History of the English Language *Hamlet* Introduction

Old English:

*Beowulf*  ca. 800 AD



Middle English: Beginning on October 12, 1066!

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| WHAN that Aprille with his shoures soote |  |
| The droghte of Marche hath perced to the roote, |  |
| And bathed every veyne in swich licour, |  |
| Of which vertu engendred is the flour; |  |
| Whan Zephirus eek with his swete breeth | *5* |
| Inspired hath in every holt and heeth |  |
| The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne |  |
| Hath in the Ram his halfe cours y-ronne, |  |
| And smale fowles maken melodye, |  |
| That slepen al the night with open ye, | *10* |
| (So priketh hem nature in hir corages: |  |
| Than longen folk to goon on pilgrimages, |  |

Modern English: Shakespeare! 16th Century AD

To be, or not to be, that is the question:
Whether 'tis Nobler in the mind to suffer
The Slings and Arrows of outrageous Fortune,
Or to take Arms against a Sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them: to die, to sleep
No more; and by a sleep, to say we end
The Heart-ache, and the thousand Natural shocks
That Flesh is heir to? 'Tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep,
To sleep, perchance to Dream; aye, there's the rub
For in that sleep of death, what dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause.