

6. Middle English II *and* Midterm Review

The History of English (Ling 390)

Prof. Pentangelo

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Quiz #5

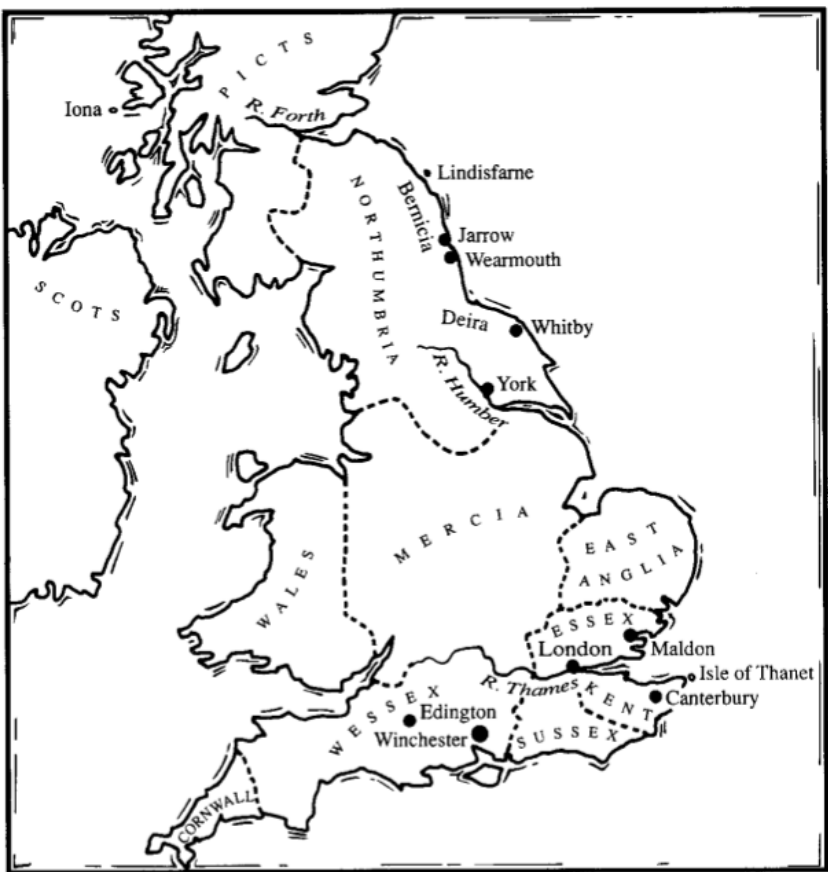
1. What is one thing that stuck out to you in the Algeo reading?
2. What is one thing that stuck out to you in the Chaucer reading?
(Not something we went over last time, but something from the prologue/tale you read for this week.)

What We'll Cover

1. Quiz #x
2. Middle English
3. Canterbury Tales Discussion

—*Intermission*—

1. Midterm Review



BRITAIN IN OLD ENGLISH TIMES



BRITAIN IN MIDDLE ENGLISH TIMES

Which dialect formed the literary standard for Old English?

Why?

And how about for Middle English?

Why?

What about for Standard Modern English?

“Standard Modern English—both American and British—is a development of the speech of London. This dialect had become the norm in general use long before the English settlement of America in the early seventeenth century, though many of those who migrated to the New World retained traces of their regional origins in their pronunciation, vocabulary, and to a lesser degree syntax. Rather than speaking purely local dialects, most used a type of speech that was essentially that of London, with regional shadings.” (pp.119–120)

Dialects and Standardization

- What does it mean for a language to be “standardized”?
- Which dialect did Chaucer write in?
- The London dialect became the standard during the Middle English period. Why did this standard remain the basis of the standard up to today? (Remember, West Saxon was the standard for Old English, but it was ultimately replaced. Why didn't this happen to the London dialect?)

Consonants

- What happened to most consonants from OE → Middle English?
- Although most consonants stayed the same, the most consequential change involved the **phonemicization** of the voiced fricatives [v], [z], and [ð].
- Throwback to Intro. to Linguistics: say you've got two phones, and you want to see if they're allophones of a single phoneme, or allophones of two separate phonemes. What do you do?

