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Old English

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4 Old English

4.1 Historical background of Old English

The history of Old English started with the arrival of Anglo-Saxon tribes in Britain in 449 AD. The Angles and the Saxons were followed by the Jutes and the Frisians, and possibly a smaller group of the Franks. Since the Angles and the Saxons were most influential in the further development of the country and the language, the term *Anglo-Saxon* is often used to refer to all the Germanic tribes who settled in Britain after 449 AD. Before their arrival in Britain, these tribes lived in the Germanic coastlands of the North Sea. Their invasion of Britain can be seen as a continuation of their movement to the West during the Migration Period referred to in German as *Völkerwanderung* [migration of peoples]. On the Continent, the Anglo-Saxon tribes had traded with the Latin-speaking peoples of the Roman Empire. Before their arrival in Britain, they had adopted a number of words from Latin (e.g. wine, cup, dish, cheese, or linen). When they arrived in Britain, the country was inhabited by Celtic peoples – the Britons, who had lived under the rule of the Roman Empire from 43 to 409 AD. At the beginning of the 5th century, the Roman Empire could no longer retain its domination of the British province and Roman officials had to leave the country. The influence of Roman culture, however, continued for at least two more centuries of what is referred to as the sub-Roman period. The Celtic inhabitants were gradually displaced from most of their original territory and Celtic languages remained in use only in Cornwall, Wales, and in some parts of Scotland.

During the 5th and the 6th centuries the Anglo-Saxons settled the entire territory of present-day England and by 600 AD, they established seven kingdoms, referred to as the Anglo-Saxon Heptarchy: Kent, Essex, Sussex, Wessex, Mercia, Northumbria, and East Anglia. The 7th century was marked by gradual Christianization of the country, which continued in the 8th century and resulted in the enrichment of Old English by another wave of lexical borrowings from Latin. The Scandinavian invasion started at the end of the 8th century; and during the 9th century, the Vikings (mainly Danes) conquered all the kingdoms of England except Wessex. The king of Wessex, Alfred the Great, withstood the Viking raids and ultimately managed to re-conquer and unify the south-western part of England at the end of the 9th century. The Danes retained the north-eastern area referred to as Danelaw. They managed to subjugate England again for a period of time at the end of the 10th and the beginning of the 11th centuries but lost the territory again.



Danelaw – England, 878 AD

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The contacts between Anglo-Saxons and Scandinavians brought about lexical enrichment and accelerated grammatical simplification of the English language. The last two Anglo-Saxon kings ruling in England before the Norman Conquest were Edward the Confessor and Harold II; the latter was killed by the Normans in 1066. The Norman Conquest foreshadowed the end of the Anglo-Saxon (Old English) period. According to traditional periodization, Old English ends in 1100. Da Rold et al. (2010) suggests a shift of the end of the Old English period to 1150 because according to recent research, manuscripts continued to be written in Old English for at least 50 years after 1100. The period between 1066 and 1150 is referred to as Updated Old English.

The term Old English does not denote one homogeneous language. Four different dialects of Old English are usually distinguished: West Saxon, Mercian, Northumbrian, and Kentish. The West Saxon dialect represented the first standardized form of written English, denoted as the *Winchester Standard*.



Geographical distribution of Old English dialects after Baugh and Cable (1993)

4.2 Old English grammar

Old English was a synthetic language with rich inflectional morphology and a relatively flexible word order. Its morphological and syntactic systems were noticeably different from those of Modern English. The Old English inflectional system retained numerous features of the reconstructed Proto-Germanic system. It most closely resembles the inflectional systems of Modern Icelandic, which is one of the most conservative Germanic languages, and of Modern German.

Subchapters 4.2.1–4.2.3 below present a brief survey of the Old English inflectional system of the most important parts of speech – nouns, verbs, and selected pronouns. These subchapters represent a modified version of passages selected from Hladký's *Guide to Pre-Modern English* (2003, pp. 39–42, 44–46, 48–52), supplemented by additional notes.

4.2.1 Old English nouns

As mentioned in Chapter 2.3, in Proto-Indo-European there were two basic types of declension, *thematic* and *athematic*. The division into these two types is based on the presence or absence of the stem suffix, denoted as the *theme*. The theme ended either in a vowel or a consonant. Nouns with a vocalic theme belonged to the vocalic or strong declension, while nouns with a consonantal theme belonged to the consonantal, or weak declension. Case endings were the same for most nouns in Indo-European but in the later development they often merged with the theme and were subject to phonological changes, especially to reduction. Thus the three-morpheme structure of Indo-European and of Early Proto-Germanic (root + theme + grammatical ending) changed into a Late Proto-Germanic two-morpheme structure (stem + grammatical ending), for example, the three-morpheme Early Proto-Germanic dative sg. **daz-a-i* developed into a two-morpheme Old English form *dæg-e*. The Old English nominative singular had no ending while in Early Proto-Germanic it consisted of root, theme, and grammatical ending: *dæg* < **daz-a-z*. The vowels and consonants forming the theme serve as labels for the declension types even in Old English: *dæg* is an A-stem because it developed from **daz-a-z* and *talū,-o* is an O-stem because the Proto-Germanic form was **tal-ō*. *Fōt* is an athematic noun because the ending *-s* was added directly to the root: PG **fōt-s* < PIE **pōd-s*.

