

# 英語の歴史

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The Encounter between Norman French and Anglo-Saxon

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### Abstract

This article reproduces and summarizes the contents of the English history classes that I have lectured at Saitama University (2003-06) and Meiji University (2005-11). This time, I will post the contents of Middle English from my lecture records. Of course, this is not just a summary of all the books on the history of the English language I have read so far, but a unique article with original perspective and knowledge of European culture, literature, and history that I have acquired through my life as a university lecturer. The English used here is American English, and the level of English is for students in general liberal arts courses at the university. This is a record that I want many English learners to have, in order for them to acquire a more comprehensive understanding of the historical, linguistic, political, and cultural background of English. In addition, this will mention the future of English, as an ideal form of the global language.

Keywords : Anglo-Saxon, Norman, Anglo-Norman, King Arthur, Chaucer

### Introduction

If we look over the history of England, there was a racial fusion constantly. The country intercepted a new invader, fighting, defeated, and ruled. The confrontation between the conqueror and the conquered continued, and then the country was invaded by other races again. There was a repetition of ethnic conflict and fusion, although it's the same island country as Japan,

which had not been invaded by other races for more than 2000 years. Aside from that being a good or bad thing, some people mainly living in northern England got out of the country and headed for North America, eventually founding the United States. America has now become the leading nation of the world, whereas its homeland, England, is now a small country, whose glory as the former British Empire has faded. Still, England, the United Kingdom, affects the world,

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showing its new life-style, its new art, and its unique culture. The UK is driving the world politically, same as the USA. The history of the English language is the history of the nation's development and it is also the history of the ethnic fusion of the world.

## The Norman Conquest

Edward the Confessor (1004-1066), the last Anglo-Saxon king, made his mistake promising the right of succession to his second cousin, William (Guillaume) in Normandy. When Edward died without a son to follow him in 1066, Harold, the son of Earl Godwin, who was the most powerful Saxon leader of Wessex, was chosen to be the next king. According to Harold, just before Edward the Confessor had died, the king had promised him to become King of England. However, William (Guillaume) claimed that the old king had already promised him the crown. William, Duke of Normandy in northern France, was also a strong and mighty warrior. He decided to take an army to England and beat Harold, who had already been crowned at Westminster Abby in January 1066. First, Harald Hardrada, King of Norway and Sweden invaded northern England at the request of Tosting, who was Harold's younger brother. King Harold marched heading north and defeated Harald's army at the Battle of Stamford Bridge. King Harald and Tosting were both killed by Harold in September 1066. Three days later, William, with 7,000 knights, landed near Hastings waiting for Harold.

At the Battle of Hastings, on October 14, 1066, Harold's army was defeated by the Norman knights on horses. It is said that Harold was killed by the enemy's arrow shot through his eye. On Christmas Day 1066, William's coronation was

held at Westminster Abby in London, and over the next four years, King William completed his conquest of England and Wales. William I (William the Conqueror) ordered his men to build castles all over the country, from which Norman barons controlled the towns and countryside. Later, a brave warrior and wise ruler, King Edward I (1239-1307) built many splendid castles in Wales as military bases for complete control against Welsh raiders. The Normans took large areas of land from rich British families. Each of the Normans had their own group of soldiers, and each of them gave land to their followers, so one Norman family ruled over each English village. Normans worked in the government and controlled churches. It is said that the population of England at that time was about 1.5 million, dominated by about 20,000 to 30,000 Normans.

William the Conqueror had a very great effect on the English language. Norman-French immediately became the language of the government, and it lasted for over 200 years. It is said that over 10,000 French words came into English; about 70 percent were nouns and most of them were abstract terms. French was used as an official language by the government, and Latin was used in church and at school; although English monks continued writing *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* until 1154. English was used by ordinary people, who didn't need to learn French or didn't want to do. French was the language of the Normans who had destroyed English towns and villages. English was the language that the British were proud of.

