

5. Middle English I

The History of English (Ling 390)

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Norman Conquest

- What was the Norman Conquest?
- When did this occur?
- What impact did it have on the linguistic landscape of England?
- After the conquest, what was the language of the nobility, royalty, and government?
- And what was the language of the commoners?
- And what was the language of the church?
- What was the Hundred Years' War?
- What impact did this war have on the linguistic landscape of England?

Orthography

- Why did the system of writing change from Old English to Middle English?
- What were some orthographic differences between Old and Middle English?
- What happened to ð and þ?
- What happened to ƿ?
- What happened to ȝ?
- What was ȝ?
- Middle English often looks even less standardized than Old English.



Wher Hercules at the meene whilte
Upon the banke with many a nothir mood
And cryeth: **T**here as by the
Duly for joy when he side arriv
Thei gan to thanke to heric godes alle
So graciously that it hath y fall
And that the fles hath so knyghtly donne
That thou as there as the sone of hime
Whiche he brought with hyu you to donde
his feires alle: a byrnyng on the frounde
us when upold of his zais arke
has in the west almost douchis mit
be. And gan fast downward to de
thine.
And on the wateres ful waterly gan to shue
yhit or he passeth the gret Ocean.
Jason is come with many a manly man
Of his feires to pience of the kynge
As he that has ascended every thyng
whiche that brought to the conquest of the kam
And Cetes then as sone as eu he cam
So do hym there outward hath him pyues
All be in herit that it was but feyned
ffor he was sei with outen euyn fiede
Of the expleyric and the gude spide
Of this Jason that he the fles lath eson
Wot he the in fath as thes feynes done
Vedan that hem hyst crafty compare
To sowe outward a feithful trewe face
And the cupyn coudes hool with yme
As in meynyng ther were no maner fyne
kyng so the byny was lde f for les ther
wade you to Jason outward righte god ther
And gan to hym spede in wordes fesse
Of freash hede many signes shewe
As though he had his conquest ayde
ffro poynt to poynt hedes wonder wdel
And den ful gins that he was so fortunid
Su to the ende that he hath comid
And reioyces in speche and comynance
That fortune list hym so to aume
And to his nales gan hym godes to ouere
And say by say ful rethely feirepe

ill be that it was nothyng son of heric
ffor: this is no les: he felt ful gret suerte
That of his u esone he was dispoynted
And that he hath the rike fles for god
To his damage and to his confusoun
And thus ther was a gret dymoun
Whiche his ther f meynyng of his thought
As it farth ofte if it be wdel ysaught
That many a man in meynyng fals f doubt
Can with the calur cover so thetroubte
Of his malice his in his desir
And rake falsly the wiffes couer fure
fful ofte dymyng: yward of euyn
So wdel were hem that couer hem out espie
And lueve her meynyng fals f fraudulent
Oher theough allas ful many au ymoent
Deceyves is that wot not what thei meue
And namelye suche that nothe for trouthe wene
And euery there that men do hem made
Of ymoent for the beste it take
And in no wise theke not but wode
kyng so arreyn this Jason cupdel
Hath take in grete what the byny hath beo
Not ashyng the gowth of his thowght
ffor: douth is for the byny ful fide
That he the kam hat lde for euernoe
Sur wden that he wathy had sya
Thowgh he grunde that ther was no grein
But fynas and eke of necessity
Like that byme it myght non other be
And pelyly sawe what he myght not thes
But that algate the fles he most dese
Whiche it were that he were lde f doth
he kemth ther as he were not woth
ffor: only he of his the grend wisse
so sime outward of strachyng: dde express
But say by say of verry curiose
he chersish Jason and his compayne
And whiche tyme about euynroun
ffrom every partie of his reynoun
The peple com to staven f to yast
Upon the kam as it were a masse
Thei lde f woude f seme what hem hyst
On wdos dunes: is but lild trift

King Edward the 1st

5 When in this p^{er}me that conyured his right
w^{it}h England, master of all his f^oren
and after p^{er}me to be p^{er} force & myght
w^{it}nt f^ore, and after that, and h^oem
y^{et}le Scotland to y^{et}le, and so forth, w^{it}ch he f^orn
Byd^{ing} a h^ont^{ing} h^om al^l to f^ort^{er} to p^{er}laye
at m^on of England, ar b^onde for h^om to p^{er}laye.

