

# A BRIEF OVERVIEW ON THE MAKING OF MODERN ENGLISH

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The Making of Modern English 214DEL

# ANGLO-SAXON

- 410 AD – Romans leave Britain leaving very little Latin behind.
- 449 AD – Germanic tribes invade (Jutes, Angles and Saxons).
- The Angles and the Saxons formed a language called ‘Anglo-Saxon’.
- They created words for simple things such as ‘cat’, ‘head’ and ‘bread’.
- Tues/Wednes/Thurs/Friday are based on Anglo-Saxon Gods.
- 597 AD – Christianity arrived in Britain and introduced more Latin words such as ‘bishop’.
- Around 800 AD – Vikings arrive and brought words such as: ‘anger’, ‘dirt’, ‘drag’ and ‘die’ with around 2,000 other words.

(Fennell 2001: 56)

(Free Folk Society 2007)

(Crystal 2005: 64)

# THE NORMAN CONQUEST

- 1066 – William the Conqueror invades England and introduces the French Language to society.
- French was the language of choice for officials/upper class.
- Words such as ‘council’ and ‘parliament’ were introduced and are still used today.
- The Church spoke Latin. Commoners mainly spoke English.
- ‘Cow’, ‘Sheep’, ‘Swine’ are words used by English farmers.
- ‘Beef’, ‘Mutton’, ‘Pork’ are the French A la Carte forms.
- Normans introduced around 10,000 words including: ‘taste’, ‘charity’, ‘proud’, ‘music’, ‘poor’.
- After England won the ‘100 Years War’ against France. English took over as the Language of power.

(Fennell 2001: 101)

# SHAKESPEARE

- William Shakespeare (1564 – 1616)
- Shakespeare is credited for producing nearly 3,000 new words.
- Some words were useful which we still use today such as: ‘gloomy’ and ‘invulnerable’.
- Others we do not, including: ‘appertainments’, ‘questrist’.
- Shakespeare had an influence on phraseology and produced many catchphrases.
- ‘*Breaking the ice*’ (*The Taming of the Shrew*, I.ii)
- ‘*Good riddance*’ (*Troilus and Cressida*, II.i)
- Shakespeare’s poetry showed the English Language was rich with emotion. “*Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?*” (*Sonnet 18*)

(Chubarov n.d)  
(Crystal 2003: 63)

# THE KING JAMES BIBLE

- 1611 – A new translation of the Bible was produced.
- It had various aspects such as desires, honour and money which could appeal to different types of people.
- The language used was simple and could be understood by almost anyone.
- Preachers began reading the book in every church.
- It produced many metaphors, idioms and phrases we still use today:
- A leopard cannot change its spots – Bible, *Jeremiah 13:23\**
- You reap what you sow – Bible, *Galatians 6:7\**
- “Turned the world upside down” – Bible, *Acts 17:6\**
- “Go the extra mile” – Bible, *Matthew 5:41\**
- (\*King James Version)

(Marshall 2003)



# ENGLISH AND SCIENCE

- In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, many physicists gained popularity.
- 1660 – The Royal Society was formed from this group of scientists.
- Scientists originally spoke Latin but switched to the English Language making it the dominant international language of science.
- As scientists discovered/created new things, they needed words in which to name them.
- 'Acid', 'telescope', and 'gravity' were among the names of their new discoveries.
- Modern discovery words: 'electroencephalography' and 'methylenedioxymethamphetamine'.

(Chubarov 2012)