In England, French had been used in the court throughout the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Because having their lands in Normandy and other parts of France, Norman kings and barons who owned lands in

England had to spend a lot of time in France. King Richard I, the Lionheart (1157-1199), stayed in England for only 6 months as King because he was so busy with the Crusades. French was the only language they could use in the castles of the nobles, while English was the language of the rustics or countrymen. Norman French, a dialect of the Normandy region, was the language of honor, chivalry, and justice. Norman blood people (maybe 2% or less of the population) spoke Norman French, but of course, it was also spoken by some English men who wanted to become elites aiming for important positions in courts, law, politics, and trades.

A famous Robin Hood Legend in medieval England is based on this historical background. Robin Hood (Rabunhod) living in Sherwood Forest, Nottingham, is told as an outlawed Saxon aristocrat who had lost his land and opposes the cruel, Norman king's brother, Prince John (future King John, nicknamed 'Lackland,' also 'Soft sword' after the loss of Normandy and Anjou). Robin Hood had robbed from the rich Normans and gave stolen things to the poor Saxons. Sir Walter Scott also introduced Robin as a character named 'Robert Locksley' in his novel *Ivanhoe* in 1820.

Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832), a great historical novelist, born in Scotland, describes the relationship between Normans and Anglo-Saxons or the relationship between Norman French and English in his work, *Ivanhoe*:

... and in the castles of the great nobles, where the pomp and state of a court was emulated, Norman-French was the only language employed; in courts of law, the pleadings and judgements were delivered in the same tongue. In short, French

was the language of honour, of chivalry, and even of justice, while the far more manly and expressive Anglo-Saxon was abandoned to the use of rustics and hinds, who knew no other. Still, however, the necessary intercourse between the lords of the soil, and those oppressed inferior beings by whom that soil was cultivated, occasioned the gradual formation of a dialect, compounded betwixt the French and the Anglo-Saxon, in which they could render themselves mutually intelligible to each other, and from this necessity arose by degrees the structure of our present English language, in which the speech of the victors and the vanquished have been so happily blended together; and which has since been so richly improved...

There is an episode that tells how French was spoken in the royal castle, Windsor. In 1348, Edward III enacted the Order of the Garter in commemoration of the victory in the battle with France. Since then, the ceremony takes place once a year in the St. George's Chapel at Windsor Castle. The formal title of the order is 'Most Noble Order of the Garter.' The strange name of the prestigious order given to 24 knights comes from an interesting episode: in the middle of a ball to celebrate the victory, a lady's sock fastener was removed and dropped. The lady then got very embarrassed and it brought everyone's cynical laughter. However, it is said that the king did not blame the woman's blunder, picked up the garter, fastened it to his left leg, saying:

Honi soit qui mal y pense.

*Disaster be to the one who thought this to*

*be bad.*

He said these words in French which was used in England at that time, then the lady was saved. It is a typical example of chivalry, kind to the weak but brave on the battlefield. The term, 24 knights came from the legendary 24 knights of King Arthur. England's first and highest Order was born from such background. Every year, at Windsor Castle, a new honorable person is being awarded the Order with the presence of Her Majesty the Queen Elizabeth.

### **Anglo-Norman English-speaking kings**

French was the official language in England during the Middle Ages. However, English became more and more widely used by Normans. Many Normans married English women, and their children spoke English. The hostile blood of the Normans and Anglo-Saxons gradually blended. Henry I (1068-1135) one of the sons of William I, decided to get married to an English lady, and intended to harmonize Norman people with Anglo-Saxons. In 1204 King John, an Anglo-Norman king had lost Normandy and other French territories, and during the next fifty years, all the barons and landowners had to give away their estates in France. They began to feel that England was their homeland. Although the upper class continued to speak French, the language was becoming less important in England. Of course, their French was Norman French and it was not considered good by Parisians. The bad relationship between England and France resulted in the Hundred Years' War (1337-1453). During this time, anti-French feelings developed in Anglo-Norman people. A spirit of English nationalism was gradually molded. The English language was

