

Middle English : 1100 to 1500

The 11th century saw the beginning of the "second period" of English, called Middle English, with the conquest of the country by William I of Normandy. At the death of Edward of England in 1066, his cousin, the Duke of Normandy—then called "William the Bastard," the illegitimate son of the Duke of Normandy, Robert I (Robert le Diable) and Arlette, a tanner's daughter—landed in England with the Pope's blessing in order to lay claim to the English throne. With an army of 6,000 to 7,000 men and some 1,400 ships, William landed in Sussex on September 29th and headed for Hastings, where he confronted King Harold II.

At the Battle of Hastings (October 14, 1066), which lasted only one day, William vanquished and killed Harold II. Thus "William the Bastard" became **William the Conqueror** and, on Christmas day, was crowned king in Westminster Abbey and became **William I of England**.

A Norman King for England (and Vassal of the King of France)

The new king ousted the Anglo-Saxon nobles, who had not supported him, and promoted his Norman barons. He began by appropriating the lands of the Anglo-Saxon aristocracy: over 1,000 "thegns" (aristocratic landowners or rich merchants) lost their lands to some 600 barons (mostly Normans but also Lorraines, Flemish, and Bretons). William I also did away with Anglo-Saxon prelates and ecclesiastical dignitaries by handing over the archdioceses to Norman dignitaries. It is thought that roughly 20,000 Normans settled in England following the Conquest. Thereafter, William I of England (1066–1087) ruled over his feudal lords with authority and became the richest and most powerful king in the West. As the kingdom's principal landowner, three-fifths of the land fell under his direct control. After twenty years of rule, the Anglo-Saxon aristocracy had vanished completely and a Norman elite had replaced it. There was not a single Englishman at the head of a bishopric or an abbey. The English language had begun to decline while Franco-Norman thrived.

However, as the Duke of Normandy, the King of England remained a vassal of the King of France (until 1204), which only succeeded in provoking antagonism. After the death of William I in 1087, his heirs fought over the English throne, and rivalries with Normandy intensified. William II ("William the Red") assumed the English throne to the displeasure of his brother, Robert Courteuse, the eldest son of William I and heir to the Duchy of Normandy. Tensions and conflicts between the two brothers lasted twenty years, as each tried to seize the other's lands, which served only to further the claims of the King of France.

The Franco-Norman Language

During the reign of William I of England, members of the court spoke a *kind of French* known today as *Franco-Norman* (or ***Anglo-Norman***), a French tinged with northern words brought by the Vikings who had conquered northern France a century earlier. By that time, the word *Norman* had lost its etymology of "man of the North" in favour of "inhabitant of the Duchy of Normandy." As conqueror, William declared Franco-Norman the official language of England. While inhabitants of the countryside and most common townspeople spoke Anglo-Saxon, the local nobility, the conquering aristocracy, and those connected with the church and the courts spoke **Franco-Norman**. Clergy, clerks, scientists, and scholars wrote in **Latin**. Thus, three languages shared the same language arena without any real competition: Franco-Norman, Anglo-Saxon, and Latin.

French, the language of the King of France, had not yet become established in high society, but this changed by the close of the 13th century. More prestigious than Franco-Norman, French was finally adopted by aristocrats and high dignitaries of the Church of England. The French language became widespread in cultural and artistic life. The Norman nobility had always forced its children to learn French, either in France itself or in specialized schools. Robert of Gloucester, one of the kingdom's leading figures, wrote in his *Chronicle* in 1298:

Vor bote a man conne frencs me telp of him lute.
Ac lowe men holdep to engliss and to hor owe speche bute.

For unless a man knows French, men think little of him .
But low men hold to English and to their own speech yet.

In short, commoners and country dwellers were barely influenced by French. They continued to use their Anglo-Saxon dialects while also borrowing (without knowing it) words from Franco-Norman or French.

