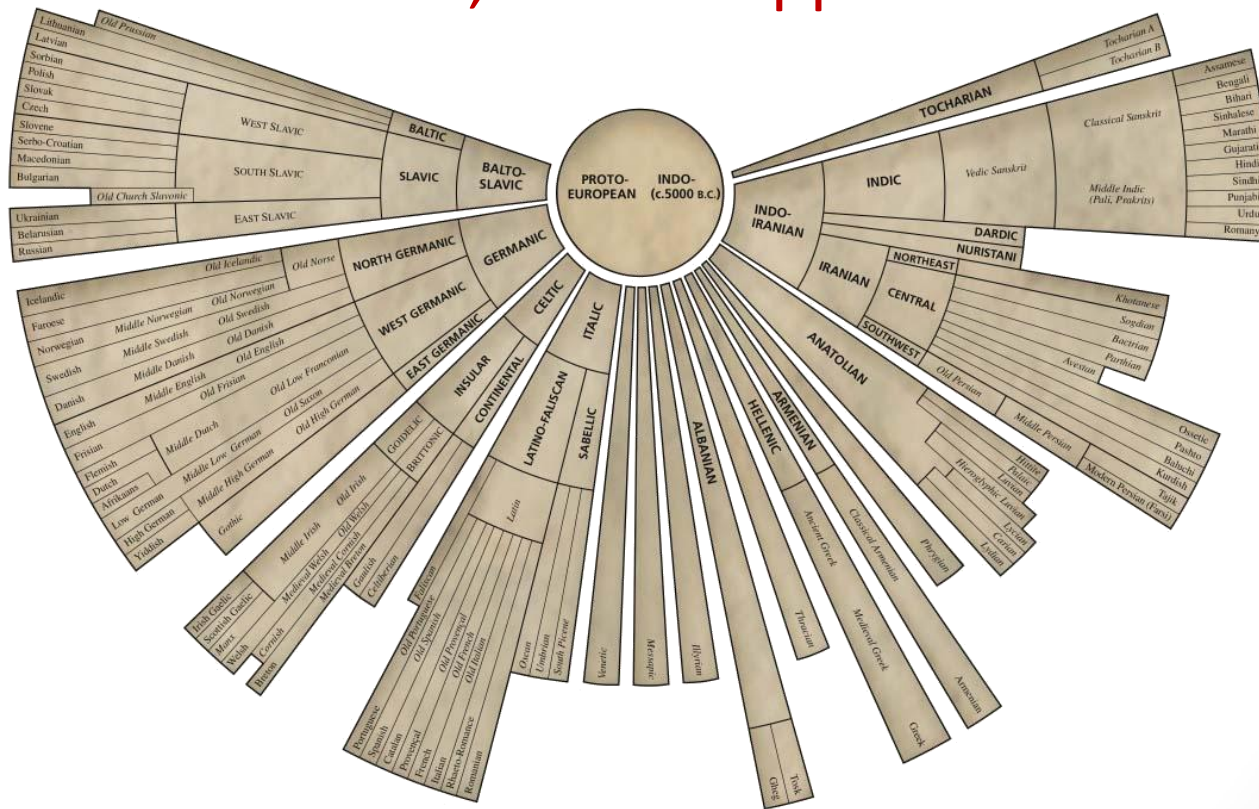


Algeo Ch. 4

2. The Germanic Sound Changes, or, Shifts Happen



Key Terms Part 2: Germanic Changes

- Dental **preterite** (“weak” preterite) dominates
- Distinct **lexis**: words without IE cognates
- Simplified **two-tense system**
- **Weak** and **Strong** declension of adjectives
- **Stress** almost always **on first syllable of root word**
- Distinct vowel changes (**Ablaut**)
- **Grimm’s Law** (First Germanic Sound Shift)
- **Verner’s Law** (exceptions to Grimm’s Law)

Ablaut: still in PIE

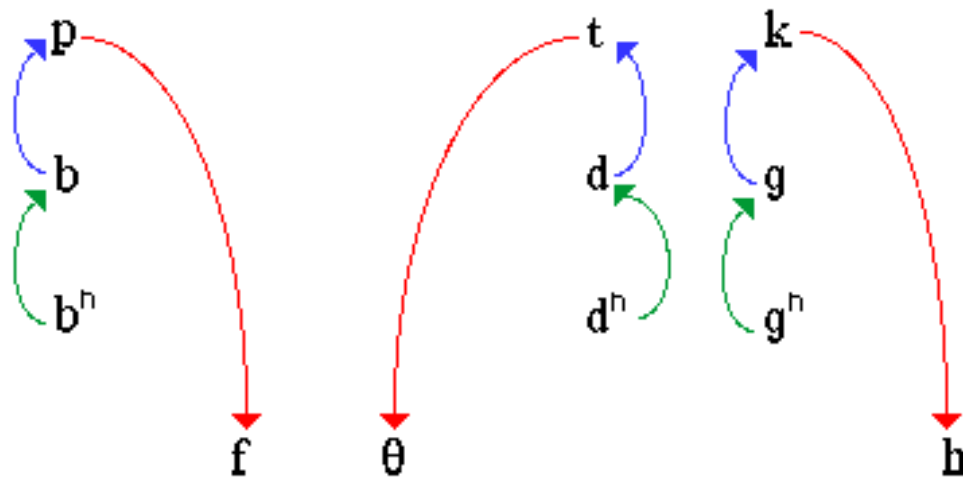
The **alternation** or **gradation** of the **vowel** in a root, often to show inflections: the vowels vary between **e**, **o** or **∅** (no vowel).