regarded as an important part of their identities. Besides, between 1348 and 1375, England suffered the terrible plague known as the Black Death. It came from China, carried by the fleas on black rats. Almost one-third of England's population of 4 million died. Many government officials, clerks, religious men, abbots, bishops, priests, and schoolmasters died, and they were replaced by the members who could speak solely English. Of course, the number of dead peasants was also very high at this time; as the result, there was a serious labor shortage and the position of peasants became stronger. The long war with France and the Black Death confused and destabilized the country politically. In 1381, Wat Tyler's Rebellion broke out. Wat Tyler was the leader of the rebellion. His real name was Walter, and although he was said to be a farmer, thinking of his family name "Tyler," his family might have been roof tilers originally. The armed peasants' rebels occupied London and attacked the hitherto impregnable royal castle, Tower of London. King Richard II, then only 13 years old, had to meet Tyler and promised to vouch for his demands. During the second visit to Smithfield, London on the next day, Tyler was trapped and killed by the king. Surprisingly, it's said that the boy king used English when negotiating with the rebels (about 20 years later when he abdicated, his speech was given in English).

Gradually, working-class people came to demand better conditions and higher wages, which led to the collapse of the serfdom system. In the cities, as the general public, for example, craftsmen and merchants related to wool and cloth trade, became important, their language, English, also became important. Jumping about a bit in time, in 1362, the Chancellor had opened Parliament in

the Palace of Westminster in English for the first time. Now, Anglo-Norman aristocrats became English speakers. After 1385, French was no longer being taught in all the grammar schools in England. When Henry, Duke of Lancaster (1367-1413) became King Henry IV of England, after Richard II's imprisonment in 1399, English people welcomed him as the perfect English-speaking king since the Norman Conquest (1066). Henry made a speech in English, his mother tongue, when he claimed the crown at the coronation ceremony:

In the name of Fadir, Son, and Holy Gost, I, Henry of Lancaster chalenge this rewme of Yngland and the corone with all the members and the appurtenances, als I that am disendit be right lyne of the blode comyng fro the gude lorde King Henry Therde ...

In the following century, the English language took the place of the French language in the government. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, some aristocrats couldn't speak French at all. During the Wars of the Roses (1455-1485) between the royal houses of Lancaster and York, for the throne of England, most documents, sermons, prayers, romances, songs, letters, and wills were written in English. English had survived this way, but it had to change constantly as in the past.

### Middle English Grammar and Vocabulary

After the Norman Conquest, Old English changed dramatically. Thousands of words from French came into the language, and many Old English words had disappeared. The language became simpler little by little and the English

spoken in this era was named Middle English (approximately 400 years from about 1100 to about 1500). The word ending of Middle English became much simpler than Old English by losing most of the endings for its nouns, adjectives, and pronouns. The plural noun ending *-(e)s* was a typical plural form by the 15<sup>th</sup> century, though some plurals, for example, with *-en* survived as in *children* and *oxen*. Adjectives and nouns lost their grammatical gender, and 'the' became the only form of the definite article.

The main change of verbs was about the past tense. Before, there were a lot of irregular verbs, but some of them began to end in *-ed*; for example, the past tense of *climb* was *clomb*, but the word *climbed* appeared in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, most of the verbs which had entered English from French, also formed the past tense with *-ed*. Sometimes the change went the other way, so *knowed* became *knew*, though *-ed* was usually used. There are still about 250 past tense irregular verbs in English, but the number is only about half of Old English ones.

In Old English there were mainly two tenses, past and present. In Middle English, other four tenses developed, using *be*, *have*, *shall*, and *will*. *Shall* and *will* express the future. *Have* and *be* expressed the perfect tense at first, but later *be* was used for the passive. *Be* was also used for the continuous tenses.

When the word ending disappeared, people in those days had to put words in a particular order to express meaning. The most common order they used was 'subject-verb-object (SVO).' They also started using prepositions, for example, *by*, *from*, *in*, and *with* instead of noun endings. The loss of the Old English system of word endings resulted in the use of prepositions. Using prepositions

and fixed patterns of word order, Middle English had made it possible to convey meaning by easy means.