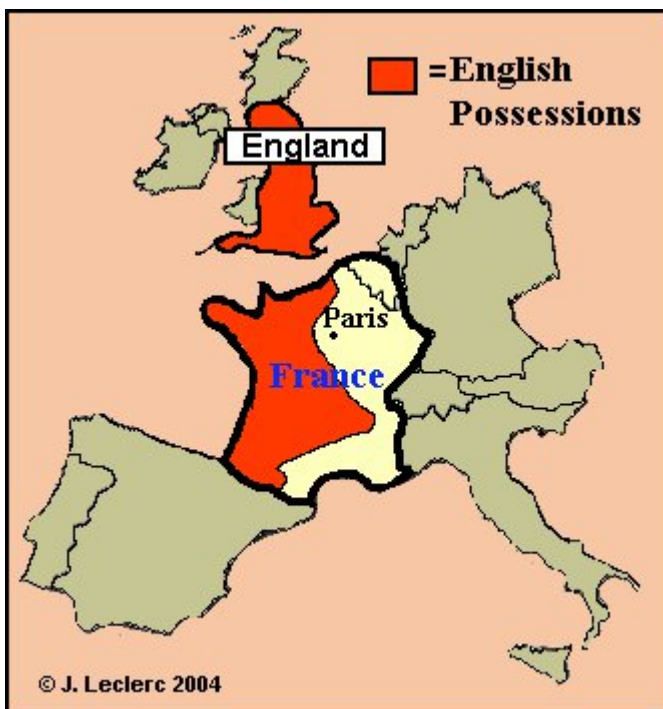
Quadrilingualism

Until the 14th century, four languages were spoken in the country, but did not seriously compete with one another. **Franco-Norman** (also called "Anglo-Norman") was the language of local administration and was taught in schools from the elementary level. The Church even preached to its congregations in Franco-Norman, although it used **Latin** for its own internal administration. **French** was the language of the aristocracy, legislation, and the courts; many rich and/or noble families sent their children to study in French cities. Meanwhile, the Anglo-Saxon people continued to speak an **Anglo-Saxon** (fragmented into five linguistic varieties) infused with Latin, Franco-Norman, and French words. Certain Anglo-Saxon words were created: town, home, house, and hall. This is how English acquired numerous lexical doublets, one of Germanic origin, the other of Romance origin: *house/ home, bookstore/ library, kitchen/ cuisine, sheep/ mutton, stream / river, coming/ arrival, tank/ reservoir, tongue/ language, town/ city, mansion/ manor*, etc.

Other words came into English through Franco-Norman: *accustom* (acostumer > accoutumer), *afraid* (afrayé > effrayé), *butler* (buteler > bouteiller), *candle* (candeile), *crown* (coronne > couronne), *eagle* (egle > aigle), *garden* (gardin > jardin), *jacket* (jacquet), *mayor* (maire), *money* (moneie), *oil* (oile > huile), *school* (escole > école), *soldier* (soudier > soldat), *taylor* (taillour > tailleur), *war* (werre > guerre), etc. **Old Norse** (of Scandinavian origin) gave Middle English the very important word *law*.

The English nobility had borrowed its titles from **French** (*prince, duke, peer, marquis, viscount, and baron*), but had created others in Middle English: *king, queen, lord, lady, and earl*. There was also an administrative vocabulary with French origins, such as *county, city, village, justice, palace, mansion, residence, government, and parliament*. There were words in the areas of religion (*sermon, prayer, clergy, abbey, piety*, etc.), law (*justice, jury, verdict, prison, pardon*, etc.), fashion (*fashion, collar, button, satin, ornament*, etc.), cooking (*dinner, supper, sole, salmon, beef, veal, mutton, pork, sausage, pigeon, biscuit, orange, oil, vinegar, mustard*, etc.), and art (*art, music, image, cathedral, column*, etc.).