The Germanic A-stems correspond to Latin and Slavonic O-stems because PIE *o* changed into PG *a* (Lat. *hostis* – G *Gast*), and Germanic O-stems correspond to Latin and Slavonic A-stems because PIE *ā* changed into PG *ō* (Lat. *mater* – OE *mōdor*).

OE nouns belonged to one of three grammatically determined genders – masculine, feminine and neuter – and enforced corresponding agreement on demonstratives, adjectives and pronouns, e.g. *weg* ‘way’ was masculine, *sē* ‘sea’ was feminine, and *þing* ‘thing’ was neuter. When referring to human beings, however, pronouns were often used according to natural gender; for example, *mæden* ‘maiden’ was neuter but it was often referred to by *hēō* ‘she’. Forty-five percent of nouns were masculine, thirty per cent feminine, and twenty-five percent were neuter. OE nouns had two morphological categories: number and case. The category of number consisted of two forms – singular and plural. Indo-European nouns had also dual forms but the only remnants of the dual in Germanic languages are to be found with pronouns. The four cases, nominative, genitive, dative, and accusative, had a number of functions, which were expressed by a higher number of cases in other languages (e.g. seven in Latin).

Below is a survey of the most productive nominal inflectional paradigms in Old English.

Vocalic stems**A-stems**

	<i>Masculine</i>		<i>Neuter</i>	
	‘stone’	‘day’	‘word’	‘vat’
<i>Singular</i>				
<i>Nom.</i>	stān	dæg	word	fæt
<i>Gen.</i>	stānes	dægēs	wordes	fætes
<i>Dat.</i>	stāne	dæge	worde	fæte
<i>Acc.</i>	stān	dæg	word	fæt
<i>Plural</i>				
<i>Nom.</i>	stānas	daȝas	word	fatu, -o
<i>Gen.</i>	stāna	daȝa	worda	fata
<i>Dat.</i>	stānum	daȝum	wordum	fatum
<i>Acc.</i>	stānas	daȝas	word	fatu, -o

Ō-stems

	<i>Feminine</i>	
	‘tale’	‘honour’
<i>Singular</i>		
<i>Nom.</i>	talu, -o	ār
<i>Gen.</i>	tale	āre
<i>Dat.</i>	tale	āre
<i>Acc.</i>	tale	āre
<i>Plural</i>		
<i>Nom.</i>	tala, -e	āra, -e
<i>Gen.</i>	tala, -ena	āra, -(e)na
<i>Dat.</i>	talum	ārum
<i>Acc.</i>	tala, -e	āra, -e

U-stems

	<i>Masculine</i>		<i>Feminine</i>
	‘son’	‘field’	‘hand’
<i>Singular</i>			
<i>Nom.</i>	sunu	feld	hand
<i>Gen.</i>	sunā	felda	handā
<i>Dat.</i>	sunā	felda	handā
<i>Acc.</i>	sunu	feld	hand
 <i>Plural</i>			
<i>Nom.</i>	sunā	felda	handā
<i>Gen.</i>	sunā	felda	handā
<i>Dat.</i>	sunum	feldum	handum
<i>Acc.</i>	sunā	felda	handā

Consonantal stems

N-stems

	<i>Masculine</i>	<i>Feminine</i>	<i>Neuter</i>
	‘name’	‘tongue’	‘eye’
<i>Singular</i>			
<i>Nom.</i>	nama	tunge	ēāge
<i>Gen.</i>	naman	tungan	ēāzan
<i>Dat.</i>	naman	tungan	ēāzan
<i>Acc.</i>	naman	tungan	ēāge
 <i>Plural</i>			
<i>Nom.</i>	naman	tungan	ēāzan
<i>Gen.</i>	namena	tungena	ēāgena
<i>Dat.</i>	namum	tungum	ēāzum
<i>Acc.</i>	naman	tungan	ēāzan

Athematic nouns (root stems)

	<i>Masculine</i>	<i>Feminine</i>
	‘foot’	‘book’
<i>Singular</i>		
<i>Nom.</i>	fōt	bōc
<i>Gen.</i>	fōtes	bēc, bōce
<i>Dat.</i>	fēt	bēc
<i>Acc.</i>	fōt	bōc
<i>Plural</i>		
<i>Nom.</i>	fēt	bēc
<i>Gen.</i>	fōta	bōca
<i>Dat.</i>	fōtum	bōcum
<i>Acc.</i>	fēt	bēc