Consonants

- In Old English, the voiced fricatives [v], [z], [ð] were **allophones** of their voiceless counterparts.
- They showed up completely predictably when between voiced sounds, and nowhere else.
- Spelling reflected this. In OE, how did you pronounce:

hæfde ‘had’

leosan ‘to lose’

broðor ‘brother’

foda ‘food’

sunu ‘son’

pæð ‘path’

- But in Middle English, [v], [z], and [ð] became phonemes in their own right — /v/, /z/, and /ð/ respectively.
- How can we tell?

Consonants

- In Middle English, we can see—for the first time—minimal pairs between, e.g. [s] and [z]:

sele “seal”

zele “zeal”

Based on our discussion so far, which one of these two words came from Old English, and which one was introduced by the French-speaking Normans?

- There were a number of new words borrowed from Old French that featured [v] or [z] in word-initial position. Seeing one of these sounds in this position is a good indication of the word’s origin.

vertu “virtue”

visit “visit”

vele “veal”

zodiak “zodiac”

- Do we see word-initial [ð] coming about in the same way? No
- There was no [ð] in Old French, so its phonemicization is not directly attributable to the Normans.

Consonants

- In words that were usually unstressed (*the, this, they, etc.*), the voiceless [θ] was voiced as [ð], part of a regular process of **lenition**, or weakening.
- In addition, the final unstressed vowel –e [ə] was broadly deleted. This left [v], [z], and [ð] at the end of a bunch of words—they were voiced because, originally, they were between two vowels, but over time, the second vowel was deleted, leaving them behind.

The examples from the text include *give, lose, and bathe*.

- As a result of all of these processes, Middle English had three new consonant phonemes: /v/, /z/, and /ð/.

Vowels

- There is a *lot* going on with vowel changes that I don't think we have sufficient time to go into right now. We'll revisit vowels at great length when we talk about the Great Vowel Shift in a few weeks.
- Three things essential for us to touch upon now: (1) the OE diphthongs became monophthongs in Middle English, (2) eight new diphthongs developed in Middle English, and (3) unstressed vowels were levelled (and often deleted word-finally).
- The diphthong [ɔɪ] “oy” was introduced through its presence in a number of borrowings from Old French, like *joie* ‘joy’ and *cloystor* ‘cloister.’ This is still phonemic to this day. What about in the US south?

Vowels

- Leveling of unstressed /a/, /o/, /u/, and /e/ began in Old English. Each of these vowels became [ə] (only in unstressed syllables!) in Middle English. The merged vowel was usually written as *e* in Middle English.

Old English

lama ‘lame’

faran ‘to fare,’ faren (past part.)

stānes ‘stone’s,’ stānas ‘stones’

feallað ‘falleth’

nacod ‘naked’

macodon ‘made’ (pl.)

sicor ‘sure’

lengðu ‘length’

medu ‘liquor’

Middle English

lāme

fāren

stōnes

falleth

nāked

mākedden

sēker

lengthe

mēde

Vowels

- This leveling had a huge impact on inflection. What's that again?
- Where *-e* came at the end of a word, it was eventually lost in almost all situations. For a while, its pronunciation was just optional. *Bryde* could be pronounced with or without it, for example.

“As a result of the merging of unstressed vowels into a single sound, the number of distinct inflectional endings in English was drastically reduced. Middle English became a language with few inflectional distinctions, whereas Old English, as we have seen, was relatively highly inflected, although less so than Proto-Germanic. This reduction of inflections was responsible for a structural change of the greatest importance.” (p.128)

- You might wonder how English went from having three grammatical genders to none, and a rich case system to essentially none. This is key to how this change occurred. Sound change drove morphosyntactic change.

Canterbury Tales

- Group 1: Isabelle W., Gianna S., Rachel – Manciple's Tale
- Group 2: Nellie, Ayah, Anika, Caitlyn – Shipman's Tale
- Group 3: Valentina, Natalie, Madison – The Cook's Tale
- Group 4: Emily, Gianna V., Hebah – The Tale of Sir Thopas
- Group 5: Anyone absent from last class – The Miller's Tale



In your groups, take 10–15 minutes to discuss the tale you read. Decide who will summarize the tale for the class.