The Growing Influence of French



By his marriage to Eleanor of Aquitaine in 1152, Henry II, first king of the Plantagenet dynasty, controlled over half of eastern France, aside from Ireland and Scotland. His kingdom now stretched from Scotland to the Pyrenees, the greatest potential power in Europe. Eventually, Philippe Auguste took back from Henry II's sons (Richard the Lionhearted and John Lackland) the lion's share of the Plantagenets' French possessions (Normandy, Maine, Anjou, Touraine, Poitou, Aquitaine, Limousin et Brittany).

At this time, the entire English monarchy spoke French, not to mention that the English kings married only French princesses (every princess between 1152 and 1445 came from France). Some English kings actually spent more time on the continent than in England; Henry II spent 21 of his 34 year reign there.

In 1259, Henry III of England officially renounced Normandy, which nonetheless retained a kind of autonomy within the French kingdom. The loss of Normandy forced the English nobility to choose between England and the continent. This contributed to marginalizing Franco-Norman while benefiting both Parisian French and English. In 1328, the last of the French Capetians (Charles IV) died heirless. The King of England claimed his succession rights to the French realm, but the French princes chose Philippe VI of Valois (1337). Henceforth, the two French-speaking kings fought over the French kingdom (until 1453) during the **Hundred Years War**.

After winning the Battle of Crécy (1346), English king Edward III was completely unable to address his troops in an English they could understand. Two years later (1348), he founded The Most Noble Order of the Garter, with its French motto *Honi Soit Qui Mal Y Pense*, meaning "Evil to him who evil thinks." But this long war had given birth to strong nationalist feelings in both France and England, and there were to be consequences for the French language of the English monarchy.

The English middle class protested the increasing use of French and demanded the use of English in their legislation. Edward III was forced to concede. In 1362, the Statute of Pleading officially recognized **English** as the sole language of the courts, although in practice French remained in use until 1731, despite the act of Parliament of 1362 that made English the sole legal language of the country. Gradually, French even lost its privileged place in education. Beginning in 1349, English became the language of instruction at the University of Oxford, whereas previously university teaching had been done in French. English began to be taught in some "grammar schools," and eventually in all schools.

The first king of England to speak English as a mother tongue was in fact Henry IV (1399–1413). One might say that in "kicking the English [allied with the Burgundians] out of France," Joan of Arc (1412–1431) also contributed to the decline of French across the Channel. One wonders what would have happened to French and English if she had not intervened: the King of England, Henry V—already Count of Maine, Duke of Normandy and of Guyana—would have been crowned at Rheims, thus becoming both King of France and England. French would surely have become the language of both countries thus united in a single kingdom. In short, if Joan of Arc saved France from the English, unbeknownst to her she also did a disservice to the French language, as her intervention ensured the enduring presence of English across the Channel.

The State of Middle English

When compared to Old English, the linguistic developments of Middle English were in the considerable simplification of the language during that period. In fact, beginning in the 13th century, the three or four cases (declensions) of nouns in the singular were reduced to two, and the *-es* ending marking the plural of nouns was adopted. "Arbitrary" distinctions of grammatical gender were replaced by "natural" ones, contrary to French practice, which arbitrarily assigned the gender of nouns. The dual number (to indicate "two," as in Greek) fell into disuse, while the dative and accusative of pronouns were merged into a single form. Verb conjugation was also simplified by omitting endings and using a common form for the singular and plural of the past tenses of "strong verbs." As for writing, it had evolved from the Runic to the Latin alphabet when England as a whole became Christian. The Middle English writing system retained a number of characteristics inherited from Old English, but adapted them according to the writing system inherited from the Normans.