# THE BRITISH EMPIRE

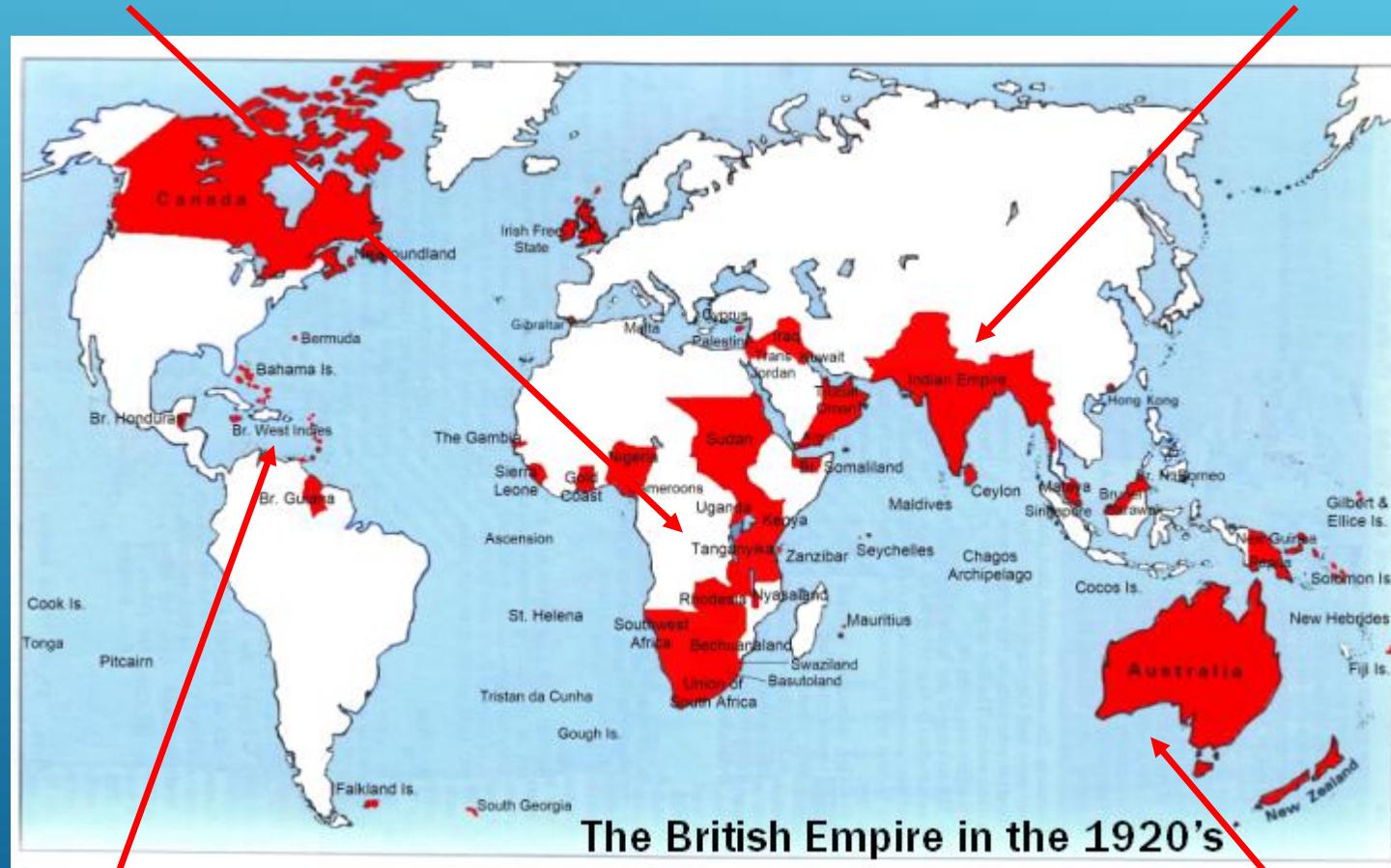
- At around the 1800s, the English Language was moving toward its 'Modern' form.
- Britain, wanted to claim various things such as land, resources and local words during their visits.
- India: 'yoga', 'pajamas', 'shampoo' and 'bungalow'
- Africa: 'banana', 'boogie', 'voodoo' and 'zombie'
- Australia: 'boomerang' and 'kangaroo'
- Caribbean: 'barbeque' and 'canoe'
- In total, the British Empire numbered around 458 million people in 1922.
- This huge number across the globe allowed the English Language to grow and expand across the world.

(Crystal 2005: 434)

# THE BRITISH EMPIRE

Africa: 'banana', 'zombie'

India: 'pajamas', 'shampoo'



Caribbean: 'barbeque', 'canoe'

Australia: 'boomerang', 'kangaroo'

# THE DICTIONARY

- The English Language was growing rapidly because of the British Empire.
- Lexicographers wanted standardise definitions for words and explain consequences of spelling slightly differently.
- Dr Samuel Johnson produced 'The Dictionary of the English Language' between 1746-1755 which contained 42,773 entries.
- People could now know the meaning of words and the standardised spelling for each of these words.
- 1857 – The Oxford English Dictionary began formation as words kept being invented. It was eventually completed in 1928 and has been revised ever since as more words are created.

(Fennell 2001: 156)

# AMERICAN ENGLISH



- 1607 – The British arrived in America.
- The British borrowed various words from Native Americans to name the new animals and items they were seeing, such as: 'raccoon' and 'moose'.
- Due to immigration, new words were coming from abroad:
- Dutch – 'coleslaw' and 'cookies'
- Italians – 'pizza' and 'pasta'
- 1900s – Capitalism and commuting was growing. These ideas introduced new words to the English Language including: 'break-even', 'white-collar' and 'subways'.
- English words remained in use in America: 'fall', 'drapes', 'period'.
- British progressed to: 'autumn', 'curtains', 'full-stops'.

(Fennell 2001: 217)

# INTERNET TECHNOLOGY

- 1972 – The first email was sent.
- 1991 – The internet arrived and brought typing back into fashion. Language progressed online, not just through speaking and writing.
- New words were being invented due to this new technological age: ‘download’ and ‘Google’.
- Sentences became shorter because of an increase in abbreviations:
- ‘btw’ (by the way) and ‘lol’ (laugh out loud).
- Many of these abbreviations along with other ‘internet language’ spurred into spoken language also:
- ‘FYI’ (for your information) and ‘FAQ’ (frequently asked questions).

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