pork
deer	venison
calf	veal

Middle English (1066-1500 A.D.) Lexical Influences

Other examples:

begin	commence
child	infant
doom	judgment
freedom	liberty
happiness	felicity
hearty	cordial
help	aid
hide	conceal
wedding	marriage
wish	desire

Middle English (1066-1500 A.D.) Structural Development

- Reduction of inflections and introduction of prepositions
- Word order: **SOV** was still common, but...
- By the end of the ME period **word order within sentences was not remarkably different from that of Modern English**

Early Modern English (1500 – 1800 A.D.)

The EME period is both a time of language **expansion** and **standardisation**

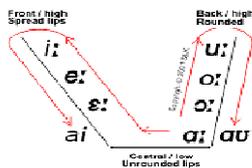
- **Shakespeare**
- **Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language*** (published in 1755 – revised ed. 1773 – and covering about 40,000 entries)
- **The printing press**

Early Modern English The Great Vowel Shift

- A **change in vowel pronunciation** that began around **1400**
- It separated Middle and Modern English
- The process accelerated in the EME period and caused **great divergence between sounds and spelling**
- Probably caused by greater **social mobility** and stratification brought about by urbanisation
- **The GVS caused all long vowels to be pronounced with a greater elevation of the tongue and closing of the mouth**

Early Modern English The Great Vowel Shift

- A move in one of the vowels caused a move in another, with each vowel 'keeping its distance' from its neighbour. **Each non-high vowel rose one height, and the high vowels, which were unable to rise any further, became diphthongs (eye = ai)**



Early Modern English The Great Vowel Shift

Chaucer 1340?-1400	vs.	Shakespeare 1564-1616	
fi:f		faiv	<i>five</i>
du:n		daun	<i>down</i>
ro:t		ru:t	<i>root</i>
na:m		ne:m	<i>name</i>
ME	1550	1600	
i:	ei	ai	<i>bite</i>
u:	ou	au	<i>out</i>
a:	a:	e:	<i>mate</i>
o:	u	u:	<i>boot</i>

Early Modern English Lexical Influences

Renaissance loan words (late 16th c.):

- From **Latin** and **Greek**: *crisis, criterion, temperature, thermometer, emphasis, enthusiasm, anachronism, climax, pathetic, system, antithesis...*
- **From or via French**: *chocolate, grotesque, moustache, tomato...*
- **From or via Italian**: *opera, sonata, concerto, soprano...*

Early Modern English Lexical Influences

Renaissance loan words (late 16th c.):

- **From or via Spanish and Portuguese**: *apricot, alligator, guitar, potato, cocoa, tobacco...*
- **Other**: *coffee* (Turkish), *landscape* (Dutch)...

Early Modern English Structural Development

By the end of the EME period the **structure** of the standard language was very close to its structure in **Present-Day English**, i.e. **more and more analytic in type**

- Further loss of inflections
- Negation could be formed either with or without 'do' > *I doubt it not (Romeo and Juliet, III - 52)*
I do not doubt you (Henry IV, IV ii - 77)
- Questions could be formed either by subject-verb inversion, or by subject-auxiliary inversion
- Multiple negation (common both in OE and Middle E) was proclaimed taboo in the 18th c
- Use of progressive and passive forms

Late Modern English Structural development

- Progressive increase in the use of **nominalizations**
- Today, English is much more **analytic** type of language, with a **rigid SVO order**
- It preserves **only some inflections**
 - -s 3d person singular present tense
 - -s plural of nouns
 - 's for Saxon Genitive
 - -ed past of regular verbs
 - -ing form
 - -er, -est for adjectives

Late Modern English Lexical Influences from all over the world

Extremely important in this period: **LME has many more words than EME**

Two main **historical reasons** for lexical expansion:

- Industrial, **scientific and technological revolutions** → **neologisms**
- the **British Empire**: at its height, Britain ruled one quarter of the earth's surface, and **English adopted many foreign words and made them its own**

Late Modern English Lexical expansion through neologisms

Neologisms created from...

- **Latin and Greek roots**: *oxygen, protein, nuclear, vaccine...*
 - **English roots**: *horsepower, airplane, typewriter...*
- Other **neologisms**: *Byte, cyber-, hard-drive, microchip...*

Late Modern English Lexical expansion through neologisms

Creation of neologisms via the **combination of existing words** (a method which was very important in OE as well):

- *netpreneur* (Internet entrepreneur)
- *Euroskeptic* (political term)

Affixation: cf. the prefix 'un-' as in 'un-freedom' and suffixes such as '-ee' and '-ise'/'ize':

- *contract-ee* (passive partner for any agentive noun e.g. *contractor*)
- *hospital-ise*

Late Modern English Lexical expansion through neologisms

Use of **acronyms** (*EU, YMCA...*)

Functional shift: when words are created with slightly different nuances (of meaning) from existing words

e.g., from the noun 'parent' > the verb 'to parent' and the new noun 'parenting', i.e. 'performing the functions of a parent', as in 'she is very knowledgeable about parenting'

Late Modern English

Lexical expansion through neologisms

Examples of loan words into E in the past two centuries:

French:

chauffeur, *hangar*, **limousine**, *déjà-vu*, *aperitif/apéritif*, *avant-garde*, *bidet*, *bourgeois(ie)*, *brasserie*, *café/café*, *camouflage*, *canard*, *chateau/château*, **chef**, *chevalier*, *coup de grace/grâce*, *coup d'état*, *croissant*, **cuisine**, *debut/début*, **dessert**, *élite/élite*, **etiquette**, **fiance(e)/fiancé(e)**, **garage**, **hotel**, *joie de vivre*, *liaison*, *lingerie*, *marionette*, *morale*, *objet d'art*, *parole*, *pâtisserie/pâtisserie*, **petite**, *prestige*, *regime/régime*, **silhouette**, *souvenir*, **toilette**, *voyeur*...