French Loan Words

Middle English vocabulary underwent a radical transformation due in large part to its borrowings from **Franco-Norman** and especially **Parisian French**. The English nobility and clergy, most of whom were fluent in French and English, littered their English with French words relating to government, the Church, the army, life at court, the arts, education, and medicine. A century after the arrival of William the Conqueror, more than 1,000 **Norman words** had entered Middle English. Eventually, so did roughly 10,000 **French words**. In reality, English and Franco-Norman melded so well that the lexical result was very supple and contained numerous terms. However, it is not always easy to distinguish Franco-Norman derivations from French ones in today's English. For example: *bargain* (bargaignier > barguigner), *bastard* (bastard, bâtard), *choice* (chois > choix), *crust* (cruste > croûte), *custom* (custume > coutume), *merchant* (marchand), *money* (monnaie), *mutton* (mouton), *pork* (porc), *to toast* (toster > rôtir), etc.

Some idea of the standard English of the period can be found in this extract from *The Canterbury Tales*, by the famous English poet Geoffrey Chaucer (1340-1400):

He		knew		the cause of		everich maladye
Were	it	of	hoo	or	cold,	or moyste or drye,
And		where	they engendred	and	of	what humour ;

He was a **verry parfit praktisour**.

Il		connaissait		la cause de		toutes		les maladies ;
Qu'elles	soient	dues	au	chaud,	au	froid,	au	temps humide ou sec;
Il	savait	où	elles	se développaient	et	de	quelles	humeurs elles provenaient ;

C'était un **praticien vraiment parfait**.

These Middle English verses contain at least eight words of French origin: **cause** (*cause*), **maladye** (*maladie*), **moyste** (*moite*), **engendred** (*engendrer*), **humour** (*humeur*), **verry** (*vrai*), **parfit** (*parfait*), and **praktisour** (old form of *médecin*, doctor). Even this small sample illustrates the importance of the French contribution to the English vocabulary of the period.

Latin Loan Words

English at this time underwent another massive Latinization, borrowing heavily from Medieval Latin, sometimes prompted by

French: *attencioun* (attention), *diffusioun* (diffusion), *pastour* (pastor), *rectour* (rector), *actualyte* (actuality), *captivite* (captivity). Among the many terms of Latin origin to have survived are *allegory*, *conspiracy*, *contempt*, *homicide*, *incarnate*, *infinite*, *intellect*, *lapidary*, *lunatic*, *moderate*, *nervous*, *promote*, *quiet* (*quietus*), *rational*, *solidary*, *submit*, *suppress*, *temporal*, *tributary*, and *zenith*. In addition, English was enriched by **Latin suffixes and prefixes**, some of them borrowed through French. For example, the prefixes *de-* (deduce), *dis-* (distract), *ex-* (except), *inter-* (interval), *per-* (pervert), *pre-* (predestine), *pro-* (prosecute), and *sub-* (subscribe); and the suffixes *-able* (admirable), *-ible* (credible), *-al* (capital), *-ant/-ent* (important, different), *-ment* (argument, segment), etc. English would later draw from Latin in order to adjust its verbal and adjectival systems to its substantive one. Moreover, English "imported" terms from ancient regional languages spoken in medieval France, especially Angevin and Provençal.

Latin (or French) was also the medium for a number of words of **Greek** origin. Some 14th century examples include *agony*, *artery*, *basis*, *centre*, *character*, *climate*, *comedy*, *cycle*, *echo*, *fantasy*, *harmony*, *horizon*, *idiot*, *logic*, *magic*, *mystery*, *pomp*, *prune*, *schism*, *spasm*, *theatre*, and *tragedy*.

Dutch Loan Words

Finally, the Netherlands brought their share of lexical loan words, thanks to flourishing economic relations between England and Flanders at the time. There are words such as *poll* (meaning "man's head"), *clock*, *pickle*, *firkin*, *hop* (the plant), *skipper*, *deck*, *hose* (tube), *groat*, *wainscot*, *bulwark*, *luck*, *groove*, and *snap*.



Meanwhile, the **people of the English countryside** spoke only a Middle English dialect. The language map at left illustrates the locations of the varieties of Middle English dialects.

There were dialects in the north (equivalent to **Northumbrian**), southwest (**West Saxon**), southeast (**Kentish**), West Midlands (**West Anglian**), and East Midlands (**East Anglian**). Compared to the preceding Old English period, Celtic speech areas shrunk while Middle English ones grew, in Scotland as much as in Wales and Cornwall.