Other Old English athematic nouns:

<i>Singular</i>	–	<i>Plural</i>
<i>mūs</i> ‘mouse’	–	<i>mȳs</i> ‘mice’
<i>lūs</i> ‘louse’	–	<i>lȳs</i> ‘lice’
<i>tōþ</i> ‘tooth’	–	<i>tēþ</i> ‘teeth’
<i>gōs</i> ‘goose’	–	<i>gēs</i> ‘geese’
<i>man(n)</i> ‘man’	–	<i>men(n)</i> ‘men’
<i>burg</i> ‘town’	–	<i>byriġ</i> ‘towns’
<i>sulh</i> ‘plough’	–	<i>sylh</i> ‘ploughs’

A full survey of the Old English declension types would include over 50 paradigms. Out of these, however, only the A-stems and the O-stems were productive. About four-fifths of all masculine nouns belonged to A-stems. The productive stems attracted nouns taken over from Latin and Greek and also nouns from the other, non-productive stems, therefore the number of nouns belonging to the productive paradigms was on the increase in the OE period. The process of merger of paradigms is not limited to Germanic languages.

The existence of productive and non-productive paradigms is also reflected in OE case markers. There were many homonymous and polyfunctional markers in OE paradigms. Some endings were the same in all declensions (e.g. genitive pl. ending *-a* and dative plural ending *-um*), and many cases acquired analogical endings under the influence of the productive stems.

The traditional classification of nominal inflection according to stems presented above has been replaced in some handbooks of OE grammar by alternative classification systems. Instead of using the labels A-stems, O-stems, etc., some authors speak about ‘general masculine declension’ or ‘strong nouns’, etc. Below is an example of a method of classifying OE nouns from a non-historical point of view. Six classes of nouns are distinguished by Peters (1968) according to their plural form:

	<i>Plural marker</i>	<i>Singular form</i>	<i>Plural form</i>
1.	-s	stān	stānas
2.	-0	word	word
3.	-a	sunu	sunas
4.	-n	nama	naman
5.	-e-	mann	menn
6.	-0 or -u	čild	čild, čildru

4.2.2 Old English verbs

Thematic and athematic verbs

The distinction between thematic and athematic verbs has the same basis as that mentioned for the nouns. In thematic verbs, the ending is added to the stem suffix – the theme (as in the Czech verb *ber-e-me*), while in athematic verbs, it is added directly to the root (as in the Czech verb *js-me*). Although athematic verbs and nouns are historically older than thematic verbs and nouns, they are very limited as to number. There were only four athematic verbs in Old English: *bēōn/wesan* ‘be’, *dōn* ‘do’, *gān* ‘go’, and *willan* ‘will’.

Strong and weak verbs

The Germanic thematic verbs fall into two groups: weak verbs and strong verbs. The weak verbs are a specific Germanic innovation. Weak verbs (divided into classes 1–3) are also denoted as regular or consonantal verbs. They contain a dental suffix (-d or -t) in the preterite (e.g. *dēman* ‘to decide’ – *dēm-de*), while the strong verbs (divided into classes I–VII), also denoted as irregular or vocalic verbs, form the preterite by means of changes in the root vowel (e.g. *bītan* ‘to bite’ – *bāt*). Strong verbs were primary verbs because they were formed from roots whose meaning was verbal, while weak verbs were secondary verbs, i.e. later formations derived from nouns and adjectives (denominative verbs) and even from strong verbs (deverbative verbs); for example, *tellan* ‘to tell’ was derived from *talū* ‘tale’, or *fyllan* ‘to fill’ from the adjective *full*.

Weak verbs were the most productive conjugation type in Old English: nearly all verbs which were formed or adopted in the Old English period were conjugated weak. Weak verbs were by far the most numerous group in Old English: about three quarters of verbs were weak. About one quarter of verbs belonged to the strong verbs and only one-fiftieth of all verbs were athematic and preterite-present verbs (predecessors of most present-day modal verbs). In spite of the differences in total numbers of verbs within the different groups, the frequencies of occurrence were roughly the same for all three groups.

Old English strong verbs were divided into seven classes. This division is based on a complex pattern of vowel gradation, termed by Grimm *ablaut*, which has its origin in Proto-Indo-European. Ablaut was the result of shifts of word stress within Proto-Indo-European verbal paradigms. Ablaut is the main feature of the conjugation of Old English classes I–VI. Class VII is based on a different principle, the principle of reduplication. The variation within classes I to V is based on the Proto-Indo-European qualitative ablaut (*e/o* gradation), while class VI is based on quantitative ablaut (long/short vowel gradation). On the way to Proto-Germanic and Old English, the original Proto-Indo-European vowel gradation patterns underwent numerous modifications.

