



Unit 2 Lesson 4

The Normans

Middle English (1100-1500)

In 1066 William the Conqueror, invaded and conquered England. The new conquerors (called the Normans) brought with them a kind of French, which became the language of the Royal Court, and the ruling and business classes. For a period, there was a kind of linguistic class division, where the lower classes spoke English and the upper classes spoke French.

A. Are these names from Old English or Norman French?

Christine, Alfred, Geoffrey, Edgar, Steven, Joan, Ethelred, Peter, Thomas, Michael, Harold, Alice, William,

In the 14th century English became dominant in Britain again, but with many French words added. This language is called Middle English. It was the language of the great poet Chaucer (c1340-1400), but it would still be difficult for native English speakers to understand today.

B) Chaucer's Middle English

And whan I sawgh he wolde never fine
To reden on this cursed book al night,
Al sodeinly three seves have I plight
Out of his book right as he redde, and eke
I with my fist so took him on the cheeke
That in oure fir he fil bakward adown.
And up he sterte as dooth a wood leon
And with his fist he smoot me on the heed
That in the floor I lay as I were deed.
And whan he swagh how stille that I lay,
he was agast, and wolde have fled his way,
Till atte laste out of my swough I braide:
"O hastou slain me, false thief?" I saide,
"And for my land thus hastou mordrede me?
Er I be deed yit wol I kisse thee."

An example of Middle English by Chaucer.

Have a look at the excerpt from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. List 10 words that you can identify as the same or similar to modern English:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10

C) Give three areas where we see the influence of French in modern English?



1

2

3

D) Find the French and English pairs.

War
Warrant
William
Wales
Wafer
Wage
Wardrobe
Castle
Plank
Pocket
Wicket

chateau
Gaul
gichet
poche
Guillaume
gage
gauffre
planche
guerre
garderobe
garantie

E) With a partner, think of 10 French food words that we use in English today.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10