Late Modern English

Lexical expansion through neologisms

Examples of loan words into E in the past two centuries:

Italian:

bravura, **lasagne**, **vendetta**, *diva*, *spaghetti*, *gorgonzola*, *ciao*, **paparazzi**, *al dente*, *dolce vita*, **mafia**, **pizza**, *pizzeria*, *alto*, *arpeggio*, *bordello*, **broccoli**, *cameo*, **canto**, *confetti*, **contralto**, *cupola*, *ghetto*, *graffiti*, *grotto*, *imbroglio*, **libretto**, *mozzarella*, *pasta*, **pianoforte**, *piccolo*, *pizzicato*, *ravioli*, *risotto*, *sonata*, *soprano*, *staccato*, *stanza*, *studio*, *tagliatelle*, *vermicelli*...

Italian, through French: *battalion*, *brigade*, *granite*...

Late Modern English

Lexical expansion through neologisms

Portuguese: *albino*, *caste*, *marmalade*...

Spanish, adapted: *alligator*, *anchovy*, *barricade*, *cedilla*, *galleon*, *ranch*, *renegade*, *sherry*...

Direct: *armada*, *armadillo*, *chili*, *embargo*, *guerrilla*, *mosquito*, *mulatto*, *negro*, *sombrero*, *vigilante*...

Occitan/Provençal, usu. through French: *ballad*, *beret*, *nutmeg*, *troubadour*...

Modern Greek: *sirtaki*...

Finnish: *sauna*

Hungarian: *coach*, *goulash*, *paprika*...

English in Italian

- IN UN **QUESTION time** del **last minute** si è discusso della **carbon tax** nella **new economy**, ma già uno **squatter** su una **safety car** presa in **leasing** con l'**e-commerce** faceva del **mobbing** un po' **friendly** ma spudorato su dei **transgender** in preda **all'outing** in **dual band** e in **chat line** con un **call center** molto, molto, molto "**extreme**" (www.larepubblica.it, 17 September 2000)

Italiese/Italese (De Mauro 1999-2007)

s.m. BU spec. nel settore pubblicitario, tecnologico, ecc., linguaggio caratterizzato dalla commistione di espressioni e costrutti italiani e inglesi (see also *itanglish*, *italenglish*...)

Summing up

- English is an **indoeuropean, West-Germanic language** with **many lexical influences** from other languages (Celtic languages, Latin, Greek, French, Italian, Spanish, etc.)
- Four stages:
 - **Old English (450-1066 A.D.):** Beowulf, the Anglo Saxon Chronicles; purely Germanic; affixation and compoundings, kennings synthetic; rich inflexional system, cases, varied word order.
 - **Middle English (1066-1500 A.D.)**
 - **Early Modern English (1500-1800 A.D.)**
 - **Late Modern English (1800-present day)**

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- Four stages:
 - **Old English (450-1066 A.D.)**
 - **Middle English (1066-1500 A.D.):** many French words, French affixes for nominalization, Chaucer, reduction of inflexions, similar order to Modern English
 - **Early Modern English (1500-1800 A.D.)**
 - **Late Modern English (1800-present day)**

Summing up

- English is an **indoeuropean, West-Germanic language** with **many lexical influences** from other languages (Celtic languages, Latin, Greek, French, Italian, Spanish, etc.)
- Four stages:
 - **Old English (450-1066 A.D)**
 - **Middle English (1066-1500 A.D.)**
 - **Early Modern English (1500-1800 A.D.):** Shakespeare, Samuel Johnson's Dictionary, Great Vowel Shift, Lexical borrowings from Latin, Greek and Italian, further loss of inflection, negation with or without auxiliary, question with inversion, no double negation
 - **Late Modern English (1800-present day)**

Summing up

- English is an **indoeuropean, West-Germanic language** with **many lexical influences** from other languages (Celtic languages, Latin, Greek, French, Italian, Spanish, etc.)
- Four stages:
 - **Old English (450-1066 A.D)**
 - **Middle English (1066-1500 A.D.)**
 - **Early Modern English (1500-1800 A.D.)**
 - **Late Modern English (1800-present day):** nominalizations, rigid SVO word order, few inflections, many lexical borrowings from the languages of the world, neologisms

Interesting links

Videos and interactive timelines

- **The History of English** in 10 minutes (YouTube)
<http://youtu.be/H3r9bOkYW9s>
- **The Adventure of English** (documentary in several episodes)
<http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/adventure-of-english/>
- **The routes of English** (BBC)
http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/routesofenglish/world/index_noflash.shtml
- **The English language timeline** (British Library)
<http://www.bl.uk/learning/langlit/changlang/across/language/timeline.html>

Readings

Introducing English Language

Section A8 (p.30-35), B8 (p.91-95),
C8 (p.160), D8 (p.239-244)

If you didn't attend the lessons or if you want to read more on this topic you might find this useful:

The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of the English Language

Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (p.5-91)

Some possible questions

- Describe the origin and pre-history of English.
- What were the main features of Old/Middle/Early Modern/Late Modern English?
- What is the Great Vowel Shift? When did it take place?
- Illustrate lexical influences on English from European languages.
- What would have happened if ...?