All these grammatical changes were made without any problems. From the 11<sup>th</sup> century to the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, they didn't write English formally. The official documents were written in Latin or French. This meant that they were free to change their spoken language very easily.

Until the 15<sup>th</sup> century, about ten thousand French words were taken into the English language. Three-quarters of them are still in use. Many French words came into every part of Anglo-Saxons' daily life, for example: *age, blanket, blue, ceiling, chair, city, curtain, dance, dinner, fruit, grammar, lamp, literature, and table*. New words about religion, law, science, nature, and arts were also introduced, such as *abbey, cathedral, mercy, crime, judge, heir, prison, punish, medicine, square, flower, forest, mountain, river, ocean, music, painting, sculpture, poet*, and so on.

French (F) words such as *people* (from French *peuple*) replaced Old English (OE) *lēode*, or F *pray* replaced OE *bid*. However, often both French and Old English survived as synonyms, such as OE *ask* and F *demand*, OE *blossom* and F *flower*, OE *board* and F *table*, OE *buy* and F *purchase*, OE *fight* and F *battle* or *combat*, OE *fire* and F *flame*, OE *heartly* and F *cordial*, OE *help* and F *aid*, *assist*, OE *house* and F *mansion*, OE *speech* and F *language*, OE *sorry* and F *regret*, OE *want*, *wish* and F *desire*, OE *wedding* and F *marriage*, OE *king* and F *sovereign*. Similarly, *answer* and *respond*, *room* and *chamber*, *start* and *commence*, *sorrow* and *grief* are all almost synonyms. The former English is casual and the latter French seems formal or public, respectively. Many French

words came into English during the Medieval Ages. Some of them were replaced by new words in English, but others eventually coexisted, which made the English expression richer, expressing subtle stylistic differences.

Sometimes, the words for the animals in the fields were represented by Old English (*cows, sheep, and pigs*), and the words for the ingredients arranged on the table were French (*beef, mutton, and pork*), this meant, originally, the person who raised farm animals spoke English and the person who ate the meat spoke French.

Contrary to the disappearance of the typical Old English names, such as Aelfric, Dunstan, Wulfric, such names as Richard, Robert, Stephen (Etienne, Stéphane), John (Jean), and William (Guillaume) from France were becoming popular, and nowadays these are the most common English given names since the Norman Conquest.

New English words were made by adding the English *-ly* and *-ful* endings to French words, such as *gently, beautiful, and peaceful*.

During the same era, thousands of Latin vocabulary entered Middle English again. They came from books on law, medicine, science, literature, and religion. There were many Latin words with new concepts not found in traditional English. Examples include *abject, adjacent, admit, conflict, incumbent, index, infancy, lucrative, ornate, pulpit, testimony, ulcer*, and so on. One of the important sources of Latin was the translation of the Bible into English. More than a thousand Latin words appear in the translation of the Bible.

The Old English dialects developed independently everywhere in England. The Middle English dialects were naturally affected by them and were similar to those of Old English. In those days, the pronunciation was so varied

from place to place that it was sometimes difficult to communicate with each other. David Crystal introduces a famous episode in his *The English Language*, published in 2002, about a conversation between a farmer's wife and a sailor from London, which is only about 80 kilometers away from the place where she lives. The sailor asked for some *eggys* (eggs) but she could not understand him, because the word for eggs in her dialect was *eyren*. So, thinking that he must be a foreigner, she told him she couldn't speak French!

In Middle English one word was spelled in lots of different ways. There were more than twenty spellings of *people*, such as *pepylle*, *peeple* or *puple*. *Naure*, *næure*, *ner*, *neure*, *neuer* are variant spellings of *never*. Sometimes some types of spelling remained in some areas as one of the dialects, and other types of pronunciation survived in others. As you can see, the word *busy* is spelled as a combination of *b*, *u*, *s*, and *y*, but pronounced [bízi]. This is why the correlation between the spelling and pronunciation of English words is sometimes inconsistent.

