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1. The Old English Period
 2. Old English Dialects
 3. Old English Grammar

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- Historians of the English language distinguish three main stages or periods in its development.
 - First is the Old English or the Anglo- Saxon period, extending from 600- 1100 A D
 - The Middle English Period from 1100 – 1500
 - Modern English from 1500 onwards.



The Old English Period

- The form of English in use before the Norman Conquest is sometimes called “Anglo Saxon’. It is also called ‘Early English’.
- There are different of opinion about the exact period in which the Old English period begins. According to **FT Wood**, this period extends from about the year **A D 600 to 1100**.
- **A C Baugh** in his book “A History of English Language” says that the Old English begins with the period from about A D 450 to 1150.



- C L Brook has said that the first half of the twelfth century may be regarded as the period of transition from Old English to Middle English.
- the invasion of the Germanic tribes, Angles and Saxons and the firm implantation of their language in the Britain formed a suitable starting point.



- They displaced the original Celtic inhabitants of Britain and gave it a new name, England – the land of Angles, and a new language, English- the language of Angles.



Old English Dialects

Old English had number of Dialects as the Germanic settlers in Britain belonged to three different tribes. Based on the regions of their occupation, we recognize four distinct dialects of the period. They are;



1. Northumbrian in the North comprising the district between the Fifth or Fourth and the Humber river
2. Mercian, spoken between the Humber and the Thames.
3. West Saxon, spoken in the region south of the Thames, except in Kent and Surrey
4. Kentish, spoken in Kent and Surrey



- Of these, Northumbrian and Mercian, spoken to the North of the Thames were the dialects of the Angles and called the Anglian variety.
- Old English Poetry had its beginning in Anglian, but it has come down to us mostly in West Saxon form. It was West Saxon, the dialects of the Saxons, which gained popularity and status as the standard language, since it was patronized by King Alfred.




- Wessex was the most highly civilized of all the kingdoms and the first to attain political unity and stability.
- Most of the important literary works of the period like *Beowulf* and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* were written in the West Saxon dialect.
- Kentish was the dialect of the Jutes, who were the earliest settlers.



Old English Grammar

- The grammar of Old English differs considerably from Modern English, predominantly being much more inflected.
- Old English has a morphological system similar to that of the Proto-Germanic reconstruction, retaining many of the inflections thought to have been common in Proto-Indo-European .

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- In contrast to Modern English, Old English had three genders (masculine, feminine, neuter) Nouns, pronouns, adjectives and determiners were fully inflected, with four grammatical cases (nominative, accusative, genitive, dative), and a vestigial instrumental, two grammatical numbers (singular and plural)



- First and second-person personal pronouns also had dual forms for referring to groups of two people, in addition to the usual singular and plural forms.



- three grammatical genders (masculine, feminine, and neuter).
- Each noun belongs to one of the three genders, while adjectives and determiners take different forms depending on the gender of the noun they describe. The word for "the" or "that" is *sē* with a masculine noun,
- *sēo* with a feminine noun, and
- *þæt* (which sounds like "that") with a neuter noun.




- ❖ Old English Mē līcaþ sē snāw for þon þe hē dēþ þā burg stille.
- ❖ Me pleases the snow because he does the city quiet.
- ❖ Translation I like the snow because it makes the city quiet.





- It was a period of full inflections because during most of this period the endings of the noun, the adjectives and the verb are preserved unimpaired.
- Many languages, such as Latin, Spanish, French, and German, have a much more extensive system of inflection.



- First and second-person personal pronouns also had dual forms for referring to groups of two people, in addition to the usual singular and plural forms

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- Noun and adjective paradigms contained four cases—
 - Nominative : the subject of a sentence, which carries out the action
 - Genitive : the possession of something The genitive in Old English corresponds to 's in present-day English and to "of" in present-day English

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- dative, : the indirect object
 - Accusative : the direct object, that which is acted upon.
 - pronouns also had forms for the instrumental case

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- Old English had a greater proportion of strong verbs (sometimes called irregular verbs in contemporary grammars) than does Modern English.
 - Many verbs that were strong in Old English are weak (regular) verbs in Modern English (e.g., Old English *helpan*, present infinitive of the verb *help*; *healp*, past singular; *hulpon*, past plural; *holpen*, past participle versus Modern English *help*, *helped*, *helped*, *helped*, respectively).



- OE was phonetic in character, its spelling representing its pronunciation closely.
- The two major sound changes in OE were i- mutation and gradation, the former taking place in early Anglo- Saxon and the latter inherited from PIE and PG.



- The Germanic tribes used a kind of alphabet, called the Runic Alphabet.

The runic alphabet, also referred to as runes, is a writing system dating back to the 2nd century CE. Runes of the 1st century CE had regional variations because the Germanic people were three major tribes: the West Germanic, the East Germanic, and the North Germanic.



- This period is characterized by a homogeneous Anglo-Saxon language, remarkable for its high degree of purity, with only a small amount of Latin loan words, followed by some Norse elements.
- The OE word stock was enriched by Indo – European words, Celtic element, Latin influence and the Scandinavian influence.

THANK YOU