The origin of the weak preterite is rather obscure. In Gothic, the preterite of *dōmjan* ‘to decide’ (OE *dēman*) had the following forms:

	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
<i>1st Person</i>	domida	domidedum
<i>2nd Person</i>	domides	domideduþ
<i>3rd Person</i>	domida	domidedun

The second halves of the plural forms may be reduplicated forms of the preterite (originally perfect) of a verb corresponding to OE *dōn* ‘to do’: ‘decide (we) did’ etc. (However, there are no independent forms of the verb ‘to do’ in Gothic.) The singular forms may be of the same origin and may have lost the reduplicating syllable through haplology or they may be based on the PIE root **d^hē-*, which was used in the formation of aorist in Greek. Another explanation by Wright (1910) is that the dental in the preterite stands in close relationship to the dental in the past participle. The weak preterite is one of the most disputed forms in Germanic morphology.

Preterite-present verbs

The preterite-present verbs combine the forms of the strong and the weak preterites. The forms of the present tense are in fact strong preterites (PIE perfects), for example *wāt – witon* ‘I know – they know’ is the same form as *bāt – biton* ‘I bit – they bit’; to express the past, new weak preterites were formed, for example *wiste* ‘I knew’.

Survey of conjugational paradigms

Strong Verbs

The forms of the verb *beran* ‘bear’, ‘carry’, ‘bring’ below illustrate the conjugation pattern of strong verbs in Old English.

<i>Present</i>	<i>Indicative</i>		<i>Subjunctive</i>		<i>Imperative</i>	
	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
<i>Person</i>						
<i>1st</i>	bere	beraþ	bere	beren		
<i>2nd</i>	bir(e)st	beraþ	bere	beren	ber	beraþ
<i>3rd</i>	bir(e)þ	beraþ	bere	beren		
 <i>Preterite</i>						
<i>1st</i>	bær	bæron	bære	bæren		
<i>2nd</i>	bære	bæron	bære	bæren		
<i>3rd</i>	bær	bæron	bære	bæren		
 <i>Participles</i>						
<i>Present</i>	berende					
<i>Past</i>	(ġe)boren					

The chart below presents the ablaut variation and reduplication within the seven classes of the Old English strong verbs. *N* denotes nasals and liquids, i.e. the resonants m, n, l, r; *Ń* denotes a syllabic resonant.

		<i>Present</i>	<i>Preterite</i> <i>Singular</i>	<i>Preterite</i> <i>Plural</i>	<i>Past Participle</i>
I	<i>PIE</i>	ei	oi	i	i
	<i>PG</i>	ī	ai	i	i
	<i>bītan</i> ‘bite’	<i>OE</i> bītan	bāt	biton	(ġe)biten
II	<i>PIE</i>	eu	ou	u	u
	<i>PG</i>	eu/iu	au	u	u
	<i>ċēōsan</i> ‘choose’	<i>OE</i> ċēōsan	ċēās	curon	(ġe)coren

III	PIE	eN+C	oN	ŋ	ŋ
	PG	eNC	aN	uN	uN
<i>bindan</i> 'bind'	OE	bindan	band	bundon	(ġe)bunden
<i>helpan</i> 'help'		helpan	healp	hulpon	(ġe)hulpen
IV	PIE	eN+V	oN	ēN	ŋ
	PG	eN	aN	ē ₁ N	uN
<i>beran</i> 'bear'	OE	beran	bær	bæron	(ġe)boren
<i>niman</i> 'take'		niman	nōm	nōmon	(ġe)numen
V	PIE	e (+other C)	o	ē	e
	PG	e	a	ē ₁	e
<i>metan</i> 'measure'	OE	metan	mæt	mæton	(ġe)meten
VI	PIE	a,o,ə ₁	ā,ō	ā,ō	a,o,ə ₁
	PG	a	ō	ō	a
<i>faran</i> 'go, fare'	OE	faran	fōr	fōron	(ġe)faren
VII	PIE	various vowels	-	-	various vowels
	PG	various vowels	redupl. + ē ₂	redupl. + ē ₂	various vowels
<i>hātan</i> 'call'	OE	hātan	hēt	hēton	(ġe)hāten
<i>bēātan</i> 'beat'		bēātan	bēōt	bēōton	(ġe)bēāten

Weak Verbs

The forms of the verb *dēman* 'decide' below illustrate the system of conjugation of weak verbs in Old English.

