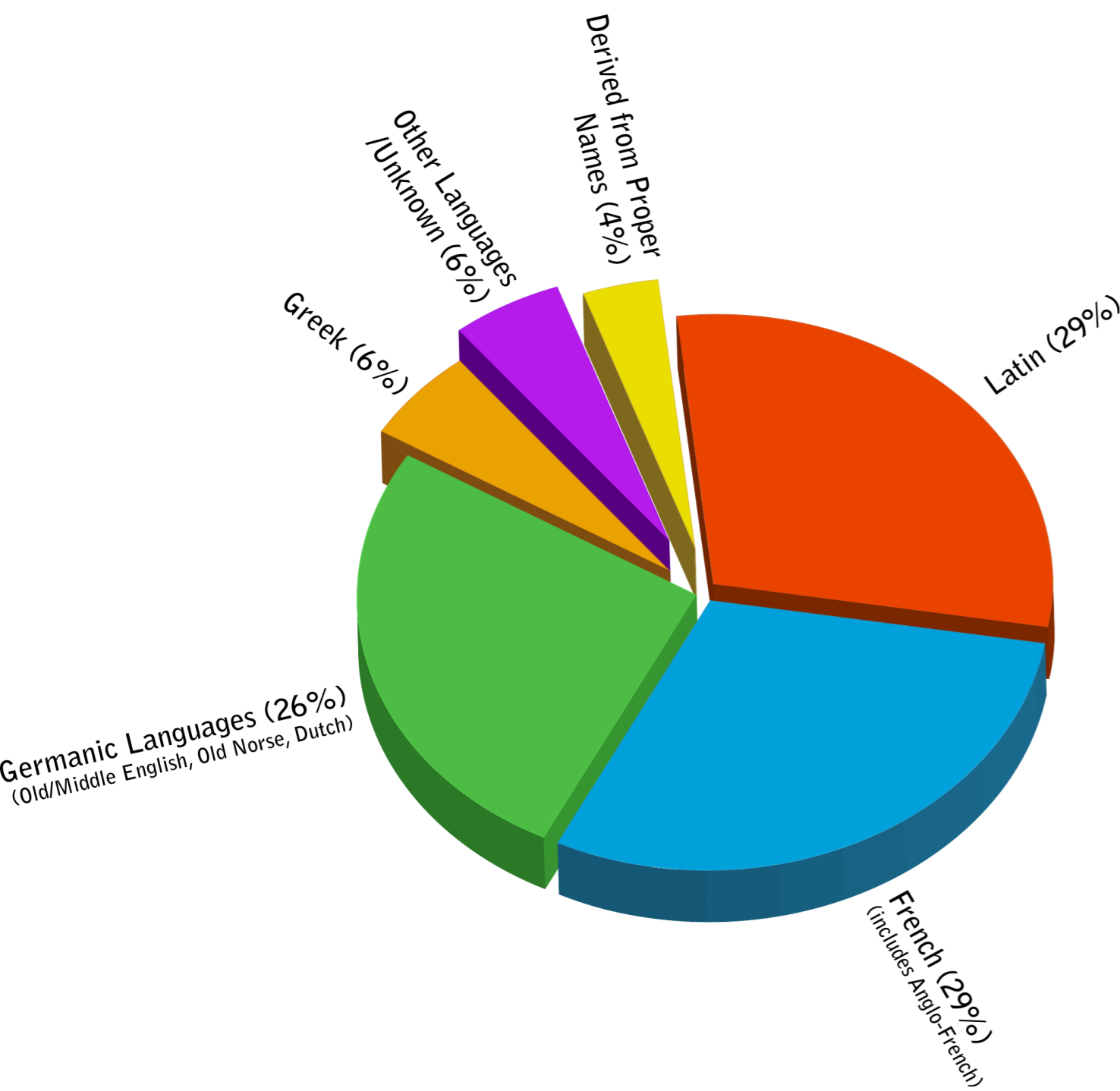




The Influence of French on the English Language

Statistics



Date	Number	Date	Number
Before 1050	2	1301-1350	120
1051-1100	2	1351-1400	180
1101-1150	1	1401-1450	70
1151-1200	15	1451-1500	76
1201-1250	64	1501-1550	84
1251-1300	127	1551-1600	91

Table2. French Borrowings in the History of English (1000words distribution, 1601-1900:134)
-Brinton 2011,249

Historical Backgrounds

- ✓ In 1066, after Edward the Confessor's death, there was a war between Harold and William of Normandy over the successor. (Battle of Hastings) -> William of Normandy won.
- ✓ William of Normandy strengthened the influence of French. Ruling classes, their servants and the bishops were Normans.
- ✓ After the Norman Conquest, England became functionally trilingual for two centuries (English, French, Latin).
- ✓ Decline of French
 - 1204: King John's loss of Normandy -> lost connection with France
 - Henry III employed French nobles -> national feelings against French
 - Hundred Years War (1337-1453) -> national feelings against the use of French
 - Black Death -> working class could become higher class -> language change

Table1. The percentage of English words from each language group -from wikipedia

French Influence on Middle English

1. Vocabulary

- Early: 1100-1300 (Anglo-Norman French)
About 900 words e.g. *government, administer, castle, attorney, court, jury*
- Since 1250
Upper classes returned to the use of English
Parisian French: standard dialect in France
- Later: 1300-1500 (Central French)
Fashion, art, architecture related words, (a wider variety) e.g. *jewel, broach, sculpture, cathedral*

