

**Р. В. Вальваков**

**ИСТОРИЯ АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА:**

**Задания для самостоятельной  
работы студентов**

Бишкек 2015

ГОСУДАРСТВЕННОЕ ОБРАЗОВАТЕЛЬНОЕ УЧРЕЖДЕНИЕ  
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Кафедра теории и практики английского языка  
и межкультурной коммуникации

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### **Задания для самостоятельной работы студентов**

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Пособие предназначено для студентов-лингвистов, изучающих историю английского языка в рамках дисциплин «История языка» и «История 1-го иностранного языка и введение в специальную филологию». Структурно учебное пособие состоит из 19 разделов, в каждом из которых даются задания для самостоятельной работы по определенной теме из курса истории английского языка. Учебное пособие охватывает историю английского языка от его возникновения до его превращения в один из основных мировых языков в 19 веке. В пособии представлены задания двух типов, которые направлены на самостоятельную работу с теоретическим аспектом истории английского языка: тестовые задания и выдержки из работ зарубежных лингвистов по истории английского языка.

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## Section I. Subject matter of the history of English

### 1. For class discussion

- The concept of language change
- Internal and external history of a language
- The rise of comparative philology

### 2. Read the following quotations. Comment on the ideas implied.

Change is normal in language. Every language is constantly turning into something different, and when we hear a new word or a new pronunciation or use of an old word, we may be catching the early stages of a change. Change is natural because a language system is culturally transmitted. Like other conventional matters – such as fashions in clothing, hairstyles, cooking, entertainment, and government – language is constantly being revised. Language evolves more slowly than do some other cultural activities, but its change is continuous and inevitable. [3]

In the past, language change has been viewed as decay and as progress, but at present neither of these views seem appropriate or true. Languages seem to maintain a balance in expressiveness and grammatical complexity over time. [2]

In fact all living languages change, though the rate of change varies from time to time and from language to language. The modern Icelandic, for example, does not find it very difficult to read the medieval Icelandic sagas, because the rate of change in Icelandic has always been slow, ever since the country was colonized by Norwegians a thousand years ago and Icelandic history began. But the English, on the contrary, find an English document of the year 1300 very difficult to understand, unless they have special training; and an English document of the year 900 seems to them to be written in a foreign language, which they may conclude (mistakenly) to have no connection with Modern English. [4]

The question of language change is really a question of why varieties develop within a language. [6]

3. Use the following citation as a kind of plan for short reports or essays on the mechanism of language change.

There are three general causes of language change. First, words and sounds may affect neighboring words and sounds. [...] Second, words and sounds may be affected by others that are not immediately present but with which they are associated. [...] Such change is called paradigmatic or associative change. Third, a language may change because of the influence of events in the world. New technologies like the World Wide Web require new forms like google ‘to search the Internet for information’ and wiki (as in Wikipedia) ‘a Website, database, or software for creating Web sites, especially collaborative ones,’ from the Hawaiian word for ‘fast.’ [3]

All living languages are subject to change. How do they change? Many linguists distinguish between actuation or innovation on the one hand and propagation or diffusion on the other. Innovation is the introduction of a new variant, possibly initially characterisable as an error. Innovations may catch on or they may die off again. Diffusion is the spread of a variant from the point where it has become an option for a number of speakers. [9]

Diffusion of change requires the prior existence of variants – alternative ways of saying the same thing. Linguistic variation is familiar in our own speech communities. For example, many Englishes have the alternative pronunciations [‘i:ðə] and [‘aɪðə] for *either*, with little apparent social marking attached to either variant. Other examples of variation in at least some current varieties of English are the negative interrogative patterns *Have you not seen X?* vs. *Haven’t you seen X?*, and the lexical items *film* vs. *movie*. Some variation appears to be stable over long periods: variation is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for change to occur. [9]

All linguists can agree both that language does change and that certain factors seem to be widely relevant. We can group three main types of force for change under the headings *structural*, *social* and *functional*. Each has its own champions in the linguistic literature, though the dividing lines between them are not always clear-cut. [9]

4. Read the following quotations. What aspects of language change can be marked out in these quotes? Translate these extracts if it seems helpful.

... changes in a language are of various kinds, and there seem to be various reasons for them. The changes that have caused the most disagreement are those in pronunciation. We have various sources of evidence for the pronunciations of earlier times, such as the spellings, the treatment of words borrowed from other languages or borrowed by them, the descriptions of contemporary grammarians and spelling-reformers, and the modern pronunciations in all the languages and dialects concerned. [4]

When we study the pronunciation of a language over any period of a few generations or more, we find there are always large-scale regularities in the changes: for example, over a certain period of time, just about all the long [a:] vowels in a language may change into long [e:] vowels, or all the [b] consonants in a certain position (for example at the end of a word) may change into [p] consonants. Such regular changes are often called *sound laws*. There are no universal sound laws (even though sound laws often reflect universal tendencies), but simply particular sound laws for one given language (or dialect) at one given period. [4]

Changes in morphology, syntax, vocabulary and word-meaning, while they can be complicated enough, are less puzzling than changes in pronunciation. Many of the same causes can be seen at work. The influence of other languages, for example, is very obvious: nations with high commercial, political and cultural prestige tend to influence their neighbours: for centuries, French influenced all the languages of Europe, while today the influence of the English language is penetrating all over the world, largely because of the power and prestige of the United States. This influence is strongest in the field of vocabulary, but one language can also influence the morphology and syntax of another. Such influence may occur if languages in a given area are in intimate contact over an extended period, and also when a religion spreads and its sacred books are translated: in the Old English period there were many translations from the Latin, and there is some evidence that Latin syntax influenced the structure of Old English, at least in some of its written forms. [4]

The change that is constantly going on in a living language can be most easily seen in the vocabulary. Old words die out, new words are added, and existing words change their meaning. Much of the vocabulary of Old English has been lost, and the development of new words to meet new conditions is one of the most familiar phenomena of our language. [5]

Changes likewise occur in the grammatical forms of a language. These may be the result of gradual phonetic modification, or they may result from the desire for uniformity commonly felt where similarity of function or use is involved. The person who says *I knowed* is only trying to form the past tense of this verb after the pattern of the past tense of so many verbs in English. This process is known as the operation of *analogy*, and it may affect the sound and meaning as well as the form of words. [5]

**External** changes are brought about by language contact (between speakers of different languages), or innovations by speakers, or issues of political or social identity. Oceans may facilitate contact whereas mountain ranges may stop it. External changes are unpredictable since it is impossible to foresee who will migrate where, or what fashion will catch on. They are sometimes the easiest to trace as, for instance, in examining when loanwords first appear in a language. [6]

**Internal** changes occur when, for instance, speakers stop using endings (or inflections) and start to rely on words such as *of, for, the, and have*. They are more predictable. Internal reasons have to do with children analyzing the language they hear in a slightly different way from the generation before them (and building their grammars accordingly). These can be cases of changing a vowel or a consonant: Old English *ham* changing to *home* and *skip* to *ship*. [6]

We should note, however, that the major processes of change do not in fact affect the lexicon in its entirety. For instance, English has gained – and lost – countless nouns, verbs and adjectives over the centuries but prepositions and conjunctions, on the other hand, have remained largely unchanged. [14]

Speakers are very aware of change not only at the lexical level, but also at the level of meaning. The latter, also known as semantic change, can occur relatively quickly and easily, sometimes within a speaker's lifetime. It is therefore one of the types of change which often

generates complaint, as some speakers may feel that younger users of a language are moving a word away from its 'true' meaning. [14]

The main concepts which underlie historical linguistics are the regularity of sound change and the systematic character of diachronic change in general. [19]

5. Choose the correct answer

**1. What does the evolution of language include in the first place?**

**a)** relationships between the facts of internal linguistic history and the history of people **b)** direction of language development **c)** differentiation of language into functional varieties **d)** structural development of the language system

**2. Which of the following matters can't be considered as the external history of the language?**

**a)** contacts with other languages **b)** the spread of the language in geographical and social space **c)** development of new grammatical forms and categories **d)** differentiation of language into functional varieties

**3. What is meant under linguistic situation?**

**a)** structural development of the language system **b)** simplifying changes in the verb conjugation **c)** evolution of the sound system **d)** the functional differentiation of language and the relationship between the functional varieties

**4. What type of differences in language becomes apparent if the same elements or parts of the language are compared at successive historical stages?**

**a)** geographical **b)** social **c)** temporal **d)** dialectal

**5. What does *merging* as a type of replacement imply?**

**a)** two distinct units take the place of one **b)** simple one-to-one replacement **c)** two or more units fall together and are replaced by one unit **d)** phonetic and morphological changes in the inflection

**6. What type of replacement was involved in the development of the modern Common case of nouns?**

**a)** splitting **b)** merging **c)** shift of meaning **d)** one-to-one replacement

**7. By what is the rate of linguistic change restricted?**

a) communicative function of language b) grammatical type of language c) borrowings d) dialectal variation

**8. What system of language can change very rapidly in comparison to other systems of language?**

a) phonetic b) morphological c) lexical d) grammatical

**9. What is the starting point of a linguistic change?**

a) synchronic variation b) dialectal difference c) lexical assimilation d) grammatical typology

**10. Where are the most general causes of language evolution to be found?**

a) in psychological aspects of language b) in extralinguistic factors c) in systemic nature of language d) in the tendencies to improve the language technique or its formal apparatus

**11. What tendency of development does English share with other Germanic languages?**

a) a tendency towards phonetic weakening of final syllables b) a tendency towards analogical leveling of forms at the morphological level c) a tendency towards assimilative and simplifying phonetic changes d) a tendency towards a more analytical grammatical structure

**12. As what type of linguistic change should we regard the appearance of numerous new words which were borrowed or coined to denote entirely new objects or ideas?**

a) innovation b) merging c) splitting d) analogical change

**13. What causes synchronic variation?**

a) the systemic nature of language change b) functional differentiation of language c) communicative function of language d) the state of linguistic units before and after a change

**14. What is one of the most difficult problems of historical linguistics?**

a) motivation of changes b) evolution of the sound system c) development of the English vocabulary d) evolution of the grammatical system

**15. How did J. and W. Grimm and other philologists of the romantic trend interpret the history of the Germanic languages in the early 19 c.?**

a) as decline and degradation b) as a living organism c) as a diversity of social conditions d) as the pressure of the language system

## Section II.

### Pre-history of the English language

#### 1. For class discussion

- The Proto-Indo-European and Proto-Germanic languages
- Grammar of the Proto-Indo-European and Proto-Germanic languages
- Proto-Indo-European vocabulary

2. Read the following quotations on the Proto-Indo-European language. Make a summary of the ideas implied.

The Indo-European family of languages, with its numerous branches and its millions of speakers, has developed, if we are right, out of some single language, which must have been spoken thousands of years ago by some comparatively small body of people in a relatively restricted geographical area. [4]

The discovery in the early nineteenth century that the European languages, such as English, German and French, were historically related not only to each other, but also to the languages of antiquity, such as Latin, Greek, and Sanskrit (an ancient language of India), led to a revolution in our understanding of the nature and history of language. [2]

The parent tongue from which the Indo-European languages have sprung had already become divided and scattered before the dawn of history. When we meet with the various peoples by whom these languages are spoken they have lost all knowledge of their former association. Consequently we have no written record of the common Indo-European language. By a comparison of its descendants, however, it is possible to form a fair idea of it and to make plausible reconstructions of its lexicon and inflections. [5]

The oldest Indo-European may have been spoken 6,000 years ago, but it is unclear if it was in fact at one point one language (that is why we call it proto-Indo European) and whether it was spoken in one region, a 'homeland'. A great deal of debate surrounds the possible Indo-European homeland. [6]

Sir William Jones (1746–1794) and others noticed the similarities between languages such as Sanskrit, Latin and English, and deduced that these similarities came from a common ancestor which had not been recorded in written form. Reconstruction of this common ancestor depends on the analysis of such similarities. [15]

From the lexical agreements among the most ancient Indo-European languages we can deduce that those speakers of Indo-European engaged in warfare, had a fairly well-developed agricultural system and were familiar with cattle, horses, sheep and swine. They probably knew how to build vehicles with wheels. The use of some metals may also have been available to them. [19]

The starting point for the realization that the recorded Indo-European languages had a common source – a 'parent' language, if we use the common image of the family tree – was the recognition that individual words in one of the languages bore systematic resemblances to those in others. [24]

It is probably very difficult to appreciate how similar the wide variety of Indo-European languages are. This is partly simply because the relations we are talking about stem from a period almost 10,000 years ago, and for which we have no direct evidence. The way we overcome this is by searching for what are called **cognate** forms. These are words which share meanings over different languages and which appear to have similar shapes. [8]

The Indo-European hypothesis, as it is called, is now well supported with evidence from many languages: a language once existed that developed in different ways in the various parts of the world to which its speakers traveled. We call it Proto-Indo-European (or simply Indo-European) because at the beginning of historical times languages derived from it were spoken from Europe in the west to India in the east. Its "descendants," which make up the Indo-European family, include [...] Russian, Polish, Czech, Bulgarian, Albanian, Armenian, Romy, and many others. [3]

3. Read the following notes about the Proto-Indo-European language and the Proto-Germanic language. Speak on lexical and grammatical features of these languages. (Compiled from Charles Barber, Joan C. Beal, Philip A. Shaw "The English Language. A historical introduction")

The Proto-Germanic language [...] has close affinities with the other Indo-European languages, together with certain peculiar developments of its own. Like the postulated Proto-Indo-European language, Proto-Germanic is a highly *inflected* language: that is, in its grammar it makes great use of variations in the *endings* of words. Not much of the Indo-European system of inflections is left in Modern English, which prefers other grammatical devices, and to get a better idea of what an inflected language is like, you need to look at something like Classical Latin, or Modern German.

Latin inherited its system of case inflections from Proto-Indo-European, and a somewhat similar system was inherited by Proto-Germanic, though both Latin and Proto-Germanic reduced the number of case distinctions: for all practical purposes, they had only five or six cases, whereas Proto-Indo-European had at least eight. [...] As in Latin, there were separate inflections for the singular and the plural. In Proto-Indo-European, there had also been inflections for the *dual* number, that is, to indicate that there were *two* of a thing, but the dual survives only vestigially in the Germanic languages.

In Proto-Germanic, as in other Indo-European languages, there was no single set of case inflections used for all nouns alike, but several different sets, some nouns following one pattern, and others another. That is, there were various **declensions** of nouns. All nouns, moreover, had grammatical gender: every noun had to be either masculine, feminine or neuter.

In Proto-Indo-European, the adjective inflections had been essentially the same as the noun inflections, but in many of the daughter languages they became distinguished from them in various ways. This happened in Proto-Germanic, which developed two distinct sets of inflections for the adjectives, called the strong and the weak declensions of the adjective. The distinction between the strong and the weak forms of the adjective has not survived in Modern English, but it can still be found in many of the other Germanic languages.

Proto-Germanic, like Proto-Indo-European, also had a system of cases for the pronouns, articles and similar words. Where Modern English has the one form *the*, Proto-Germanic had a whole series of forms according to the case, number and gender of the noun that followed.

Proto-Indo-European also had a great array of inflections for its verbs. Proto-Germanic retained many of these, but it simplified the system. For example, it had only two tenses of the verb, a present tense and a past tense: there were forms corresponding to *I sing* and *I sang*, but no distinct forms with such meanings as 'I shall sing', 'I have sung' and so on.

It was in the verbs that Proto-Germanic made one of its own distinctive developments. From Proto-Indo-European it had inherited a whole series of verbs that showed change of tense by changing the vowel of their stem, like Modern English *I sing*, *I sang*, or *I bind*, *I bound*; these are called **strong** verbs. This alternation of vowels for grammatical purposes is highly characteristic of the Indo-European languages, and there were large numbers of strong verbs in Proto-Germanic. Alongside these strong verbs, however, Proto-Germanic invented a new type, called **weak verbs**. In these, the past tense is formed by adding an inflection to the verb-stem, as in *I walk*, *I walked*.

4. Read the following quotations on the Proto-Germanic language. Make a summary of the ideas implied.

All Germanic languages derive from a common ancestor known as Proto-Germanic, which seems to have emerged during the third millennium BC as the language of a group of people living in what is now Denmark and southern Sweden. [15]

The common form that the languages of the Germanic branch had before they became differentiated is known as Germanic or Proto-Germanic. It antedates the earliest written records of the family and is reconstructed by philologists in the same way as is the parent Indo-European. The languages descended from it fall into three groups: East Germanic, North Germanic, and West Germanic. [5]

The language spoken by the first identifiable Germanic peoples was Proto-Germanic, which is the presumed common ancestor of all the modern Germanic languages. Proto-Germanic, like all natural languages, cannot have been homogeneous, and it is likely that the differences between its dialects – which subsequently developed into distinct

languages – were present from the outset. Records of Proto-Germanic do not survive. [16]

A second and very important source of information about early Germanic is provided by borrowings into Finnish, a non-Indo-European language. Apparently Finnish has changed little phonetically since that time, so that a form like *rengas* 'ring' is nowadays quite close to the Proto-Germanic form, from which it was borrowed [...][19]

One further feature common to the early Germanic languages (and which can therefore also be assumed to have been present in Proto-Germanic) is the fixing of the stress in most words on the first syllable. [...] Because in Germanic the stress came to be always placed on the first syllable in most words, the prominence of the syllables at the ends of words was reduced. This seems to have played a part in the gradual loss of inflectional endings which came to be characteristic of the various Germanic languages. [24]

5. Read the following quotations on discovering genealogical relatedness of languages. Comment on the ideas implied.

It is obvious that those elements of the vocabulary which all or a considerable number of the branches of the family have in common must have formed a part of the original word-stock. In fact, a word common to two or three branches of the family, if the branches have not been in such proximity to each other as to suggest mutual influence, is likely to have been in the original language. [5]

To find linguistic relations, we usually take words such as pronouns, numerals, and kinship terms as comparison material since they are supposed to have changed the least. This kind of comparison work is known as **the Comparative Method**. [6]

Linguistic reconstruction was one of the great intellectual advances of the nineteenth century, relating to similar developments in, for example, textual criticism of the Bible and (most spectacularly) the Darwinian insights as to the origin of species, and it has shown its value for historians of the language on numerous occasions. [16]

Lithuanian is spoken by about three million people in the Baltic state of Lithuania. It is important among the Indo-European languages because of its conservatism. It is sometimes said that a Lithuanian peasant can understand certain simple phrases in Sanskrit. Although the



statement implies too much, Lithuanian preserves some very old features that have disappeared from practically all the other languages of the family. [5]

That Latin was somehow related to Greek was a common assumption already in antiquity. But the usual view then was that Latin 'descended' from Greek. Only in the course of the nineteenth century was the correct relationship established: Latin and Greek are genetically related because they both descend from a common ancestor, namely Indo-European. [19]

The historical relationship of the Indo-European languages to one another is not, however, seen merely in the fact that in many cases they use words which are demonstrably developed from a common source. The grammar of the various languages also clearly has a common starting point. In its very early stages, Indo-European had a grammar that was heavily dependent on inflections. [24]

By the nineteenth century, the methodologies of comparative philology had become well established. Scholars undertook (as they still do now) comparative analyses of *cognates*; that is, data which displayed similarities in terms of form and meaning not because of borrowing or coincidence, but because of genetic relatedness. This is an important specification, because any other kind of data can lead to erroneous conclusions. [14]

6. Choose the correct answer

**1. What classification groups languages in accordance with their origin from a common linguistic ancestor?**

a) morphological b) ancestral c) genealogical d) syntactical

**2. Which of the following languages does not belong to the Germanic group of languages?**

a) Afrikaans b) Icelandic c) Portuguese d) Faroese

**3. Through what are all the Germanic languages related?**

a) common origin b) common written records c) peculiarities of verb structure d) trends of phonetic development

**4. What event marks the beginning of the history of the Germanic group?**

a) appearance of the Proto-Germanic language b) military campaigns of Julius Caesar c) earliest migration of Franconian tribes d) Scandinavian expansion to France

**5. By whom was the 1<sup>st</sup> mention of Germanic tribes made?**

a) Julius Caesar b) Pitheas c) Pliny the Elder d) Tacitus

**6. Who made a classified list of Germanic tribes grouping them under 6 headings?**

a) Julius Caesar b) Pitheas c) Pliny the Elder d) Tacitus

**7. Who made the translation of the Gospels from Greek into Gothic?**

a) Julius Caesar b) Ulfilas c) F. Engels d) Pliny the Elder

**8. What is Old Norse?**

a) a sort of common North Germanic parent-language b) a dialect of the Gothic language c) a language in which the Younger Edda is written d) a common language into which The High German dialects consolidated

**9. Which of the North Germanic languages was the last to develop into an independent national language?**

a) Swedish b) Danish c) Icelandic d) Norwegian

**10. What group of Germanic languages does Faroese belong to?**

a) South Germanic b) North Germanic c) East Germanic d) West Germanic

**11. Which of the North Germanic languages has retained a more archaic vocabulary and grammatical system?**

a) Swedish b) Danish c) Icelandic d) Norwegian

**12. What is the most important written record of Old Icelandic?**

a) the Elder Edda b) the Gospels c) the Silver Codex d) Commentaries on the Gallic war

**13. Into what language did the Franconian dialects develop in the later Middle Ages?**

a) Swedish b) Dutch c) German d) Norwegian

**14. Why didn't any Spoken Standard for the literary German language exist until the 19 c.?**

a) Germany remained politically divided into a number of kingdoms and dukedoms b) the High German dialects weren't consolidated into a common language c) High German intermixed with neighboring tongues, especially Middle and High Franconian d) the High German group of tribes did not go far in their migrations

**15. The dialects of what West Germanic tribes developed into the English language?**

a) the Angles, the Saxons, the Frisians, the Jutes b) the Franconians, the Alemanians c) the Ingvæones, the Herminones d) the Celts, the Goths

**16. What place is regarded as the most probable original home of the Teutons?**

a) the southern coast of the Baltic Sea in the region of the Elbe b) the northern coast of the Black Sea c) eastern plains of the Apennines d) Normandy

**17. By what methods was the Proto-Germanic language reconstructed?**

a) by methods of synchronic variation b) by methods of comparative linguistics c) by methods of grammatical typology d) by methods of historical semantics

**18. What is one of the earliest texts in the languages of the Germanic group?**

a) The Silver Codex b) Commentaries On The Gallic Wars c) Brut d) Ormulum

**Section III.**

**Old English. Historical background. Linguistic situation**

*1. For class discussion*

- Celtic Britain
- Anglo-Saxon settlement
- Danish settlement. The reign of King Alfred the Great
- Old English dialects

*2. Read the following quotations on Anglo-Saxon settlement. What do you think are the most important aspects of this event?*

The English language began its own separate development in the middle of the fifth century A.D. after a series of invasions of the English islands by Germanic-speaking tribes from what is now northwestern Europe. The invading groups included Saxons, Angles, Jutes, and Frisians. The invaders fought against Celtic-speaking inhabitants, who were eventually overcome. [2]

The Anglo-Saxon settlement of Britain must not be thought of as the arrival of a unified invading army, but rather as the arrival and penetration of various uncoordinated bands in different parts of the country, beginning in the middle of the fifth century and going on all through the sixth. The processes of struggle and assimilation with Celtic-speaking Britons were lengthy, and Anglo-Saxon domination in England was not assured until late in the sixth century. [4]

About the year 449 an event occurred that profoundly affected the course of history. In that year, as traditionally stated, began the invasion of Britain by certain Germanic tribes, the founders of the English nation. [5]

The English language of today is the language that has resulted from the history of the dialects spoken by the Germanic tribes who came to England in the manner described. It is impossible to say how much the speech of the Angles differed from that of the Saxons or that of the Jutes. The differences were certainly slight. Even after these dialects had been subjected to several centuries of geographical and political separation in England, the differences were not great. [5]

Anglo-Saxon England on the other hand was sparsely populated and travel was very difficult. The Germanic peoples from whom our language stems were comparative newcomers who brought social and political traditions by which they viewed themselves in terms of familial or tribal (that is non-national) associations. Although we might tend to think of the migration as a single historical event, archaeological data and even contemporary accounts attest more long range and piecemeal patterns of immigration. [24]

For the first centuries of the Anglo-Saxon migration and settlement, we have little direct information about the language of Germanic invaders. Our first clues come from names found in seventh and eighth

century Latin manuscripts, especially of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* (Bede), with their English personal and place names. [24]

The term Old English, although it identifies a distinctive form of the English language, covers in fact a wide range of linguistic usages. In a period marked by enormous changes – political, social, and cultural – it is hardly surprising to find that the language too was far from stable. [24]

The settlement of the various Germanic peoples in different regions of the country was, however, an important factor in the linguistic diversity which characterized Old English, since dialectal distinctiveness can be linked to geographical areas. The terms Kentish, West Saxon, and Anglian (the latter also divided into Northumbrian and Mercian), which are used to describe the main dialects of Old English, suggest how, for the early stages in the writing of Old English at least, a correspondence can be clearly established between locality and linguistic forms. [24]

It is likely that the Anglo-Saxons, or more properly, the English, came from the area of north-west Germany and Denmark, and perhaps also the north-east of the Netherlands, the area known today as Friesland. Indeed Frisian, still spoken by about 300,000 people in this part of the Netherlands, is the language to which English is most closely related historically. [8]

But who exactly were these Anglo-Saxons? As implied earlier, the name is somewhat misleading, since it labels only two of the invading tribes and leaves others, such as the so-called Jutes and the Frisians, invisible. These culturally and linguistically related Germanic tribes were Indo-European in origin, and had migrated out of the *Urheimat* to an area now known as the Great North German Plain. Once in England, however, these tribes tended to settle largely in different areas of the country. [...] In each area, tribes would forge useful alliances, or would come together under a powerful leader, and so establish a small kingdom. Eventually, seven of these, known as the Anglo-Saxon Heptarchy, were established: Northumbria, Mercia, East Anglia, Essex, Sussex, Wessex and Kent. One of these kingdoms would gain political supremacy over others at different times: in the early part of the seventh century, Northumbria gained prominence, in the eighth century, Mercia and then in the ninth century, Wessex, under Ecgbert (802–839) and later, Alfred (871–889). [14]

In one of the main sources of information on this early period of English, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation*, the seventh-century monk Bede (often given the honorific Venerable) cites *circa* 449 AD as the date of the first significant landings of the language's Germanic progenitors on what would become English soil. This date is therefore often cited in relation to the initial emergence of the English language. However, it is important to note that these initial migrants, known collectively but somewhat erroneously as the Anglo-Saxons, were not English speakers. They spoke instead the closely related Germanic dialects that would become the roots of English within a few generations of settlement and interaction in England. [14]

The Germanic settlement comprised seven kingdoms, the Anglo-Saxon Heptarchy: Kent, Essex, Sussex, Wessex, East Anglia, Mercia, and Northumbria – the last, the land north of the Humber estuary, being an amalgamation of two earlier kingdoms, Bernicia and Deira. Kent early became the chief center of culture and wealth, and by the end of the sixth century its King, Ethelbert, could lay claim to hegemony over all the other kingdoms south of the Humber. Later, in the seventh and eighth centuries, this supremacy was to pass to Northumbria, with its great centers of learning at Lindisfarne, Wearmouth, and Jarrow; then to Mercia; and finally to Wessex, with its brilliant line of kings beginning with Egbert, who overthrew the Mercian king in 825, and culminating in his grandson, the superlatively great Alfred, whose successors after his death in 899 took for themselves the title *Rex Anglorum* 'King of the English.' [3]

3. Read the following quotations on the Christianization of Anglo-Saxon England. What are the linguistic consequences of the conversion of Anglo-Saxons to Christianity?

