

Blame It On the Normans: Vocabulary Changes

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*"Not much in the way of loot, but we got
a ton of store credit."*



Sources of Influence

- Anglo-Norman (before 1250)
- Parisian French (after 1250)
- Latin (through French and through the universities)
- Contact with trading partners, particularly in the Low Countries

Best Resource:

- The *Middle English Dictionary* (M.E.D.)
 - <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/>
 - Interface can be tricky but has best citations, examples, etymologies



Some numbers (estimated)

- Some scholars estimate that between 70-80% of Old English words were replaced or duplicated by words of French origin in the Middle English period
- Before **1250**, only about 900 French words recorded in English; after 1250, multiple thousands, according to Jespersen
- Biggest period is in second half of 14th century (hello, [Mr. Chaucer](#) and friends...)

How did this work?

- Assimilation—words stopped being seen as “foreign,” just as “taco” seems normal to us today
- Nationalizing—foreign words got English spellings and pronunciations (e.g. *mouton* > *mutton*); English inflectional morphemes; they were compounded like native English words
- Process of going from “that’s the word THEY use” to “that’s the word WE use”

Areas of Anglo-Norman Influence on Middle English Lexis

- Government
- The Church
- The Law
- The Military
- Fashions, customs, & society
- Arts, education, & medicine (heavy Latin influence)

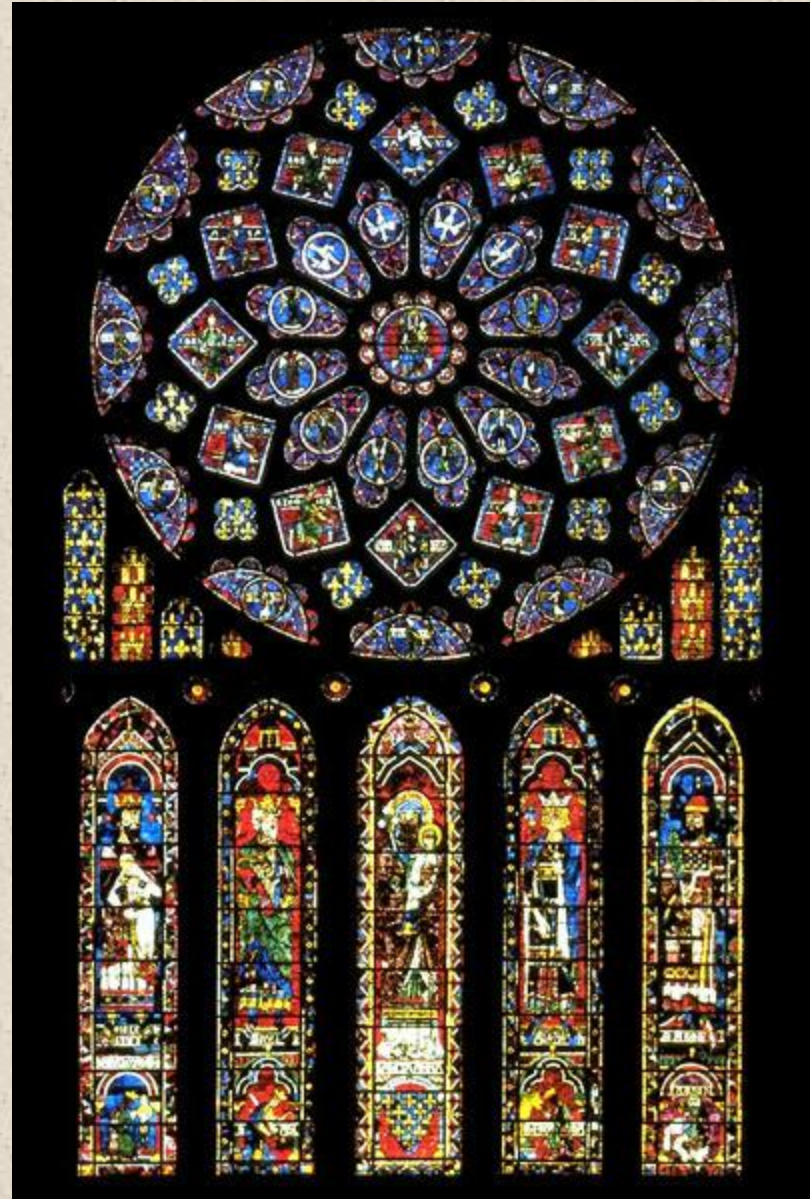


Government

- Government
- Administer
- Regal/royal
- Sovereign
- Subject
- Allegiance
- Marshal
- Court
- Sir
- Madam
- Mistress
- Feudal
- Serf
- Chivalry