<i>Present</i>	<i>Indicative</i>		<i>Subjunctive</i>		<i>Imperative</i>	
	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
<i>1st</i>	dēme	dēmaþ	dēme	dēmen		
<i>2nd</i>	dēm(e)st	dēmaþ	dēme	dēmen	dēm	dēmaþ
<i>3rd</i>	dēm(e)þ	dēmaþ	dēme	dēmen		
<i>Preterite</i>						
<i>1st</i>	dēmde	dēmdon	dēmde	dēmden		
<i>2nd</i>	dēmdes(t)	dēmdon	dēmde	dēmden		
<i>3rd</i>	dēmde	dēmdon	dēmde	dēmden		

Participles

<i>Present</i>	dēmende
<i>Past</i>	(ġe)dēmed

The verb *dēman* is a representative of class 1 of the weak verbs. The chart below illustrates the division of class 1 into three subclasses. Class 2 included derived verbs ending in *-ian* except those ending in *-rian*; class 3 included the verbs *habban* ‘have’, *libban* ‘live’, *secġan* ‘say’, and *hycġan* ‘think, study’.

	<i>Infinitive</i>	<i>Present</i>	<i>Preterite</i>	<i>Participle</i>
<i>1a – short vowel in the stem</i>	fremman ‘do, perform’ nerian ‘protect, save’	fremme nerie	fremede nerede	(ġe)fremed (ġe)nered
<i>1b – long vowel in the stem</i>	dēman ‘decide’	dēme	dēmde	(ġe)dēmed
<i>1c – different vowels in present and preterite</i>	þencan ‘think’ sellan ‘give’	þence selle	þöhte sealde	(ġe)þöht (ġe)seald

Preterite-Present verbs

The chart below presents the conjugation of the Preterite-Present verbs. Most of these OE verbs, as well as their later descendants, lack some of the grammatical forms, therefore they are sometimes referred to as ‘defective’.

	<i>Infinitive</i>	<i>Person</i>	<i>Present Singular</i>	<i>Present Plural</i>	<i>Past Participle</i>	<i>Present Subj.</i>	<i>Preterite</i>
I	<i>witan</i> ‘know’	<i>1st</i> <i>2nd</i> <i>3rd</i>	wāt wāst wāt	witon witon witon	(ġe)witen	wite	wiste, wisse
III	<i>cunnan</i> ‘know (how to)’ > ‘can’	<i>1st</i> <i>2nd</i> <i>3rd</i>	cann canst cann	cunnon cunnon cunnon	(ġe)cunnen	cunne	cūþe
	----- ‘dare’	<i>1st</i> <i>2nd</i> <i>3rd</i>	dearr dearst dearr	durron durron durron	-----	durre, dyrre	dorste

IV	<i>sćulan</i> 'be obliged to' > 'shall'	1st	sćeal	sćulon		sćule, sćyle	sćeolde
		2nd	sćealt	sćulon	-----		
		3rd	sćeal	sćulon			
V	<i>mazan</i> 'be able to' > 'may'	1st	mæg	mazon		mæge	meahte, mihte
		2nd	meaht	mazon	-----		
		3rd	mæg	mazon			
VI	----- 'be allowed to' > 'must'	1st	mōt	mōton		mōte	mōste
		2nd	mōst	mōton	-----		
		3rd	mōt	mōton			

Athematic verbs

The chart below presents the conjugation of the Old English athematic verbs *bēon/wesan* 'to be', *dōn* 'to do', *gān* 'to go', and *willan* 'will'.

<i>Infinitive</i>		<i>bēon/wesan</i>		<i>dōn</i>	<i>gān</i>	<i>willan</i>
<i>Present Indicative</i>	<i>1st Sing.</i>	eom	bēō	dō	gā	wille
	<i>2nd Sing.</i>	eart	bist	dēst	gæst	wilt
	<i>3rd Sing.</i>	is	biþ	dēþ	gæþ	wille
	<i>Plural</i>	sind, sint, sindon, earon	bēoþ	dōþ	gāþ	willað
<i>Present Subjunctive</i>	<i>Singular</i>	sīē/sȳ	bēō	dō	gā	wille
	<i>Plural</i>	sīēn	bēōn	dōn	gān	willen
<i>Imperative</i>	<i>Singular</i>		bēō	dō	gā	
	<i>Plural</i>		bēoþ	dōþ	gāþ	
<i>Preterite Indicative</i>	<i>1st Sing.</i>		wæs	dyde	ēode	wolde
	<i>2nd Sing.</i>		wære	dydes(t)	ēodes(t)	woldes(t)
	<i>3rd Sing.</i>		wæs	dyde	ēode	wolde
	<i>Plural</i>		wæron	dydon	ēodon	woldon
<i>Preterite Subjunctive</i>	<i>Singular</i>		wære	dyde	ēode	wolde
	<i>Plural</i>		wæren	dyden	ēoden	wolden

<i>Present</i>	wesende	dōnde	gānde	willende
<i>Participle</i>	bēōnde			
<i>Past Participle</i>	(ġe)wesen	(ġe)dōn	(ġe)gān	

The different forms of the Modern English verb *to be* (OE *bēōn* and *wesan*) can be traced back to four Proto-Indo-European roots, *bheu-*, *es-*, *ues-*, and *or-*. These roots have also been preserved in other Indo-European languages:

<i>PIE Root</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>German</i>	<i>Czech</i>
bheu-	be, been	bin, bist	být, byl
es-	is	ist, sind	jsem, jsi,...
ues-	was, were	war, gewesen	
or-	are		

4.2.3 Old English pronouns

Below is a survey of Old English personal, possessive, demonstrative, indefinite, and interrogative pronouns.