2. Spelling

- <æ> was first dropped from the English alphabet, e.g. *æfter, æsc, græ*
- <th> was introduced replacing the letters <þ> and <ð>.
- <qu> replaces <cw>, e.g. OE *cwen* -> ME *queen*
- <ç> for /tʃ/ -> <ch> e.g. OE *çild* -> ME *child*
- OE <sc> for /ʃ/ -> <sh> or <sch>, e.g. *scield* and *sceap* -> *shield* and *sheep*
- <hw> -> <wh>, e.g. *what*

3. Pronunciation

- [v] and [z] became separate phonemes.
- words with initial <h> were pronounced with/without /h/ in Middle English. In the development of Vulgar Latin from Latin, the initial <h> was dropped in pronunciation -> loan words taken from French have no <h>, e.g. *honor, honest, hour* and *heir*; words of Germanic origin, e.g. *hair, house*, have an initial <h> -> we can see whether a word was borrowed from French/Latin
- <c> has the pronunciation [s]

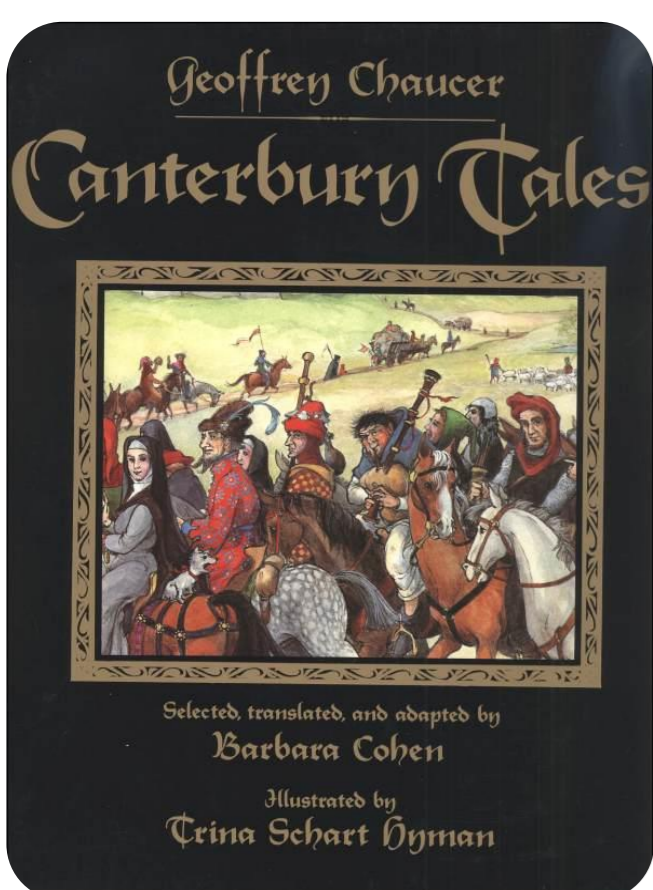
4. Grammar

- Nouns followed by adjectives. e.g. *attorney general, court martial, fee simple, heir male, letters patent, proof positive*

5. Affixation

- English words have French affixes and English suffixes were also added to French loan words.
- Prefixes: *con-, de-, dis-, ex-, pre-, en-, pro-, trans-*
- Suffixes: *-ee, -ance, -ant, -ation, -ment, -ism, -ity, -able*

Examples in Literature: Canterbury Tales



"When that Aprill with his shoures soote
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,
And bathed every veyne in swich licour
Of which vertu engendred is the flour..."
-The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales (Line 1-4)

Aprill: c1100; Middle French: *avril*, Old French: *avrill*
March: Old French: *marz, mars* (1119; French *mars*), Anglo-Norman: *marsh*
Perced: Anglo-Norman: *percer*, Old French, Middle French *percer, perser*
Licour: Old French: *licur, licour*
Veyne: Old French: *veine*
Vertu: Anglo-Norman: *verteu* Old French, Middle French *vertu*
Engendred: French: *engendrer*
Flour: Middle English: *flour, flur*, < Old French *flour, flur, flor* (French *fleur*)

Later borrowings

1) Comparison between Anglo-Norman French and Central French

- earlier [č, ʃ] and later [š, ž]
champion *chandelier*
chestnut *chevron*
- earlier with [s] and later without [s]
hostel *hotel*
(e)squire *equerry*
- earlier (English stress pattern) and later (French stress pattern)
móral *mórale*
drágon *dragóon*

2) After 1500s

- French Revolution:
words related to revolution e.g. *guillotine, aristocrat, democrat, revolutionize, liberal, conservative*
- 19th century:
social graces e.g. *rococo, cliché, resumé, chef, fiancée, coup d'état*

Brinton, Laurel J. and Leslie K. Arnovick. 2006. *The English Language. A Linguistic History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. -table 2
Lutz, Angelika. 2002. "When did English begin?". In Teresa Fanego und Elena Seoane, eds. *Sounds, Words, Texts and Change. Selected Papers from 11 ICEHL, Santiago de Compostela, 7-11 September 2002*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
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http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_English_words_of_French_origin -table 1
Oxford English Dictionary