English, like most languages, can trace its origins back to **Indo-European**, spoken by a group of tribes that lived in Europe or western Asia.

By **4000 BC**, this group broke up into several sections

One group migrated to **India**

Several other groups migrated to **Asia Minor**, **Greece**, **Italy**, and northern and western **Europe**.

The various branches evolved over time into a large number of different languages:

* **Sanskrit**
* **Greek**
* **Latin**
  + **Italian**
  + **French**
  + **Spanish**
* **Germanic**
  + **German**
  + **Dutch**
  + **Swedish**
  + **English**

English is largely **Germanic** in origin, due largely to the influence of the three Germanic tribes that invaded Britain in the 5th century.

**JUTES  
 ANGLES**

**SAXONS**

The Germanic alphabet consisted of **runes** - the runic alphabet was used for carving inscriptions on wood and stone - there was no written language

* Most knowledge of **Old English** is based on manuscripts written by monks.

A number of our present day words are virtually unchanged from the Old English, most common being our **prepositions** like under, to, for, from, and **connectives** like that, and, where, or - also most of our **pronouns** like his, I, we, and your - grammar has also remained fundamentally unchanged - **verbs** still retain the same tenses - subjects precede verbs and prepositions precede their objects just as they did in Old English - contributions by other languages have been largely to our **Vocabulary**!

During the Anglo-Saxon period, three other languages made significant contributions to the English vocabulary:

**Celtic** languages, in place at the time of the Roman invasion, contributed many place names such as Kent, York, Thames, Dover, and Avon

Dyfed, Powys, and Clwyd (Welsh counties) Llewelyn.

**Latin** contributed many Christian terms to the language like alter, disciple, mass, nun, and shrine - also education terms such as school, Verse, paper, and title and everyday words like plant, mat, and box

**Old Norse**, the language of the Danish invaders who settled in northern England, contributed many place names - towns like Whitby, Thornby, Kirkby, Grimsby, and Willoughby owe their “by” endings to the Old Norse “Byr” (Town) - the Danes contributed many everyday terms like add, fellow, guess, kindle, leg, loose, lug, nag, raise, sky, and window.