We know little about the Anglo-Saxons until after their conversion to Christianity, which introduced them to the use of the Roman alphabet for writing extensive texts. [...] With Christianity came the Latin model of writing. The English already had one form of writing, runes, but these were used only for short inscriptions, not for texts of any length. [4]

One of the most profound effects of the arrival of Christianity in Britain on the English language was the development of an Old English script based on the Roman alphabet. Before the arrival of the Christian

missionaries, the only script available in Anglo-Saxon England had been a different sort of writing altogether, a runic ‘alphabet’ developed from the earlier Germanic futhork. [24]

Two significant events mark the beginning of the Christianization of Anglo-Saxon England. In the 560s an Irish monk named Columba established a monastic settlement on Iona, an island off the west coast of Scotland. It became the launching point for missionary and monastic activity around Northumbria and accounts for the pervasive influence of Celtic traditions there. And in 597 a Roman monk named Augustine, sent by Pope Gregory, led a mission to Kent where they were welcomed by King Æthelberht, whose wife Bertha came from a Christian Frankish family. Augustine’s mission was, according to Bede, a resounding success, so that he not only baptized King Æthelberht but also 10,000 Anglo-Saxons by the end of 597. Across England, however, conversion was often a faltering process, especially in the first century after Augustine’s mission. [1]

Christianity had actually come to the Anglo-Saxons from two directions – from Rome with Saint Augustine and from the Celtic Church with Irish missionaries. Christianity had been introduced to the British Isles, and particularly to Ireland, much earlier, before the year 400. And in Ireland Christianity had developed into a distinctive form, quite different from that of Rome. Irish missionaries went to Iona and Lindisfarne and made converts in Northumbria and Mercia, where they introduced their style of writing (the Insular hand) to the English. For a time it was uncertain whether England would go with Rome or the Celts. That question was resolved at a Synod held at Whitby in 664, where preference was given to the Roman customs of when to celebrate Easter and of how monks should shave their heads. Those apparently trivial decisions were symbolic of the important alignment of the English Church with Rome and the Continent. [3]

It is frequently supposed that the Old English period was somehow gray, dull, and crude. Nothing could be further from the truth. England after its conversion to Christianity at the end of the sixth century became a veritable beehive of scholarly activity. The famous monasteries at Canterbury, Glastonbury, Wearmouth, Lindisfarne, Jarrow, and York were great centers of learning where men such as Aldhelm, Benedict Biscop, Bede, and Alcuin pursued their studies. [3]

4. Read the following quotations. Comment on the importance of the reign of King Alfred the Great for the history of the English language.

In 871 ad Alfred ascended to the throne of Wessex. Alfred’s achievement as a military strategist over the period of his reign (871–99) is matched by his success in championing the vernacular. In his determination to educate as many of his subjects as possible and to make England a centre of intellectual achievement, Alfred set up a scheme by which certain important Latin works were to be translated into English. Alfred was not working in isolation; he seems to have been able to call upon scholars from Mercia as well as from the Continent. [24]

A turning point in the cultural history of English took place when King Alfred of Wessex (871–99) launched a series of vernacular projects after his successful defense of his kingdom against the Vikings. Alfred himself translated at least four Latin texts into English and invited others to join him in promoting vernacular literacy among all Englishmen of the free class. Alfred’s ambitious plan enhanced new ideas about the vernacular: English was good enough for prose composition and worthy enough for parchment. Most of the English texts from Alfred’s generation were written in Early West Saxon, the dialect of his realm. [1]

One of Alfred’s greatest innovations, however, was his promotion of English as a *written* language. From our perspective today the advantages of using the vernacular may seem obvious, but to Alfred’s contemporaries literacy was primarily restricted to Latin, so his decision to elevate Old English must have seemed unconventional. [1]

Alfred came to the throne of Wessex in 871, at the height of the Danish invasions. Through his strategy and tactics in both war and diplomacy he was able, first, to regroup the Wessex forces and, then, to establish a truce with the Danes by the Treaty of Wedmore in 878. From our point of view, the most important feature of that treaty was that it recognised Danish settlement roughly speaking northeast of a line from London to Chester. This area was known as the Danelaw. In the Danelaw there must have been many Danish speakers living alongside English speakers, apparently with relatively little mutual hostility and their languages to some degree mutually intelligible. [9]

Alfred is the only English king to be honored with the sobriquet “the Great,” and deservedly so. In addition to his military victories over

the Vikings, Alfred reorganized the laws and government of the kingdom and revived learning among the clergy. His greatest fame, however, was as a scholar in his own right. He translated Latin books into English: Pope Gregory the Great's Pastoral Care, Orosius's History, Boethius's Consolation of Philosophy, and Saint Augustine's Soliloquies. He was also responsible for a translation of Bede's Ecclesiastical History and for the compilation of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle – the two major sources of our knowledge of early English history. [3]

5. Use the following citation as a kind of plan for short reports or essays on the dialects of Old English and the linguistic situation in Anglo-Saxon England.

During the sixth century, the Germanic invasions ended and England entered a period of relative political stability. The island became covered with a patchwork of kingdoms, and during this period of political stability several dialect areas arose. The major dialects were West Saxon, Kentish, Mercian and Northumbrian, the West Saxon dialect eventually becoming the most important. The differences among these dialects, which mainly involved pronunciation, were similar to differences among dialects in the present-day United States. [2]

One interesting thing is that, although a West Saxon variety became an influential literary language in the late Anglo-Saxon period, it is not the direct ancestor of modern standard English, which is mainly derived from an Anglian dialect (but not, it should be pointed out, any of the Mercian or Northumbrian varieties represented in extant Old English texts). [4]

Old English and Old Norse were still reasonably similar, and Englishmen and Danes could probably understand each other, and pick up each other's language, without too much difficulty. In the later OE period we must visualize various bilingual situations. There would be Englishmen speaking Old Norse, and Danes speaking Old English, and when they didn't know a word in the other language they would use a word from their own, perhaps giving it a pronunciation and inflections that they thought appropriate to the other language. Sometimes they would use a word in the other language but give it the meaning of the corresponding form in their own language. And no doubt there were children of mixed marriages who could speak both languages fluently. Thus great mixing took place between the two languages. [4]

Old English was not an entirely uniform language. Not only are there differences between the language of the earliest written records (about A.D. 700) and that of the later literary texts, but the language differed somewhat from one locality to another. We can distinguish four dialects in Old English times: Northumbrian, Mercian, West Saxon, and Kentish. [5]

The only dialect in which there is an extensive collection of texts is West Saxon, which was the dialect of the West Saxon kingdom in the southwest. Nearly all of Old English literature is preserved in manuscripts transcribed in this region. [5]

With the ascendancy of the West Saxon kingdom, the West Saxon dialect attained something of the position of a literary standard, and both for this reason and because of the abundance of the materials it is made the basis of the study of Old English. [5]

Several dialects of OE are recorded, but one variety, Late West Saxon, seems to have achieved the status of a standardised written language in the years before the Norman Conquest. [15]

That is, West Saxon was the most clearly distinct variety, as might be expected because of geographical factors which isolated it even from the Norse invaders. [24]

The best attested of all Old English varieties is the standard literary language associated with the West Saxon hegemony of the late tenth century and onwards until the Norman conquest. [24]

West Saxon continued to be a privilege dialect in the tenth century when Alfred's successors consolidated West Saxon supremacy and supported intellectual movements led by the Church. Until this point, Old English dialects had corresponded mostly to geographical variety, like Northumbrian, Mercian, and Early West Saxon. With the monastic reform in the royal seat of Winchester in the late tenth century, however, the Late West Saxon dialect became the standard written vernacular to be used for manuscripts produced even outside Wessex. Late West Saxon, which accounts for the majority of the extant Old English corpus, is characterized by highly regulated orthography. [1]

We also have to bear in mind that English was not the only language in which texts were written in Anglo-Saxon England. As everywhere in the medieval West, Latin was the prime language of religion, scholarship, and literature, enjoying unrivalled prestige. In Anglo-

Saxon England in the tenth and the early eleventh centuries, however, there is a characteristic tendency (unique in a European context) to supplement Latin texts with texts written in the vernacular in practically all domains where Latin had been prevalent. The implication of this situation is that the shaping influence of Latin (and contemporary Anglo-Latin in particular) on the various linguistic and stylistic levels of Old English merits our close attention. [1]

6. Choose the correct answer

1. In what century were the British Isles invaded by Germanic tribes?

a) 3 b) 4 c) 5 d) 6

2. Which of the following languages does not belong to the Celtic group of languages?

a) Irish b) Icelandic c) Welsh d) Cornish

3. How long did the Roman occupation of Britain last?

a) 300 years b) 400 years c) 500 years d) 600 years

4. Who wrote the 1<sup>st</sup> history of England?

a) Julius Caesar b) Bede c) Aelfric d) Wulfstan

5. What was the largest and most powerful kingdom of the Saxons?

a) Wessex b) Essex c) Sussex d) East Sussex

6. By what tribe was the kingdom of Northumbria founded?

a) the Angles b) the Saxons c) the Jutes d) the Frisians

7. How can the linguistic conquest of the Celts by the Germanic tribes be characterised?

a) It was complete. b) It was partial. c) It was unsuccessful. d) It was sudden and fast.

8. What was the decisive event in the linguistic history of the Germanic tribes?

a) the migration to the British Isles b) language contacts with the Romans c) converting to Christianity d) introduction of Latin alphabet

9. Which of the following events played a most important role in the history of the English language?

a) intermixture between the Celts and the Germans b) the Roman occupation of Britain c) introduction of Christianity d) death of king Alfred the Great

10. Why was the linguistic amalgamation of the English and the Danes easy?

a) their languages had similar word stock b) they spoke the same language c) they had similar culture d) their tongues belonged to the same linguistic group

11. What dialect of Old English prevailed in the domain of writing?

a) Northumbrian b) Kentish c) West Saxon d) Mercian

12. What foreign language was widely used in writing alongside Old English dialects?

a) Latin b) Celtic c) Scandinavian d) Old Norse

13. How was the dialectal division of Old English transformed at the time of written Old English?

a) the dialects changed from tribal to regional b) the dialects changed from regional to tribal c) the dialectal division disappeared d) there appeared new dialects

## Section IV. Old English Grammar

1. For class discussion

- Old English noun
- Old English adjective
- Old English pronoun and numerals

2. Read the following notes about the Old English nouns, adjectives and pronouns. Speak on the peculiarities of Old English nominal and pronominal systems.

### Nouns

In grammar, Old English carried out some simplifications of the Proto-Germanic system. OE nouns usually have only four cases: nominative, accusative, genitive and dative. Moreover, the number of commonly used declensions is reduced, the vast majority of nouns tending to be attracted into three or four large declensions.

At the same time, there are fewer distinctive case-endings than in Proto-Germanic, because of the weakening and loss of sounds in unstressed syllables in prehistoric Old English, and the operation of analogy. [4]

The inflection of the Old English noun indicates distinctions of number (singular and plural) and case. The case system is somewhat simpler than that of Latin and some of the other Indo-European languages. There is no ablative, and generally no locative or instrumental case, these having been merged with the dative. In the same way the vocative of direct address is generally identical with the nominative form. Thus the Old English noun has only four cases. The endings of these cases vary with different nouns, but they fall into certain broad categories or declensions. [5]

Agreement (sometimes called concord) is functionally and formally much more important in OE than in PDE. Agreement is demonstrated when a noun, along with the modifier applying to it, will be assigned the appropriate case ending required by its function in the sentence. In OE, modifiers (determiners, adjectives) agree with the nouns to which they apply not only in case, but also in number and gender. [15]

### **Adjectives**

An important feature of the Germanic languages is the development of a twofold declension of the adjective: one, the strong declension, used with nouns when not accompanied by a definite article or similar word (such as a demonstrative or possessive pronoun), the other, the weak declension, used when the noun is preceded by such a word.

This elaboration of inflection in the Old English adjective contrasts in the most striking way with the complete absence of inflection from the adjective in Modern English. Such complexity is quite unnecessary, as the English language demonstrates every day by getting along without it. Its elimination has resulted in a second great advantage that English possesses over some other languages. [5]

The ending of the **adjective** is very intricate in Old English. As in other Germanic languages, such as German, Dutch, and Swedish, its form depends on whether a demonstrative is present. This is different in the other Indo-European languages. If no demonstrative precedes the adjective in Germanic, the adjective gets a more distinctive (strong) ending to 'make up' for this lack; if the adjective is preceded by a demonstrative, it gets a less varied (weak) ending. The strong and

weak endings are also referred to as indefinite and definite in some Old English grammars. [6]

Because of agreement, the form of the **adjective** depends on the number, gender and case of the noun which it modifies, and OE adjectives can take several distinct inflexional endings because of this rule. However, this is not the only complexity; for there are in OE two adjectival paradigms, called **strong** and **weak**. Determining which paradigm to use depends on the relationship between the adjective and other words. [15]

Adjectives in Old English always agreed in case, number and gender with the nouns they modified. Of course, we would expect this of any inflected language, not just a Germanic one, cf. French or Italian. But in Germanic there was one peculiarity which still exists in most of the present-day languages with the exception of English. This is that adjectives normally belonged to two declensions. Which declension an adjective followed in any given context was syntactically determined. Broadly, if the adjective was in a definite noun phrase (usually made definite by a demonstrative or possessive), then one declension was used, elsewhere the other was used.[...] It is important to note that an adjective was not weak or strong because the noun it modified was weak or strong; as has been said, the assignment of declension in adjectives was syntactically determined; in this respect, therefore, the adjective did not agree with the noun. [19]

### **Pronouns**

One big difference from Modern English is in the system of demonstratives. Today we have a threefold system: *the, this, that*. But in Old English there are only two demonstratives, *se* 'the, that' and *tes* 'this'. On the other hand, the ternary modern system comprises only five different forms (*the, this, these, that, those*), whereas each of the OE demonstratives is declined through three genders, five cases (the fifth being the instrumental) and two numbers. [4]

From the point of view of historical morphology, and disregarding syntax, it is probably best to class the pronouns into two types: (i) personal pronouns, by which we mean the first and second person personal pronouns only; (ii) impersonal pronouns, by which we mean not only the demonstratives, possessives, interrogatives and indefinites, but also the third person personal pronouns. Throughout the period all the

pronouns appeared in a considerable variety of forms, even within one dialect. Probably this was largely because pronouns could occur both in stressed and in unstressed positions, and so there would exist alongside one another both stressed or 'strong' forms and unstressed or 'weak' forms. These could not only differ from one another, but could also interact with one another and so produce alternative strong and weak forms. This is not particularly different from the situation in present-day English, to which we are all unconsciously accustomed, but what we are not accustomed to, and yet exists in Old English, is the variety of spelling to reflect these variations. [19]

There are two striking differences between the Old English first and second person personal pronouns and those existing today. Firstly, in Old English there was in the second person both a singular form *fru* 'thou' and a plural form *je* 'you'. Furthermore, the difference between these was purely one of number: there was no sociolinguistic difference as there was in Middle English and as still exists in, for example, some Yorkshire dialects, between *tha'* and *jo*. These differences only arose after the time of the Conquest. Secondly, as well as singular and plural forms, there also existed, albeit only occasionally, a dual form, used for referring to two persons, e.g. *wit* 'we two'. The dual form was essentially restricted to Old English, although some examples of it persisted into the fourteenth century. [19]

From the frequency of its use and the necessity for specific reference when used, the personal pronoun in all languages is likely to preserve a fairly complete system of inflections. Old English shows this tendency not only in having distinctive forms for practically all genders, persons, and cases but also in preserving in addition to the ordinary two numbers, singular and plural, a set of forms for two people or two things – the dual number. [5]

3. Read the following notes which contain comparison of Old English grammar and Modern English grammar. Make a summary of the ideas implied.

Comparing the many endings and few words of Old and Modern English, we see that the main change between the two stages is that of a language with free word order and many endings but no 'small' words such as *the* or *to* becoming a language with strict word order, few endings and many 'small' words. [6]

The principal difference between OE and PDE is that OE is, to a much greater degree than PDE, an **inflected** language. Whereas the relationships between words in PDE are largely expressed by word order, in OE these relationships are expressed to a much greater extent by special endings attached to words. These endings are called **inflexions**. OE and PDE are not so very different in this respect; we still use a number of inflexions today, even if we do not call them such. [15]

OE differs from PDE most obviously in its grammatical structure, through its widespread use of inflexions to relate words to each other. To put it another way, word-form and word-function are closely related in OE. [16]

To modern eyes and ears, Old English grammar provides a fascinating mixture of the familiar and the unfamiliar. The word order is much more varied than it would be in Modern English, but there are several places where it is strikingly similar. Adjectives usually go before their nouns, as do prepositions, articles, and other grammatical words, just as they do today. Sometimes, whole sentences are identical in the order of words, or nearly so [...]. The main syntactic differences affect the placing of the verb, which quite often appears before the subject, and also at the very end of the clause [...]. Like other Germanic languages, Old English was inflected: the job a word did in the sentence was signaled by the kind of ending it had. Today, most of these inflections have died away, leaving the modern reader with the major task of getting used to the word endings, in order to understand the Old English texts. [18]

Compared with the present-day language, Old English was highly inflected. Nouns had four cases and three genders; verbs inflected for person and number and for the indicative and subjunctive moods. Where inflexions for any of these categories exist today, they either do so in a greatly altered form, as with the modern possessive, or are little more than relics of an older stage, as with, for example, the subjunctive. Further, in the Old English noun phrase there was agreement between noun and modifying adjective rather as in present-day German, something lost from English at about the time of Chaucer. Like a language such as Latin, Old English also had noun (and adjective) declensions and verb conjugations. Similar categories could be proposed for present-day English (see below for further discussion), but might be of little relevance.



Compared with Latin, however, Old English appears somewhat degenerate in its inflexional systems; there is not the same richness in inflexions – fewer cases, fewer distinctions of tense, no genuine inflexional passive. This state of affairs is by no means surprising. The Old English inflexional system derived directly from that in Germanic, which, although different from that in Latin, shares the same Indo-European origin (but, of course, Latin and Germanic each have their own characteristics, especially amongst verbs, since they proceeded along divergent paths of linguistic development). But Old English begins to show the loss and simplification of inflexions which characterises the later stages of English and which eventually creates a language with remarkably few inflexions compared with most other Indo-European languages. [19]

In morphological typology, OE is considered a largely synthetic system, or one which makes use of morphs that carry more than one unit of lexical or grammatical information. As we will see in the following discussion, this is not as clear-cut and as tidy a categorization as it might appear: the OE corpus indicates that the language already incorporated analytic type features and processes and was continuing to change in this direction.

Thus texts indicate that inflectional paradigms were involved in a process of reduction, with some inflections disappearing and others falling together in form. These losses were accompanied by a marked preference for fixed word-order – a feature characteristic of analytic systems. In addition, although OE derivational morphology was productive, texts also evidence a high degree of compounding – again, an analytic-type process. It would seem then that OE texts capture a relatively early stage in a long, ongoing transition from the much more synthetic system of the Germanic ancestor of English to one with a more analytic character. [14]

Old English will inevitably seem to the modern reader a crabbed and difficult language full of needless complexities. Actually, Old English noun inflection was somewhat less complex than that of Germanic, Latin, and Greek and much less so than that of Indo-European, which had eight cases (nominative, accusative, genitive, dative, ablative, instrumental, locative, and vocative). No Old English noun had more than

six distinct forms, counting both singular and plural; but even this number will seem exorbitant to the speaker of Modern English, who uses only two forms for all but a few nouns: a general form without ending and a form ending in *-s*. The fact that three modern forms ending in *-s* are written differently is quite irrelevant; the apostrophe for the genitive is a fairly recent convention. As far as speech is concerned, *guys*, *guy's*, and *guys'* are all the same. [3]

4. Choose the correct answer

**1. What language units didn't Old English employ in building grammatical forms?**

a) suppletive formation b) inflections c) reduplication d) prefixes

**2. What type of language was Old English?**

a) polysynthetic b) synthetic c) analytical d) amorphous

**3. What was the principal form-building means used in Old English grammar?**

a) inflections b) prefixes c) sound interchanges in the root d) reduplication

**4. What part of speech in Old English didn't employ suppletive formation?**

a) noun b) pronoun c) verb d) adjective

**5. What part of speech isn't distinguished in Old English?**

a) the conjunction b) the interjection c) the pronoun d) the article

**6. How many nominal grammatical categories were there in Old English?**

a) 3 b) 4 c) 5 d) 6

**7. What grammatical categories didn't exist in Old English noun?**

a) number b) case c) gender d) definiteness/indefiniteness

**8. Which part of speech in Old English grammar had the maximum number of grammatical categories?**

a) noun b) pronoun c) verb d) adjective

**9. What peculiarity did Old English personal pronouns of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person have?**

a) they didn't distinguish any grammatical category b) they distinguished 5 cases c) they distinguished 4 genders d) they distinguished 3 numbers

**10. What was the function of grammatical categories of number and person in Old English verbal system?**

**a)** denoting the recipient of an action **b)** showing agreement between the verb-predicate and the subject of the sentence **c)** indication of future action **d)** indication of past action

**11. How can the distinction of gender in Old English nouns be characterized?**

**a)** it was always associated with the meaning of nouns **b)** it had a phonetic significance **c)** it wasn't a grammatical category **d)** it was a grammatical category

**12. Why was the distinction of Old English noun cases less consistent than that of numbers?**

**a)** in most declensions there were homonymous forms **b)** cases were less important for communication **c)** the loss of stem suffixes led to the formation of different sets of grammatical endings **d)** because of the merging of the stem-suffix with the original grammatical ending

**13. What is the peculiarity of the semantic functions of Old English noun cases?**

**a)** they were clearly defined **b)** they required further specification by means of preposition **c)** they didn't overlap **d)** they were used only in adverbial meanings

**14. What is the most remarkable feature of Old English nouns?**

**a)** the loss of stem suffixes **b)** fluctuation in the use of cases **c)** expression of adverbial meanings **d)** elaborate system of declensions

**15. How many declensions were there in Old English?**

**a)** less than 20 **b)** less than 25 **c)** more than 25 **d)** more than 20

**16. What feature wasn't used as a distinction of the Old English system of declensions?**

**a)** phonetic changes in the final syllables **b)** semantic function of cases **c)** the stem-suffix **d)** the gender of nouns

## Section V. Old English Grammar

### 1. For class discussion

- Old English verb
- Old English word order
- Old English syntax

2. Read the following notes about the Old English verb. Speak on the peculiarities of Old English verbal system.

In its verbal system, Old English inherited from Proto-Germanic a two-tense system (traditionally called 'present' and 'past'), with different forms for indicative and subjunctive. Proto-Germanic also had inflections for the passive, but these did not survive in Old English.

In Old English, as in other Germanic languages, we also see the beginnings of a new tense system using auxiliaries, and especially the development of forms for the perfect and for the passive, like Modern English *I have helped* and *I am helped*. The perfect tenses existed in Old English, but were not used as frequently or as consistently as they were later. [4]

A peculiar feature of the Germanic languages was the division of the verb into two great classes, the weak and the strong, often known in Modern English as regular and irregular verbs.