By the end of the 14th century, standard English was fully formed. It had developed in the area around London for various political, economic, and demographic reasons. Due to massive borrowing from Latin and French, the English of this period had become far removed from other Germanic languages such as German, Dutch, and Danish. And compared to Old English, it was completely transformed.

This English was used by the people insofar as it corresponded to the speech around London, one that would become the language of public life, trade, and learning.

It is worth noting that English evolved unchecked, never having been "governed" by the rules generally imposed on official languages. Until now, Latin and French had been the languages used in official functions. In centuries to come, Latin would continue to exercise a profound influence on English, a Germanic language: no small feat!

Modern English : 1500 to the Present

Modern English begins in the middle of the 15th century, when Franco-Norman and Anglo-Saxon coalesced to form today's English. Modern English can be divided into three periods:

1. **Early Modern English** : 1500 to 1750
2. **Late Modern English** : 1750–1800 to the 20th Century
3. **Contemporary English** : the 20th Century

Early Modern English

The period known as Early Modern English began just prior to the Renaissance, a time of unprecedented, intense excitement that included a fascination with Italy, new inventions, the discovery of America, etc. While it was a prosperous era for the aristocracy and the middle class, the peasants generally lived in squalor and knew nothing of Renaissance splendours. The English language attained its definitive structure in the 16th century, when spelling began to be standardized and grammar acquired the characteristics known today. At the end of the first period, which corresponds to the Renaissance movement, pronunciation transformed itself: for example, *to meet*, once pronounced [met], evolved into [mi:t].

The Contribution of Latin and Scientific Words

Vocabulary once again borrowed heavily from Greek and Latin, often through French. For example, with *real* and *royal* came the Latinism *regal*. The great authors wrote in English (this was the Shakespearean era), but scientific writings were always in Latin. This is why English drew from **Latin** and **Greek**: *maternity*, *esteem*, *education*, *atmosphere*, *skeleton*, *catastrophe*, *drama*, *scheme*, *genius*, *vacuum*, *anonymous*, *celebrate*, and *confiscate* are but a few examples. Others include *absurdity*, *adapt*, *agile*, *alienate*, *anachronism*, *appropriate*, *assassinate*, *atmosphere*, *autograph*, *benefit*, *capsule*, *catastrophe*, *chaos*, *climax*, *conspicuous*, *contradictory*, *crisis*, *criterion*, *critic*, *disability*, *disrespect*, *emphasis*, *encyclopaedia*, *enthusiasm*, *epilepsy*, *eradicate*, *exact*, *excavate*, *excursion*, *exist*, *expectation*, *expensive*, *explain*, *external*, *extinguish*, *fact*, *glottis*, *habitual*, *halo*, *harass*, *idiosyncrasy*, *immaturity*, *impersonal*, *inclemency*, *jocular*, *larynx*, *lexicon*, *lunar*, *monopoly*, *monosyllable*, *necessitate*, *obstruction*, *pancreas*, *parenthesis*, *pathetic*, *pneumonia*, *relaxation*, *relevant*, *scheme*, *soda*, *species*, *system*, *temperature*, *tendon*, *thermometer*, *tibia*, *transcribe*, *ulna*, *utopian*, *vacuum*, and *virus*.

Many words borrowed from Latin first went through French, but as usual it is not always easy to tell which ones. Meanwhile, new complications arose in spelling, leading to some disharmony between pronunciations and written forms, a characteristic as striking in French as in English.