Personal pronouns

<i>Singular</i>	<i>1st Person</i>	<i>2nd Person</i>	<i>Masculine</i>	<i>3rd Person</i>	
				<i>Feminine</i>	<i>Neuter</i>
<i>Nom.</i>	iċ	þū	hē	hiō/hēō	hit
<i>Gen.</i>	mīn	þīn	his	hire	his
<i>Dat.</i>	mē	þē	him	hire	him
<i>Acc.</i>	mec, mē	þec, þē	hine	hīē	hit

Plural

<i>Nom.</i>	wē	ġē		hīē, hī, hēō
<i>Gen.</i>	ūser, ūre	ēōwer, iōwer		hira, hiora, heora
<i>Dat.</i>	ūs	ēōw, iōw		him, heom
<i>Acc.</i>	ūsic, ūs	ēōwic, iōw		hīē, hī, hēō

The plural form *hīē* and its variants *hī*, *hēō* were used for all three genders. In addition to the pronouns above, two dual pronominal forms were used in West-Saxon and in poetry: *wit* ‘we two’ and *gīt* ‘you two’.

Possessive pronouns

The forms of possessive pronouns are identical with the genitive forms of personal pronouns: *mīn* ‘my’, *þīn* ‘thy’, *his* ‘his’, *hire* ‘her’, *his* ‘its’, *ūre* ‘our’, *ēower* ‘your’, *hira* ‘their’. A general 3rd person form *sīn* ‘his, her, its, their’ was mostly used in poetry.

Demonstrative pronouns

Specifying demonstrative pronouns (*that, the*)

	<i>Singular</i>			<i>Plural</i>
	<i>Masculine</i>	<i>Feminine</i>	<i>Neuter</i>	
<i>Nom.</i>	<i>sē</i>	<i>sēō/sīō</i>	<i>þæt</i>	<i>þā</i>
<i>Gen.</i>	<i>þæs</i>	<i>þære</i>	<i>þæs</i>	<i>þāra, þære</i>
<i>Dat.</i>	<i>þæm, þām</i>	<i>þære</i>	<i>þæm, þām</i>	<i>þæm, þām</i>
<i>Acc.</i>	<i>þone</i>	<i>þā</i>	<i>þæt</i>	<i>þā</i>
<i>Instr.</i>	<i>þȳ, þon</i>		<i>þȳ, þon</i>	

Deictic demonstrative pronouns (*this*)

	<i>Singular</i>			<i>Plural</i>
	<i>Masculine</i>	<i>Feminine</i>	<i>Neuter</i>	
<i>Nom.</i>	<i>þēs</i>	<i>þēōs</i>	<i>þis</i>	<i>þās</i>
<i>Gen.</i>	<i>þisses</i>	<i>þisse</i>	<i>þisses</i>	<i>þissa</i>
<i>Dat.</i>	<i>þissum</i>	<i>þisse</i>	<i>þissum</i>	<i>þissum</i>
<i>Acc.</i>	<i>þisne</i>	<i>þās</i>	<i>þis</i>	<i>þās</i>

Relative pronouns/relative particle

Old English had no relative pronouns, only the relative particle *þe*.

Indefinite pronouns

Below are some of the most common Old English indefinite pronouns:

ǣlc	‘each, every’
ǣniġ	‘any’
nǣniġ	‘no one’
ān	‘one, a certain’
nān	‘no, none’
nāwiht	‘nothing’
sum	‘a, some, a certain’
swylc, swilc, swelc	‘such’
man	‘one’

Interrogative pronouns

	<i>Masculine/Feminine</i>	<i>Neuter</i>
<i>Nom.</i>	hwā	hwæt
<i>Gen.</i>	hwæs	hwæs
<i>Dat.</i>	hwām, hwǣm	hwām, hwǣm
<i>Acc.</i>	whone	hwæt
<i>Instr.</i>	hwī, hwȳ	hwī, hwȳ

4.3 Old English texts

Bēowulf

(Original text with standard typographical modifications and a Modern English glosses)

Hwæt, wē zārDena in zēardazum
Indeed, we of-Spear-Danes in former-times

þēōdcyninza þrym zefrūnon,
of-kings-of-a-people glory [acc.] have-heard

hū ðā æþelinzas ellen fremedon.
how the princes courageous-deeds performed!