10 His most d^{er} p^{er}me, that was b^ond^{er} the son
th^ough all the w^old p^{er}nd^{er} was his name
th^o d^{er}th^ost the w^ort^hest w^ont^{er} d^{er}is^{er}
th^o w^ont^{er} d^{er}is^{er}, but he p^{er}nd^{er} the same
com^{er}ssed the w^old to f^ort^{er} his name
did b^ond^{er} the d^{er}th^ost d^{er}is^{er}

Can you read this?

Whan þat aprill with his shoures swote

Whan þat aprill with his shoures swote
þe groweth of ayeche hath good to þe rote
And botched our wayne with soche veyn. I canz
Of which verue engendred is þe floure
And zephirus also with his sweete breath
Inspired hath in our holt and both
The tempe of springe. and þe yonge dew
Hath in þe saw. half his comys þou
And smale fowles maken melody
That slepen al nyght wopen by
So quethen þom natyres in þer awage
þat longith folke to go on pilgrymage
And þat many for to seeke strange shroudes
To serue halowes. cowth in sondy londes
And specially from every sheres ende
Of england to edynburgh they woude
The holy blissful martyr. for to seeke

What text is this?

Canterbury Tales

- What is/was Canterbury?
- Who did the narrator meet at the Tabbard Inn?
- Why was everyone at the Tabbard?
- What were they going to Canterbury to see?
- Describe the Knight.
- Describe the Squire.
- Describe the Yeoman.
- Describe the Prioress.
- Why was “French of Paris” unknown to the Prioress?

Thomas Becket is the
“holy blessed martyr”

Lexicon

- The Norman Conquest led to huge changes in the wordstock of English.
- How?
- Many of the everyday, core parts of our vocabulary come ultimately from Proto-Germanic, either directly through Old English or more circuitously through the Scandinavians who settled in the north and east.
- But many other words came from French, by way of the Normans.
- Do you know about **types** vs **tokens**?

Types vs. Tokens

“This is the story: the man saw the dog. That is it, that is the story.”

- How many words are in this quote?

- Tokens: 16

This is the story man saw dog that it

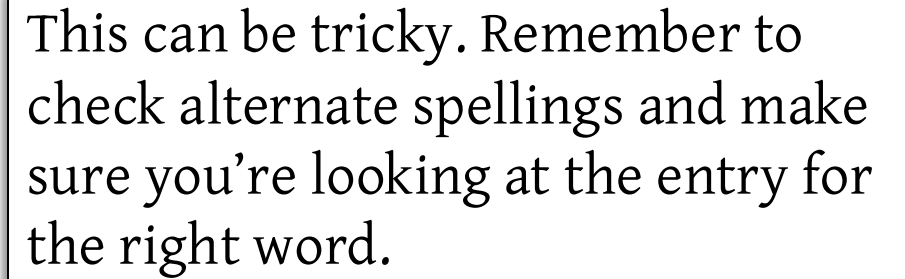
- Types: 9

is the story that
is the
the

Activity!

- In groups, work on 10 lines from the Canterbury Tales' General Prologue.
- Group 1: Lines 1–10
- Group 2: Lines 11–20
- Group 3: Lines 21–30
- Group 4: Lines 31–40
- Identify the number of words (types) and the number of tokens per type. Accept spelling variations where obvious as the **same** word (e.g. Frensshe and Frenshe).
- Then, go to the Middle English Compendium and look up each type's origin: <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/>
- What are the origins of the most high-frequency words? The lowest-frequency words?

This can be tricky. Remember to check alternate spellings and make sure you're looking at the entry for the right word.



Canterbury Tales



- Read line 715 through end of Prologue

For next time

- Read pp.119–128 in Algeo.
And in Chaucer:
- Group 1:
- Group 2:
- Group 3:
- Group 4:
- Take some time in your groups to choose which (Prologue and) Tale your group would like to read.