The apparent irregularity of the strong verbs is due to the fact that verbs of this type are much less numerous than weak verbs. In Old English, if we exclude compounds, there were only a few over 300 of them, and even this small number falls into several classes. Within these classes, however, a perfectly regular sequence can be observed in the vowel changes of the root. [5]

OE has special forms of the finite verb to express indicative, subjunctive and imperative **moods** within simple verb phrases. Mood may be defined as a category to do with different degrees of possibility with regard to the action referred to by the verb, including the speaker's attitude to the factuality or otherwise of that action. The PDE configuration differs somewhat. [15]

3. Read the following notes about the Old English syntax. Speak on the peculiarities of Old English syntactic system.

Because of its inflectional system, Old English had greater freedom of word-order than Modern English. [4]

There are a number of constructions in OE that do not require a subject, i.e. they do not require an NP in the nominative case. Furthermore, the verb is always in the third person singular form. Such constructions are usually called 'impersonal', but 'subjectless' might be a more appropriate term. [22]

Because of features such as case marking and explicit subject – verb agreement, OE word order was much more flexible than that of modern English, allowing for [...] both OV and VO structures. By the late years of the Anglo-Saxon period, VO order appears to have increasingly become the norm, very likely in accompaniment to the inflectional reduction we have observed in the last section, which would have eroded morphological signals of case. As we will see, however, there were instances in which V(S)O or OV was preferred, possibly in accordance with developing stylistic conventions in the emerging West Saxon standard. OV order, for example, was common when the object of a verb was a pronoun, when an object was topicalized, or in a subordinate clause introduced by a relative pronoun such as *at* 'that'. [14]

Old English syntax has an easily recognizable kinship with that of Modern English. There are, of course, differences – and some striking ones – but they do not disguise the close similarity between an Old English sentence and its Modern English counterpart. [3]

... in Old English subordinate clauses it was common for the verb to be placed at the end of the clause... [24]

4. Choose the correct answer

**1. What are the main 4 classes of OE pronouns?**

a) demonstrative, possessive, indefinite, reflexive, b) personal, indefinite, reflexive, demonstrative c) personal, indefinite, interrogative, demonstrative d) demonstrative, indefinite, reflexive, possessive

**2. How can Old English reflexive pronouns be characterized?**

a) they were fully developed b) they didn't exist in Old English c) they were not fully developed d) they could be used only in combination with demonstrative pronouns

**3. What class of Old English pronouns was not always distinctly separated from the four main classes?**

a) personal b) relative c) demonstrative d) interrogative

**4. What is a "noun-pronoun"?**

a) a pronoun whose grammatical categories are similar to those of nouns b) a pronoun which developed out of a noun c) a pronoun which is used together with a noun in one syntactic pattern d) a pronoun which can be used instead of a noun in a sentence

**5. How many numbers did Old English personal pronouns have?**

a) 2 b) 3 c) 4 d) 5

**6. From what class of pronouns did the personal pronouns of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person originate?**

a) personal b) interrogative c) demonstrative d) reflexive

**7. What is a peculiar feature of personal pronoun declension in Old English?**

a) personal pronouns had only two cases in the paradigm of declension b) there were forms in personal pronoun declension homonymous with demonstrative pronouns declension c) personal pronouns began to lose some of their case distinctions d) personal pronouns began to lose some of their gender distinctions

**8. What way of word-building was used in the personal pronouns of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person?**

a) suppletion b) prefixation c) suffixation d) vowel interchange

**9. What pronouns were frequently used as noun determiners?**

a) demonstrative b) personal c) interrogative d) reflexive

**10. What can a demonstrative pronoun indicate through agreement with the nouns?**

a) gender, person, number b) gender, case, person c) number, case, definiteness/indefiniteness d) number, gender, case

**11. What is the peculiarity of Old English verb forms?**

a) finite forms distinguished between 3 numbers b) all the forms of the verb were analytical c) there were no non-finite forms d) all the forms of the verb were synthetic

**12. With what parts of speech did the non-finite forms of OE verb share many features?**

**a)** nominal parts of speech **b)** verbal parts of speech **c)** pronominal parts of speech **d)** subnominal parts of speech

**13. What were the specifically verbal categories of Old English verb?**

**a)** tense and mood **b)** number and person **c)** voice and aspect **d)** time correlation and coordination

**14. In what grammatical category did the predicate of the OE sentence agree with its subject?**

**a)** number **b)** person **c)** number and person **d)** tense

**15. What categorial forms constituted the category of tense in Old English?**

**a)** present, past, future **b)** present, past **c)** present, future **d)** past, future

**16. Due to what the distinction between some forms of the moods in OE was eliminated?**

**a)** phonetic changes in the final syllables **b)** elaborate system of conjugation **c)** homonymous forms **d)** grammatical characteristics of these forms were homogeneous

**17. What meaning did the Subjunctive Mood in OE express?**

**a)** conditional meaning **b)** a general meaning of unreality or supposition **c)** temporal meaning **d)** hypothetical meaning

**18. In what type of OE sentences besides conditional ones was the use of Subjunctive Mood common?**

**a)** clauses of time and result **b)** gerundial construction **c)** complex object **d)** complex subject

**19. How many strong verbs were there in Old English?**

**a)** about 200 **b)** about 300 **c)** about 400 **d)** about 500

**20. How many classes of strong verbs were there in Old English?**

**a)** 5 **b)** 6 **c)** 7 **d)** 8

**21. What etymological group do OE strong verbs belong to?**

**a)** native words **b)** mainly Scandinavian borrowings **c)** mainly Latin borrowings **d)** combination of Scandinavian and native words

**22. How can Old English strong verbs be characterized concerning their usage?**

**a)** they were basic items of the vocabulary widely used in word derivation **b)** they were used mainly in the poetic style **c)** they were used mainly in spoken language **d)** they could be used only in translations from Latin into Old English

**23. What distinguishes the classes of strong verbs from each other?**

**a)** inflections **b)** prefixes **c)** sound interchanges in the root **d)** frequency of occurrence

**24. What factor determined the syntactic structure of OE?**

**a)** system of verb conjugation **b)** the nature of OE morphology **c)** development of analytical forms **d)** strong influence of Latin

**25. What are the relations between the spoken and the written forms of Old English?**

**a)** written form of Old English didn't exist **b)** spoken Old English differed from written Old English in its grammar **c)** spoken Old English differed from written Old English in its vocabulary **d)** the written forms of the language resembled oral speech

**26. How did the fact of Old English being primarily a spoken language influence its syntax?**

**a)** the syntax of the sentence was relatively simple **b)** the syntax of the sentence was complicated **c)** the syntactic patterns used in oral speech could not be used in written language **d)** complex sentences prevailed over simple ones

**27. What is a peculiar feature of Old English poetic syntax?**

**a)** special syntactical constructions with prepositions **b)** complex syntactical constructions with gerund **c)** stereotyped syntactical constructions **d)** syntactical constructions borrowed from Latin

**28. Why do many syntactical constructions in OE texts look clumsy, loosely connected and disorderly?**

**a)** because written form of Old English had only begun to grow **b)** there were no conjunctions in Old English **c)** Old English had a highly developed system of intonation which allowed to connect sentences in oral speech but could not be shown in written texts **d)** because the meaning of many grammatical forms was not clearly defined

## Section VI. Old English vocabulary

### 1. For class discussion

- General characteristic of Old English vocabulary
- Scandinavian influence on Old English vocabulary
- Latin influence on Old English vocabulary

### 2. Read the following quotations. Comment on the peculiarities of Old English vocabulary.

The most striking characteristic of Old English vocabulary is how Germanic it is. [6]

The bulk of the OE lexicon was inherited from Proto-Germanic. This component included words which have no cognate in the other Indo-European languages, and which presumably either entered Germanic through early contact with non-Indo-European languages now extinct, or are forms whose cognates have simply not survived in those languages. [15]

An examination of the words in an Old English dictionary shows that about 85 percent of them are no longer in use. Those that survive, to be sure, are basic elements of our vocabulary and by the frequency with which they recur make up a large part of any English sentence. [5]

OE, for a mixture of extra- and intralinguistic reasons, seems to have been relatively inhospitable to words from other languages. Nevertheless, a number of languages did leave their mark on the OE lexicon: Greek, Latin, Celtic, Scandinavian and French. [15]

A second feature of Old English that would quickly become apparent to a modern reader is the rarity of those words derived from Latin and the absence of those from French which form so large a part of our present vocabulary. Such words make up more than half of the words now in common use. They are so essential to the expression of our ideas, seem so familiar and natural to us, that we miss them in the earlier stage of the language. The vocabulary of Old English is almost purely Germanic. A large part of this vocabulary, moreover, has disappeared from the language. [5]

The OE vocabulary is, etymologically speaking, extremely homogeneous, especially if compared with present-day English. Nevertheless, contacts with other languages in the PrOE and OE periods have left some traces, which provide interesting insights into the external history of the language, in so far as they reflect cultural, religious and/or political changes. [22]

One conspicuous feature of OE vocabulary is the existence of large lexical families tied together by means of word formation. This is also reflected by the behaviour with regard to borrowing, especially when translating Latin texts. The translator would usually coin an Anglo-Saxon word rather than just borrow the Latin word if the OE vernacular did not have an obvious equivalent, i.e. he would resort to loan translations and loan creations. In this respect, OE is diametrically opposed to early Modern English, where borrowing was the normal process. [9]

We can classify Old English vocabulary into the following four types. Firstly, native core vocabulary; secondly, **affixation**, the process by which a native affix is attached to an existing word to create a new word, as in present-day English *brightness* from *bright* plus the suffix *-ness*; thirdly, **compounding**, the process by which two independent words are joined together to create a new third word, as in present-day *railway*, created from the two dependent words *rail* and *way*; fourthly, **borrowing**, that is to say introducing non-native words into the language in exactly the way we have already seen. [8]

### 3. Read the following quotations. Comment on the place and role of borrowings in Old English vocabulary.

#### **Latin**

For several hundred years, while the Germanic tribes who later became the English were still occupying their continental homes, they had various relations with the Romans through which they acquired a considerable number of Latin words. Later when they came to England they saw the evidences of the long Roman rule in the island and learned from the Celts additional Latin words that had been acquired by them. And a century and a half later still, when Roman missionaries reintroduced Christianity into the island, this new cultural influence resulted in a quite extensive adoption of Latin elements into the language. There

were thus three distinct occasions on which borrowing from Latin occurred before the end of the Old English period. [5]

The largest number of loans, whether direct or indirect (semantic loans, loan translations), in OE is due to the influence of Latin, which had already started at the time when the ancestors of the Anglo-Saxons were still on the Continent. At this stage Latin may also have acted as an intermediary for the adoption of some loans from Greek. [22]

Given the impact Roman culture and Christianisation had on the Anglo-Saxons, on their way of thinking and their material culture, the number of Latin loans borrowed in the OE period is relatively small, in particular when compared to the number of Latin loans that came in during Middle and Early Modern English. The main reason for this is the astonishing versatility with which the native vocabulary could be used in order to render a foreign concept. [22]

### ***Celtic***

It has been estimated that perhaps no more than 12 words from Celtic were incorporated into English during the OE period. These included words for geographical features such as *torr* 'peak', *cumb* 'deep valley', *crag*; animals such as *brocc* 'badger'; and miscellaneous words such as *bannuc* 'a bit' and *bratt* 'cloak'. However, many current place names and names of topographical features such as rivers and hills remain as evidence of England's Celtic settlement. [14]

### ***Scandinavian***

Most of the Scandinavian loanwords first appear in writing in the Middle English period, but their form shows that they had been taken into English in the late OE period, for they have undergone the sound changes that mark the transition from Old to Middle English. They do not appear earlier in writing because at that time there was no literary tradition in the Danelaw, and most surviving texts are in the West Saxon dialect, which was the one least influenced by Old Norse. [4]

But what is most striking about the Scandinavian loanwords as a whole is that they are such *ordinary* words. The English and the Scandinavians had very similar cultures, and the fusion of the two peoples was a close one; many of the words taken over, in consequence, were homely everyday ones, words belonging to the central core of the vocabulary. [4]

The total number of Scandinavian loans is in fact rather small, compared with the number of words later borrowed from French and Latin; on the other hand, many of them are words in very frequent use, and there is a Scandinavian enclave in the very central regions of the English vocabulary. [4]

The similarity between Old English and the language of the Scandinavian invaders makes it at times very difficult to decide whether a given word in Modern English is a native or a borrowed word. Many of the more common words of the two languages were identical, and if we had no Old English literature from the period before the Danish invasions, we should be unable to say that many words were not of Scandinavian origin. [5]

Among the most notable evidences of the extensive Scandinavian settlement in England is the large number of places that bear Scandinavian names. When we find more than 600 places like *Grimsby*, *Whitby*, *Derby*, *Rugby*, and *Thoresby*, with names ending in *-by*, nearly all of them in the district occupied by the Danes, we have a striking evidence of the number of Danes who settled in England. For these names all contain the Danish word *by*, meaning 'farm' or 'town', a word that is also seen in our word *by-law* (town law). Some 300 names like *Althorp*, *Bishopsthorpe*, *Gawthorpe*, and *Linthorpe* contain the Scandinavian word *thorp* (village). An almost equal number contain the word *thwaite* (an isolated piece of land) – *Applethwaite*, *Braithwaite*, *Cowperthwaite*, *Langthwaite*, *Satterthwaite*. About a hundred places bear names ending in *toft* (a piece of ground, a messuage) – *Brimtoft*, *Eastoft*, *Langtoft*, *Lowestoft*, *Nortoft*. Numerous other Scandinavian elements enter into English place-names, which need not be particularized here. It is apparent that these elements were commonplace in the speech of the people of the Danelaw. It has been remarked above that more than 1,400 Scandinavian place-names have been counted in England, and the number will undoubtedly be increased when a more careful survey of the material has been made. [5]

4. Choose the correct answer

**1. What helped to study Old English vocabulary in addition to the evidence of Old English written records?**

- a) the research of the peculiarities of Latin and Celtic borrowings
- b) the study of the words of the closely related Old Germanic languages
- c) the study of language contacts of Germanic tribes with other peoples
- d) the research of the way of life of the Germanic tribes

**2. How can the quantity of Old English vocabulary be estimated?**

- a) it had as many words as used by a present-day cultured English-speaker
- b) it didn't have enough words to express complex philosophical and metaphysical notions
- c) it had richer vocabulary than present day English
- d) it had the richest vocabulary among all Old Germanic languages

**3. What can be established by examination of the origin of words?**

- a) the interrelations between languages and linguistic groups
- b) grammatical typology of a language
- c) universal properties to be found in all languages
- d) structural development of the language history

**4. How can the Old English vocabulary be characterized concerning its origin?**

- a) Germanic
- b) Romanic
- c) special dialectal vocabulary with a lot of borrowings
- d) dialectal vocabulary with small number of loan words

**5. What are the 3 main layers in the native Old English words?**

- a) Latin borrowings, Celtic borrowings, specifically Old English words
- b) Celtic borrowings, common Germanic words
- c) dialectal words, derived words, common Indo-European words
- d) common Indo-European words, common Germanic words, specifically Old English words

**6. What words constitute the oldest part of the Old English vocabulary?**

- a) words belonging to the common Indo-European layer
- b) dialectal words
- c) Celtic borrowings
- d) specifically poetic words

**7. To what etymological layer do agricultural terms belong?**

- a) Celtic borrowings
- b) Latin borrowings
- c) dialectal words
- d) common Indo-European words

**8. What do verbs belonging to the common Indo-European words denote?**

- a) actions performed in agriculture
- b) basic activities of animals
- c) basic activities of man
- d) actions performed by objects of nature

**9. What words does the common Germanic layer of Old English vocabulary include?**

- a) words which are shared by most Germanic languages
- b) words borrowed by Germanic tribes from Latin
- c) words not found in Proto-Germanic
- d) words that occur outside the group of Germanic languages

**10. With what are the common Germanic words in Old English vocabulary connected semantically?**

- a) natural phenomena and human body
- b) plants and animals
- c) war and trade
- d) nature and everyday life

**11. How many borrowed words were there in Old English?**

- a) 400
- b) 500
- c) 600
- d) 1000

**12. What do Celtic borrowings in Old English vocabulary denote?**

- a) names of parts of the human body
- b) rivers and lakes
- c) place names
- d) animals

**13. What words does the earliest layer of Latin borrowings comprise?**

- a) words which the Germanic tribes brought from the Continent when they came to settle in Britain
- b) words which the Germanic tribes acquired through the contact with Romanized Celts
- c) words borrowed into English in the 7 century
- d) words borrowed after the introduction of Christianity

**14. What do early Old English borrowings from Latin indicate?**

- a) things connected with war, trade, buildings, home life
- b) things connected with learning and religion
- c) things connected with nature
- d) things connected with sea

**15. How many periods of Latin influence on the Old English vocabulary can be distinguished?**

- a) 2
- b) 3
- c) 4
- d) 5

**16. What words found their way into Old English during the last period of Latin influence on the Old English vocabulary?**

a) words connected with nature b) words connected with religion and learning c) words connected with everyday life d) words connected with war and trade

**17. What was the reason of the wider use of Latin after the introduction of Christianity?**

a) the spread of education b) introduction of a large number of Latin borrowings into the language c) strong cultural ties between Anglo-Saxons tribes and the Continent d) growth of specialized spheres of knowledge

**18. In what language phenomenon besides borrowing words does Latin impact on Old English vocabulary show itself?**

a) the appearance of translation-loans b) the appearance of special sounds in phonological system of a language c) the growth of scientific vocabulary d) the rise of stylistics

**19. What language phenomenon do the names of the days of the week in Old English represent?**

a) metonymy b) metaphor c) borrowing d) translation-loan

## Section VII. Old English vocabulary

### 1. For class discussion

- Stratification of Old English vocabulary
- Enrichment of Old English vocabulary: affixation and compounding.
- Poetic words in Old English

### 2. Read the following quotations. Comment on the ideas implied.

**Affixation** is by far the most frequent method for creating new vocabulary in Old English. There is a very large number of both **prefixes** and **suffixes** in the language, many of which are themselves very often used. [8]

To enlarge its vocabulary, Old English depended more on its own resources than on borrowings from other languages. From Proto-Indo-

European, the Germanic languages had inherited many ways of forming new words, especially by the use of prefixes and suffixes. [4]

The English did not always adopt a foreign word to express a new concept. Often an old word was applied to a new thing and by a slight adaptation made to express a new meaning. The Anglo-Saxons, for example, did not borrow the Latin word *deus*, because their own word *God* was a satisfactory equivalent. Likewise *heaven* and *hell* express conceptions not unknown to Anglo-Saxon paganism and are consequently English words. *Patriarch* was rendered literally by *hēahfoeder* (high father), *prophet* by *witega* (wise one), *martyr* often by the native word *brōwere* (one who suffers pain), and saint by *hālgā* (holy one). [5]

Much more than by borrowing, OE increases its wordstock through word-formation, rather as Present-Day German does (cf. Present-Day German *Fernsprecher* TELEPHONE, lit. 'distant-talker'). Two principal methods are used: **compounding** of words already existing in the language, and **affixation**. Such phenomena are attested in PDE, but they seem to be particularly common in OE. [15]

3. Read the following quotations. What ideas concerning the existence of Old English poetic vocabulary can be marked out in these quotes?

There is one further conspicuous feature of the OE vocabulary, however, which seems to be primarily due to the type of texts that have been preserved, and in particular to the high proportion of poetic records among them, because there the phenomenon in question is one of the main artistic devices: lexical variation. As a consequence, there are certain areas in the vocabulary that abound in near-synonyms or even complete synonyms, at least from our rather distant point of view, which does not always enable us to establish minimal meaning differences between such items. [22]

The existence of specifically poetic words as such is not too surprising, because poetry not infrequently tries to use a diction that differs from everyday language, for example, by employing rare, frequently archaic words. The same is of course true of OE, and many poetic words seem to be archaisms, e.g. *heoru*, *mece* 'sword', *gup*, *hild* 'battle', *orgamo*'old', *Jiras*'men'. Others are, or originated as, metonymic or metaphorical expressions, e.g. *ceo*'keel', *flota* 'floater' for 'ship' (instead of



*scip, bat*) or *lind* 'shield', *xse* 'spear' (referring to the material they consist of), *ofreca* 'warrior'. [2]

A final point to note about compounding in OE is that it appears to have been an extremely useful device in poetic composition. The alliterative patterns used in this genre necessitated the availability of a variety of synonyms for the same concept, hence the creation of oft-quoted compounds such as *swanrad* 'swan-road', *hwalrad* 'whale-road' and *ganetes ba* 'gannet's bath' for the sea. [14]

In Anglo-Saxon there were different vocabularies for poetry and prose, a distinction surprising to the modern age. [1]

4. Choose the correct answer.

**1. By what means was Old English vocabulary replenished?**

- a) borrowing from Celtic b) word-formation c) semantic changes  
d) lexical homonymy

**2. Into what three types did Old English words fall?**

- a) simple, derived, compound b) complex, simple, derived  
c) simple, combined, derived d) borrowed, derived, complex

**3. What stimulated the growth of suffixation in Old English?**

- a) the loss of stem-suffixes b) borrowings from Latin c) the loss of Proto-Germanic noun declension d) influence of the French language

**4. What words are termed "hapax legomena"?**

- a) words created for one occasion b) Anglo-Saxon legal terms  
c) Scandinavian borrowings d) special poetic compounds

**5. What ways of word-formation did Old English employ?**

- a) sound interchange, conversion b) derivation, back formation  
c) derivation, word-composition d) conversion, blending

**6. What was the earliest source of root-vowel interchanges?**

- a) ablaut b) umlaut c) gemination d) palatal mutation

**7. With what part of speech were prefixes widely used?**

- a) adjectives b) nouns c) verbs d) pronouns

**8. What prefix was often used as a marker of the Past Participle?**

- a) for- b) un- c) mis- d) ge-

**9. What was the most productive means of word derivation in Old English?**

- a) sound interchange b) prefixation c) word stress d) suffixation

**10. With what part of speech were suffixes widely used?**

- a) demonstratives b) nouns c) verbs d) pronouns

**11. What two large groups of suffixes were there in Old English?**

- a) suffixes of verbs, suffixes of adverbs b) positive suffixes, negative suffixes c) suffixes of nouns, suffixes of adjectives d) native suffixes, borrowed suffixes

**12. What productive Old English suffix was used to build abstract nouns from verbs?**

- a) -ung/-ing b) -nes/-nis c) -en d) -læc

**13. What is a most important feature of Old English suffixation?**

- a) limited use in word-formation b) great productivity c) the growth of new suffixes from root-morphemes d) morphological simplification

**14. How can verb suffixes be characterized?**

- a) they developed from root-morphemes in Late Proto-Germanic  
b) they were borrowed from Latin c) they were widely used d) they were few and non-productive

**15. How can word-composition be characterized?**

- a) it was productive b) it was non-productive c) it was common only to Old English d) it was productive but only in verbs

**16. What was the most productive pattern of word composition?**

- a) adjective+noun b) noun+noun c) noun+verb d) adjective+pronoun

## Section VIII. Old English literature

1. For class discussion

- Old English poetry
- Beowulf
- Anglo-Saxon chronicle

2. Read the following quotations on the Old English poetry. Make a summary of the ideas implied.

The literature of the Anglo-Saxons is fortunately one of the richest and most significant of any preserved among the early Germanic peoples. [5]

In the development of literature, prose generally comes late. Verse is more effective for oral delivery and more easily retained in the memory. It is therefore a rather remarkable fact, and one well worthy of note, that English possessed a considerable body of prose literature in the ninth century, at a time when most other modern languages in Europe had scarcely developed a literature in verse. This unusual accomplishment was due to the inspiration of one man, the Anglo-Saxon king who is justly called Alfred the Great (871–899). [5]

The authorship of many Anglo-Saxon texts is a mystery. Some, like *Beowulf*, clearly draw on earlier oral tradition, captured by scribes whose own contribution to the works is unclear. Other early authors are known to us – Alfred himself, Caedmon, Cynewulf and Alfric ‘the Grammarian’ (c.950–1010). [11]

Surviving Anglo-Saxon poetry ranges across the treatment of mythic, heroic and ecclesiastic subjects, sometimes merging themes of all three. [14]

More than half of Anglo-Saxon poetry is concerned with Christian subjects. Translations and paraphrases of books of the Old and New Testament, legends of saints, and devotional and didactic pieces constitute the bulk of this verse. The most important of this poetry had its origin in Northumbria and Mercia in the seventh and eighth centuries. The earliest English poet whose name we know was Caedmon, a lay brother in the monastery at Whitby. [5]

Two streams mingle in Old English literature, the pagan and the Christian, and they are never quite distinct. The poetry of pagan origin is constantly overlaid with Christian sentiment, while even those poems that treat of purely Christian themes contain every now and again traces of an earlier philosophy not wholly forgotten. [5]

The greatest single work of Old English literature is *Beowulf*. It is a poem of some 3,000 lines belonging to the type known as the folk epic, that is to say, a poem which, whatever it may owe to the individual

poet who gave it final form, embodies material long current among the people. [5]

Old English poetic manuscripts contained no titles. Titles such as *Beowulf* or *The Seafarer* have been added by editors, usually in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Most of the poetry is also anonymous, the chief exceptions being the few lines known to be by Caedmon and four poems containing the name of Cynewulf woven in runes into the texts as an acrostic, so that readers could pray for him. We know more of the prose authors, who included King Alfred, Archbishop Wulfstan, and Abbot Aelfric, but even here most of the surviving material, as in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, is anonymous. [18]

The earliest account of Anglo-Saxon poetry is Bede's story of the poet Caedmon in his *Ecclesiastical History*. [4]

Virtually all that survives of Old English poetry is contained in four manuscripts. The fact that two of them, the Exeter Book and the Junius manuscript, are devoted exclusively to poetry perhaps testifies to the strong contemporary awareness of verse as a distinct mode of discourse. All four manuscripts were produced near the end of the Anglo-Saxon period, around 975-1000, but most modern opinion holds that many of the poems were already centuries old by then (the evidence is largely linguistic, and there is little consensus as to which poems are early). All four (as well as some contemporary copies of other poems) show a similar dialectal mixture, predominantly Late West Saxon but with elements of other dialects and earlier forms. [19]

3. Read the following quotations on the Old English prose. Make a summary of the ideas implied.

Anglo-Saxon prose writing is characteristically associated with Alfred, the so-called ‘father of Old English prose’ and a keen patron of learning. On his ascension, Alfred made the revival of education a priority, seeking to provide texts which he deemed important to his subjects’ welfare and interestingly, to their sense of self and nationhood. He learnt Latin so that he could undertake translations of important works, and established a ‘circle’ of translators to aid in this enterprise. The efforts of Alfred and his circle produced translations of Pope Gregory’s *Cura Pastoralis* ‘Pastoral Care’, translations of Boethius’ *Consolation of Philosophy* and the *Soliloquies* of St Augustine. Alfred’s circle is also associated with the translation of Bede’s Latin *Ecclesiastical*

*History* into Old English. Alfred himself, however, is probably most famously associated with the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, a record of important events in English history. The *Chronicle* no doubt also served as a useful propaganda device, since it would inevitably pay particular attention to the successes of its patron, but the record it offers of life in England until approximately the thirteenth century is invaluable and fascinating. [14]

King Alfred was the founder of English prose, but there were others who carried on the tradition. Among these is Ælfric, the author of two books of homilies and numerous other works, and Wulfstan, whose *Sermon to the English* is an impassioned plea for moral and political reform. [5]