Oft Scyld Scēfinz sceapena þrēatum,
Often Scyld Scefing [to] enemy's troops [dat.],

monezum mæzþum meodosetla oftēah,
[to] many tribes [dat.] mead-benches [acc.] took-away,

ezsode eorlas, syððan ārest wearð
terrified warriors after first was

fēasceaft funden; hē þæs frōfre zebād,
helpless found; he for-that consolation received,

wēōx under wolcnum, weorðmyndum þāh,
thrived under sky, in-honours prospered

oð þæt him æzhwylc þāra ymsittendra
until to-him each-one [of] the around-sitting [gen.]

ofer hronrāde hýran scolde,
across whale-road obey had-to,

zomban zyldan; þæt wæs zōd cyninǵ!
tribute [acc.] to-pay; that was great king!

Ðæm eafera wæs æfter cenned
To-him son was later brought-forth

zeonȝ in zearðum, þone ȝod sende
young in dwelling, whom God sent

folce tō frōfre; fyrenðearfe onȝeat,
to-people as comfort; great-distress [acc.] he-perceived,

þe hīe ær druzon aldorlēase
which [acc.] they earlier suffered lord-less

lanȝe hwīle; him þæs Liffrēa,
long time; to-him because-of-that Lord-of-life,

wuldres Wealdend, woroldāre forȝeaf,
glory's Ruler, worldly-honour gave,

Bēowulf wæs brēme – blæd wīde spranȝ –
Beowulf was renowned – glory widely spread –

Scyldes eafera Scedelandum in.
Scyld's son [in] Danish-lands [dat.pl.] in.

Source:

Hladký, Josef (2003). *A Guide to Pre-Modern English*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, p. 103.

Beowulf

(Prose translation by David Wright)

Hear! We know of the bygone glory of the Danish kings, and the heroic exploits of those princes. Scyld Scefing, in the face of hostile armies, used often to bring nations into subjugation, and strike terror in the hearts of their leaders. In the beginning he had been picked up as a castaway; but he afterwards found consolation for his misfortune. For his power and fame increased until each of his overseas neighbours was forced to submit and pay him tribute. He was an excellent king.

Later a son was born to him in his stronghold, a young prince whom God, seeing the misery which the Danes had so long endured when they were kingless, sent to be their comfort. The Almighty granted him renown. Beowulf, son of Scyld, became famous in Denmark, and his fame spread everywhere.

Source:

Wright, David (1964). *Beowulf (A prose translation)*. Penguin Books, p. 27.

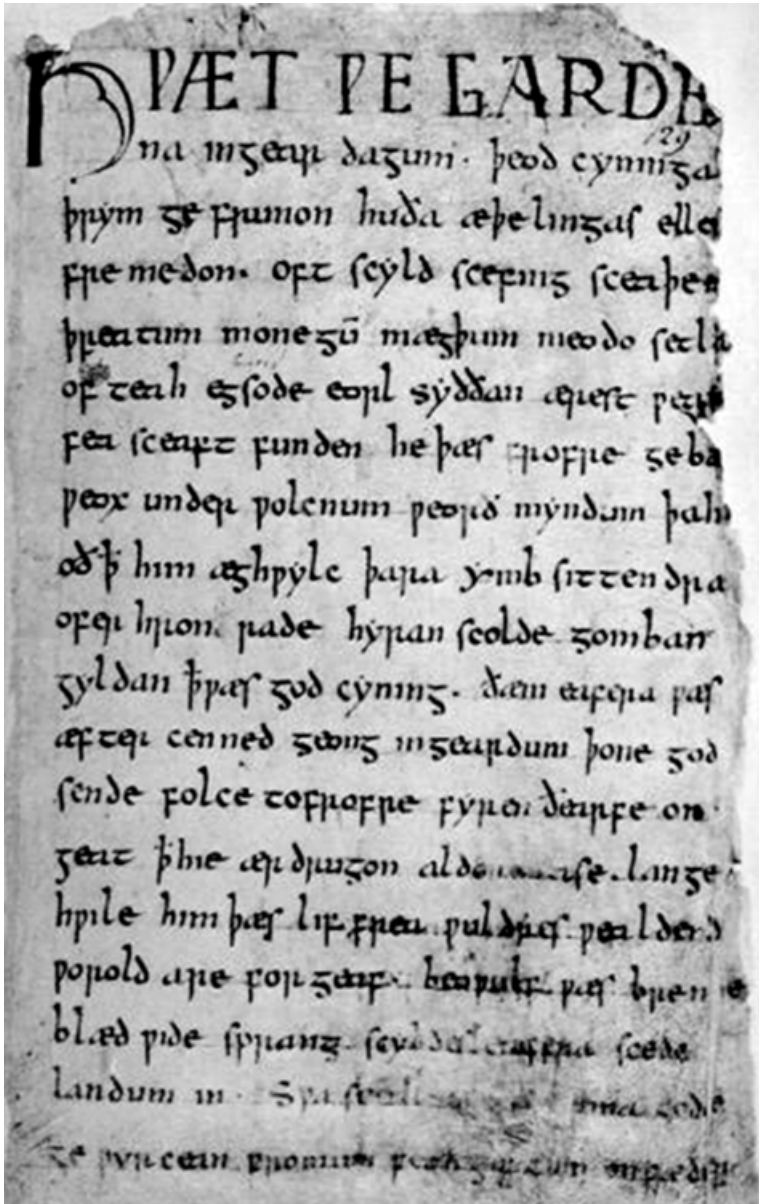
Béowulf

(Czech translation by Jan Čermák)

