## A brief chronology of English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Language Stage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>700 BC</td>
<td>The <strong>Celts</strong> – tribes coming from central and northern Europe - settled in Britain</td>
<td>They spoke Celtic: first step in the development of the English language</td>
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<tr>
<td>55 BC</td>
<td>Roman invasion of Britain by Julius Caesar</td>
<td>Local inhabitants speak Celtic +</td>
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<tr>
<td>43 AD</td>
<td>Roman invasion and occupation by Emperor Claudius</td>
<td>Old English: the Angles, Saxons and Jutes mixed their dialects and adopted some Celtic words + many words entered the language (Viking)</td>
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<tr>
<td>436 AD</td>
<td>Roman withdrawal from Britain</td>
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<tr>
<td>449 AD</td>
<td>Settlement in Britain by Germanic invaders (Angles, Saxons and Jutes)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Late 8th century</td>
<td>The Vikings invaded Britain</td>
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<tr>
<td>c1150</td>
<td>Earliest surviving manuscripts in Middle English.</td>
<td>Middle English</td>
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<tr>
<td>1348</td>
<td>English replaces Latin as the language of instruction in most schools.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1362</td>
<td>English replaces French as the language of law. English is used in Parliament for the first time.</td>
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<tr>
<td>c1388</td>
<td>Chaucer starts writing <em>The Canterbury Tales</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>c1400</td>
<td>The Great Vowel Shift begins.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1476</td>
<td>William Caxton establishes the first English printing press.</td>
<td>Early Modern English</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The Celts

- 700 BC – Tribes coming from Central Europe settled in Britain
- Their priests were called “Druids”
- They worshipped many gods and the natural elements (the Sun, the Moon, water..)
- Stonehenge: prehistoric site probably used to observe stars and planets or a temple for the adoration of the Sun or the performance of mystic rites
- The Irish, the Scots and the Welsh are their descendants and their languages are Celtic ones
The Romans

- 55 BC Julius Caesar invaded Britain which became part of the Roman Empire under the name of “Britannia”
- 43 AD the actual conquest took place under Emperor Claudius
- They introduced their civilization, they built roads, public baths and theatres
- The Hadrian’s Wall was built to defend themselves from Scottish invasions
Angles, Saxons, Jutes

• 436 AD - The Romans withdrew their soldiers to defend themselves against barbarious attacks

• 449 AD – Britain was invaded by Germanic tribes and called it “Angl-land”, the future England

• The hero of the Britons’resistance against the Anglo-Saxons was King Arthur with his knights of the Round Table

• Language: these tribes mixed their dialects but also adopted Celtic words (birth of Old English)
 Religion

• The Romans had brought Christianity

• The Germanic religion of the new tribes made Christianity retreat; it survived only in some parts of Wales, Scotland and Ireland

• 597 AD – Pope Gregory I sent a monk, Augustine, to spread Christianity; he first went to Canterbury and became the first Archbishop of Canterbury

• The new religion became popular and many Latin words – the language of the Church and education - were absorbed by Old English (religious words like candle, angel, temple, etc.)
The Vikings

- Late 8th century – the Vikings invaded Britain from Scandinavia and mixed with the Anglo-Saxons

- Their language, the Norse, entered Old English (many common words coming from this language, for ex. *sky, give, egg, skirt*, etc.)
The Normans

- 1066 – William, Duke of Normandy invaded Britain by defeating the Saxon King Harold at the Battle of Hastings

- He became King and was called “the Conqueror”

- French, the Normans’ language, influenced the Germanic language

- Britain became a trilingual country and **Middle English** developed from their fusion

- The Bayeux Tapestry (arazzo) which depicts the events leading up to the Norman conquest of England
CANTERBURY

- Canterbury Cathedral is one of the oldest and most famous Christian structures of England; it is the cathedral of the Archbishop of Canterbury, leader of the Church of England
Thomas Becket (1118-1170)

Archbishop of Canterbury from 1162 until his death in 1170. He is venerated as a saint and martyr by both the Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion. He engaged in conflict with Henry II of England over the rights and privileges of the Church and was assassinated by knights of the king in Canterbury Cathedral.
Geoffrey Chaucer (1343-1400)

- Author, poet, courtier, philosopher, diplomat and bureaucrat. Called the father of English literature, Chaucer is the first author to demonstrate the artistic legitimacy of the vernacular English language, rather than French or Latin.

- *The Canterbury Tales* is a collection of stories written in Middle-English. The tales are told by a group of pilgrims as they travel together on a journey to the shrine of St. Thomas Becket at Canterbury Cathedral. He uses the tales and the descriptions of the characters to paint an ironic and critical portrait of English society at the time, and particularly of the Church. Structurally, the poem bears the influence of *The Decameron*, which Chaucer came across during his diplomatic mission to Italy in 1372. However, Chaucer peoples his tales with 'sondry folk' rather than Boccaccio's fleeing nobles.