The changes in orthography, the system of spelling, in this era was outstanding. The Normans introduced new alphabet letters, *j* and *z*, and they used *k* more often, and they also used *u* and *v*. They replaced the Old English runic symbol *ȝ* with *g* or *gh*, *þ* with *th*. They also changed *h* to *gh*, *cw* to *qu*, *sc* to *sh*, *c* to *ch*, and *ū* to *ou*. As a result, for example, *niht*, *cwene*, *scip*, *cirice*, and *hūs* came to be spelled *night*, *queen*, *ship*, *church*, and *house*, respectively. The *th* spelling came to appear occasionally in many manuscripts. In many words, they used *u* where we currently spell *v* or *o*, in such words as *æure* for *ever*, *gyuen* for *give*, or *tunge* for *tongue*, and *wunder* for *wonder*. Moreover, in some words, the letter *u* was

replaced with *o*. So, now we have *come*, *love*, and *son* instead of *cuman*, *lufu*, and *sumu*, respectively.

In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, people wanted not only their first names but also their surnames. The growing use of family names increased significantly. Sometimes the family name was related with the father's name (*Tomson*; meaning "son of father Tom"), as in Anglo-Saxon times. In Scotland, *Mac* or *Mc* is well known as the meaning of "son." The Norman French also introduced *Fitz*, meaning "son of." Other names signified the place where a person lived (*Hill*, *Brook*), or the town a person came from (*Burton*, *Milton*), or the name of his country (*French*, *Francis*, *Holland*), or his occupation (*Butcher*, *Carpenter*, *Constable*, *Cook*, *Fisher*, *Miller*, *Thatcher*). In those days a family name could be changed many times while they were living.

In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the spelling of various words changed dramatically. For example, in verbs, the *-ing* endings, such as *running*, and the *-th* endings, such as *goeth*, as a marker of the third person singular present, appeared. And apart from verbs, personal pronouns *they*, *their*, and *them* were used in some parts of England. The 15<sup>th</sup> century saw an emergence of great invention which consequently helped spread the spelling of Standard English. In 1476 the printing machine was brought to London by a man named William Caxton. Since then, it was possible to produce thousands of copies of books. Caxton decided to use the spellings and words roughly shared in London, Oxford, and Cambridge, then slowly standard spellings spread. As a result, there are still thousands of words that are spelled in the way they were pronounced in Caxton's days. For example, the letter *k* in *knee*, and the letter *l* in *would* were pronounced at that time.

From the 13<sup>th</sup> century, English was used more and more in official documents and in literature. More literary works in English remained from the 13<sup>th</sup> century than before. They left songs, poems, and explanations of Christianity.

### Literary works written in Middle English

*The Peterborough Chronicle* written in the 12<sup>th</sup> century in the South East Midland dialect, was one of the manuscripts of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which contain information about the history of England after the Norman Conquest. The monks of Peterborough Abbey continued to write in English. Nine surviving manuscripts are still in the British Library and the other two in Oxford and Cambridge Universities.

Consisting of about 19,000 lines, *Ormulum*, an early Middle English religious verse, also exists. Written by a monk named Orm (or Ormin), it was a manuscript of biblical annotations used to preach doctrine at church. It is an important material for recognizing the pronunciation at that time, and it was familiar to monks and farmers who did not understand Latin. Only one copy of about a seventh of the material survived, which is now in the Bodleian Library of the University of Oxford.

*The Brut*, consisting of about 16,000 lines, appeared in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. It survives in two manuscripts, both of which exist in the British Library. The author is poet Lawman. It is worth while noting that *The Legends of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table* is introduced in those manuscripts.

*The Owl and the Nightingale* is a debate poetry using the South West dialect, in which a fierce debate is developed between an ugly owl and an attractive nightingale. Some arguments

of the two birds are about sin, marriage, human weakness, death, friend, historical figures, and churchgoing. Anne W. Baldwin (Wisconsin State University) points out that the owl is Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury. The author of the poem is unknown, nor the exact date of its first composition. But it is assumed that it was probably written after the death of Henry III in 1272. Two manuscripts are stored at the British Library and the Jesus College at Oxford respectively.

In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, chivalric romance, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, was written around Manchester in the northwestern part of England. The language used is a dialect spoken in the area, North West Midlands. The author is not clear. Three religious narrative poems *Pearl*, *Patience*, and *Cleanness* (which is also known by the editorial title *Purity*) are also said to have been written by the same author, including *St. Erkenwald* in 1386. The story of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is very interesting. It was influenced by the legend of King Arthur, and the main character, Sir Gawain, was set to be the nephew of King Arthur, youngest of the knights of the Round Table. It was an extraordinary romance on the theme of the beheading game, the exchanging of winnings, the quest for the Green Chapel, the castle where Sir Gawain stopped for an inn of the night, the polite hospitality of the castle lord, the temptation of the lady of the castle, the etiquette of hunting, and what the ideal chivalry spirit is.

*Piers Plowman* is a Middle English alliterative verse written by William Langland (1330?-1386?). It is an allegorical narrative poem with a lot of religious themes, mainly the true Christianity in life and the importance of Love in the context

of Catholicism. Also, it is famous for mentioning Robin Hood tales for the first time. It seems that Langland was born in West Midlands because the dialect used in the poem is consistent with the one used in the region and there were also many names for places that suggest some connection to the area. He seems to have had a wife and children, and had made a living by reciting prayers for the dead.

*The Cloude of Unknowing* was also written to discover and understand the real relationship with God in the latter half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. No one knows who wrote this work, but the author is believed to be responsible for other works, including *The Book of Privy Counseling*, *Deonise Hid Divinity*, and *A Letter of Prayer*.

*Handlyng Synne* (1303) and *Mannyng's Chronicle* (1338) are Middle English works completed by Robert Mannyng (or Robert de Brunne; 1275-1338), who was once a monk at the Gilbertine priory at Cambridge, then became a monk of Bourne Abbey at Lincolnshire in East Midlands of England. Mannyng's verse is often said to be vital and very colorful, being very exciting to the readers compared to other contemporary works. In *Handlyng Synne*, which consists of about 12,000 lines of verse, the author preached moral practice and theory. The doctrine was illustrated by referring to the events of daily life at that time. It is a valuable clue to know how the life of the British in the medieval era was.

Three long poems *Mirour de l'Omme* ("The Mirror of Mankind") in French in 1379, *Vox Clamantis* ("The Voice of One Crying Out") in Latin in 1381, and *Confessio Amantis* ("The Lover's Confession") in English in 1393, were all written by John Gower (1330-1408), who practiced law and was a dealer of wool living in London. Born into

a wealthy family in Kent, Gower served Richard II and Henry IV as a court poet. Gower was a close friend with Geoffrey Chaucer. He was also a contemporary of William Langland and an author of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Shakespeare's *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* is based on an episode included in Gower's most famous work, *Confessio Amantis*. His tomb is in Southwark Cathedral in London. George Campbell Macaulay (1852-1915), a noted English classical scholar, discovered the only manuscript of the poem in the Cambridge University Library.

In the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* was written. The author was not clear, and Sir John was supposed to be born and grown in England in the story, but in fact he was a fictitious character. This book is said to be written mainly based on various materials. According to the travel memoir, Sir John went to Jerusalem, Turkey, Persia, Syria, Arabia, Egypt, Libya, Ethiopia, India, China, Java, Pulau Sumatera, and so on. It is said that Christopher Columbus (1451-1506) was greatly inspired by both *Sir John's Travels* and the great *Marco Polo's Travels*. Actually, *Marco Polo's* was published earlier and had probably heavily influenced *Sir John's Travels*. The literary works listed above are extremely valuable in tracing the development of medieval English.