Church

- Religion
- Theology
- Sermon
- Homily
- Sacrament
- Creator
- Savior
- Miracle
- Heresy
- Preach
- Pray
- Confess
- Sacrifice
- Ordain
- Charity
- Mercy
- Baptize
- Divine



Law

- Justice
- Judgment
- Attorney
- Plaintiff
- Jury
- Verdict
- Felony
- Evidence
- Proof
- Prison



- Trespass
- Bequeath
- Testament
- Estate
- Assault
- Heir
- Executor
- Plead
- Accuse
- Indict
- Condemn

Military

- Army
- Navy
- Havoc
- Peace
- Enemy
- Arms
- Battle
- Combat
- Captain



- Sergeant
- Duke
- Arm
- Array
- Harness
- Brandish
- Defend
- Gauntlet
- Dagger

Social Mores & Behaviors

- Fashion
- Dress
- Apparel
- Gown
- Robe
- Lace
- Embroidery
- Blue
- Brown
- Scarlet



- Saffron
- Russet
- Dinner
- Supper
- Feast
- Appetite
- Taste
- Victuals
- Most cooking terms
- Most utensils

More social words

- Curtains
- Couch
- Chair
- Cushion
- Lamp
- Blanket
- Parlor
- Wardrobe
- Closet
- Pantry
- Tapestry



- Recreation
- Solace
- Leisure
- Dance
- Minstrel
- Names for various classes of horses and tack
- Names for various kinds of pets
- Palace
- Mansion

Art, Learning, Medicine

(from Latin, probably via French)

- Art
- Painting
- Sculpture
- Music
- Beauty
- Color, hue
- Literature
- Poet
- Rhyme
- Prose
- Romance



- Treatise
- Logic
- Grammar
- Noun
- Clause
- Gender
- Medicine
- Physician
- Surgeon
- Poison
- Remedy

How to Tell When A Word Is Borrowed

	Anglo-Norman Period (1066-c. 1225 to 1250)		Central (Parisian) French Period (after 1225-1250)
[st]	Hostel		[t] hôtel
[ʃ]	Judge, just, jewel, journey, majesty		[ʒ] Jabot, rouge
[č]	Chant, charge, chamber, chimney		[š] Chamois, chaperon, chiffon
[aɪ]	Nice, vine		[i] Ravine
[k]	Caitiff, castle, cathedral		[č] Chalet, chattel, chase
[w]	Waste, warrant, reward, wardrobe, warden, William		[g] Gutter, guarantee, regard, garderobe, guardian, Guillaume
[kw]	Quilt		[k] Racquet
[g]	Regal, legal		[y] Royal, loyal

Many OE/Anglo-French pairs differentiate (with status marking*)

- Hearty/cordial*
- Stench/aroma*
- Ox/beef*
- Sheep/mutton*
- Swine/pork*
- Calf/veal*
- Might/Power
- Ask/Demand
- Wish/Desire
- Bit/Morsel



Influence of Low Countries:

14th & 15th centuries especially

- Wool trade: *nap*, *cambric*, *duck*, *gruff*
- Shipping: *deck*, *bowsprit*, *lighter*, *dock*, *freight*, *boom*, *ahoy*, *hoist*, *shoal*, *skipper*
- Merchant words: *mart*, *groat*, *guilder*, *dollar*, *hanker* (to desire), *luck*, *split*
- Miscellaneous: *beaker*, *pickle*, *stove*, *waffle*



Third wave of Latin influence on English Lexis: Mostly learned words (Influence of universities), mostly 14th & 15th centuries

- *Trivium, rhetoric, abject, allegory, individual, picture, polite, popular, etc.*
- Often words were borrowed for a specialty meaning and then broadened: *genius, incumbent, limbo, lunatic, nervous*
- Words for literary embellishment--“high style”:
incarnate, malefactor, incubus, ornate