Some English scholars very attached to Latin etymology managed to impose Latinate forms. For example, *debt* (F *dette*) and *doubt* (F *doute*) acquired a written [b] as a reminder of the Latin *debitum* and *dubitum*. A -g was added to *reign* because of the Latin *regnum*, and an -s to *island* because of *insula*. But in the latter case, *island* did not come from the Latin *insula* but from the Old English *iegland*. There was also the addition of numerous **Latin prefixes and suffixes**:

- Prefixes: a- (amoral), ab-, ac-, ad-, ante-, anti-, co-, com-, con-, de-, di-, dis-, e- (eject), em-, en-, ex-, it-, im-, in-, ir-, ob-, op-, per-, pre-, pro-, re-, sub-, super-.
- Suffixes: -age, -al, -ance, -ant, -ar, -ate, -ence, -ent, -ible, -ic, -id, -ile, -ion, -ite, -ity, -ive, -or, -ous, -tion and nouns like -a (data), -is (crisis), -ude (decrepitude), -um (datum), and -y (contingency).

It is noteworthy that Latinate words had a higher status than Anglo-Saxon or Germanic words, especially during the Renaissance, when professional vocabulary (medicine, botany, law, etc.) entered English in full force directly from Latin or through French. Thus, Latinate words became indicators of a good English education and, consequently, of the speaker's social status. For example, it can be shown how words of Latin (or French) origin have acquired a higher social cachet than Germanic ones. Today's English has many such doublets: *amiable/ friendly*, *lachrymose/ weeping*, *libra ry / book store*, *city/ town*, *journey/ trip*, *couch/ bed*, *cuisine/ kitchen*, *pork/ pig*, *mutton/ sheep*, etc.

The English humanists also borrowed from **Greek**, either directly or through Latin. Many scholars knew Greek and promoted its study. They directly introduced words such as *criterion*, *acoustic*, *idiosyncrasy*, *pathos*, *topic*, *acoustic*, *anonymous*, *chorus*, *crisis*, *critic*, *cylinder*, *dogma*, *drama*, *enigma*, *isthmus*, *larynx*, *nectar*, *site*, and *theory*. Moreover, Renaissance English fostered the use of compound words taken from Greek, such as *anthropology*, *archaeology*, *biography*, *cacophony*, *geography*, *hydrography*, and *physiology*. This way of enriching the lexicon would become very much in vogue in the 18th and 19th centuries—not to mention the 20th.

On the other hand, during the Renaissance many Latin or Greek words were considered pompous. Called *inkhorn terms*, they seem to have been most popular in university circles. With this fashion, however, came a growing resistance to borrowings often considered pointless. Some writers who used inkhorn terms were criticized for being boring and unintelligible, and even pedantic. Terms that the local populations would find hard to understand or use were called **hard words**. Some scholars, such as George Pettie (1548–1589), spoke of "the barbarousness of our tongue," while Sir Thomas Wilson denounced "these scholars who Latinize to the point that the man in the street wonders what they are saying." Later on, English protestants would refer to Latin as a *Popish language* in the belief that it had been created to keep the common people in ignorance and uphold the power of the clergy. Moreover, changes were underway as the 17th century drew to a close: in 1687 Newton wrote his *Principia Mathematica* in Latin, but in 1704 published his *Opticks* in English.

The Contribution of Modern Languages

Throughout the 17th century, English continued to borrow **French words**, notably through the English aristocracy and middle class. Examples include *aide-de-camp*, *belles-lettres*, *burlesque*, *cabaret*, *canaille*, *champagne*, *chef-d'oeuvre*, *commandant*, *compote*, *cortège*, *contretemps*, *crayon*, *démarche*, *dishabille*, *double entente*, *envoy* (from *envoyer*), *façade*, *faux pas*, *group*, *liaison*, *muslin* (from *mousseline*), *penchant*, *pis-aller*, *repartee*, *reverie*, *suite*, and *tableau*.

