
Contents

Preface	ix
Acknowledgements	xi
Texts and facsimiles	xii
Symbols	xvi
1 The English language is brought to Britain	1
1.1 How the English language came to Britain	1
1.2 Roman Britain	7
1.3 Studying variety in language across time	10
1.4 How has the English language changed?	10
1.5 How can we learn about OE and later changes in the language?	11
1.6 Changes of meaning – the semantic level	12
2 Old English	15
2.1 Dialects and political boundaries	15
2.2 Written OE	17
2.3 Danish and Norwegian Vikings	24
2.4 The Battle of Brunanburh – OE poetry	27
2.5 Effects on the English language	30
2.6 Latin vocabulary in OE	32
2.7 OE grammar	33
2.8 The Norman Conquest	38
2.9 The pronunciation of OE	42
2.10 The inflections of OE	42
3 From Old English to Middle English	43
3.1 The evidence for linguistic change	43
3.2 The Norman Conquest and the English language	44
3.3 The earliest surviving ME text	46
3.4 The book called <i>Ormulum</i>	50
3.5 The origins of present-day Standard English in ME	53
3.6 Evidence of changes in pronunciation	53
3.7 The <i>Bestiary</i> – the eagle	57
3.8 A note on ME spelling	58

4	Middle English I – Southern and Kentish dialects	59
4.1	The dialectal areas of ME	59
4.2	How to describe dialect differences	63
4.3	An example of a fourteenth century SW dialect	64
4.4	Grammar	65
4.5	A SE, or Kentish, dialect	66
5	Middle English II – Northern dialects	71
5.1	A fourteenth century Scots English dialect	71
5.2	Another Northern dialect – York	75
5.3	Northern and Midlands dialects compared	78
5.4	Chaucer and the Northern dialect	80
6	Middle English III – West Midlands dialects	82
6.1	A NW Midlands dialect	82
6.2	A SW Midlands dialect	87
7	Middle English IV – East Midlands and London dialects	94
7.1	The origins of present-day Standard English	94
7.2	A SE Midlands dialect	95
7.3	The London dialect – Chaucer	98
7.4	The London dialect – Thomas Usk	101
8	Early Modern English I – the fifteenth century	104
8.1	The beginnings of EMnE	104
8.2	Early fifteenth century East Midlands dialect	104
8.3	Late fifteenth century East Midlands dialect	106
8.4	Late fifteenth century London English	108
8.5	The medieval tales of King Arthur	112
8.6	Late fifteenth century London dialect	113
9	Early Modern English II – the sixteenth century	117
9.1	The Lisle letters	117
9.2	Formal prose in the 1530s	120
9.3	A different view on new words	123
9.4	'English Dictionaries & other bookes written by learned men'	124
9.5	Changes in English pronunciation – the Great Vowel Shift	128
9.6	Punctuation in sixteenth century texts	131
9.7	The development of the standard language	131
9.8	Evidence for some sixteenth century varieties of English	134
9.9	English at the end of the sixteenth century	139

10	Early Modern English III – the seventeenth century	142
10.1	More evidence for changes in pronunciation	142
10.2	Sir Thomas Browne	145
10.3	George Fox's journal	148
10.4	John Milton	151
10.5	Dorothy Osborne's letters	153
10.6	John Evelyn's diary	156
10.7	John Bunyan	160
10.8	John Aubrey	165
10.9	Christopher Cooper's <i>The English Teacher</i>	166
10.10	John Dryden	172
10.11	North Riding Yorkshire dialect in the 1680s	177
11	Modern English – the eighteenth century	180
11.1	Correcting, improving and ascertaining the language	180
11.2	The perfection of the language	184
11.3	'The Genius of the Language'	185
11.4	Bishop Lowth's grammar	186
11.5	Literary styles in the eighteenth century	188
11.6	'The depraved language of the common People'	189
11.7	Language and class	190
11.8	William Cobbett and the politics of language	193
12	Postscript – to the present day	196
12.1	Some developments in the language since the eighteenth century	196
12.2	The continuity of prescriptive judgements on language use	198
12.3	The grammar of spoken English today	199
12.4	From OE to MnE – comparing historical texts	201
Bibliography		208
Index		211