Two problems in particular were faced by prose writers: developing a vocabulary that could cope with the intellectual and technical demands of their subjects and still be generally understood; and developing techniques of grammatical relation and sentence structure to organize complex thought, without the benefit of either the stress-distinctions important in speech or the partially metrical patterns traditional in verse. There was also, however, a concern with establishing a standard form of the language, governed by recognised rules, and a growing interest in the possibilities of stylistic ornament. [19]

Although most works in Old English prose were to one degree or another translations from Latin, there is surprisingly little contemporary suggestion of any difficulty in rendering Latin thought in the vernacular. [19]

The vocabulary of literary prose is marked by its variation from author to author, sometimes even within the work of an author. Whereas poetry deployed a common stock of words and compounding elements which were exploited by most poets, in prose different writers made different choices from a surprisingly wide range of possibilities. [19]

Possibly the major challenge faced by prose writers in creating a language appropriate to their needs was in the area of sentence structure. Latin prose was an important influence on most of the early vernacular prose works and would have encouraged the use of complex sentences with much subordination, but this is not a common feature in Old English verse and was presumably still less common in the spoken language. [19]

But the fact was that many works of prose were translations from Latin originals, and the word order patterns of the vernacular often mimed those of the Latin. [13]

4. Read the following quotations on the language of Old English poetry. Make a summary of the ideas implied.

The very principle of alliteration, which is such a prominent element in the poetry, came into being because the Germanic accent on the first syllable of words required that the functional ornament of verse should occur at the beginnings of words rather than at the end (as in rhyme). The poetic tradition shared by Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Hardy is totally different. In their verse, foreign forms (classical meters, French rhyme) are imposed upon an alien English speech. The resulting tension can be a source of aesthetic pleasure, but it is a pleasure radically different from that which we experience in OE verse, where the relationship between poetic form and natural speech is not one of tension but rather one of harmony. [1]

Old English poetry, like all the poetry of the early Germanic peoples, was not written in rhyming lines; it was alliterative. The metrical pattern of each line was determined by the number of strong stresses in the line. Poetry in the Romance languages (French, Italian, and so on) and in Modern English depends on the number of syllables in each line (iambic pentameter, for example, has five feet, each foot made up of a weak and a strong stress, for a total of ten syllables per line). In Old English (and the other old Germanic languages) what mattered was only how many strong stresses each line had (from two to four). And the stressed syllables alliterated with each other: that is, they all had to begin with the same consonant or vowel (for the purposes of poetry, any vowels could alliterate on any other). [13]

The Germanic metrical system is found in its most perfect form in the OE *Beowulf*. Each line of verse falls into two half-lines, each of which contains two accented syllables normally long in quantity accompanied by two or more unaccented syllables. The two half-lines are bound together by alliteration. Either or both of the accented syllables in the first half-line must alliterate with the first accented syllable in the second halfline. The second accented syllable in the second half-line must not alliterate. [1]

Old English poetry employs a wealth of terms frequent in verse but seldom if ever found in prose and presumably not current in speech. The most frequent are the words designating 'man', 'warrior' (on the distinction between the two meanings, see below): *beorn*, *guma*, *hxled*, *rinc*, *secg*. [19]

Compound nouns and adjectives are of the essence of Anglo-Saxon poetic language. [19]

The poetic vocabulary contains a large number of compounds. Partly this is because the stress patterns in many verse-types favor the sequences of stressed or half-stressed syllables that are peculiar to compounds. But the poets also seem to regard compounding as an inherently poetic manner of expression. [1]

A striking feature of Old English poetic diction is its emphasis on nouns and adjectives at the expense of verbs and adverbs. This manifests itself, as we have seen, in metrical practice, where nouns and adjectives always have primary stress but finite verbs and adverbs frequently do not, and are often excluded from the alliterative patterns. But it is also evident in the development of a specialised vocabulary. Verbs scarcely figure at all in the list of words primarily used in poetry: poetic simplices and compounds are mainly nouns, frequently adjectives, hardly ever verbs or adverbs. In various ways, the traditional techniques of verse composition both discourage the use of a variety of verbs and deprive them of emphasis when they are used. [19]

The linguistic units from which Old English poets build their poems are frequently neither single words nor sentences, but what have come to be known as formulae. A formula is, basically, a set form of words which fills a metrical half-line and is used repeatedly to express the same idea. [19]

One important aspect of Old English poetic diction is its specialized grammar and syntax, extending all the way from matters of inflexion and the use of demonstratives to the structure of the sentence. [19]

5. Choose the correct answer

**1. What are the earliest written records of English?**

**a)** runic inscriptions **b)** legal documents **c)** manuscripts written in Latin characters **d)** glosses to the Gospels

**2. When did the art of runic writing become known to the Germanic tribes?**

**a)** when they came to Britain **b)** before they came to Britain **c)** after the introduction of Christianity **d)** during the Scandinavian settlement

**3. How is the runic alphabet called?**

**a)** wynn **b)** runic alphabet **c)** futhark **d)** thorn

**4. In what languages can the runic alphabet be found?**

**a)** only in Germanic languages **b)** in all European languages **c)** in all Indo-European languages **d)** only in Old English

**5. What was the main function of the runes?**

**a)** putting down poetry **b)** putting down prose **c)** everyday writing **d)** to make short inscriptions on objects to bestow magical power on them

**6. What is one of the best known runic inscription in England?**

**a)** Franks Casket **b)** Anglo-Saxon charters **c)** Durham Ritual **d)** Rushworth Gospels

**7. What is the total number of runic inscriptions in Old English?**

**a)** 30 **b)** 40 **c)** 50 **d)** 60

**8. What does our knowledge of the Old English language mainly come from?**

**a)** runic inscriptions **b)** the Beowulf poem **c)** customs and traditions **d)** manuscripts written in Latin characters

**9. Who were practically the only literate people in the period of early Old English?**

**a)** rural people **b)** city dwellers **c)** monks **d)** noblemen

**10. What were the first English words to be written down with the help of Latin characters?**

**a)** personal names **b)** religious words **c)** names of domestic animals **d)** names of plants

**11. What written records are known under the general heading of "Anglo-Saxon Charters"?**

**a)** legal documents **b)** personal letters **c)** school textbooks **d)** translations from Latin into Old English

**12. What form of language was used throughout the country as the written form of Old English during the late Old English period?**

**a)** Saxon **b)** West Saxon **c)** Latin **d)** Northumbrian

**13. What three subjects is Old English poetry mainly restricted to?**

a) religious, educational, lyrical b) religious, scientific, epic  
c) heroic, religious, lyrical d) religious, technical, heroic

**14. In what dialect was Beowulf originally composed?**

a) Mercian or Northumbrian b) Kentish or West Saxon c) West Saxon or Northumbrian d) Kentish or Mercian

**15. What is Beowulf based on?**

a) completely fictional story b) legends of saints c) biblical stories d) old legends about the tribal life

**16. In what century were the old heroic verses of Old English declining?**

a) 7 b) 8 c) 9 d) 10

**17. What system of versification does Old English poetry have?**

a) metaphorical system b) alliteration c) exaggeration d) rhymed system

**18. What is the style of Old English poetry marked by?**

a) large number of Latin borrowings b) the wide use of metaphorical phrases c) complex syntax d) brevity

**19. What is the peculiar production of Old English poetry?**

a) riddles b) proverbs c) descriptions of nature d) funny stories

**20. Who was the most outstanding writer of the later Old English period?**

a) Aelfric b) Caedmon c) Cynewulf d) Beowulf

**21. What is the language of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle remarkable for?**

a) complex syntax b) simplicity of language c) wide use of metaphorical phrases d) combination of Scandinavian and native words

**22. When does the literary prose in Old English begin?**

a) in the 11<sup>th</sup> century b) in the 10<sup>th</sup> century c) during the reign of king Alfred d) before the Scandinavian settlement

**23. Who was the first to translate some parts of the Bible from Latin?**

a) Bede b) Aelfric c) king Alfred d) Caedmon

## Section IX. Old English sound system

### 1. For class discussion

- Vowels
- Consonants
- Grim's law, Verner's law

2. Read the following notes about the Old English vowels and consonants. Speak on the peculiarities of Old English vocalic and consonantal systems.

The earliest records of Old English (8–9th c.) require us to posit a simple six-vowel system, all six vowels occurring as both long and short. Peripherality (relative closeness to the edge of the vowel space) as an additional feature of long and short vowels is redundant: the long vowel is always peripheral, and the short vowel is always non-peripheral. If we discount peripherality, we are left with an (idealized) familiar vowel triangle. [1]

Our knowledge of the pronunciation of Old English can be only approximate. The precise quality of any older speech sound from the era before sound recordings cannot be determined with absolute certainty. Moreover, in Old English times, as today, there were regional and individual differences, and doubtless social differences as well. At no time do all members of any linguistic community, especially an entire nation, speak exactly alike. [3]

One striking difference between the Anglo-Saxons' pronunciation and ours is that vowel length was a significant distinction in Old English. Corresponding long and short vowels probably differed also in quality, but the length of time it took to say them seems to have been of primary importance. We conventionally mark the spellings of Old English long vowels with a macron and leave short vowels unmarked, thus: *gōd* 'good' versus *god* 'god.' [3]

The vowel letters in Old English were *a, æ, e, i, o, u*, and *y*. They represented either long or short sounds, though sometimes scribes wrote a slanting line above long vowels, particularly where confusion was likely, for example, *gōd* for [go:d] 'good,' but that practice was not con-

sistent. The five vowel letters **a**, **e**, **i**, **o**, and **u** represented what are sometimes referred to as “Continental” values – approximately those of Italian, Spanish, German, and to some extent of French as well. [3]

The letter **æ** represented the same sound for which we use it in phonetic transcriptions: [æ]. The letter **y**, used exclusively as a vowel symbol in Old English, usually indicated a rounded front vowel, long as in German *Bühne*, short as in *fünf*. This sound, which has not survived in Modern English, was made with the tongue position of [i] (long) or [ɪ] (short) but with the lips rounded as for [u] or [ʊ] respectively. [3]

Late West Saxon had two long diphthongs, **ēa** and **ēo**, the first elements of which were respectively [æ:] and [e:]. The second elements of both, once differentiated, had been reduced to unstressed [ə]. In the course of the eleventh century the [ə] was lost; consequently these long diphthongs became monophthongs that continued to be differentiated, at least in the standard pronunciation, until well into the Modern English period but ultimately fell together as [i:], as in *beat* from Old English *bēatan* and *creep* from *crēopan*. [3]

The consonant letters in Old English were **b**, **c**, **d**, **f**, **g**, **h**, **k**, **l**, **m**, **n**, **p**, **r**, **s**, **t**, **þ** or **ð**, **w**, **x**, and **z**. (The letters **j**, **q**, and **v** were not used for writing Old English, and **y** was always a vowel.) The symbols **b**, **d**, **k** (rarely used), **l**, **m**, **n**, **p**, **t**, **w** (which had a much different shape, namely, **ƿ**), and **x** had the values these letters typically represent in Modern English. [3]

Mutation is a change in a vowel sound caused by a sound in the following syllable. The mutation of a vowel by a following **i** or **y** (as in the examples above) is called i-mutation or i-umlaut. [3]

The doubling of consonant symbols between vowels indicated a double or long consonant; thus the two **t**'s of *sittan* indicated the double or long [t] sound in *hot tamale*, in contrast to the single consonant [t] in Modern English *hotter*. Similarly **ll** in *fyllan* indicated the lengthened medial **l** of full-length, in contrast to the single or short **l** of *fully*. The **cc** in *racca* ‘part of a ship’s rigging’ was a long [k], as in *book keeper*, in contrast to *beekeeper*, and hence *racca* was distinguished from *raca* ‘rake’ and so on. [3]

3. Use the following citation as a kind of plan for short reports or essays on the peculiarities of Old English phonetics.

Old English words of more than one syllable, like those in all Germanic languages, were regularly stressed on their first syllables. Exceptions to this rule were verbs with prefixes, which were generally stressed on the first syllable of their main element: *wiðféohtan* ‘to fight against,’ *onbindan* ‘to unbind.’ Be-, for-, and ge- were not stressed in any part of speech: *bebód* ‘commandment,’ *forsōð* ‘forsooth,’ *gehēp* ‘convenient.’ Compounds had the customary Germanic stress on the first syllable, with a secondary stress on the first syllable of their second element: *lārhūs* ‘school’ (literally ‘lore house’), *hildedē* or ‘fierce in battle.’ [3]

Old English script used the six vowel symbols **a**, **e**, **i**, **o**, **u** and **y**, and a seventh one, **æ**, called ‘ash’. All of these could represent both long and short vowels. [4]

To represent diphthongs, the Anglo-Saxons used digraphs (sequences of two symbols): **ea**, **eo**, **io** and **ie**. The spellings **ea** and **eo** probably represented the pronunciations [æa] and [eo] (or perhaps [eu]); they too could be either short or long. The spelling **io** appears mainly in early texts, where it appears to represent a distinct diphthong, which later fell together with the sound represented by **eo**. The digraph **ie** probably also once represented a diphthong, but even in early West Saxon texts it seems already to have fallen together with the sounds represented by **i/y**. Non-West-Saxon texts also use the digraph **oe**; this however does not represent a diphthong, but the close-mid front rounded vowel [ø(:)], that is, some kind of [e(:)] with lip-rounding. [4]

Old English had no symbol **v**: the symbol **f** was used to represent both [f] and [v]. The reason is that, in Old English, [f] and [v] were members of the same phoneme: they were allophones. When this phoneme occurred within a word (that is, not initially or finally) before a voiced sound, and was not doubled, it was pronounced [v]; in all other positions it was pronounced [f]. So [f] was used in *fæder* ‘father’, *fif* ‘five’, *hæft* ‘handle’ and *pyffan* ‘to puff’, while [v] was used in *giefan* ‘to give’, *seofon* ‘seven’, *hræfn* ‘raven’ and *lifde* ‘he lived’. [4]

There were two other such pairs in Old English. There was a symbol **s**, but not normally a symbol **z**, and for a similar reason: [s] and [z] were allophones, and the rules for their distribution were exactly the same as for [f] and [v]. [4]

The third pair that behaved in this way were the voiceless [θ] (as in *thin*) and the voiced [ð] (as in *this*). To represent this phoneme, the scribes used two symbols: the runic symbol *þ*, called ‘thorn’, and the symbol *ð*, called ‘eth’, which was based on the Latin character *d*. [4]

In all three cases, Old English has a single phoneme consisting of a pair of voiced and voiceless allophones, where Modern English has two separate phonemes. The Old English arrangement was not inherited from Proto-Germanic, but arose in prehistoric Old English by processes of assimilation. [4]

OE *c* never represents a pronunciation [s], as it does in Modern English centre, city and lace. This spelling-convention was introduced from French after the Norman Conquest, and is unknown in Old English. (Barber Beal Shaw)

The letter *g* was used in Old English to represent two different phonemes. On the one hand there was a /j/ phoneme, similar to the semi-vowel in Modern English yes, as in the words *gēar* ‘year’, *fæger* ‘fair’, *cāeg* ‘key’ and *geoc* ‘yoke’. On the other hand there was a /g/ phoneme, similar to the consonant of Modern English *go*, as in the words *gōd* ‘good’, *gēs* ‘geese’ and *dogga* ‘dog’. [4]

A second sound change in Old English is palatalization, which occurs in many other languages as well. Starting in early Old English, the velars [k], [sk], and [g] are fronted, in particular before a front vowel (the velar sounds are not fronted before back vowels, as in *cool*). [6]

There are two other rules that will be pointed out whenever relevant – breaking and vowel fronting. They are complex and interact with numerous other rules. Breaking occurs when the front vowels *æ*, *e* and *i* become diphthongs, i.e. are broken into two sounds, before certain consonants (i > io/eo, e > eo, æ > ea). [6]

The fronting rule, also called i-umlaut, describes what happens when a back or low vowel such as *o* or *u* or *a* precedes an *i*. In Germanic, before English separates, the form for singular mouse is \*mus and plural *mice* is \*mysi. The fronting of *u* to *y* occurs in the plural, before the plural -i, resulting in \*mysi. (u > y, later i before [i], o > e before [i], a > æ before [i]). [6]

The i-ending (having caused the fronting) subsequently disappears and the cause of the fronting becomes hidden. The non-fronted

and fronted forms thus now form singular and plural pairs in (a) and intransitive and transitive pairs in (b):

a. *mouse – mice, louse – lice, goose – geese, foot – feet, tooth – teeth*

b. *fall – fell, sit – set* [6]

A major point of difference between the OE and modern English consonant systems lies in the fact that certain phonemes in the latter were conditioned allophonic variants in the former. Thus, sounds such as [v], [z] were word medial allophones of /f/ and /s/, and [g], [j] and [ɣ] were allophones of /g/ in complementary distribution, as were the [x], [h], [ç] allophones of /h/ and the [k]. [14]

There is still much scholarly dispute about the details of OE pronunciation, although there is general agreement on the main characteristics. Our knowledge of OE usage derives from the analysis of spelling, and from comparative and reconstructive work with other related languages and later states of English. [15]

In general, all vowels should be pronounced in OE. Most scholars agree that there were almost no ‘silent’ vowels, like *e* in PDE *life*. (An exception is the optional *e* in spellings such as *sceolde* SHOULD, *hyccgean* THINK common in late West Saxon beside *scolde*, *hyccgan*, where the *e* seems to be a kind of diacritic indicating the quality of the preceding consonant cluster.) Vowels in unstressed syllables were generally pronounced more distinctively than they are in varieties of PDE; thus the endings *-an/-en/-on* were all distinguished. [15]

OE distinguished long and short consonants – thus the double <nn> in *sunne* ‘sun’ was distinct from the single <n> in *sunu* ‘son’ – and also between long and short vowels; long vowels are conventionally marked in modern editions by a length-mark or macron, e.g. *hām* ‘home’, *fōt* ‘foot’, *cū* ‘cow’.

Length distinctions were important in OE, as witnessed by such pairs as *God* ‘God’, *gōd* ‘good’, *wendon* ‘turned’ and *wēndon* ‘believed’, *āwacian* ‘awaken’, *āwācian* ‘grow weak’. [16]

Three of the principal parameters for phonological contrasts in Old English were similar to those today: backness, height and lip-rounding. But in addition vowel length formed a significant contrast. [19]

In classical Old English diphthongs were always “falling”, that is to say, the first element of the diphthong was the more prominent. There were only two principal diphthong, which were spelled *eo* and *ea*. Each

of these diphthongs contrasted in length. Thus the four diphthongs can be characterized graphically as *eo, êo, ea, êa*. [19]

The Old English period showed a steady decline in the number and variety of unstressed vowels, so that by the end of the period it may be doubted whether there was phonemically more than one unstressed vowel, namely the reduced schwa vowel [ə]. However, in classical Old English the distinction between front and back unstressed vowels is generally well maintained, the former normally being written *e* and the latter *o* or *a*, thus *stones* “stone” versus *stanas* “stones”. [19]

In many respects the Old English consonant system was not unlike the system in the present-day language. Thus there were the following principal classes of consonants: stops, fricatives, sibilants, affricates, nasals, liquids and approximants. On the other hand, there were several general features which contrast with those in the present-day language. For example, the feature of [voice] was contrastive only for stops and affricates, so that in Old English there were no minimal pairs of the type *ferry-very* as found today. [19]

Perhaps the most obvious difference between Old English and present-day English is the existence in the former of geminate consonants. In Old English we find a contrast between, say, *sete* “set” imp. sg. and *sette* “set” 1 sg. pr. ind. This serves to indicate a difference not unlike that in present-day English between *black it (out)* and *black kit*, transcribed as [blæk it] and [blæk kit] respectively. [19]

4. Choose the correct answer

**1. What language formed the basis for the development of the Old English sound system?**

- a) Latin b) Indo-European c) Proto-Germanic d) Celtic

**2. Did the Old English sound system undergo any changes in the period previous to Old English?**

- a) it underwent multiple changes b) it remained stable and didn't undergo any changes c) it underwent slight changes under the influence of Latin d) it didn't undergo any changes because Old English sound system didn't exist in the period previous to Old English

**3. What prosodic feature underwent no changes in Old English?**

- a) word accentuation b) phonemic tone c) rhythm d) vowel length

**4. By what type of stress was a syllable made prominent in Old English?**

- a) lexical stress b) secondary stress c) prosodic stress d) dynamic stress

**5. How can the word stress be characterized?**

- a) it was variable b) it was fixed c) Old English is considered to lack lexical stress entirely d) it was unpredictable

**6. What affix was unaccented in Old English?**

- a) noun prefix b) adjective prefix c) verb prefix d) adverb prefix

**7. What did the development of vowels in Early Old English consist of?**

- a) modification of monophthongs b) modification of diphthongs c) modification of separate vowels and of entire sets of vowels d) modification of vowels [ɑ:], [æ:], [ɔ:]

**8. What does the phonetic change begin with?**

- a) splitting of phonemes b) numerical growth of phonemes c) merging of old phonemes d) growing variation in pronunciation

**9. The formation of what Old English sound is described in the following passage: “If a front vowel stood before a velar consonant there developed a short glide between them, as the organs of speech prepared themselves for the transition from one sound to the other. The glide, together with the original monophthongs formed a ...”?**

- a) nasalized long vowel b) consonant elongation c) fricative sound d) diphthong

**10. What accounts for many modifications of vowels in Early Old English?**

- a) the influence of Latin b) diphthongisation of vowels c) the rise of nasalized long vowels d) the tendency to assimilative vowel change

**11. What phonetic change is described in the following passage: the front vowels [ɪ], [e] and the newly developed [æ], changed into diphthongs with a back glide when they stood before [h], before long [l] or [l] plus another consonant, and before [r] plus other consonants ?**

- a) gemination b) breaking c) palatal mutation d) merging of phonemes

**12. What Old English sounds did breaking produce?**

- a) monophthongs b) short diphthongs c) long consonants d) short vowels



**13. What phonetic process happens when one vowel changes to another through the influence of a vowel in the succeeding syllable?**

- a) gemination b) palatalisation c) mutation d) assimilation

**14. How can the system of Old English consonants be characterized?**

a) Old English consonants were historically more stable than vowels b) Old English consonants and vowels didn't differ in respect to their historical stability c) Old English consonants displayed an unbalanced arrangement of sounds d) Old English vowels were historically more stable than consonants

**15. What is the relation between Old English consonants and Proto-Germanic consonants?**

a) all Old English consonants correspond to the same sounds in Proto-Germanic b) Old English and Proto-Germanic consonants have the same roots in West Germanic consonant system c) very few noise consonants in Old English correspond to the same sounds in Proto-Germanic d) Old English and Proto-Germanic consonants underwent similar historical changes

**16. How are some of the consonant changes dated in pre-written periods and shared by all the languages of the West Germanic subgroup referred to?**

a) West Germanic changes b) changes under Grimm's Law c) changes under Verner's Law d) East Germanic changes

**17. How is the process of the lengthening of a consonant after a short vowel termed?**

- a) mutation b) rhotacism c) devoicing d) gemination

**18. What are the two most general classes of Old English consonants ?**

a) noise consonants and sonorants b) plosives and fricatives c) voiced and voiceless d) palatal and velar

**19. What is the most universal distinctive feature in the consonant system?**

a) distinction of voiced and voiceless sounds b) distinction of fricatives and plosives c) difference in length d) the process of hardening

**20. In what position were the Old English geminated consonants mostly distinguished?**

- a) intervocal b) interdental c) velar d) palatal

## Section X.

### Middle English. Historical background. Linguistic situation

#### 1. For class discussion

- The Norman conquest
- The rise of French
- The rise of English

2. Read the following quotations. What do you think are the most important aspects of the linguistic situation in England after the Norman Conquest? Comment on the ideas implied.

