

The Norman Invasion & Middle English

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What we'll cover tonight

1. Norman Conquest
2. Middle English
3. Anglo-French

Norman Conquest

- What was the Norman Conquest?
- When did it take place?
- What was its linguistic impact?

Normans – descendants of Vikings who settled in northern France a few centuries prior – conquered England. The Duke of Normandy, Guillaume/William, had a loose claim to being King of England, and used this to justify the conquest.

The decisive Battle of Hastings: 1066. The Anglo-Saxon King Harold was killed; the Norman William became king.

(1) England became multilingual, and (2) English was changed forever, in ways we'll soon discuss.

Norman Conquest



Norman Conquest > England became multilingual

Say it's 1200 AD.

You're a **farmer**.

What do you speak?

Middle English!

What do you write?

Probably nothing!

Norman Conquest > England became multilingual

Say it's 1200 AD.

You're a **royal courtier**.

What do you speak?

Anglo-French!

What do you write?

Anglo-French!

Norman Conquest > England became multilingual

Say it's 1200 AD.

You're a **merchant**.

What do you speak?

Middle English! Anglo-French!

What do you write?

Anglo-French!

Norman Conquest > England became multilingual

Say it's 1200 AD.

You're a **monk**.

What do you speak?

Middle English! Anglo-French!

What do you write?

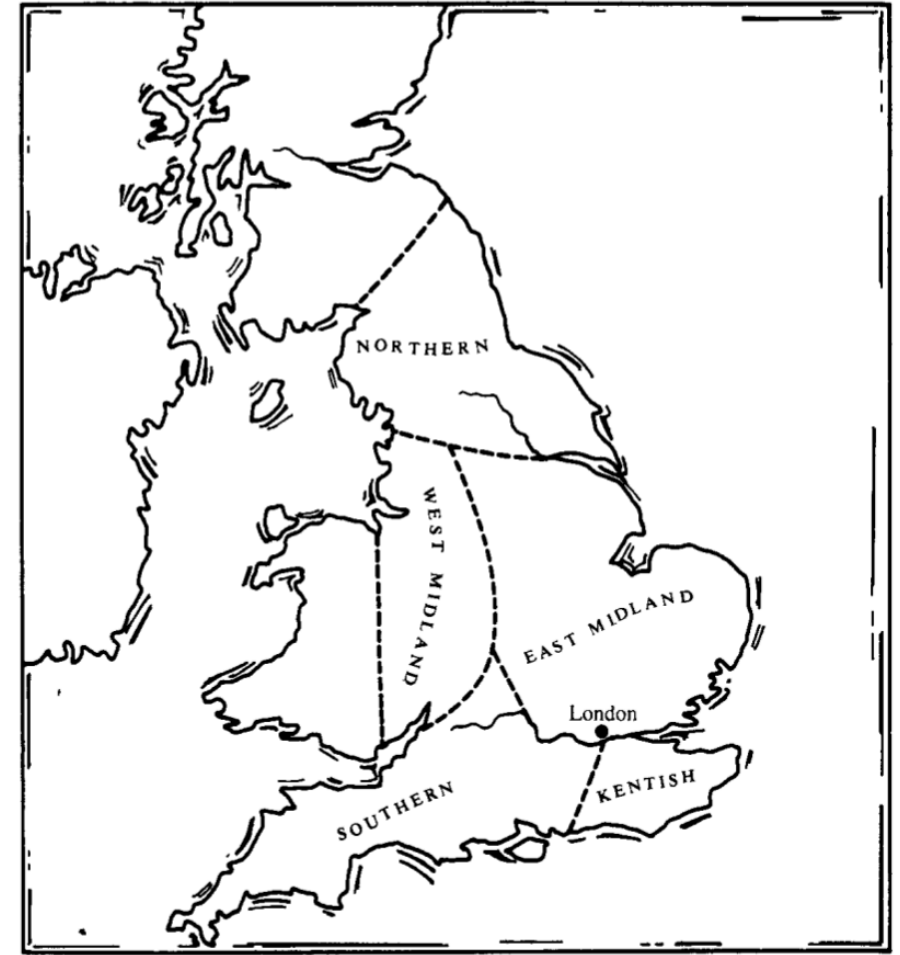
Latin!