As elsewhere in Europe, the Renaissance also brought a contingent of **Italian words**. Thanks to its economic riches, military strength, technological and scientific advances, and cultural supremacy, Italy dominated almost every field of endeavour. So it is no surprise that many in England were fascinated by this country and gave in to a vogue of Italomania that is still evident in the English language today. Between 1500 and 1650, English borrowed heavily from Italian: *artisan*, *bandit*, *battalion*, *bankrupt*, *belvedere*, *cav a lier*, *cornice*, *madon n a*, *opera*, *partisan*, *pedant*, *populace*, *balloon*, *carnival*, *caprice*, *gazette*, *disgrace*, *mustachio*, *tarot*, etc.

Although Queen Elizabeth I and her advisors took great pains to foster anti-Hispanic sentiment, many English people also spoke Spanish, especially since the marriage of Mary Tudor, daughter of Catherine of Aragon, with Philip II of Spain. But it was not until the mid-17th century that **Spanish terms** entered the English vocabulary through French: *sherry*, *cargo*, *infant*, *renegade*, *creole*, *toreador*, *armada*, *escalade*, *grenade*, etc. Some words were borrowed from the Spanish Americas: *ananas*, *banana*, *cannibal*, *mosquito*, *potato*, etc.

English continued to borrow from **Dutch** (*brandy*, *yacht*, *smack* [fishing boat], *filibuster*, *wagon*, *frolic*, *snip*, *sputter*, etc.), **Arabic** (*alchemy*, *admiral*, *alembic*, *azimuth*, *cotton*, *elixir*, *alcohol*, *algebra*, *apricot*, *hashish*, *arsenal*, etc.), the **languages of India** (*curry*, *pariah*, *nabob*, *arsenic*, *check*, *chess*, *lilac*, etc.), **Persian** (*bazaar*, *dervish*, *shah*, etc.), and **Turkish** (*caviar*, *coffee*, *dolman*, *horde*, *janissary*).

During the 16th and 17th centuries, English took canoe, lama, manioc, tobacco, chocolate, condor, tomato, moccasin, sachem, squaw, and others. from **aboriginal languages**.

English Transformed

These contributions show without a doubt that the English lexicon was undergoing quite a transformation with the introduction of foreign terms. English was even forsaking its Germanic heritage of short words in favour of long words passed down by Latin and Greek, and even French (or Franco-Norman). Moreover, this was a fashion followed by most English writers—Chaucer in the 14th century, Sidney, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Bacon in the 16th, and Ben Jonson and Milton in the 17th. If some in England reacted "badly" to the intrusion of foreign words—especially Latin and Greek ones—others believed the English language had also grown richer with thousands of new words, and that it had acquired a remarkable lexical flexibility. It is easy to understand the reaction of someone like Edmund Spenser (1552–1599) at the influx of these foreign terms into English. Writing to the poet Gabriel Harvey (1550–1631), he lamented that they had made the English language a gibberish and a mishmash of all other languages. This flood of new words from approximately fifty different languages must have made a similar impression on many in England. Still, the majority of loan words came from Latin, Greek, French, Italian, and Spanish, giving the language of this "northern country" a curious and unique "Mediterranean flavour."

It is also around this time that concerns were raised about spelling. The introduction in 1476 of the printing press by William Caxton played a role in standardizing spelling. There were two opposing camps—"revolutionaries" and "reformers." The former wanted to completely overhaul the writing system, while the latter merely wanted to tidy up the spelling. The reformers won, which left English spelling in a rather complex state. In the mid-17th century, a major campaign was waged aimed at founding an English Academy modelled after the French *Académie française* (1635) and the Italian Accademia della Crusca (1582). The proponents of the idea wanted to set out and impose a series of norms that would stabilize the English language. But despite the support of such famous writers as Dryden, Defoe, and Swift, nothing came of the idea. A certain standardization did occur during the next period, but attempts at reform would remain half-hearted until the arrival of lexicographer Noah Webster (1758–1843). In 1828, Webster published his *American Dictionary of the English Language*, which included distinctive new American spellings. Webster's fame does not rest solely on his impressive body of work—he was the first to see the necessity of distinguishing American usage from its British model. As for grammar, despite numerous attempts since the 16th century, English has never been truly codified.