It is certainly true, however, that the Conquest, and the centuries that followed, had a profound influence on the English language. For some centuries, English ceased to be the language of government, and there was no such thing as a national, standard literary English; and when English did once again become a major literary language across the whole country it had changed a good deal under the influence of the conquerors. [4]

The invaders of 1066 spoke Norman French, a northern dialect of the language, and in England this developed characteristics of its own, and is then called Anglo-Norman. In the thirteenth century, however, when the Central French dialect of Paris had begun to exert a strong influence on the rest of France, the Anglo-Norman dialect lost some of its prestige in England: it was regarded as rather old-fashioned and rustic, and the courtly language was Central French. [4]

In the period with which we are at the moment concerned – the period up to 1200 – the attitude of the king and the upper classes toward the English language may be characterized as one of simple indifference. They did not cultivate English – which is not the same as saying that they had no acquaintance with it – because their activities in England did not necessitate it and their constant concern with continental affairs made French for them much more useful. [5]

French became the language of the upper classes, both secular and religious. Latin was still the language of the Church and was available for religious writings and also for administration. The role of English was reduced in educational and religious matters, though it must be

remembered that a greater proportion of the people living in the country still spoke English as their mother tongue. [20]

This is not to say that English was in danger of disappearing while Norman French was so publicly dominant. Nor should we assume that the ruling classes deliberately clamped down on its usage – an occurrence sometimes associated with colonizing activities. The Normans appear to have simply let the English speak the English way, and the language remained the native tongue of the *majority* of the population. [14]

However, it is important to stress that French speakers in England always formed a minority; the *majority* of the population were monolingual, and the language they spoke was English. [24]

For a long time after the Norman Conquest, England was trilingual. Latin was the language of the Church, Norman French of the government, and English of the *majority* of the country's population. The loss of Normandy in 1204 by King John, a descendant of the Conqueror, removed an important tie with France, and subsequent events were to loosen the remaining ties. By the fourteenth century, several things happened that promoted the use of English. The Hundred Years' War, beginning in 1337, saw England and France bitter enemies in a long, drawn-out conflict that gave the deathblow to the already moribund use of French in England. Those whose ancestors were Normans eventually came to think of themselves as English. [3]

The clearest indication of the extent to which the English language had risen in the social scale by the middle of the thirteenth century is furnished by a little treatise written by Walter of Bibbesworth to teach children French – how to speak and how to reply, "Which every gentleman ought to know." French is treated as a foreign language, and the child is taken on a very practical course through life, learning the names of the parts of the body, the articles of its clothing, food, household utensils and operations, meals, and the like, together with terms of falconry and the chase and other polite accomplishments. [5]

At the close of the thirteenth century and especially in the course of the next we see clear indications that the French language was losing its hold on England in the measures adopted to keep it in use. The tendency to speak English was becoming constantly stronger even in those two most conservative institutions, the church and the universities. [5]

However, the appearance of books for the aristocracy on how to speak French, such as Walter of Bibbesworth's *Treatise* from the middle of the thirteenth century, suggests that English is the mother tongue but that French was a necessary accomplishment for cultivated discourse; this 'cultivated' French was Central French, not Anglo-Norman, and was evidently adopted because of the cultural ascendancy of Central French in the later Middle Ages. [10]

By the end of the Middle Ages, therefore, French had become marginalized in England as a second, 'high-status' language, used rather as it was in nineteenth-century Russia. [10]

Following the Norman Conquest, England was a country with three main languages, and English was the least prestigious of the three. Before 1066 English coexisted with Latin, the language of the Church; after that it competed with an alternative vernacular, Norman French, which in England developed its own features as Anglo-Norman. The Normans represented a relatively small proportion of the population, but their language came to have a disproportionate impact upon society, since they were in positions of power. [1]

### 3. Choose the correct answer

**1. For what was the historical background favourable during the early Middle English period?**

a) influx of Latin borrowings b) dialectal differentiation c) differentiation of language into functional varieties d) structural development of the language system

**2. By what event were the dialectal differences in Middle English accentuated?**

a) introduction of printing b) Norman Conquest c) introduction of Christianity d) collapse of Canute's empire

**3. To what the increased regional differences of English in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> c. can partly be attributed?**

a) Scandinavian invasion b) Norman Conquest c) differentiation of language into functional varieties d) influx of Latin borrowings

**4. What Middle English dialects acquired lasting Scandinavian features?**

a) Northern dialects b) Southern dialects c) Eastern dialects d) Western dialects

**5. What was the original home place of the Norman Conquerors of England?**

a) Normandy b) North of England c) Scandinavia d) Central France

**6. What language did the Normans speak?**

a) Northern dialect of French b) Northern dialect of English c) Central French d) Scandinavian

**7. What event speeded up the decline of the Anglo-Norman language?**

a) loss of Normandy b) immigration from France c) Scandinavian invasion d) introduction of French as the language of school teaching

**8. What is the most immediate linguistic consequence of the Norman domination in Britain?**

a) wide use of the French language in many spheres of life b) many people became bilingual c) official recognition of Latin in the sphere of education d) change of grammatical typology

**9. What language, alongside French, was the language of writing after the Norman Conquest?**

a) West Saxon b) Latin c) Scandinavian d) Old English

**10. Why was English used for spoken communication after the Norman Conquest?**

a) all writing was in Latin and French b) written English was forbidden by Normans c) English had no writing d) most of the people were illiterate

**11. Why was the struggle between French and English bound to end in the complete victory of English?**

a) English had easier pronunciation b) English was the living language of the entire people c) English had easier grammar d) English was used for oral communication

**12. How long did the domination of French in Britain last?**

a) 300 years b) 350 years c) 400 years d) 450 years

**13. In what Middle English dialects were new words, coming from French, first used?**

a) Northern dialects b) Southern dialects c) Eastern dialects d) Western dialects

**14. What event can't be considered as favourable for increased variation and more intensive linguistic change after the Norman Conquest?**

a) the use of a foreign tongue as the state language b) the diversity of the dialects c) the decline of the written form of English d) introduction of printing

**15. What of the following was the greatest event in the history of the English language?**

a) the reign of king Alfred the Great b) the Norman Conquest c) the Scandinavian invasion d) collapse of Canute's empire

**16. What was the official language of administration after the Norman Conquest?**

a) French b) Latin c) English d) Scandinavian

**17. By whom was English spoken after the Norman Conquest?**

a) Norman barons b) clergymen c) noblemen d) ordinary people

**18. What was the earliest sign of the official recognition of English by the Norman kings?**

a) mingling of the English language and the French language b) teaching conducted in English c) teaching conducted in French d) Proclamation issued by Henry III

**19. How can the spheres of Norman influence upon English life be determined?**

a) by studying the French literature b) by studying the characteristic features of Anglo-Norman c) by analyzing the linguistic situation d) by early French borrowings

**20. What can the later French borrowings be attributed to?**

a) 2<sup>nd</sup> stage of the Norman Conquest b) cultural and scientific progress in Europe in the 16<sup>th</sup> century c) the development of the French literature in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century d) continued cultural, political and economic contacts between the countries

## Section XI. Middle English grammar

### 1. For class discussion

- General characteristic. Decay of inflections
- New features of English grammar
- Some grammatical categories in Middle English

2. Read the following quotations on Middle English grammar. Comment on the ideas implied. What makes the Middle English period important for the history of the English language?

The Middle English period (1150–1500) was marked by momentous changes in the English language, changes more extensive and fundamental than those that have taken place at any time before or since. Some of them were the result of the Norman Conquest and the conditions which followed in the wake of that event. Others were a continuation of tendencies that had begun to manifest themselves in Old English. [5]

The Middle English period is marked by a great reduction in the inflectional system inherited from Old English, so that Middle English is often referred to as the period of weakened inflections. [4]

Middle English is of special importance for the history of the language – for precisely the reasons suggested by the adjective 'middle'. It marks the transition between English as a typologically 'Old Germanic' language and English of the type now familiar to us. These four centuries are particularly rich in radical and system-transforming changes in both phonology and morphology; they also provide a much richer corpus of evidence than Old English, both in numbers of texts and regional spread. [20]

It is important to emphasize that these changes which affected the grammatical structure of English after the Norman Conquest were not the result of contact with the French language. Certain idioms and syntactic usages that appear in Middle English are clearly the result of such contact. 15 But the decay of inflections and the confusion of forms that constitute the truly significant development in Middle English grammar are the result of the Norman Conquest only insofar as that event brought about conditions favorable to such changes. By removing the authority

that a standard variety of English would have, the Norman Conquest made it easier for grammatical changes to go forward unchecked. Beyond this it is not considered a factor in syntactic changes. [5]

The Middle English period is particularly interesting because it shows where several important features of Modern English grammar have come from. It also provides a useful perspective for present-day arguments about English usage, as a number of the issues which have been condemned as 20<sup>th</sup>-century sloppiness are well in evidence from the earliest times. [18]

We should note that although inflectional reduction is usually cited as one of the most salient and distinctive characteristics of ME, it is very likely to have begun in earlier stages of the language. [14]

3. Read the following quotations. Make a summary of the ideas implied. How did Middle English grammar change compared to Old English grammar?

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. [3]

One of the important results of the leveling of unstressed vowels was the loss of grammatical gender. We have seen how this occurred with the adjective. We have also seen that grammatical gender, for psychological reasons rather than phonological ones, had begun to break down in Old English times as far as the choice of pronouns was concerned, as when the English translator of Bede's Latin Ecclesiastical History refers to Bertha, the wife of King Ethelbert of Kent, as *hēo* 'she' rather than *hit*, though she is in the same sentence designated as *ioxt* (neuter demonstrative used as definite article) *wif* rather than *sēo wif*. [3]

Only personal pronouns retained (as they still do) a considerable degree of their complexity from Old English. They alone have preserved distinctive subject and object case forms, the distinction between accusative and dative having already disappeared in late Old English for the first and second person pronouns. [3]

In Early Middle English we find all four of the OE noun cases still preserved in both singular and plural, but in the course of the period there is a tendency to reduce the total number of forms to three: one for the nominative and accusative singular (like *eye*), one for the genitive

singular (like *eyes* ‘of an eye’), and one for all plural uses (like *eyen* ‘eyes’). [4]

We have seen that the definite article and the adjective played a large part in Old English in marking out distinctions of case and number. The loss of this function by the end of the Middle English period (when both the adjective and the definite article had become indeclinable) represented a major change in the structure of the language. It also meant that grammatical gender disappeared, and was replaced by ‘natural gender’. [4]

As the inflectional system decayed, other devices were increasingly used to replace it. For one thing, word-order became more important: inflections were increasingly incapable of showing which noun was the subject of the sentence, and which the object, and this function was taken over by the use of the S–V–O word-order, which became the dominant one in the ME period. The S–O–V word-order found in some subordinate clauses disappeared in Early Middle English. [4]

Nearly a third of the strong verbs in Old English seem to have died out early in the Middle English period. In any case about ninety of them have left no traces in written records after 1150. Some of them may have been current for a time in the spoken language, but except where an occasional verb survives in a modern dialect they are not recorded. [5]

In demonstratives, relatives, adjectives, and nouns, we see a major **reduction of forms and endings**. [6]

All the changes we have discussed – the loss of case, gender, and number on nouns, adjectives, demonstratives, and pronouns – are changes from synthetic to analytic. [6]

The endings of the ME verb remained pretty much the same as in OE, even though the elaborate system of verb classes disappeared. Many strong verbs from OE survived into ME, but some did not: for example, knead, help, and wax (meaning “to grow”) became weak verbs in Middle English (though, in some texts, the strong forms are also used). All verbs borrowed into English from the ME period onwards are borrowed as weak verbs. [13]

4. Choose the correct answer

**1. What system of language underwent profound alteration in the course of Middle English?**

a) grammatical system b) lexical system c) pragmatic system  
d) phonetic system

**2. What is the main tendency of the evolution of the English grammatical system from the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> c.?**

a) development of polysynthetic grammar b) simplification of syntax  
c) transformation into a language of the analytical type d) transformation into an amorphous language

**3. How can the grammatical changes in Middle English be characterized?**

a) they were rapid and sudden b) it was a complex evolutionary process made up of stable and changeable constituents  
c) grammatical features were in a state of perpetual change d) grammatical characteristics remained absolutely stable

**4. What is one of the most permanent characteristics of the language?**

a) transformation of the grammatical system b) perpetual change of phonology  
c) stable grammar system d) the division of words into parts of speech

**5. What new part of speech appeared in Middle English?**

a) the conjunction b) the interjection c) the pronoun d) the article

**6. How did the article appear in the English language?**

a) it split from the adjectives b) it split from the pronouns  
c) it split from the nouns d) it split from the adverbs

**7. What happened to the synthetic grammatical forms in Middle English?**

a) they disappeared completely b) they increased in number  
c) they intermixed with the analytical forms d) their proportion in the language became very small

**8. What means of form-building went out of use in Late Middle English?**

a) sound interchanges b) the prefix ge- c) suppletive formation  
d) inflections

**9. The application of what means of form-building was reduced in Middle English?**

a) sound interchanges b) prefixation c) suppletive formation  
d) inflections

**10. What happened to the grammatical suffixes and endings in the Middle English period as compared with the Old English period?**

a) they became less varied b) they were lost c) they became more varied  
d) they developed new phonetic variants

**11. How was Middle English period described by H. Sweet?**

a) a period of full endings b) a period of levelled endings  
c) a period lost endings d) a period of found endings

**12. What was the main tendency of the evolution of grammatical endings in Middle English?**

a) contextual specification b) reduction c) leveling d) merging

**13. When did the weakening of endings begin?**

a) in Proto-Germanic b) in Middle English c) in late Middle English  
d) in early Modern English

**14. What new way of form-building appeared in the Late Old English and Middle English?**

a) sound interchange b) syntactical c) synthetical d) analytical

**15. From what did analytical forms develop?**

a) predicative constructions b) metaphors c) phraseological units  
d) free word groups

**16. In what part of speech was analytical form-building most productive?**

a) noun b) adjective c) verb d) adverb

**17. What part of speech was not affected by analytical form-building?**

a) noun b) adjective c) verb d) adverb

**18. What is the main direction of development for the nominal parts of speech in all the periods of history of English?**

a) morphological simplification b) the growth of analytical forms  
c) transition from the syntactical to the morphological level d) stability of morphological characteristics

**19. What is one of the greatest events in the history of the English grammar?**

a) decline and transformation of the nominal morphological system  
b) development of new syntactical constructions c) transformation of the verbal morphological system  
d) development of the Gerund

**20. What influence did the simplification and leveling of forms have on the verb conjugation in Middle English?**

a) the verb conjugation disappeared b) the verb conjugation became more regular and uniform  
c) the verb conjugation became more complex d) the categories of number and person disappeared

**21. What nominal categories were lost in Middle English?**

a) number in nouns b) number in personal pronouns c) gender and case in adjectives  
d) case in nouns

## Section XII. Middle English vocabulary

### 1. For class discussion

- French influence on the vocabulary
- Loss of native words. Semantic changes
- Latin influence on the vocabulary

2. Read the following quotations on lexical peculiarities of Middle English. Make a summary of the ideas implied.

French influence upon the grammar and phonology of English was of relatively little importance, but the impact of that language upon the lexis was prolonged, varied and ultimately enormous. It commenced before the Conquest as the result of the political and religious contacts between Anglo-Saxon rulers and Normandy, where Ethelred II was forced to take refuge from the Danes, and it continued in one form or another, Norman, central French or Picard, throughout the medieval period. [20]

The impact of the Norman Conquest on the English language, like that made by the earlier Norse-speaking invaders, was largely in the word stock, though Middle English also showed some instances of the

influence of French idiom and grammar. Suffice it to say that, as a result of the Conquest, English acquired a new look. [3]

Whereas the lexical stock of Old English had been largely Germanic, that of Middle English was somewhat more Romanic in nature. English borrowed significantly from French in this period (a typical estimate is about 10,000 loans), and it is traditionally held that these loanwords entered the language in two main phases divided approximately by 1250. [14]

French loans were adopted in two stages from two different varieties of French, with the dividing line around 1250. During the first period, the borrowings are less numerous and are more likely to exhibit peculiarities of Norman and Anglo-Norman in their phonology. Moreover, the roughly 900 words borrowed during this period are such that the lower classes would become familiar with them through contact with a French-speaking nobility, e.g. *baron*, *noble*, *dame*, *servant*, *messenger*, *feast*, *minstrel*, *juggler*, i.e. they reflect the 'superiority' of the French culture. In the period after 1250, the pattern changed: now words were introduced by those who so far had spoken French but now turned to English as their normal, everyday spoken language. This introduced many words related to government and administration, but also words drawn from the domains of fashion, food, social life, art, learning and medicine, and other domains of everyday life. Moreover, the source was now Central French, which had had a different phonological development. [9]

All in all, around 10,000 French words were introduced into English during the Middle English period, of which about 75 per cent are still in current use. [9]

Words from French are often polysyllabic terms for the institutions of the Conquest (church, administration, law), for things imported with the Conquest (castles, courts, prisons), and terms of high culture or social status (cuisine, fashion, literature, art, decoration). [13]

There can be little doubt that a large proportion of the words borrowed from French were thoroughly popular in character, that is, words current in the everyday French spoken in England. At the same time the importance of literature is not to be underestimated as a means of transfer. So much of Middle English literature was based directly on French originals that it would have been rather exceptional if English writers

had consistently resisted the temptation to carry French words over into their adaptations. [5]

The richness of English in synonyms is largely due to the happy mingling of Latin, French, and native elements. It has been said that we have a synonym at each level – popular, literary, and learned. Although this statement must not be pressed too hard, a difference is often apparent, as in *rise – mount – ascend*, *ask – question – interrogate*, *goodness – virtue – probity*, *fast – firm – secure*, *fire – flame – conflagration*, *fear – terror – trepidation*, *holy – sacred – consecrated*, *time – age – epoch*. In each of these sets of three words the first is English, the second is from French, and the third from Latin. The difference in tone between the English and the French words is often slight; the Latin word is generally more bookish. [5]

French influence became increasingly evident in English manuscripts of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. It has been estimated that some 10,000 French words came into English at that time – many previously borrowed from more distant sources (such as alkali from Arabic). These words were largely to do with the mechanisms of law and administration, but they also included words from such fields as art, medicine and fashion. Many of the new words were quite ordinary, everyday terms. Over 70 per cent were nouns. A large number were abstract terms, constructed using such French affixes as *con-*, *trans-*, *pre-*, *-ance*, *-tion*, and *-ment*. About three-quarters of these French loans are still in the language today. [18]

French is the most dominant influence on the growth of Middle English vocabulary, but it is by no means the only one. During the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries several thousands words came into the language directly from Latin (though it is often difficult to exclude an arrival route via French). Most of these words were professional or technical terms, belonging to such fields as religion, medicine, law, and literature. They also included many words which were borrowed by a writer in a deliberate attempt to produce a "high" style. Only a very small number of these "aureate terms" entered the language, however (e.g. *meditation*, *oriental*, *proximity*). The vast majority died almost as soon as they were born (e.g. *abusion*, *sempitern*, *tenebrous*). [18]

The simultaneous borrowing of French and Latin words led to a highly distinctive feature of Modern English vocabulary – sets of three items all expressing the same fundamental notion but differing slightly

in meaning or style, such as *kingly/royal/regal* and *rise/mount/ascend*. The Old English word is usually the more popular one, with the French word more literary, and the Latin more learned. [18]

3. Choose the correct answer

**1. The results of what foreign influence that had taken place during Old English became apparent only in Middle English?**

a) Celtic b) Latin c) French d) Scandinavian

**2. By what is the presence of Scandinavians in the English population indicated?**

a) borrowing from Celtic b) a large number of place-names c) borrowings from Old Norse d) archeological research

**3. Why did the fusion of the English and of the Scandinavian settlers progress rapidly?**

a) many of the commonest words in their languages were alike b) they spoke the same language c) they had the same religion d) the sounds of their languages were alike

**4. What English dialect underwent through a profound Scandinavian influence?**

a) Northern dialect b) Southern dialect c) Midland dialect d) Eastern dialect

**5. Due to what did Scandinavian loan-words penetrate into the national language?**

a) high degree of assimilation b) simple morphological structure c) peculiarities of linguistic situation d) dialect mixture

**6. What is the total number of Scandinavian borrowings in English?**

a) 700 b) 800 c) 900 d) 1000

**7. To what semantic sphere do the Scandinavian borrowings mostly belong?**

a) everyday life b) architecture c) war d) trade

**8. What happened to military terms borrowed from Scandinavian?**

a) they underwent semantic changes b) they were displaced by Latin terms c) they were displaced by French terms d) they developed other non-military meanings

**9. What of the following can serve as a convincing proof of the close contacts between the Scandinavian and the English languages in everyday life?**

a) the replacement of some native form-words by Scandinavian borrowings b) the assimilation of legal borrowings c) the adoption of military borrowings d) modification of the meaning of the native word

**10. Why was the assimilation of the Scandinavian loan-words easy?**

a) Scandinavian words were very much like native words b) the sounds in both languages didn't differ at all c) the words had the same morphological structure d) because of the large scale contacts between the English and the Scandinavians

**11. What phonetic feature can indicate that a word was borrowed from Scandinavian?**

a) palatalization of final consonant b) initial [sk] combination c) modification of the sound [ʃ] d) reduction of final syllable

**12. To what variety of English were French words restricted at the initial stages of penetration?**

a) northern dialect b) bookish language c) the speech of the aristocracy at the king's court d) the speech of rural people

**13. In the course of what process were the early French loans borrowed?**

a) translation of French books b) written communication c) printing of the first books d) oral communication

**14. The total number of what borrowings in English by far exceeds the number of borrowings from any other foreign language?**

a) Latin b) French c) Scandinavian d) Celtic

**15. In what manuscripts more French words are recorded?**

a) manuscripts coming from the southern regions b) manuscripts coming from the northern regions c) manuscripts coming from the eastern regions d) manuscripts coming from the western regions

**16. What is one of the main historical reasons for the abundance of synonyms in Modern English?**

a) the influx of Latin words b) the influx of French words c) stylistic differentiation of the native vocabulary d) homonymy of Germanic roots



**17. In what does the difference between the native and the borrowed words often lie?**

- a) quantity of syllables
- b) stylistic connotation
- c) frequency
- d) morphological structure

**18. What stylistic character do the French loan-words adopted in Late Middle English preserve?**

- a) dialectal
- b) colloquial
- c) scientific
- d) bookish

**19. In what way was the English vocabulary influenced by the French language except borrowing words?**

- a) by the adoption of new place-names
- b) by the adoption of French affixes
- c) by the adoption of new stylistic devices
- d) by the adoption of new personal names

**20. Why was assimilation of French words more difficult than assimilation of Scandinavian words?**

- a) the Anglo-Norman language had a far more elaborate and sophisticated words than Old English
- b) the English deliberately resisted the use of French
- c) the Normans spoke not a literary French but a dialect known as “Anglo-Norman”
- d) French belonged to a different linguistic group

### **Section XIII. Middle English literature**

#### *1. For class discussion*

- Middle English written records
- Chaucer
- Introduction of printing

*2. Use the following citation as a kind of plan for short reports or essays on the development of Middle English literature.*

Accordingly, the literature in English that has come down to us from this period (1150–1250) is almost exclusively religious or admonitory. The *Ancrene Riwle*, the *Ormulum* (c. 1200), a series of paraphrases and interpretations of Gospel passages, and a group of saints’

lives and short homiletic pieces showing the survival of an Old English literary tradition in the southwest are the principal works of this class. [5]

The hundred years from 1150 to 1250 have been justly called the Period of Religious Record. It is not that religious works were not written in French too for the upper classes; it is rather the absence in English of works appealing to courtly tastes that marks the English language at this time as the language of the middle and lower classes. [5]

The separation of the English nobility from France by about 1250 and the spread of English among the upper class is manifest in the next hundred years of English literature. Types of polite literature that had hitherto appeared in French now appear in English. Of these types the most popular was the romance. The religious literature characteristic of the previous period continues; but we now have other types as well. The period from 1250 to 1350 is a Period of Religious and Secular Literature in English and indicates clearly the wider diffusion of the English language. [5]

The general adoption of English by all classes, which had taken place by the latter half of the fourteenth century, gave rise to a body of literature that represents the high point in English literary achievement in the Middle Ages. The period from 1350 to 1400 has been called the Period of Great Individual Writers. The chief name is that of Geoffrey Chaucer (1340–1400), the greatest English poet before Shakespeare. ... To this period belong William Langland, the reputed author of a long social allegory, *Piers Plowman* (1362–1387); John Wycliffe (d. 1384), putative translator of the Bible and author of a large and influential body of controversial prose; and the unknown poet who wrote not only the finest of the Middle English romances, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, but three allegorical and religious poems of great beauty, including *Pearl*. [5]

The fifteenth century is sometimes known as the Imitative Period because so much of the poetry then written was written in emulation of Chaucer. It is also spoken of as a Transition Period, because it covers a large part of the interval between the age of Chaucer and the age of Shakespeare. [5]

3. Read the following quotations on some aspects of the development of Middle English literature. Make a summary of the ideas implied.

The literature written in England during the Middle English period reflects fairly accurately the changing fortunes of English. During the time that French was the language best understood by the upper classes, the books they read or listened to were in French. [5]

The Norman Conquest interrupted the production of poetry in English, though there is evidence to suggest that Old English poetry was already by the eleventh century in something of a decline. There is a recognizable continuity only in prose writing from the Old to the Middle English period. English itself was undergoing changes which accelerated its movement from a synthetic to an analytic language. In addition, the availability of three languages in the country, with English being the least elevated, may have inhibited the enlargement of the literary potential of English. [20]

The Middle English period was one of significant literary achievement, seeing the production of both translations and original works in both English and French. [14]

... almost from the moment of his death in 1400, Chaucer came to be revered as the inventor of a new, poetic language. His earliest imitators, the poets John Lydgate and Thomas Hoccleve, saw him as “purifying” English from the “rudeness” of the Anglo-Saxon. [13]

We think of Chaucer as a poet of facility and flair, but he was also a prose writer whose translations and adaptations of earlier material were in some ways even more appreciated in his own time than the poetry. [13]

4. Choose the correct answer.

**1. What time is marked by the flourishing of the Middle English literature?**

- a) first part of the 14<sup>th</sup> century
- b) second part of the 14<sup>th</sup> century
- c) first part of the 15<sup>th</sup> century
- d) second part of the 13<sup>th</sup> century

**2. What does the flourishing of literature testify to?**

- a) appearance of new stylistic devices of English
- b) increase in the quality of school education
- c) development of a special style of drama
- d) complete reestablishment of English as the language of writing

**3. What type of English was mostly used in Middle English literature?**

- a) West Saxon dialect
- b) the London dialect
- c) mixture of dialects
- d) South-Western dialect

**4. What literary genres do the literary texts of Middle English mostly belong to?**

- a) drama
- b) folk epic
- c) variety of genres
- d) legends of saints

**5. What type of literary texts prevailed during the period of literary efflorescence in Middle English?**

- a) poetry
- b) prose
- c) both poetry and prose
- d) only prose as poetry didn't exist in Middle English

**6. Under what name is the period of Middle English literary efflorescence known?**

- a) age of Renaissance
- b) age of Shakespeare
- c) age of Great Writers
- d) age of Chaucer

**7. Who is one of the prominent authors of the Middle English literature?**

- a) Caedmon
- b) Shakespeare
- c) John de Trevisa
- d) Venerable Bede

**8. Into what Middle English dialects was Polychronicon translated?**

- a) West Saxon dialect
- b) the London dialect
- c) mixture of dialects
- d) South-Western dialect

**9. What is John Wyclif's most important contribution to English prose?**

- a) he was the inventor of a new prosaic language
- b) he wrote *Sir Gawaine And The Green Knight*
- c) he translated Bible into English
- d) he translated Polychronicon

**10. What book played an important role in spreading the London dialect of English?**

- a) *Polychronicon*
- b) *Bible*
- c) *Sir Gawaine And The Green Knight*
- d) *Brute*

**11. Who were the chief poets of Middle English besides Chaucer?**

- a) John Gower, William Langland
- b) R. Higden, John de Trevisa
- c) John Wyclif, Henry the Minstrel
- d) Thomas Hoccleve, John Lydgate

**12. By whom was *Sir Gawaine And The Green Knight* written?**

- a) John Lydgate
- b) John Gower
- c) Chaucer
- d) author is unknown

**13. By whom was *The Vision Concerning Piers The Plowman* written?**

a) Geoffrey Chaucer b) John Gower c) John Lydgate d) William Langland

**14. To what genre does *The Vision Concerning Piers The Plowman* belong ?**

a) knightly romance of the Arthurian cycle b) an allegory and a satire c) folk epic d) historical novel

**15. What poem was written by John Gower?**

a) *Sir Gawaine And The Green Knight* b) *The Voice Of The Crying In The Wilderness* c) *Brut* d) *The Vision Concerning Piers The Plowman*

**16. In what language was *The Voice Of The Crying In The Wilderness* written?**

a) classical Middle English b) Latin c) London dialect of Middle English d) national literary English language

**17. How is the role of Chaucer in the history of the English language usually described?**

a) the founder of the literary language b) the inventor of a new poetic style c) the man who made Latin popular in England d) the man who made reading popular in medieval England

**18. How can Chaucer's literary language be characterized?**

a) classical London dialect b) classical early Middle English c) classical early modern English d) classical Middle English

**19. What language became the basis of the national literary English language in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries?**

a) East Midland dialect b) Chaucer's literary language c) Latin d) early Middle English

**20. Who are the two prominent poets of the 15<sup>th</sup> century?**

a) John Wyclif and John Gower b) John Gower and William Langland c) Thomas Hoccleve and John Lydgate d) John de Trevisa and Geoffrey Chaucer

**21. How is the style of Chaucer's successors termed?**

a) aureate language b) the language of Chaucer's successors c) classical Middle English d) abstract language

## Section XIV. Middle English sound system

### 1. For class discussion

- Vowels
- Consonants
- Great vowel shift

2. Read the following notes about cases. Speak on the peculiarities of Middle English sound system (Compiled from Barber Charles, Joan C. Beal, Philip A. Shaw. *The English language. A historical introduction.* Cambridge University Press. 2009. 306 p.)