PIE changed the vowel of the root to show certain verb inflections. English still has a small set of verbs which are inflected by changing the vowel; they are relics of the ancient ablaut process.

	e-grade	o-grade	zero-grade
Indo-European	*sengwh 'to sing'	*songwh	*sngwh
Modern English	sing(s) (present tense)	sang (past tense) song (a noun formed from a verb)	sung (participle form)

Grimm's Law (1822): First Germanic Shift

Grimm's Law

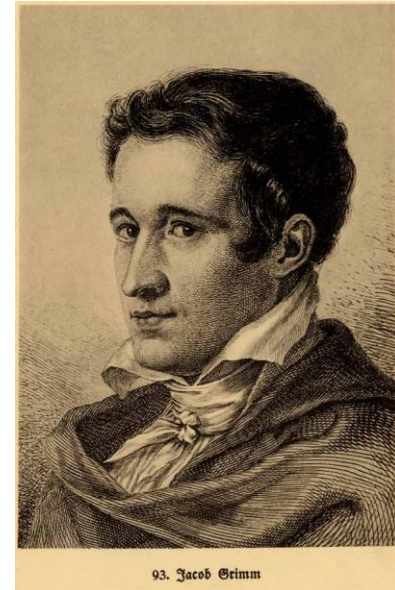


voiceless stops --> voiceless fricatives

voiced stops --> voiceless stops

voiced aspirated stops --> voiced stops

Place of articulation counts: labials stay labials, dentals stay dentals, velars stay velars (or glottal)



This is the point where aspiration stops being phonemic in Germanic languages.

Verner's Law (1875)

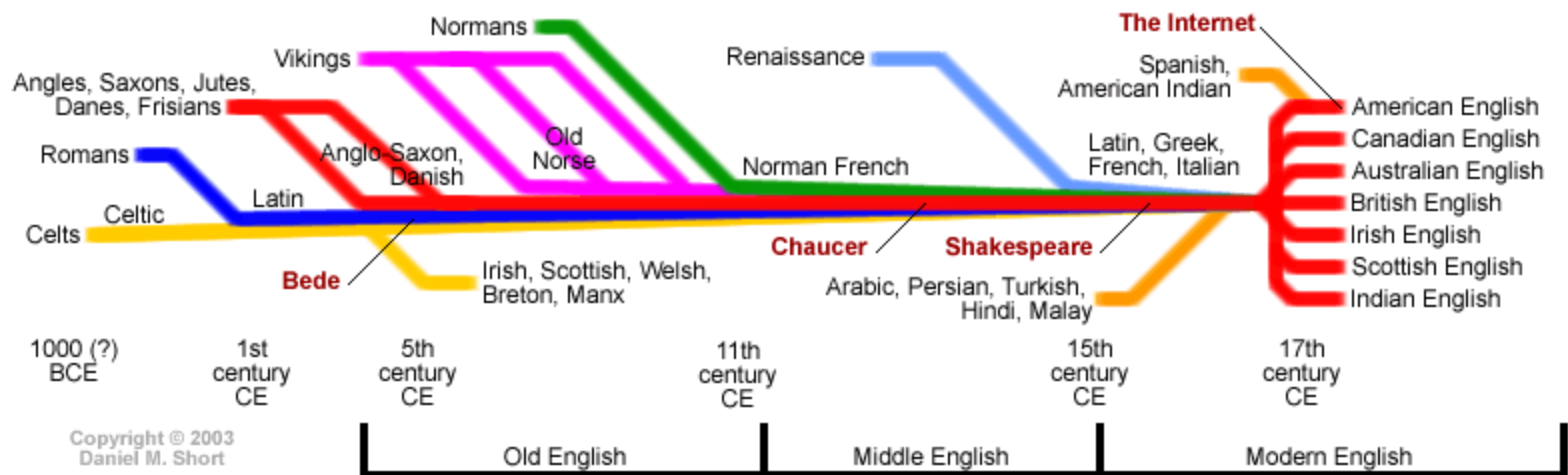
IE	Germanic	(WGmc)
p	Not f but b	
t	Not θ but ð	d
k	Not h but g	
/z/ spelled s	r	

Karl Verner (1875) realized that sometime after Grimm's Law took effect, **stress shifted to the first syllable & further shifts happened.**

- PIE **voiceless stops** followed by an **unstressed syllable** become Germanic voiced fricatives.
- Further, the WGmc **voiced fricative** /z/ (spelled 's') **rhotacized** into the **liquid** /r/
 - This explains why "lost" has an alternate form "lorn" (still seen in 'forlorn') and why "was" has the plural form "were"



Diachronic Development of English



A Chronological Table of English History

Date	Events	Language Influence	
Before 500 C.E.			
~4000 B.C.E.	Pre-English Proto-Indo-European	Ablaut	Dates for 1st exam
~2000 B.C.E. - 500 C.E.	Continental Germanic	Grimm's Law Latin borrowings Verner's Law	
<hr/>			
500 - 1100 C.E.			
449	Christianity introduced to England	Latin borrowings	Dates for 2nd exam
500	Angles and Saxons invade England	Celtic borrowings	
800 - 1000	Viking Invasions	Scandinavian borrowings	
<hr/>			
1100 C.E. - 1500 C.E.			
1066	Middle English Norman Conquest	French borrowings	
<hr/>			
1500 C.E. - Present			
1400 - 1500	Great Vowel Shift		
1476	Caxton's Printing Press in Westminster		
13th - 16th century	Renaissance and scientific innovation	Greek borrowings Latin borrowings	Dates for 3rd exam
16th - 19th C	Age of Discovery & English Colonialism	Borrowings from many languages	