Norman Conquest > England became multilingual

- From 1066 to the late-14th century, England was functionally trilingual between Middle English, Anglo-French, and Latin.
- Anglo-French had a strong influence on the development of Middle English.

Middle English

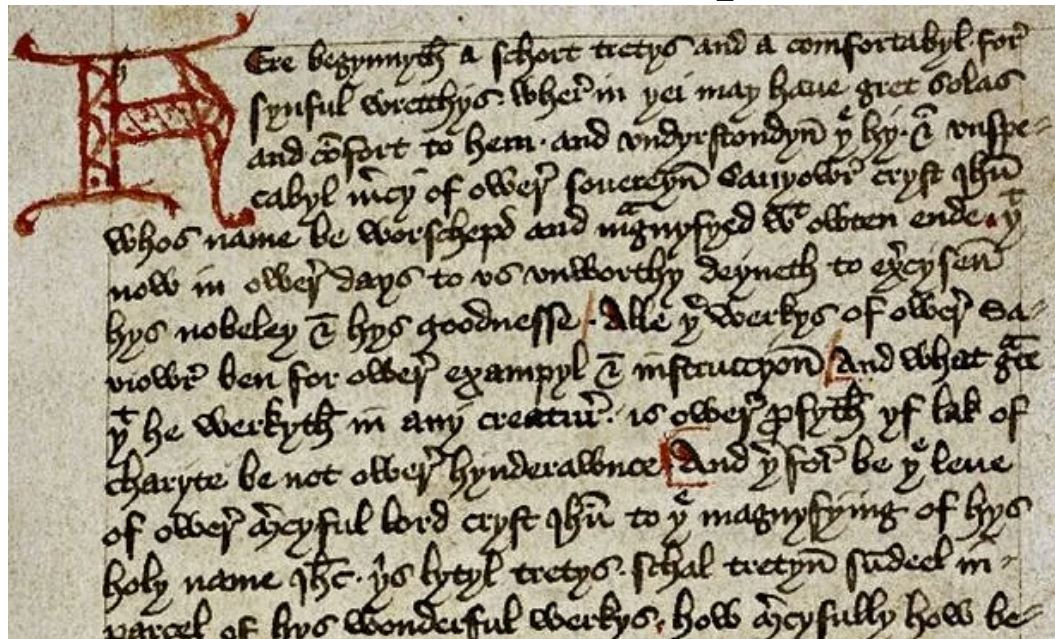
- What was it?
- Retrospective name for the medieval language that descended from Old English and preceded Modern English.
- There were various different varieties or dialects of Middle English, just as there are many varieties of Modern English.
- The variety spoken in London developed into most modern English varieties (US, UK, Australia, India, etc.)



Map from Algeo (2009)

Middle English

- What are some examples of Middle English?