Quite apart from revealing hidden changes, the new orthography gave English writings quite a new look. A number of new consonant symbols were introduced. A new symbol *g* was introduced for the stops represented by OE *ȝ*, and the OE symbol was retained only for the fricatives. Where Old English had used *f* to represent both [f] and [v], ME scribes used *u* or *v* (which were allographs at this period) for the voiced sound. Similarly, *z* was introduced besides *s*, though not consistently. The digraph *th* gradually replaced *d* and *t*, but *d* is found up to about 1300, and *t* remained quite common until about 1400.

It is to be noted that in Middle English there were separate phonemes /f/ and /v/, /s/ and /z/, and /θ/ and /d/, where in Old English there had been pairs of allophones. In the spelling, however, this fact was only fully recognized for /f/ and /v/, and this still remains the case today, as can be seen from pairs such as *cloth/clothe* and *close* (adjective) / *close* (verb).

Other phonological changes which mark the transition from Old English to Middle English include the disappearance of OE *a*, which in most dialects fell together with *æ*; the monophthongization of all the Old English diphthongs, both long and short; the development of new ME diphthongs, especially by the fusion of a vowel with a following [j] or [w]; and the weakening of the vowels in unstressed syllables, all of them appearing as ME *e* (perhaps representing [ə]). For example, the OE words *fader* 'father', *heorte* 'heart', *stream* 'stream', *magden* 'girl', *fugol* 'bird' and *lagu* 'law' appear in Middle English with such spellings

as *fader* or *feder*, *herte*, *strem*, *meiden*, *fowel* and *lawe*, though with much regional variation.

A sound change which took place in Late Old English, but which did not become apparent until the ME period, was the lengthening of short vowels before certain consonant groups. In many cases the vowels were shortened again during the ME period, but long vowels remained in some dialects, especially before the groups *ld*, *mb* and *nd*. Lengthening before these groups accounts for the modern forms of words like *old*, *bold*, *cold*, *told*. In Old English (Anglian) these had short *a* (*ald*, etc.); this was lengthened to *ā* during the ninth century, and in the twelfth century this *ā* regularly became *ǫ* south of the Humber, giving ME pronunciations like [ɔ:lɔd].

Another vowel-lengthening process, which has had far-reaching effects on both pronunciation and spelling, took place in Middle English itself, during the thirteenth century. This was the lengthening of short vowels in open syllables in two-syllable words (this is often termed Middle English open syllable lengthening). An open syllable is one that ends with a vowel. Where a single consonant occurs between vowels in an English word, the consonant normally belongs to the second syllable, and the first syllable is therefore open. Thus in the OE verb *bacan* 'to bake' the syllable division is *ba-can*, and the first syllable is an open one. This word became early ME *baken* (still with short [a]), and then the vowel in the open syllable was lengthened to [a:] (like the vowel of French *tard*), which in Modern English has regularly developed into the [eɪ] of *bake*. When, however, there are two consonants between the vowels, the first consonant normally belongs to the first syllable, which is therefore a closed one. Thus in ME *thanken*, from OE *tancian*, the syllable division was *than-ken*, and no lengthening took place.

This ME lengthening of vowels in open syllables of dissyllabic words has affected our spelling conventions. In Early Middle English, words like *bake* had two syllables. After the first vowel had been lengthened, the final *-e* was lost, and such words became monosyllables. But the *-e* was often retained in the spelling, and so we tend in Modern English to regard a final *-e* as a mark of a preceding long vowel or a diphthong, provided there is only one consonant symbol in between. Thus

we use spellings like *home* and *stone*, where the final *-e* has no etymological justification, but is simply inserted to show that the *o* represents a long vowel or a diphthong.

3. Use the following citation as a kind of plan for short reports or essays on the peculiarities of Middle English sound system.

When we come to the vowel changes in Modern English we see the importance of the factors that determined the length of vowels in Middle English. All Middle English long vowels underwent extensive alteration in passing into Modern English, but the short vowels, in accented syllables, remained comparatively stable. If we compare Chaucer's pronunciation of the short vowels with ours, we note only two changes of importance, those of *a* and *u*. By Shakespeare's day (i.e., at the close of the sixteenth century) Chaucer's *a* had become an [æ] in pronunciation (*cat*, *thank*, *flax*). In some cases this ME *a* represented an OE (*at*, *apple*, *back*), and the new pronunciation was therefore a return to approximately the form that the word had had in Old English. It is the usual pronunciation in America and a considerable part of southern England today. The change the *u* underwent was what is known as unrounding. In Chaucer's pronunciation this vowel was like the *u* in *full*. By the sixteenth century it seems to have become in most words the sound we have in *but* (e.g., *cut*, *sun*; *love*, with the Anglo-Norman spelling of *o* for *u*). So far as the short vowels are concerned it is clear that a person today would have little difficulty in understanding the English of any period of the language. [5]

The main trend in Middle English is consonant deletion, as in the case of [g], [h], [w], and [l], and vowel shifting, especially in non-northern texts. [6]

Changes in vowel height also occur. In non-northern texts, the long *a* sounds in *na*, *mast*, *ham*, and *ane* become *o* in Middle English in both spelling and pronunciation, resulting in Modern English *no*, *most*, *home*, and *one*. In northern texts, this change does not take place. However, the short *a* in *man* and *land* is often an *o* in the North but not in the South. [6]

Other sound changes are very regional as well. For instance, palatalization does not occur in the North either and thus, we have non-palatalized forms like *Frankis*, *kirk*, and *egg* where southern texts might

have French, church, and eye ‘egg’. Many of the northern forms still survive in the North in the modern period, as we will see in a later chapter. [6]

In Old English, the vowels have long and short variants. In Middle English, the short vowels change their height and are not just short variants of the long vowels. [6]

The vowel system was first reshaped by two changes, one virtually exceptionless, the other sporadic. The first was raising and rounding of OE /a/ to /ɔ/ (except in the north); the second was lengthening of vowels in certain open penultimate stressed syllables, so-called Middle English Open Syllable Lengthening (MEOSL). [9]

The regular distinctions between ME and PDE pronunciations of long vowels may be noted. The raisings and diphthongisations which produced the PDE system, known as the ‘Great Vowel Shift’, took place at the beginning of the EModE period; it has been argued that they are the result of sociolinguistic interaction in late medieval/Early Tudor London. [10]

In the vowels of unstressed syllables, the qualitative distinctions which existed in OE were already becoming obscured in late Anglo-Saxon times. This pattern continued in ME: Chaucer’s unstressed vowel-sounds seem to have been [ə, ɪ]. Both were usually spelt <e, i/y> in the Ellesmere manuscript, such as –e in *oldeor-y-in sweryng*. [10]

The major difference between OE and ME vowel-systems was in diphthongs. The OE diphthongs monophthongised and merged with other sounds during the transition from OE to ME, and new diphthongs had emerged in the system through vocalisations of consonants and borrowings from French. [10]

The Great Vowel Shift, you will learn, was the defining moment in the history of English pronunciation. It made modern English “modern.” It was the systematic raising and fronting of the long, stressed monophthongs of Middle English, and it took place roughly from the middle of the fifteenth through the end of the seventeenth centuries. This was the change that made the language of the age of Chaucer largely opaque by the time of Shakespeare. While scholars of English from the Renaissance onward had been aware of these changes, it was not until the rise of empirical historical philology in the nineteenth century that a way was found of explaining them as a single phenomenon. And it was not until 1909 that the great Danish linguist, Otto Jespersen, codified

these philological researches into a concise statement of what happened and why it was important. [13]

The Great Vowel Shift was not a set of local differences in speech sounds or a collection of individual distinctions between earlier and later forms of English. It was a systemic change: a change in an entire sound system, in the course of which each element of that system had an effect on, or was the result of, the change in any other element of that system. That system was the long, stressed monophthongs of Middle English. “Long” means that the vowels were held for a longer time than others; it is, in Old and Middle English, a matter of quantity, not of quality. “Stressed” means that the vowels had to be in a word’s syllable that received major stress (usually, this meant the root syllable of the word). “Monophthongs” are vowels that contain only one, continuously produced sound: to put it in the terms of physical articulation, it means that the tongue and the lips remained in the same position during the production of the sound. [13]

OE speakers appear to have made use of word-initial consonant clusters including h, as in hl, hn and hr. ME spelling indicates that the pronunciation of this initial h disappeared ... [14]

(OE) hleor – (ME) lere ‘complexion’

(OE) hnappian – (ME) nappe ‘to sleep’

(OE) hrathor – (ME) rather ‘sooner’

Other OE word-initial consonant clusters which underwent pronunciation change in ME include *sw* and *tw*. Where these clusters came to precede a back vowel (as a result of sound changes), the pronunciation of *w* was lost. Thus OE *swa* ([sw]) and *twa* ([tw]) became ME *so* ([s]) and *two* ([t]) respectively. [14]

#### 4. Choose the correct answer

### 1. How did the phonetic assimilation of loan-words adopted during the Middle English period influence the word accent?

- a) it became fixed
- b) it changed quantitatively
- c) it acquired greater positional freedom
- d) the rules of word stress changed

**2. In Middle English disyllabic loan-words there is a tendency of moving the accent to the first syllable, so that the resulting pattern conformed to the pattern of native words. How is this tendency termed?**

- a) recessive tendency
- b) rhythmic tendency
- c) dynamic tendency
- d) static tendency

**3. In Middle English words of three or more syllables there is a tendency of a regular alternation of stressed and unstressed syllables. How is this tendency termed?**

- a) recessive tendency
- b) rhythmic tendency
- c) dynamic tendency
- d) static tendency

**4. What factor played a role in the fact that the stress was not shifted to the prefixes of many verbs borrowed or built in Late Middle English and in early Modern English?**

- a) lexical factor
- b) morphological factor
- c) prosodic factor
- d) syntactic factor

**5. What does the fact that word stress distinguished a verb from a noun show?**

- a) the phonological application of word stress widened
- b) new quantitative features of word stress developed
- c) new qualitative features of word stress developed
- d) the application of word stress became dynamic

**6. What language units played a decisive role in the process of altering the entire system of word accentuation?**

- a) borrowed phonemes
- b) noun phrases
- c) native core vocabulary
- d) polysyllabic loan-words

**7. What tendency was particularly strong in unstressed final syllables in Middle English?**

- a) the tendency of monophthongization
- b) the tendency of diphthongization
- c) the tendency of modification of separate vowels
- d) the tendency toward phonetic reduction

**8. How many vowels did Late Middle English have in unaccented syllables?**

- a) 2
- b) 4
- c) 6
- d) 8

**9. What is regarded as an important mark of Middle English distinguishing it from Old English?**

- a) the occurrence of only two vowels in unstressed final syllables
- b) the occurrence of only four vowels in unstressed final syllables
- c) the occurrence of only six vowels in unstressed final syllables
- d) the occurrence of only eight vowels in unstressed final syllables

**10. What was the final [ə] that disappeared in Late Middle English (though it continued to be spelled as -e) used for?**

- a) it showed the character of stress of the following syllable
- b) it marked the diphthongs
- c) it showed that a word was a loan word
- d) it showed the length of the vowel in the preceding syllable

**11. What is one of the most important sound changes of the early Middle English?**

- a) the loss of Old English diphthongs and the growth of new diphthongs
- b) the labialization of close vowels
- c) disappearance of Old English monophthongs and the growth of new monophthongs
- d) lengthening of bi-phonemic vowel sequences

**12. What new type of consonant appeared in Middle English?**

- a) affricates
- b) velar consonants
- c) long consonants
- d) fricative consonants

**13. Why did a number of Old English consonants disappear in Middle English?**

- a) they were geminated and because of it turned into monophthongs
- b) they were palatalized and because of it turned into diphthongs
- c) they were vocalized
- d) they were assimilated

**14. What process eliminated the back lingual fricative consonants?**

- a) the diphthongization of [eo]
- b) the vocalization of [j]
- c) the diphthongization of [w]
- d) the vocalization of [ɣ] and [x]

**15. What happened to Old English long consonants in Middle English?**

- a) they were vocalized
- b) they were diphthongized
- c) they were shortened
- d) they were palatalized

## Section XV. Middle English dialects

### 1. For class discussion

- Evidence for dialect difference
- Principal dialects of Middle English
- The status of Middle English

### 2. Read the following quotations on Middle English dialects.

*Comment on the ideas implied.*

The most striking fact about Middle English is that it exhibits by far the greatest diversity in written language of any period before or since. [20]

One of the striking characteristics of Middle English is its great variety in the different parts of England. This variety was not confined to the forms of the spoken language, as it is to a great extent today, but appears equally in the written literature. In the absence of any recognized literary standard before the close of the period, writers naturally wrote in the dialect of that part of the country to which they belonged. [5]

The language differed almost from county to county, and noticeable variations are sometimes observable between different parts of the same county. The features characteristic of a given dialect do not all cover the same territory; some extend into adjoining districts or may be characteristic also of another dialect. Consequently it is rather difficult to decide how many dialectal divisions should be recognized and to mark off with any exactness their respective boundaries. In a rough way, however, it is customary to distinguish four principal dialects of Middle English: Northern, East Midland, West Midland, and Southern. [5]

When discussing Old English dialects, we observed that the standard view presents four fairly distinct dialects. The traditional picture of the Middle English dialect situation has never been seen as quite so stable, but, broadly speaking, there is some sense in talking of five regional mappings: North, East Midlands, West Midlands, Southeast and Southwest. This picture, unfortunately, has the illusory advantage of suggesting that there is continuity between the traditional mapping of

Old English and the later history. Thus, Northumbrian maps on to Northern, Mercian maps on to West Midlands, and perhaps East Midlands, West Saxon equates to Southwestern and Kentish to Southeastern. [9]

Throughout the Middle English period and later, Kentish preserves individual features marking it off as a distinct variety of Southern English. [5]

The grammatical differences between the ME dialects include differences in inflections, and in the forms of the personal pronouns. During the ME period, there was a tendency for northern forms to permeate southwards. [4]

The differences in vocabulary between the regions are most striking in the matter of loanwords. In the northern and East Midland dialects there are numerous Scandinavian words; some of these permeated into the other dialects during the ME period, but many never became accepted outside the old Danelaw. French loanwords, on the contrary, first appeared most densely around London, the centre of fashion and administration, and spread northwards and westwards from there; by the fourteenth century, they were being used freely all over the country. [4]

Variability in written Middle English is very wide-ranging at every linguistic level: spelling, morphology, syntax and lexicon. There are also several non-linguistic dimensions in which this variation can be observed. Of these, the geographical and chronological dimensions are most immediately obvious: texts from different areas are different, and later texts differ very markedly from earlier ones. [20]

Variation in written Middle English is so extensive that it is reasonable to ask in what sense we are dealing with a single state or stage of language. We can argue that the label 'Middle English' does not refer to a coherent entity, but to a complex series of divergent, rapidly changing and intertwining varieties retrospectively seen as transitional between 'Old English' and 'Modern English'. [20]

Tolerance of variation in written Middle English can be ascribed to the absence of a fully institutionalised standard variety in Middle English; indeed, this is one of the most important sociolinguistic differences between Middle English and Modern English. [20]

From the far north to the far south, English varied, and in London many of these forms would mix as sons of provincials traveled to seek fortunes, as men married women far from home, as traders came and

went along the city streets. The London English of the time of Chaucer takes, as its base, an East Midland Middle English, but marks of the north and south and west show up in many texts written in the metropolises. [13]

Middle English textbooks often provide a list of dialects as follows: Northern, West Midland, East Midland, South-Western, South-Eastern. Such a typology is helpful operationally, but modern dialectological study indicates that it is an over-simplification. Present-day language-varieties shade into each other, forming a continuum; the same situation obtained for Middle English. [1]

3. *Choose the correct answer*

**1. Why is it difficult to make a precise map of all the Middle English dialects?**

a) the sources of dialectal division are unavailable b) Middle English dialects are linguistically diversified c) localized and dated documents are few in number d) Middle English dialects occupied different territories at different times

**2. How were early Middle English dialects and their approximate boundaries determined?**

a) by methods of historical linguistics b) by methods of comparative linguistics c) by analyzing Middle English literature d) by inference

**3. What is the main difficulty in determining boundaries of Late Middle English dialects?**

a) dominant position of the London dialect b) growing dialectal mixture c) interference of Latin d) reestablishment of English as the language of the state and literature

**4. What dialectal groups can be distinguished in Early Middle English?**

a) Southern, Northern, Midland b) Kentish, Scottish, mixed group c) Southern, Western, Eastern d) Northern, Midland, Western

**5. With what Middle English dialect does the Old English Saxon dialect correlate?**

a) South-Western b) Kentish c) East Midland d) West Midland

**6. What Old English dialect made the basis of the dialect of London in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> c.?**

a) East Saxon b) West Saxon c) Kentish d) Northern

**7. To what Old English dialect does the Middle English Midland dialect correspond?**

a) Kentish b) West Saxon c) Northumbrian d) Mercian

**8. What Middle English dialects became the basis of the Scottish dialect?**

a) Northern b) Gloucester c) South-West Midland d) Kentish

**9. What language was used in Ireland alongside Celtic languages in the period of Early Middle English?**

a) English b) Latin c) Scottish d) French

**10. How can the relation of Early Middle English dialects to one another be characterized?**

a) Midland dialects were the most widespread b) dialects were overwhelmed by French c) the London dialect prevailed d) they were equal

**11. When did the domination of the French language in England come to an end?**

a) in the course of the 14<sup>th</sup> c. b) in the course of the 13<sup>th</sup> c. c) in the course of the 12<sup>th</sup> c. d) in the course of the 15<sup>th</sup> c.

**12. What language became dead in the course of the Early Middle English?**

a) Latin b) Scandinavian c) Anglo-Norman d) English

**13. What language had taken place of French as the language of literature and administration towards the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> c.?**

a) English b) Anglo-Norman c) Latin d) Scandinavian

**14. Why did English oust French in the course of the Middle English period?**

a) because the Bible was written in English and therefore English unlike French was used in all regions of the country b) because English had easier grammar c) because French had much more difficult pronunciation d) because English remained the mother tongue and the only spoken language of the majority of the population

**15. Who used French and Latin alongside English until the 16<sup>th</sup> c.?**

a) monks b) lawyers c) teachers d) writers



**16. What event testifies to the recognition of English as the state language?**

**a)** opening of Parliament by the king's chancellor in English  
**b)** using of the English language in the law courts **c)** using of the English language in writing legal documents **d)** using of the English language by ordinary people in oral communication

**17. In what sphere had English regained supremacy by 1385?**

**a)** diplomacy **b)** writing letters **c)** religion **d)** education

**18. What happened to the French borrowings at the time when English became a medium of general communication?**

**a)** they disappeared completely from the language **b)** they multiplied **c)** they were replaced by corresponding English words **d)** they decreased in number

**19. What was the result of the intermixture of dialects in Middle English?**

**a)** the London dialect reinforced its position **b)** a complete change of grammar **c)** the infiltration of borrowings into all the local and social varieties of English progressed more rapidly **d)** the local and social varieties of English began to disappear

**20. What is the most important event in the changing linguistic situation during the period of Late Middle English?**

**a)** ending of the French domination **b)** the rise of the London dialect **c)** the establishment of English as the language of the literature **d)** decline of Latin

**21. The features of what dialect does the London dialect display in the late 14<sup>th</sup> c?**

**a)** East Midland **b)** East Saxon **c)** Kentish **d)** Northern

## Section XVI. Early modern English

### *1. For class discussion*

- Early modern English vocabulary
- Early modern English grammar
- King James Bible (1611)

*2. Read the following quotations on some general characteristics of Early Modern English. Make a summary of the ideas implied.*

In the sixteenth century the modern languages faced three great problems: (1) recognition in the fields where Latin had for centuries been supreme, (2) the establishment of a more uniform orthography, and (3) the enrichment of the vocabulary so that it would be adequate to meet the demands that would be made upon it in its wider use. Each of these problems received extensive consideration in the England of the Renaissance, but it is interesting to note that they were likewise being discussed in much the same way in France and Italy, and to some extent in Germany and Spain. [5]

Speakers and writers of Early Modern English often had a choice of forms or of constructions where today we have no choice – for example, in verb-inflections, personal pronouns, relative pronouns, and the formation of negative and interrogative sentences. [4]

Beside the classical languages, which seemingly had attained perfection, the vulgar tongues seemed immature, unpolished, and limited in resource. It was felt that they could not express the abstract ideas and the range of thought embodied in the ancient languages. [5]

The real force behind the use of English was a popular demand, the demand of all sorts of men in practical life to share in the fruits of the Renaissance. The Revival of Learning had revealed how rich was the store of knowledge and experience preserved from the civilizations of Greece and Rome. [5]

As we approach the end of the century (16-PB) and see that English has slowly won recognition as a language of serious thought, we detect a note of patriotic feeling in the attitude of many people. They seem to have grown tired of being told that English was crude and barbarous. [5]

Thirdly, English in the Renaissance, at least as we see it in books, was much more plastic than now. People felt freer to mold it to their wills. Words had not always distributed themselves into rigid grammatical categories. Adjectives appear as adverbs or nouns or verbs, nouns appear as verbs – in fact, any part of speech as almost any other part. [5]

Finally, we note that in spite of all the progress that had been made toward a uniform standard, a good many features of the language were still unsettled. There still existed a considerable variety of use – alternative forms in the grammar, experiments with new words, variations in pronunciation and spelling. [5]

The English language as a medium for serious writing has had to reemerge (at least) twice in its history – once around 1300 when its use had to be justified over the use of French and once after 1500 when it was seen as an unsophisticated alternative to Latin. Middle English manuscripts frequently included apologies for using English rather than Latin. By the 1550s, however, English reemerges: while it was ‘barbarous and unrefined’ before, now it is ‘elegant’. [6]

There is no doubt that an early Modern English period needs to be recognized in the history of English. The jump from Middle to Modern English would be too great without it. Between the time of Chaucer and the time of Johnson, roughly 1400 to 1800, the language continues to change in quite noticeable ways, and there are many points of difference with modern usage. [18]

Early modern English (a convenient if slightly amorphous term which covers at least 1500–1700, the two centuries focused on in this chapter) is a period of paradox. It is during early modern English that many features of present-day English were developed and consolidated: caricaturing slightly, this period is a bridge between the dialectal diversity which is widely apparent in Middle English, and the striving for order and regularity which is often seen to be characteristic of the eighteenth-century grammarians and codifiers. [24]

The individual character of early Modern English was recognized only in the second half of the twentieth century. The beginning of the period is usually associated with the introduction of printing by Caxton in 1476, its end in the second half of the seventeenth century with the end of the Stuart period and the accession of William of Orange to the throne (1689). The period thus starts out in the late Middle Ages, and

includes the Renaissance, the Reformation and the Age of Enlightenment, i.e. periods of important cultural, political and intellectual upheavals. [9]

3. Read the following quotations on lexical peculiarities of early modern English. Make a summary of the ideas implied.

We have already seen that the influx of French words in the Middle English period had predisposed English speakers to borrow words from abroad. In Renaissance England this predisposition was given full scope, and there was a flood of Latin loans, the peak period being between about 1580 and 1660. The introduction of loans was encouraged by the large number of translations made from Latin. [4]

There are a number of Latin loans in Old and Middle English, but in Early Modern English this increases considerably, and by 1600 Latin is the greatest source of loanwords in English. [4]

Some of the loans, however, were adapted, and given an English form. For example, the Latin ending *-ātus* is often replaced by *-ate*, as in *desperate*. In some cases the Latin inflection is simply omitted, as in *complex* (Latin *complexus*). [4]

Not only did Latin influence bring in new words; it also caused existing words to be reshaped in accordance with their real or supposed Latin etymology. We owe the *b* in our modern spelling of *debt* and *doubt* to Renaissance etymologizing, for the earlier spellings were *dette* and *doute*, which were their forms in Old French; the *b* was inserted through the influence of Latin *debitum* and *dubitāre*. [4]

While large numbers of loanwords entered the language in the early modern period, especially from Latin, words nevertheless continued to be coined from existing English language-material by traditional methods of word-formation, especially affixation, compounding and conversion. Indeed, it is probable that more words were produced in this way than were borrowed from foreign languages, though this fact was not noticed by contemporaries, who were obsessed with inkhorn terms. [4]

In the sixteenth century the modern languages faced three great problems: (1) recognition in the fields where Latin had for centuries been supreme, (2) the establishment of a more uniform orthography, and (3) the enrichment of the vocabulary so that it would be adequate to meet the demands that would be made upon it in its wider use. Each of these problems received extensive consideration in the England of the

Renaissance, but it is interesting to note that they were likewise being discussed in much the same way in France and Italy, and to some extent in Germany and Spain. [5]

We have already indicated that enlarging the vocabulary was one of the three major problems confronting the modern languages in the eyes of men in the sixteenth century. And it is not difficult to see why this was so. The Renaissance was a period of increased activity in almost every field. It would have been strange if the spirit of inquiry and experiment that led to the discovery of America, the reform of the church, the Copernican theory, and the revolution of thought in many fields should have left only language untouched. [5]

Sixteenth-century purists objected to three classes of strange words, which they characterized as *inkhorn terms*, *oversea language*, and *Chaucerisms*. For the foreign borrowings in this period were by no means confined to learned words taken from Latin and Greek. The English vocabulary at this time (*early Modern English – P.B.*) shows words adopted from more than fifty languages, the most important of which (besides Latin and Greek) were French, Italian, and Spanish. [5]

Görlach (1991: 136) says that the period between 1530 and 1660 “exhibits the fastest growth of the vocabulary in the history of the English language.” [6]

The increase in foreign borrowings is the most distinctive linguistic sign of the Renaissance in English. [18]

There were many translations of classical words during the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and thousands of Latin and Greek terms were introduced, as translators searched for an English equivalent and could not find one. [18]

The Renaissance saw the introduction some where between 10,000 and 25,000 new words into the language. Many were foreign loanwords; others were self-consciously ‘invented’ by writers attempting to enrich a vernacular widely held to be insufficient. Although the need for new words in early modern English was real enough, especially in fields such as medicine and law, which had previously been dominated by Latin and other foreign languages, linguistic innovation in the Renaissance generated a polemic well known as the ‘inkhorn’ controversy. [24]

During the six decades of Shakespeare’s life, more words entered the English language than at any other time in history. Science and commerce, exploration and colonial expansion, literature and art – all contributed to an increased vocabulary drawn from Latin, Greek, and the European and non-European languages. While the lexicon of Old English took only 3 percent of its vocabulary from elsewhere, nearly 70 percent of our modern English lexicon comes from non-English sources. Recent statistical analyses of loan words throughout history affirm, too, that the bulk of this borrowing came in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. [13]

During the whole early Modern English period borrowing was the most frequent way of enrichment and word formation was less prominent. In the eighteenth century, however, the tide is beginning to turn, and word formation becomes more important than borrowing, probably because the foreign word-formation patterns had become sufficiently established to really become productive within the English vocabulary. [9]

4. Read the following quotations on some aspects of the development of early modern English grammar. Make a summary of the ideas implied.

English grammar in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century is marked more by the survival of certain forms and usages that have since disappeared than by any fundamental developments. The great changes that reduced the inflections of Old English to their modern proportions had already taken place. In the few parts of speech that retain some of their original inflections, the reader of Shakespeare or the Authorized Version is conscious of minor differences of form and in the framing of sentences may note differences of syntax and idiom that, although they attract attention, are not sufficient to interfere seriously with understanding. [5]

Because the adjective had already lost all its endings, so that it no longer expressed distinctions of gender, number, and case, the chief interest of this part of speech in the modern period is in the forms of the comparative and superlative degrees. In the sixteenth century these were not always precisely those now in use. For example, comparatives such as *lenger*, *strenger* remind us that forms like our *elder* were once more common in the language. The two methods commonly used to form the

comparative and superlative, with the endings *-er* and *-est* and with the adverbs *more* and *most*, had been customary since Old English times. But there was more variation in their use. Shakespearian comparisons like *honester*, *violentest* are now replaced by the analytical forms. A double comparative or superlative is also fairly frequent in the work of Shakespeare and his contemporaries: *more larger*, *most boldest*, or Mark Antony's *This was the most unkindest cut of all*. [5]

The sixteenth century saw the establishment of the personal pronoun in the form that it has had ever since. In attaining this result three changes were involved: the disuse of *thou*, *thy*, *thee*; the substitution of *you* for *ye* as a nominative case; and the introduction of *its* as the possessive of *it*. [5]

Even the casual reader of Elizabethan English is aware of certain differences of usage in the verb that distinguish this part of speech from its form in later times. These differences are sometimes so slight as to give only a mildly unfamiliar tinge to the construction. [5]

Another feature of the English verb in the sixteenth century, more noticeable at the close than at the opening, is the occurrence of this *-s* as an ending also of the third person plural. [5]

Early Modern English is characterized by a further **loss of inflections** and an increase in the number of prepositions and auxiliaries (grammaticalization), as expected of a language becoming more analytic. The loss of inflections is artificially stopped by prescriptive grammarians, editors, and schoolteachers in the centuries that follow. If that had not happened, we might have lost the third person *-s* ending and the case endings on personal (*I/me*, *she/her*, etc.) and relative pronouns (*who/whom*). This has in fact happened in a number of modern varieties. [6]

As to **verbal endings**, the distinctive second person singular *-st* ending is lost due to the loss of the second person singular pronoun *thou*. The third person singular verbal ending changes from *-th* to *-s* in the course of the Early Modern English period. Authors vary greatly with respect to which verbal ending they use. [6]

Starting around 1600, most verbal endings are left out in writing; the third person verbal ending may no longer have been pronounced *-th* long before that. Forms in *-th* rhyme with forms in *-s*: in 1643, Richard Hodges mentions that *boughs* and *boweth* are the same. Shakespeare no

longer uses third person *-th* endings on verbs, except for *hath* and *doth*, and even those disappear after 1600 (Taylor 1972; 1976). [6]

The transformation of English into an analytic language continues in the Early Modern English period. As mentioned earlier, in syntactic terms, this transformation leads to an increasingly fixed word order and the introduction of **grammatical words**. An example of a grammatical word being formed is the directional *to* becoming a dative case marker. In Middle English, the number of prepositions and determiners increases as prepositions replace cases. Starting in the Early Modern English period, the grammatical words introduced are mainly auxiliaries. The trend towards more embedded sentences that started in Middle English also continues in Early Modern English. [6]

After ME two major changes affected the pronoun system. One was simple: *it* developed a new genitive, *its*. The other was lengthy, complicated and still not fully understood – the singular *thou/thy/thee* paradigm was lost and *you* took on nominative and oblique functions for both numbers, while the old genitive plural *your* came to serve as both singular and plural. [9]

5. Choose the correct answer

**1. What was the age of literary Renaissance marked by?**

a) decay of inflections b) great linguistic freedom c) development of phonetic writing d) rise of prescriptive grammar

**2. How can the period that followed the age of the literary Renaissance be characterized linguistically?**

a) period of fixing the language b) period of dialectal diversity c) period of stabilizing vocabulary d) classical period

**3. What became the subject of great concern in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries?**

a) protection of the language from corruption and change b) some aspects of language usage c) correct pronunciation d) language of lower classes

**4. How was linguistic change regarded by the writers of the late 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries?**

a) as corruption b) as necessity c) as norm d) as a standard way of language development

**5. What is the 18<sup>th</sup> century remarkable for?**

a) indifference to matters of language usage b) rise of grammatical typology c) deliberate attempts to fix the language d) development of dialectology

**6. What matters were among the most popular subjects of the new journals THE TATLER and THE SPECTATOR?**

a) sociolinguistic matters b) lexicological matters c) fashion matters d) language matters

**7. Who drew up a detailed proposal that a body of well-informed persons should be set up in order to fix the correct rules of usage?**

a) J. Swift b) R. Steele c) J. Dryden d) J. Milton

**8. Who was the author of Grammatica Linguae Anglicanae (1653) which won European fame and ran through many editions?**

a) J. Wallis b) R. Lowth c) J. Priestley d) L. Murray

**9. What were the grammars of the 18<sup>th</sup> century influenced by?**

a) extralinguistic foundations of the literary language b) works of J. Priestley and L. Murray c) the descriptions of classical languages and the principles of logic d) some tendencies of the English language development

**10. What was the main purpose of the grammars of the 18<sup>th</sup> century?**

a) to improve the corrupt language of the lower classes b) to stimulate language change c) to provide schools with adequate manuals d) to formulate rules based on logical considerations

**11. What were the grammars of the 18<sup>th</sup> century designed to do in relation to language change?**

a) to promote language change b) to restrict language change c) to describe language change d) to observe language change

**12. What is one of the most influential prescriptive grammars of the 18<sup>th</sup> century?**

a) A SHORT INTRODUCTION TO ENGLISH GRAMMAR  
b) GRAMMATICA LINGVAE ANGLICANAE  
c) RUDIMENTS OF ENGLISH GRAMMAR  
d) ENGLISH GRAMMAR ADAPTED TO THE DIFFERENT CLASSES OF LEARNERS

**13. What role did R. Lowth's grammar play in the development of the English language in the 18<sup>th</sup> century?**

a) it was most effective in propagating the doctrine of correctness  
b) it fixed the development of the English language in the 18<sup>th</sup> century  
c) it motivated the high rate of language change  
d) it formed the basis for the universal logical grammar

**14. How did R. Lowth regard "double comparison"?**

a) as logical b) as rudimentary c) as obligatory d) as illogical

**15. What prominent grammarian of the 18<sup>th</sup> century deviated from the prescriptive aims of grammar and the domination of Latin?**

a) J. Priestley b) R. Lowth c) L. Murray d) J. Wallis

**16. Who was the author of the RUDIMENTS OF ENGLISH GRAMMAR (1761)?**

a) J. Priestley b) R. Lowth c) L. Murray d) J. Wallis

**17. What American grammarian was the author of the grammar that for many years was the most widely used manual at schools?**

a) J. Priestley b) R. Lowth c) L. Murray d) J. Wallis

**18. With whom is the greatest achievement of the 18<sup>th</sup> century English lexicography connected?**

a) S. Johnson b) E. Coles c) N. Bailey d) J. Swift

**19. Whose dictionary did Samuel Johnson use as the basis of his own?**

a) N. Bailey's dictionary b) E. Cole's dictionary c) N. Webster's dictionary d) J. Swift's dictionary

**20. When was S. Johnson's dictionary published?**

a) 1754 b) 1755 c) 1756 d) 1757

**21. How did S. Johnson's dictionary regulate current usage?**

a) by giving general descriptions b) by giving naïve descriptions of meaning c) by giving precise definitions d) by giving etymology

**22. Between what pronunciations of English did S. Johnson distinguish?**

a) regular pronunciation and irregular pronunciation  
b) colloquial pronunciation and regular pronunciation  
c) received pronunciation and colloquial pronunciation  
d) elegant pronunciation and colloquial pronunciation

**23. What role did the grammars and dictionaries of the 18<sup>th</sup> century play in the development of the English language?**

**a)** they didn't play any significant role for the development of the language **b)** they helped to standardize the language and fix its Written and Spoken standard **c)** they provided illustrations of the peculiarities of the 18<sup>th</sup> century English language **d)** they formed basis for the school education and through it for the spread of the current usage

**Section XVII.**

**The rise of a national Standard language  
in the period 1476–1776**

*1. For class discussion*

- Influence of Shakespeare on the English language
- First English dictionaries
- Johnson's dictionary (1755)

*2. Read the following notes about the influence of Shakespeare on the English language. Make a summary of the ideas implied.*

It is a well-known fact that, except for a man like the Elizabethan translator Philemon Holland, Shakespeare had the largest vocabulary of any English writer. This is due not only to his daring and resourceful use of words but also in part to his ready acceptance of new words of every kind. [5]

Among Shakespearian words are found *agile, allurement, antipathy, catastrophe, consonancy, critical, demonstrate, dire, discountenance, emphasis, emulate, expostulation, extract, hereditary, horrid, impertinency, meditate, modest, pathological, prodigious, vast*, the Romance words *ambuscado, armada, barricade, bastinado, cavalier, mutiny, palisado, pell-mell, renegade* – all new to English in the latter half of the sixteenth century. Some of the words Shakespeare uses must have been very new indeed, because the earliest instance in which we find them at all is only a year or two before he uses them (e.g., *exist, initiate, jovial*), and in a number of cases his is the earliest occurrence of the

word in English (*accommodation, apostrophe, assassination, dexterously, dislocate, frugal, indistinguishable, misanthrope, obscene, pedant, premeditated, reliance, submerged, etc.*). [5]

The Shakespearean impact on the language was chiefly in the area of lexicon. His work, however, also provides countless instances of the way English was developing at the time, and illustrations from his poems and plays are unavoidable in any discussion of contemporary pronunciation, word formation, syntax, or language use. In return, the studies of Renaissance language in general have contributed many insights into Shakespeare's own use of language. [18]

All textbooks on the history of English agree that the two most important influences on the development of the language during the final decades of the Renaissance are the works of William Shakespeare and the King James Bible of 1611. "Influence" does not here refer to the way these works use language in a beautiful or memorable way. Extracts from both sources predominate any collection of English quotations... [18]

Shakespeare. The very name evokes the acme of the English language. Even people who have never seen his plays know phrases such as "sound and fury," "the most unkindest cut," "ripeness is all," and, of course, "to be, or not to be." .... More than any other writer in the language, Shakespeare used the resources of English to their full. He coined nearly six thousand new words; he juxtaposed terms from the Anglo-Saxon and the learned Latin for striking effect; he wrestled with the syntax of everyday speech until it almost broke. [13]

*3. Read the following notes about the role of Samuel Johnson's Dictionary in the history of the English language. Make a summary of the ideas implied.*

The publication in 1755 of *A Dictionary of the English Language*, by Samuel Johnson, A.M., in two folio volumes, was hailed as a great achievement. And it was justly so regarded, when we consider that it was the work of one man laboring almost without assistance for the short space of seven years. True, it had its defects. Judged by modern standards it was painfully inadequate. Its etymologies are often ludicrous. It is marred in places by prejudice and caprice. Its definitions, generally sound and often discriminating, are at times truly Johnsonian. It includes a host of words with a very questionable right to be regarded as belonging to the language. But it had positive virtues. It exhibited the

English vocabulary much more fully than had ever been done before. It offered a spelling, fixed, even if sometimes badly, that could be accepted as standard. It supplied thousands of quotations illustrating the use of words, so that, as Johnson remarked in his preface, where his own explanation is inadequate “the sense may easily be collected entire from the examples.” [5]

It was not until Samuel Johnson completed *A Dictionary of the English Language* in 1755 that the lexicon received its first authoritative treatment. Over a seven-year period, Johnson wrote the definitions of c. 40 000 words, illustrating their use from the best authors since the time of the Elizabethans (but excluding his own contemporaries). Although he has fewer entries than Bailey, his selection is more wide-ranging, and his lexicological treatment is far more discriminating and sophisticated. The book, according to his biographer Boswell, “conferred stability on the language – and at least with respect to spelling (where most of Johnson’s choices are found in modern practice), this seems to be so. [18]

In the codification of English during the eighteenth century the publication of Johnson's dictionary stands out above all other events, and a good deal has been written about both the lexicographer and his lexicon. [22]

Among its 40,000 entries, the dictionary's impressive 114,000 citations signal a significant advance in lexicography and a noteworthy commitment to the centrality of usage in ascertaining and codifying the language. [22]

Of course, Johnson’s *Dictionary* did more than present a linguistic persona. It created the public idea of the dictionary as the arbiter of language use. It made such a book the kind of object everyone would have and use. More pointedly, it shaped the English of its time and for a century afterward. It regularized spelling and grammatical forms. It codified and sanctioned pronunciations. It broadened the vocabulary of everyday speech, while at the same time seeking to excise slang and colloquial expressions from polite discourse. And, in its use of literary examples to illustrate word uses, forms, and histories, the *Dictionary* affirmed a canon of English literature and critical appreciation: it was both a product of and subsequent teacher of taste. In all these areas, Johnson set the mold for later lexicographers: from Noah Webster and his *Dictionary of the American Language* (first published in 1828), to

the founders and the editors of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (published from 1889 to 1928), who, in fact, first called their work the *New English Dictionary* – for the *old* one was Johnson’s. [13]

4. Read the following quotations first English dictionaries. Make a summary of the ideas implied.

English dictionaries did not exist until the seventeenth century. Before then, there were two-language dictionaries (for example, English–French and Latin–English), but no dictionaries devoted to English alone. The earliest surviving English dictionary, published in 1604, was a dictionary of ‘hard words’, as were all subsequent ones in that century. Because of the great vocabulary expansion in the later sixteenth century, and the prevalence of ‘inkhorn terms’, a need was felt for works which would explain the meaning of obscure words. The history of the dictionary in the seventeenth century is mainly one of expansion: Robert Cawdrey’s dictionary of 1604 contained about 2,500 words, while that of Elisha Cole in 1676 contained about 25,000. [4]

Not until the eighteenth century, however, did dictionaries attempt to record the ordinary everyday words of the language, the first being *A New English Dictionary* of 1702, perhaps by John Kersey. This was followed by the outstanding dictionaries of Nathan Bailey (1721) and of Samuel Johnson (1755). Johnson’s monumental work includes extensive quotations from earlier authors to illustrate word-meanings. These dictionaries helped to stabilize spellings and word-meanings, and inevitably came to be treated as authorities. [4]

In 1700 a score of English grammars existed, and scores more appeared by 1800. Several English dictionaries, slight by later standards, also existed in 1700, and substantial ones including Dr Johnson's were to follow in the next hundred years. Thus, in the eighteenth century the regulation and codification of English fell to independent entrepreneurs: grammarians and lexicographers operating in a market-place unfettered by guidelines, unsanctioned by imprimatur, and unencumbered by official meddling. Then in the nineteenth century, besides grammars and dictionaries aplenty, including a beginning for the grand *Oxford English Dictionary*, prescriptive handbooks of lexical and grammatical usage also flourished, as the debate between prescriptivists and descriptivists was joined. [22]

The Enlightenment made its mark on language largely through new words, new technical terms, but its love of orderliness can also be detected in the way it organized linguistic phenomena. Dictionaries of the late eighteenth century are more precise and systematic than earlier dictionaries, most of which defined words in an informal, even colloquial style and still included (for example) the magical powers of gems. Encyclopedias before about 1730, such as Chambers', explain certain things in scholastic (Aristotelian) terms, whereas the first edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1768–71) draws substantially on recent discoveries in mathematics, physiology, and biology. Modern linguists still rely on the scheme of organization for languages and language families ("Indo-European") that was invented or discovered by Sir William Jones in the 1780s. [1]

It is also during this period that the first dictionaries appear. The first are bilingual Latin–English dictionaries, followed by bilingual English–French dictionaries, e.g. Palsgrave (1530) *Lesclarcissement de la langue francoyse*, and also multilingual ones. The first monolingual English dictionaries were published in the early seventeenth century, primarily providing glosses for the increasing stock of learned vocabulary, so-called 'hard words', but gradually they were expanded and also included ordinary everyday usage. The greatest milestone in this development was Samuel Johnson's (1755) dictionary, which served as a model for dictionary makers throughout many generations, until work on the *OED* started in the nineteenth century. [9]

5. Choose the correct answer.

**1. What particular process happened during the early Modern English period?**

a) development of the Gerund b) dialectal differentiation c) phonological and phonetic change d) the formation of the national literary English language

**2. From what time is it possible to speak of the evolution of a single literary language?**

a) early Middle English b) late Middle English c) early Modern English d) late Modern English

**3. What factor favored the rise of the national language?**

a) progress of culture b) Norman Conquest c) translation of the Bible d) foreign contacts

**4. What caused the growth of vocabulary during the early Modern English period?**

a) unification of the country b) trade with foreign countries c) invention of printing d) mixture of dialects

**5. What process played a decisive role in the development of the English language during the early Modern English period?**

a) complete change of the grammatical typology b) influx of Latin borrowings c) appearance of the new social classes d) the economic and political unification

**6. What form of language is used as a national Standard?**

a) language of prose and poetry b) superdialect form c) scientific language d) written language

**7. By what are the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries in Western Europe marked?**

a) renewed interest in classical art and literature b) decline in the level of culture c) lexical and grammatical changes in most European languages d) introduction of French as the language of school teaching

**8. What was a big stimulus to the development of learning and literature during the early Modern English period?**

a) great geographical discoveries b) appearance of cheap printed books c) official recognition of Latin in the sphere of education d) rise of a new social class – bourgeoisie

**9. What organization became the centre of new humanistic learning?**

a) King's court b) Oxford university c) the Church of England d) printing house

**10. How was English characterized in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries?**

a) rude and barren tongue b) expressive and eloquent c) highly developed language d) a most sophisticated

**11. Upon what system of English did classical languages have the greater influence during the early Modern English period?**

a) phonological b) lexical c) morphological d) syntactical



**12. In what language were the scientific works in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries written?**

a) Latin b) Greek c) French d) English

**13. Who was the 1<sup>st</sup> printer of English books?**

a) Beowulf b) G. Chaucer c) W. Caxton d) J. Wycliffe

**14. What achievement had the most important effect on the development of English during the early Modern English period?**

a) translation of the Bible b) *Canterbury Tales* by G. Chaucer  
c) reemergence of English in the 16<sup>th</sup> c. d) the invention of printing

**15. What is the first printed English book?**

a) the Bible b) Recuyell of the history of Troye c) *Canterbury Tales* by G. Chaucer d) Beowulf

**16. What role did the 1<sup>st</sup> printers play in the history of the English language?**

a) they fixed and spread the written form of English b) they corrected mistakes in books written during Old and Middle English period  
c) they introduced a lot of Latin and French borrowings into English  
d) They made G. Chaucer and other poets popular in England

## Section XVIII. Late modern English

### 1. For class discussion

- First English grammars
- The rise of prescriptive grammar
- Standardization and codification of English

2. Read the following quotations on the standardization and codification of the English language. Make a summary of the ideas implied.

The intellectual tendencies here noted are seen quite clearly in the eighteenth-century efforts to standardize, refine, and fix the English language. In the period under consideration discussion of the language takes a new turn. Previously interest had been shown chiefly in such questions as whether English was worthy of being used for writings in which Latin had long been traditional, whether the large additions being

made to the vocabulary were justified, and whether a more adequate system of spelling could be introduced. Now for the first time attention was turned to the grammar, and it was discovered that English had no grammar. At any rate its grammar was largely uncodified, unsystematized. The ancient languages had been reduced to rule; one knew what was right and what was wrong. But in English everything was uncertain. One learned to speak and write as one learned to walk, and in many matters of grammatical usage there was much variation even among educated people. This was clearly distasteful to an age that desired above all else an orderly universe. [5]

Eighteenth-century attempts to codify the English language and to direct its course fall, we may repeat, under three main heads: (1) to reduce the language to rule and set up a standard of correct usage; (2) to refine it—that is, to remove supposed defects and introduce certain improvements; and (3) to fix it permanently in the desired form. [5]

Until the 1650s, there is much debate on vocabulary and spelling, and English is technically without a standard, i.e. the language of one social or regional group that is typically taught in schools and used in official circles. The centuries that follow impose many restrictions on linguistic freedoms and the need for an Academy is debated. [6]

The three hundred years from William Caxton to Dr Johnson constitute a period of transition during which the spelling and the morphological shape of words became to a great extent fixed. Although large numbers of new words have been added, the forms that were codified in grammars and dictionaries in the eighteenth century have changed relatively little in the course of the last two hundred years. [21]

The rise of a national Standard language in the period 1476–1776 had its literary counterpart in the formation of a *national literature*, embodied in the works of those whom influential opinion identified as the nation's 'best authors'. Indeed, the codifying of language and the canonising of literature were not merely simultaneous but symbiotic processes, with the 'best authors' being quarried for instructive examples as much by grammarians and language teachers as by rhetoricians and literary critics. Dr Johnson, for instance, advised prospective readers of his Dictionary that 'the syntax of this language . . . can be only learned by the distinct consideration of particular words as they are used by the best authors'. [21]

This growing perception of standardness as a virtue (in Europe generally, not just England) is connected with a general late Renaissance and Enlightenment desire for linguistic ‘normalisation’ and ‘stabilisation’; this would give to the increasingly used local vernaculars an ‘authority’ and permanence like that of Latin (which being a dead language was no longer subject to the vagaries of usage: even if it was pronounced differently in different countries, and its vocabulary was increased, its grammatical structure remained relatively stable). [21]

Broadly speaking, one of the most important sociolinguistic developments affecting the modern period is standardisation, a process spanning centuries and still on-going. The late Modern English period consolidates the foundation laid for Modern Standard English to be codified in the grammars and dictionaries of the eighteenth century. In 1775 Dr. Johnson (1709-84) published the dictionary (1755) that was to be definitive for generations to come, based on the usage of ‘good’ authors from Shakespeare to Addison. [22]

The most significant event in the codification of English during the nineteenth century was, of course, the compilation of *the New English Dictionary*, whose grounding can be traced to the Philological Society, founded in London in 1842. By the mid-1850s members of the Society had come to recognise certain deficiencies in the dictionaries of Samuel Johnson and Charles Richardson, the latter a disciple of Home Tooke. [22]

The Early Modern period sees, in printed texts at least, what could be called the triumph of standardization. By 1660, books and pamphlets produced by the London printing houses show a very low degree of orthographic variation, while the major morpho-syntactic changes in English appear, from the evidence of print, mainly to be complete by around 1600: after this date, outgoing features such as ‘thou’, third person singular ‘-th’, and unregulated use of auxiliary ‘do’ are largely confined to formulaic, archaic, and poetic contexts. [1]

3. Read the following quotations on first English grammars. Make a summary of the ideas implied.

What Dr. Johnson had done for the vocabulary was attempted for the syntax by the grammarians of the eighteenth century. Treatises on English grammar had begun to appear in the sixteenth century and in the seventeenth were compiled by even such authors as Ben Jonson and

Milton. These early works, however, were generally written for the purpose of teaching foreigners the language or providing a basis for the study of Latin grammar. Occasional writers like John Wallis (*Grammatica Linguae Anglicanae*, 1653) recognized that the plan of Latin grammar was not well suited to exhibiting the structure of English, but not until the eighteenth century, generally speaking, was English grammar viewed as a subject deserving of study in itself. [5]

