

EVENTS RELATED TO PERIODS OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Period	Year(s)	Event
Pre-English	54 B.C.E.	The ancient Britons (or Celts) defend their land from Julius Caesar and are defeated.
	50 C.E.	Roman Emperor Claudius I colonizes Britain; Celtic and Latin languages coexist.
	450 C.E.	Romans leave Britain; the Teutonic tribes (Jutes, Angles, and Saxons) invade. Anglo-Saxon becomes dominant language and the vocabulary stressed the people, objects, and events of daily life. The Roman alphabet, adapted from Greek, was reintroduced into Britain by Christian missionaries.
	60	England divides into seven kingdoms; Northumbria emerges as the dominant Christian kingdom affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church. A national English culture begins to emerge (e.g., <i>Beowulf</i>).
Old English	800	The Danes (or Norsemen or Vikings) invade England and bring political adjustment and racial assimilation but are defeated by King Alfred in 878. Words were phonetically very regular.
	900	Old English reaches its literary peak under the West Saxon kings.
	1000	The Danes successfully invade Britain, yet the Anglo-Saxon language continues its dominant role.
	1066	William the Conqueror, Duke of Normandy, invades Britain; Norman French becomes the official language of state while English remains the language of the people. More than 10,000 French words passed into the English vocabulary, of which 75% are still in use.

Period	Year(s)	Event
Middle English	1350	Edward III takes control; English again becomes the official language of state. Affixes begin to occur and phonetic spellings become hybrids, (e.g., niht = night, cween = queen)
	1400	Geoffrey Chaucer (regarded as the master of the English tongue) dies, leaving his classic, <i>The Canterbury Tales</i> .
	1420	Henry V becomes the first English king to write in Middle English.
	1475	The Renaissance reaches England. English borrows from Latin and Greek languages. William Caxton begins printing in English, encouraging new spelling conventions.
Modern English	1500-1650	The sound patterns of the language were changing, especially among vowel sounds (e.g., Chaucer: hoos, Shakespeare: hose, modern: house)
	1600	Queen Elizabeth I and William Shakespeare write in Modern English.
	1755	Samuel Johnson compiles the first comprehensive dictionary of English.
	1828	Noah Webster compiles a dictionary of American English.
	1857-1928	The <i>Oxford English Dictionary</i> is developed and published in parts; it is published in full in 1928.

The truth is that if borrowing foreign words could destroy a language, English would be dead (borrowed from Old Norse), deceased (from French), defunct (from Latin) and kaput (from German). When it comes to borrowing, English excels (from Latin), surpasses (from French) and eclipses (from Greek) any other tongue, past or present.

Claiborne, *Our Marvelous Native Tongue*, 1983, p. 4