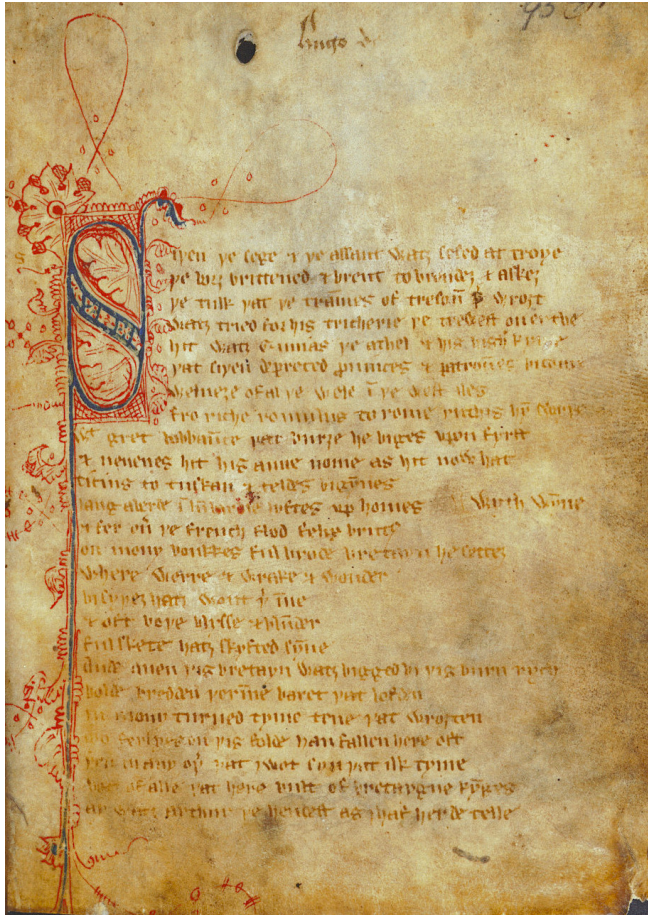


The Book of Margery Kempe (c. 1430s)
Spiritual autobiography.

Here begynnyth a schort tretys and a comfortabyl for synful wrecchys, wherin thei may have gret solas and comfort to hem and undyrstondyn the hy and unspe cabyl mercy of ower sovereyn Savyowr Cryst Jhesu, whos name be worschepd and magnifyed...

Here begins a short treatise and a comfort for sinful wretches, wherein they may have great solace and comfort to them and understand the high and unspeakable mercy of our sovereign saviour Jesus Christ, whose name be worshipped and magnified...

- What are some examples of Middle English?



Sir Gawain and the Green Knight
(late 14th-century)
Alliterative poem.

sipen þe sege and þe assaut watz sesed at troye
þe borȝ **brittened** and brent to **brondez** and askez
þe **tulk** þat þe **trammes** of tresoun þer wroȝt
watz tried for his tricherie þe trewest on erþe

Since the siege and the assault was ceased at Troy
the city [burgh] smashed and burnt to fuel and ashes
the knight that the contrivances of treason there wrought
was tried for his treachery, the truest on earth.

Middle English

- How did it differ from Old English?

Vocabulary strongly influenced by Anglo-French

Old English	Middle English	meaning
æhta	catel	'property'
burhsittende man	citeseyn	'citizen'
dæl	porcioun	'portion'
dælde	departide	'divided'
forwearð	perischid	'perished'
gælsa	lecherously	'lechery, lecherously'
genōh	plente	'enough, plenty'
gewilnode	coueitide	'wanted, coveted'
gewistfullian	make we feeste	'let us feast'
mildheortness	mercy	'mercy'
rīce	cuntre	'country'
þēow	seruaunt	'servant'
wræclīce	in pilgrymage	'abroad, traveling'

Middle English

- How did it differ from Old English?
 - Levelling of unstressed /a/ o/ /u/ and /e/ to [ə].
 - Using Algeo (2009: 122–128) as a guide, each group should report back on two sound changes.
1. Principal consonant changes (122–123)
 2. Middle English vowels (123–124)
 3. Changes in diphthongs (124–125)
 4. Lengthening + shortening (126–127)

Anglo-French

- Also known as “Insular French.”
- The form of French that arose in England.
- Most speakers were multilingual. Many “French” borrowings into English actually come from Anglo-French and not Continental French.

“...generations of educated Englishmen passed daily from English into French and back again in the course of their work. Very many of the French terms they used has been developing semantically on English soil since 1066, were absorbed quite naturally with all their semantic values into the native English who used them and then continued to evolve into their new environment of Middle English.” (Rothwell 1991: 180)

Anglo-French

1066: Norman conquest

1204: Normandy and England no longer under common control

Spoken in England into the late 1300s

- Colonial variety of a language separated from the linguistic core.
- Can you think of similar examples?