The decade beginning in 1760 witnessed a striking outburst of interest in English grammar. In 1761 Joseph Priestley published *The Rudiments of English Grammar*. In it he showed the independence, tolerance, and good sense that characterized his work in other fields, and we shall have more to say of it below. It was followed about a month later by Robert Lowth’s *Short Introduction to English Grammar* (1762). [5]

If we attempt to view the work of the eighteenth-century grammarians in retrospect and estimate the results that they achieved, we shall find them not inconsiderable. It must be remembered that consciously or unconsciously these grammarians were attempting to “ascertain” the language and to give definiteness and order to a body of hitherto uncodified practice. As a consequence it could no longer be said that English was a language without rules. It might almost be said that we had too many rules. Some of them have since been set aside. Others are of doubtful validity, although they still find a place in our handbooks and are imposed upon those who consider conformity to supposed authority a sufficient criterion of correctness. [5]

Grammars are not very prescriptive in the 16th century: they take usage into account and do not provide the arbitrary rules based on Latin grammar that we currently still have. For instance, in 1653, John Wallis wrote a grammar of English in Latin, written for foreigners, but he did not feel genders and cases should be introduced since there was “no basis in the language itself”. [6]

The early English grammars were bilingual grammars, for Frenchmen wanting to learn English and for Englishmen wanting to learn French. The first grammar of English proper was written by Bull-ohar. It was published in 1586, and for the next seventy years or so several more grammars were written, some in English (by Ben Jonson, for example), others in Latin. All early grammarians primarily resorted to Latin grammar to provide them with a model, describing the grammar

of English as if it had eight parts of speech, three tenses, two moods and six persons. There was, again, no other model available. English grammar was not at first considered an object worthy of study for its own sake. [9]

Lowth's *Short Introduction to the English Language* (1762) marks the beginning of the next stage in the standardisation process, the *prescription* stage. The grammar distinguishes itself from others produced around the same time in that in the footnotes to its section on syntax it provides an inventory of grammatical errors made by more or less contemporary authors as well as by those whose language was often upheld as representing the norm of good usage. Even 'our best Authors ... have sometimes fallen into mistakes', Lowth wrote in his preface, and a grammar such as his own would be needed to remedy the defects he identified. Lowth, and others after him, presented his reading public with a norm of correct English. [9]

#### 4. Choose the correct answer

**1. By what time had the Written Standard been fixed and recognized?**

a) by the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century b) by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century c) by the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century d) by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century

**2. What is the next stage in the growth of the national literary language after the Written Standard had been fixed and recognized?**

a) flourishing of literature b) development of the Spoken Standard c) fixing the literary norms of the language d) increasing the tempo of language change

**3. What is considered as a valuable source of information on the norms of the Spoken Standard of the 18<sup>th</sup> century?**

a) grammars and dictionaries b) King James Bible c) works of contemporary linguists d) private letters

**4. What testifies to the existence of recognized norms of educated spoken English?**

a) emergence of the Spoken Standard b) diverse recommendations aimed at improving the forms of written and oral discourse given in compositions on language c) geographical and social differentiation

of language d) intermixture of people belonging to different social groups

**5. What is the earliest date for the emergence of the Spoken Standard?**

a) late 17<sup>th</sup> century b) late 18<sup>th</sup> century c) middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century d) middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century

**6. By what time had current usage of English become more uniform?**

a) the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century b) the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century c) beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century d) beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century

**7. What does the concept of Spoken Standard imply?**

a) a level of fluency in spoken speech required to enter the University b) a system of rules by which the knowledge of English was assessed c) an average type of speech regularly produced by all members of society d) a more or less uniform type of speech used by educated people and taught as "correct English" at schools

**8. How can the stability of the Spoken forms of the language be characterized as compared to the Written Standard ?**

a) Spoken forms were more stable than the Written Standard b) Written Standard could go through sudden and rapid changes c) spoken forms were never as stable as the Written Standard d) the Spoken Standard was more firmly established than the Written Standard

**9. What of the following wasn't the source of many new features that first entered the Spoken Standard?**

a) local dialects b) lower social dialects c) professional jargons d) poetry

**10. What elements was the Written Standard enriched by?**

a) elements coming from various functional and literary styles b) elements coming from lower social dialects c) elements coming from local dialects d) elements coming from professional jargons

**11. What are the geographical and social sources and origins of the Spoken Standard?**

a) the tongue of Westminster b) the tongue of London c) speech of the aristocracy d) speech of common people

**12. What phenomenon in the 17<sup>th</sup> century enriched the language and at the same time had a stabilizing effect on linguistic change?**

**a)** flourishing of literature **b)** dialectal diversity **c)** appearance of grammars based on prescriptive principles **d)** translation of scientific works from Latin in English

**13. Why may the formation of the national literary English language be regarded as completed by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century?**

**a)** it possessed the Spoken Standard **b)** it possessed both a Written and a Spoken Standard by this time **c)** it possessed the Written Standard **d)** it possessed a highly developed literature

**14. In what did the 19<sup>th</sup> century Literary English find its ideal representation?**

**a)** in the works of English authors of the 19<sup>th</sup> century **b)** in the speech of aristocrats **c)** in the dictionary of Samuel Johnson **d)** in the speech of common people

**15. What were local dialects and lower social dialects mainly used for?**

**a)** for writing prose **b)** for writing poetry **c)** for written communication **d)** for oral communication

**16. What was the result of the changing of literary tastes in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when writers began to take a greater interest in the regional dialects and in folklore?**

**a)** appearance of numerous dictionaries of dialectal words **b)** development of new lexicological categories **c)** a sudden linguistic change **d)** non-standard forms of the language were recorded in the speech of various characters

**17. What two varieties of English in Great Britain claimed to be literary tongues?**

**a)** Scottish and Anglo-Irish **b)** Irish and Manx **c)** Scottish and Cornish **d)** Irish and Gaelic

## **Section XIX. The formation and growth of the national literary English language**

### *1. For class discussion*

- The growth of vocabulary in the 19<sup>th</sup> century
- English outside the British Isles
- Standardization of English in the 19<sup>th</sup> century
- Later Modern English

### *2. Read the following quotes on the events of the internal history of the English language in the 19<sup>th</sup> century*

The events of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries affecting the English-speaking countries have been of great political and social importance, but in their effect on the language they have not been revolutionary. The success of the British on the sea in the course of the Napoleonic Wars, culminating in Nelson's famous victory at Trafalgar in 1805, left England in a position of undisputed naval supremacy and gave it control over most of the world's commerce. [5]

The 19th century is characterized by the Industrial Revolution which transforms a (mainly) agricultural society into an industrial one and can be said to start in limited ways after 1700. It is characterized by an increased use of machines and factories as well as urbanization. English Imperialism is at its height during the reign of Victoria (1819–1901). We will see that both Industrialism and Imperialism lead to many linguistic changes. [6]

The growing importance of social class and the consolidation of British working-class culture in the fifty years from 1875 to 1925 are reflected in language, particularly in the creation of urban dialect, which was to become a major focus of interest to sociolinguists in the twentieth century. [22]

The establishment of the first cheap newspaper (1816) and of cheap postage (1840) and the improved means of travel and communication brought about by the railroad, the steamboat, and the telegraph had the effect of uniting more closely the different parts of Britain and of spreading the influence of the standard speech. [5]

3. Read the following quotations on grammatical peculiarities of 19 century English. Make a summary of the ideas implied.

On the whole, noun- and verb-forms have remained very stable during the Later Modern English period, because of the influence of the standard literary language and of the educational system. One exception is the group of learned nouns borrowed from Greek and Latin complete with their original plural forms (*dogma/dogmata*, *formula/formulae*, *genus/genera*, *syllabus/syllabi*, etc.). Such words are more and more often given analogical plurals in *-(e)s* (*formulas*, *genuses*, etc.), though sometimes a distinction is made between technical and popular usage: technical *formulae*, popular *formulas*. [4]

Verbal forms in fact reveal a number of significant shifts over the nineteenth century, not least perhaps in the continued diffusion of the progressive passive. Although examples of the earlier construction could still be found ('Chintz-room preparing for Mr. Sawyer', noted Harriet Acworth, the well-educated wife of an Evangelical minister in Leicestershire, in her diary in 1838), the newer form – as in 'The house was being built' – was well established by the 1830s, even if it continued to attract prescriptive censure. [24]

And syntagms like *is being* were real neologisms in the nineteenth century, arousing what now seem the most extraordinary reactions. [22]

The major problems of English inflectional morphology had long been settled – only a few questions in nominal inflection remained to be answered for grammarians of prescriptive grammars in the 19th century. A minor instance of unregulated usage was the genitive marker after stemfinal *s*; there was still some variation, but the generalization of *'s* appears to be the rule (as in *Tess 's*, *Dickens's*). Otherwise, case was (and still is) indicated only in pronouns. In plural formation, the distinction between countable and uncountable, i.e. whether a word could be pluralized (and whether a mass noun like *acquaintance* was to be constructed with a plural form of the verb), was a syntactical concern rather than one of morphology. However, the question of how a plural of a foreign word ought to be formed remained urgent (and is still unsolved), the speaker's competence in the classical languages competing with the tendency to integrate these words in pronunciation and morphology. [7]

In view of this background, it may well come as a surprise to find that there *were* developments within English syntax, chiefly in areas which had not been fully regularized in the 18th century. Other innovations, like the increasingly long strings of premodifying nouns and the increase in the use of the genitive in non-possessive functions, are not recorded with any conspicuous frequency in the 19th century and can thus probably be regarded as more recent changes, particularly in newspaper language. Developments in text structure are closely bound up with styles and text types. [7]

An analysis of 19th-century texts clearly shows that most 'problems' discussed in 18th-century grammars were still very much in evidence a century later (and indeed today); descriptions of individual writers' (deviant) usage largely agree with the lists of complaints in grammar books. [7]

In word order, 19th-century English appears to have permitted somewhat more choice than modern English does, being open to considerations of rhythm (especially in long periods, supported by heavy punctuation, cf. 3.3) and emphasis. However, some uses of inversion, i.e. the transposition of the subject and the (auxiliary or full) verb, strike one as particularly Victorian. Apart from cases where the use is standard (in questions and after sentence-initial *hardly*, etc.), inversion remained very much a question of stylistic choice ... [7]

Another minefield, largely uncleared in the 19th century is the position of adverbs and adverbial phrases and clauses. Prescriptive grammar laid down that adverbs ought not to 'split' infinitives and compound verbs, or separate copulatives and their complements (or, worse, transitive verbs and their objects). The fear of splitting infinitives (infrequent before 1830) is an exemplary case of a battle between usage, which might well allow the construction in certain contexts, and reason, which might object out of prescriptive concerns. The 'split infinitive' was one of the major concerns of linguists. [7]

The 19th century saw the expansion of the progressive into the passive. The construction was among the most criticized innovations, being considered both unnecessary and ugly – the active form would not be misunderstood with intransitive verbs, or where the sentence meaning was impossible to misconstrue. [7]

The increase in non-finite constructions was notable, especially patterns like *it was easy for him to come* replacing earlier *that ... should* clauses. A proper distinction between verbal nouns and gerunds (with verbal government) remained unclear, but was ultimately settled in the 19th century: whereas mixed constructions like *building of palaces* or *the building palaces* were common before, 19th-century grammarians insisted on the distinction between gerunds (*verbal: economically building houses*) and verbal nouns (*nominal: the economic building of houses*). [7]

4. Read the following quotations on lexical peculiarities of 19 century English. Make a summary of the ideas implied.

Scientific discoveries and inventions do not always influence the language in proportion to their importance. It is doubtful whether the radio and motion pictures are more important than the telephone, but they have brought more new words into general use. Such additions to the vocabulary depend more upon the degree to which the discovery or invention enters into the life of the community. This can be seen especially in the many new words or new uses of old words that have resulted from the popularity of the automobile and the numerous activities associated with it. Many an old word is now used in a special sense. Thus we *park* a car, and the verb *to park* scarcely suggests to the average driver anything except leaving his or her car along the side of a street or road or in a *parking space*. But the word is an old one, used as a military term (*to park cannon*) and later in reference to carriages. [5]

Scientific terms represented an area of conspicuous growth with *-ology* emerging as particularly popular suffix. *Biology* (1819), *embryology* (dated to 1859 in the OED in Darwin's *Origin of Species*, although in fact used by him – and others – some time earlier), *volcanology* ('The science or scientific study of volcanoes'), and *petrology* (among scores of others) all owe their beginnings to this time. Similar was *-itis*, as in *appendicitis*, a word first used in 1886, *conjunctivitis* (1835), *dermatitis* (1876), and *gastritis* (1806) attest further examples. [24]

Most of the new words coming into the language since 1800 have been derived from the same sources or created by the same methods as those that have long been familiar ... [5]

The existence of the OED therefore provides an unparalleled resource for nineteenth-century English (as well as that of earlier periods).

The lexical range of English at this time was striking. New words from India, Africa, and the Caribbean confirmed the colonial present (as did associated connotative meanings)... [24]

A little over a century after Johnson's dictionary appeared, the *OED* was launched under James Murray's editorship. In it the notion of a 'core' vocabulary evolved. Murray designated entries as 'Common Words of literature and conversation' as opposed to other words which were labeled 'scientific', 'foreign', 'dialectal', 'slang', 'technical', etc. Unlike Johnson's dictionary which was finished in a scant nine years, the *OED* was to take nearly seventy-five. Its aim was to record every word used in English literature since the year 1000 and to trace its historical development. The supplement, begun in 1957 by Robert Burchfield, was rather overambitiously planned to take only seven. Yet by the time the *OED* was completed in 1933, it had become obvious that no one dictionary could cover the entire lexicon of English. [22]

The most significant event in the codification of English during the nineteenth century was, of course, the compilation of *the New English Dictionary*, whose grounding can be traced to the Philological Society, founded in London in 1842. By the mid-1850s members of the Society had come to recognise certain deficiencies in the dictionaries of Samuel Johnson and Charles Richardson, the latter a disciple of Home Tooke. Consequently, to plan a lexicon that would supplement the existing dictionaries, a committee comprising F.J. Furnivall, Richard Chenevix Trench, and Herbert Coleridge undertook in 1857 to collect 'words and idioms hitherto unregistered'. [22]

The most important and available sources for information about the facts of language are dictionaries. Since 1800, the dictionary tradition, which had reached an earlier acme in Dr. Samuel Johnson's work, has progressed far beyond what was possible for that good man. Today English speakers have available an impressive array of dictionaries to suit a variety of needs. The greatest of all English dictionaries, and indeed the greatest dictionary ever made for any language, is the Oxford English Dictionary (OED). It was begun in 1857 as a project of the Philological Society of London for a "New English Dictionary," and that was what the work was called until the Oxford University Press assumed responsibility for it. The principal editor of the dictionary was

James Murray, a Scotsman who enlisted his family to work on the dictionary. Published in fascicles, it was completed in twelve volumes in 1928, thirteen years after Murray's death and seventy-one years after it had been proposed. But that was not the end of it. In 1933 a supplementary volume was published, largely filling lacunae from the early volumes. Then, after a hiatus of forty years, Robert Burchfield brought out four new supplementary volumes (1972–86) that both corrected missing history and added new words that had come into the language since the original publication. In 1989, a second edition of the dictionary was published in twenty volumes, combining the original with Burchfield's supplements and adding yet more new material. In 1992, an electronic version of the second edition was published on CD-ROM. The electronic files of the dictionary continue to be updated and corrected and are available online, though only by subscription. [3]

Both Johnson and Webster hoped to record the best examples of usage and create a standard by which future developments in language could be judged and to which future writers might aspire. By contrast, the editors of the *OED* set out to do something at once more humble and more ambitious: to record all the words in the English language without discrimination or interference of any sort. In the words of one of their founders, R. C. Trench, they planned to cast a swoopnet across the language, catching every word that had ever been used, recording its usage from its first use to its last and thus enabling it "to tell its own story." The new dictionary was to be an objective and impartially assembled "inventory". [1]

In 1834, William Whewell introduced the word *scientist* to the English language, having formed it by analogy with *artist*, to describe "students of knowledge of the material world." In the spring of that year, Whewell (1794–1866) was sought out by Michael Faraday (1791–1867) for advice on naming, and Faraday began his letter by writing: "I wanted some new names to express my facts in Electrical science without involving more theory than I could help." Faraday had just coined the noun *electrolyte* and then the verb *electrolyze* "instead of saying that water is *electrochemically decomposed*." But he was puzzled by what to call the *electrodes* (itself a Faraday coinage): "the two surfaces . . . by which the current enters into & passes out." [1]

It is very difficult to generalize about what characterizes the 19th-century vocabulary of English. How different it was from PDE is easily demonstrated from a few everyday contexts. Consider what people drank when not having ale, beer or wine, gin, tea, milk or water: Brook (1970:26) draws attention to the period-specific drinks *bishop*, *negus*, *porter*, *flip*, *dog's nose* and *purl*. Vehicles then available included a *gig*, *stanhope*, *dog-cart*, *taxedcart*, *chaise-cart*, *cabriolet*, *rumble* and *barouche*, a selection to which the first edition of Roget's *Thesaurus* (1852:64) adds *cariole*, *phaeton*, *curricle*, *whisky*, *landau*, *droshki*, *desobligeant*, *diligence*, *cab*, *calash*, *brougham*, *clarence* and various others, certainly not exhausting the range of terms available. [7]

The two major sources of lexical innovation in the 19th century were, as in other periods, the borrowing of foreign words (cf. 6.3) and the coinage of items on the basis of productive patterns in word-formation (cf. 6.4). A minor, but quite conspicuous, cause of lexical innovation was 19th-century prudery. Not only was *leg* often replaced by *limb* in all contexts, but other body parts and types of underwear came to be circumscribed by fanciful coinages (*trousers* were strictly to be avoided, *inexpressibles*, *indescribables*, *inexplicables* and *unmentionables* being suggested instead – however facetiously). [7]

5. Read the following quotations on some aspects of the development of the English language in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Make a summary of the ideas implied.

By the nineteenth century, English had become the language of a worldwide empire, and it was beginning to be influenced by its worldwide context. For the purpose of a general history of the language, however, England and London can still be treated as the natural focus of events. In the short term, in view of developments in England, the linguistic processes of half a millennium must have appeared to culminate in Victorian English. [12]

Given the insistence by historians on the nineteenth century as a period of particularly dramatic shift, it can seem ironic that, in histories of the language, it is the absence of significant linguistic change which instead comes to the fore. The English of the present day differs from that of 1800 'only in relatively minor ways', writes Fennell; Gerry Knowles similarly allows only 'little subsequent change [since 1800] in the forms of the standard language', even if he simultaneously admits

‘substantial change in non-standard spoken English’. It is of course undeniable that the wide-scale systemic changes which characterized some of the earlier periods discussed in this volume are absent. On the other hand, to assume a situation of near stasis is clearly somewhat reductive, especially when one takes into account the linguistic variability which accompanied private writings of a variety of kinds. [24]

‘Every age may be called an age of transition’, the novelist and statesman Edward Bulwer Lytton stated in 1833. ... as Lytton noted, ‘the passing-on, as it were, from one state to another never ceases’. Nevertheless, he made one important distinction for the nineteenth century alone. ‘In our age’, he added, ‘the transition is visible’. For those who lived in the nineteenth century, this ‘visibility’ of change could hardly be denied. [24]

After two centuries of effort to remedy the perceived inadequacies of English to enable it to meet a continually expanding range of functions, the eighteenth century was a time for putting the final touches on it, to fix things once and for all. In the nineteenth century and early part of the twentieth the success of England as an imperial nation combined with romantic ideas about language being the expression of a people's genius would engender a triumphalist and patriotic attitude to English. The language was now not so much to be improved but preserved as a great national monument and defended from threat in a battle over whose norms would prevail. As the demographic shift in the English-speaking population moved away from Britain, the twentieth would be declared the American century, and the Empire would strike back. [22]

Historians generally refer to the language used between 1500 and 1700 as early Modern English (eModE), with some suggesting that it begins as early as 1400 and continues until 1800. The structural stability of English over the late Modern English period challenges any simple-minded view of the relationship between social change and language change which might lead us to expect that language change is necessarily faster and more radical during periods of social upheaval. [22]

Thus, in the eighteenth century the regulation and codification of English fell to independent entrepreneurs: grammarians and lexicographers operating in a market-place unfettered by guidelines, unsanctioned by imprimatur, and unencumbered by official meddling. Then in

the nineteenth century, besides grammars and dictionaries aplenty, including a beginning for the grand *Oxford English Dictionary*, prescriptive handbooks of lexical and grammatical usage also flourished, as the battle between prescriptivists and descriptivists was joined. In the twentieth century, grammar books with distinctively descriptivist underpinnings have been compiled, and the *OED* completed, updated, integrated, and computerised so that it is now available in a mammoth set of twenty volumes or a single saucer-sized compact disc. [22]

By the end of the nineteenth century the phonetic sciences were maturing in Britain, having been established by A. J. Ellis (whose comments as head of the Philological Society we noted earlier) and Henry Sweet, the rough model for Professor Henry Higgins in Shaw's 'Pygmalion', which was produced in 1916. With advances in phonetics came renewed discussion of the roles of speaking and writing as norms for English usage. [22]

In the mid-nineteenth century Dean Trench linked English usage with ethics in his influential works, and since that time words have been widely viewed in Britain and America as having true and false senses and right and wrong uses. Language has been viewed as a mirror of community standards and community ethics. [22]

The history of English since 1800 has been a story of expansion – in geography, in speakers, and in the purposes for which English is used. Geographically, English was spread around the world, first by British colonization and empire-building, and more recently by American activities in world affairs. Braj Kachru has proposed three circles of English: an inner circle of native speakers in countries where English is the primary language, an outer circle of second-language speakers in countries where English has wide use alongside native official languages, and an expanding circle of foreign-language speakers in countries where English has no official standing but is used for ever-increasing special purposes. [3]

The writing of English grammars, already in full swing in the 18th century, continued. There is no exhaustive analysis of grammar books of English in the 19th century, nor is there a reprint series such as we have for the earlier period, but the sharply rising numbers in the last decades of the 18th century suggest that the production of grammar books continued unabated to cope with the demand from the growing



reading public. Michael reports (1991) that there were at least 856 different grammars of English printed in the 19th century, as against 271 before 1800. [7]

6. *Choose the correct answer*

**1. Why are Shakespeare's works important for the history of the English language?**

a) they show the peculiarities of the colloquial speech b) they give evidence for dialectal difference c) they give an ideal representation of the literary language of his days d) they help to establish the boundaries between different periods of the English language

**2. What of the following doesn't characterize the language of Shakespeare?**

a) freedom in creating new words b) large number of dialectal words c) versatility of grammatical constructions d) vast vocabulary

**3. What new kind of written evidence appeared in the early Modern English?**

a) scientific compositions b) love stories c) religious writings d) private papers

**4. What information do numerous letters of the 16<sup>th</sup> century give for the history of the English language?**

a) they give a fair picture of the colloquial speech b) they give information about some grammatical features of the language c) they show peculiarities of the belles-lettres style d) they provide complete information about the vocabulary of the early modern English

**5. How is a lower class London dialect called?**

a) Cockney b) Sidney c) Cawdrey d) Court English

**6. What is the large number of early works concerned with the English language devoted to?**

a) difficult words, borrowed from other languages b) Anglo-Saxon literature c) history of the language d) spelling and pronunciation

**7. What were the early English grammars based on?**

a) Latin grammar b) Anglo-Saxon grammar c) French grammar d) Greek grammar

**8. What is John Wallis famous for?**

a) the first author to break with the Latin tradition b) the first author to break with the Anglo-Saxon tradition c) the first author to break with the French tradition d) the first author to break with the Greek tradition

**9. What development did the international trade lead to?**

a) publishing of dictionaries b) development of economic vocabulary c) publishing of special phrasebooks d) development of special Business English

**10. What were the earliest dictionaries of the English language devoted to?**

a) lists of dialectal words b) lists of special vocabulary c) lists of derived words d) lists of difficult words

**11. What are Robert Cawdrey and John Bullokar famous for?**

a) they were famous lexicographers b) they were famous grammarians c) they were famous poets d) they were famous phoneticians

**12. By what time had the Written Standard of English been established?**

a) end of the 16<sup>th</sup> c. b) end of the 17<sup>th</sup> c. c) beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> c. d) middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> c.

**13. According to H. Wyld, what was the language of literature and writing in the 16<sup>th</sup> c. identical to?**

a) language of popular literature b) East Midland dialect c) colloquial Court English d) language of G. Chaucer

**14. What is the social basis of the written form of language in the early 17<sup>th</sup> c. according to T. Rastorgueva?**

a) educated people b) nobility c) ordinary people d) clergy

**15. What is a peculiar linguistic feature of the writings of the Renaissance?**

a) primitive grammatical constructions b) great number of borrowings c) variation at all linguistic levels d) poor vocabulary

**16. What is the linguistic "freedom" of the early modern English explained by?**

a) by the creative work of many middle English poets b) by the publication of dictionaries and grammars c) by the increased amount of written documents and by the broad contacts of the literary language

with folklore and oral speech **d)** by the development of new grammatical forms such as the gerund, the participle, etc.

**17. Which form of speech was superior to other forms during the early modern English period?**

**a)** English of scientists **b)** English of middle-class people **c)** English of literary texts **d)** Court English

**18. What language was a rival of English in the sphere of science and philosophy?**

**a)** French **b)** Greek **c)** Latin **d)** Old Greek

**19. What information about the English of the early modern period does *The Diary of Henry Machyn* give?**

**a)** large number of Latin borrowings **b)** existence of certain grammatical forms **c)** existence of social differences **d)** existence of dialectal vocabulary

**20. How can the speech of London in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries be characterised?**

**a)** it became more mixed **b)** it became fixed **c)** it completed its development **d)** it acquired great number of Latin borrowings

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ИСТОРИЯ АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА:  
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работы студентов

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