The name of King Arthur is a symbol of British history. The story of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table is one of the greatest myths in the country. King Arthur was a real king living somewhere in the south of Britain. He was the Celtic king, who died in a battle against Saxons around 500 AD. About 200 years later, his story appeared in Wales. It is in a work, *Y Gododdin*, a medieval Welsh epic, which is important as the

oldest record of the legend of King Artur. William Caxton printed Sir Thomas Malory's romance *Le Morte d'Arthur* (the Death of Arthur) in 1485. One of the most famous stories is the search for the cup known as the Holy Grail, used by Jesus Christ at the Last Supper. Other famous stories are *Sir Lancelot's adventure*, *Lady of the Lake*, and *Excalibur*.

## Geoffrey Chaucer English

The greatest writer in Middle English is Geoffrey Chaucer (1343?-1400). Chaucer, who is called, "the father of English poetry," was born in a rich family of the wine traders in London. *Geoffrey* is a French-style first name. *Chaucer* originally means "shoemaker" in Old French (*chaussure*, *chauceure*). When Chaucer was a child, the Black Death attacked London, and he escaped death by a miracle. He survived, but many of his relatives died. Therefore, it is said that his father could take over huge properties and estates from them. Later on, a clever son of a merchant, Geoffrey, could work in the court as a page later. It was an incredible start and a very rare case that was not realized by other ordinary people at that time. Educated as a squire, he became a government official involved in accounting, law, and diplomatic mission. In 1390, Chaucer also held a special commission as Master of Works at Windsor Castle. He supervised the repair of the St. George's Chapel of the castle. However, this chapel is not the present famous building of that name, but at the location of what is now Albert Memorial Chapel, next to the current magnificent St. George's Chapel building. He is said to have stayed in the Winchester Tower on the north side of the castle. Chaucer was also a court poet, and he started his literary work as a translator.

His first translation was French *Le Roman de la Rose* into English for the people of the court, especially the court ladies. He was good at Latin, Italian, and French. His artistic sensibility was nurtured by the French literature and the Italian art. However, most of his best-known works were written in English, not in French, nor in Latin. His greatness is that, being an elite at that time, he did not adopt the language of French or Latin, but that of the language used by the common people in England. He had a genuine literary sense and valued the more manly and expressive Anglo-Saxon language. He thought English was his mother tongue and it was a national language. Chaucer used the dialect of East Midlands, especially London-based English, which was also spoken in the area of Oxford and Cambridge. Those areas formed a triangle, which was the center of politics, commerce, learning, and culture of England. After all, the English spoken in the London-Oxbridge Triangle developed into the modern Standard English. Chaucer used many words from French. His masterpiece, *The Canterbury Tales*, was written in the 1390s, composed of more than 17,000 lines, by using 20-25 percent of French words. It begins with the following famous lines of the Prologue:

Whan that Aprill, with his shoures soote  
The droghte of March hath perced to the  
roote

And bathed every veyne in swich licour  
Of which vertu engendred is the flour

.....

Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages  
And palmeres for to seken straunge  
strondes

.....

When April with its showers sweet  
 The drought of March has pierced to the  
 root  
 And bathed every vein in such liquid  
 Of which virtue engendered is the flower  
 .....  
 Then folks long to go on pilgrimages  
 And palmers (long) to seek strange strands  
 .....

*The Canterbury Tales* is a collection of episodes told by the people of different classes traveling together from Southwark in London to Canterbury Cathedral. They told their stories to each other on the way to their destination. Those Canterbury pilgrims had many kinds of occupations such as a wife of Bath, knight, miller, cook, man of law, friar, clerk (a student of Oxford), merchant, squire, franklin, physician, shipman, prioress, nun's priest, nun, parson, monk, and so on. Chaucer describes medieval people's way of thinking and behaviors ironically or satirically.

By the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, English was to be spoken and read by many people. The language became more matured and richer as a mother tongue, and eventually reached the climax. In the next century, a great genius of English literature, William Shakespeare appeared.

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