You will:

- (1) summarize what your tale was about, and
- (2) bring up anything that stuck out to you about the Middle English text. (Take note of the line number.)



If you take this group time to ask ChatGPT to summarize your tale for you, you will be **cursed**.

Midterm

- Next week.
- Open book – handwritten notes, printed notes, printed textbook – but not open laptop, tablet, or phone.
- Printed materials may not be shared with others.
- 25 points in total / 25% of your overall grade.
- Mix of multiple choice (10 points), short answer (10 points), and long answer (5 points).
- Self-timed, up to 9:50pm (class's end time).
- You can leave once you've turned it in.



MIDTERM REVIEW RULES

- Four teams.
- Some people on each team will use their phone as a buzzer by joining our game on the website buzzin.live
- (Of course, other teammates can hit the buzzer.)
- Forty questions, divided over two rounds.
- Each team earns one point per question correctly answered.
- In round 2, each team loses one point per question incorrectly answered.
- In both rounds, if your team answers incorrectly, the other team gets to answer (if they want) before you can try again.
- The team with the most points at the end wins.
- All members of the winning team will receive 1 extra credit point on their midterm.

Round 1

20 questions

1 point per correct answer

No penalty for wrong answers

1. In Old English, was <y> a vowel, a consonant, or both?
2. Where did the Anglo-Saxons come from?
3. Did the Anglo-Saxons inhabit Britain while it was under Roman rule?
4. What was the Danelaw?
5. Who was Alfred the Great?
6. Which dialect was most Old English literature written in?
7. What is “Insular hand,” and where did it come from?
8. What was Futhorc?
9. Why were some Futhorc runes incorporated into the Latin alphabet to write Old English?
10. What’s one letter that was used in Old English that isn’t used anymore?

11. What's one letter that was used in Middle English that isn't used anymore?
12. What was Bald's Leechbook?
13. Who were the Normans?
14. When did the Normans come to England?
15. What was Anglo-Norman?
16. What are the Canterbury Tales?
17. How did diphthongs change between Old English and Middle English?
18. In England, after the Norman Conquest but before the Hundred Years War, in which language was most literature written?
19. And after the Hundred Years War?
20. In what dialect?

Round 2

20 questions

1 point awarded per correct answer

1 point deducted per wrong answer

1. What language family is English a part of?
2. Roughly what percentage of Modern English vocabulary is Germanic — 30%, 60%, or 90%?
3. When was the Battle of Hastings?
4. Why was the Battle of Hastings significant?
5. How were most unstressed vowels pronounced in Middle English?
6. What happened to most final schwas in Middle English?
7. What's one way the inflectional system of English changed from Old English to Middle English?
8. Why did the spelling system of English change from Old to Middle English?
9. In the Old English word *opran*, what sound did *þ* make?
10. In the Old English word *heafod*, what sound did *ƿ* make?

11. What language was *The Canterbury Tales* written in?

12. What language was *Beowulf* written in?

13. What language is this?

For sche was evyr lettyd be hyr enmy, the devel, evyrmor seyng to hyr whyl sche was in good heele hir nedyd no confessyon but don penawns be hirself aloone, and all schuld be forgovyn, for God is mercyful inow.

14. What language is this?

Ða riðon hie þyðen ond hir ealdorman orric ond piferð hir þegn ond þa men þe he him bæftan ær læfde ond þone æþeling on þære byrig metton þær se cyning ofrlægen læg.

15. It is 1300AD. You are a farmer in southern England. You likely speak what language?

16. It is 1100AD. You are a nobleman in Essex. You likely speak what language?

17. What influence did the Norman Conquest have on English vocabulary?
18. Why did Old English absorb a large number of Scandinavian loanwords?
19. Who were the Britons?
20. Old English *biscop* 'bishop', *earc* 'arc', and *abbad* 'abbot' were all borrowings from what language?

For next time

- Study!
- Print out whatever you'll need to refer to!