Hoj! Slyšme zpěv o slávě Dánů,
 věhlasu vládců dávných věků,
 kdy urození muži udatně si vedli.
 Scyld, syn Scéfův, porážel šiky,
 dvorany dobýval jednu po druhé,
 národy děsil, byť nalezenec
 nejdřív byl ubohý. Tak útěchy došel:
 sílil pod nebesy, v slávě prospíval,
 až mu každý z kmenů v okolí
 velrybí cestou poslušnost vzkázal,
 daně odváděl. Dobrý byl král!
 V pozdějších dobách dostal dědice,
 syna mu seslal, lidem ke spáse,
 Stvořitel, věda, jak krutá strast
 po drahý čas druhdy krušila
 lid bez krále. Kníže zázraků,
 Pán všeho živého, Béowulfu žehnal:
 slovo o slávě syna Scyldova
 spěšně se šířilo v zemi Skåne.

Source:

Čermák, Jan (2003). *Béowulf*. Praha: Torst, pp. 61–62.



The first page of Beowulf (Nowell Codex)

Source: EugeneZelenko. *First page of Beowulf*. Wikimedia Commons [online] 25. 11. 2004. [accessed 2014-07-11]. Available at: <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Beowulf.firstpage.jpeg>

The Lord's Prayer

Below is the text of the Lord's Prayer in the standardized West Saxon literary dialect (end of 10th century) and its Modern English equivalent from the *Anglican Book of Common Prayer* (1928). The doxology "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever", which concludes the Lord's Prayer in the *Anglican Book of Common Prayer*, has been omitted. The Old English text contains standard typographical modifications.

Fæder ūre þū þe eart on heofonum,	Our Father who art in heaven,
Sī þīn nama ġehālgod.	hallowed be thy name.
Tōbecume þīn rīce,	Thy kingdom come.
ġewurþe ðīn willa,	Thy will be done
on eorðan swā swā on heofonum.	on earth as it is in heaven.
Ūrne ġedæġhwāmlican hlāf syle ūs tō dæg,	Give us this day our daily bread,
and forġyf ūs ūre gyltas,	and forgive us our trespasses,
swā swā wē forġyfað ūrum gyltendum.	as we forgive those who trespass against us,
And ne ġelæd þū ūs on costnunge,	and lead us not into temptation,
ac ālȳs ūs of yfele.	but deliver us from evil.
Sōþlice.	Amen.

Sources:

Anglican Book of Common Prayer (1928)

Old English. Wikipedia. The Free Encyclopedia [online] 4. 10. 2014. [accessed 2014-10-06]. Available at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_English

The Lord's Prayer – Vocabulary:

fæder	<i>Father</i>	dæghwāmlic	<i>Daily</i>
ūre	<i>Our</i>	hlāf	<i>bread</i> (Masc. A-stem)
þū	<i>Thou</i>	sellan	<i>to give</i> (class 1c)
þe	relative particle	ūs	<i>Us</i>
eart	<i>are</i> (2nd Person Sg. of <i>be</i>)	tōdæg	<i>today</i>
on	<i>on, in</i>	and	<i>and</i>
heofon	<i>heaven</i> (Masc. A-stem)	forġiefan	<i>to forgive</i> (class V)
sī	<i>be</i> (Present Subj.)	gylt	<i>guilt</i> (Masc. I-stem)
þīn	<i>Thine</i>	gyltend	<i>offender, debtor</i> Masc. A-stem)
nama	<i>name</i> (Masc. N-stem)	ne	<i>not</i>
hālgian	<i>to hallow</i> (class 2)	lædan	<i>to lead</i> (class 1b)
becuman	<i>to come</i> (class IV)	costnung	<i>temptation</i> (Fem. Ō-stem)
rīce	<i>kingdom</i> (N. Ja-stem)	ac	<i>but</i>
weorðan	<i>to become</i> (class III)	ālȳsan	<i>to deliver from</i> (class 1b)
willa	<i>will</i> (Masc. N-stem)	of	<i>from</i>
eorDe	<i>earth</i> (Fem. N-stem)	yfel	<i>evil</i> (Neuter A-stem)
swā swā	<i>so as</i>	Sōþlice	<i>truly, amen</i>
ūrne	<i>our</i> (Acc. Sg. Masc.)		

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