

Introduction to Old English (TD)

Final exam study guide (2020 – updated version)

1. PART I: (about two thirds of the overall mark)

On the day of the exam you'll be required to provide a few short definitions. You'll also be asked a few questions about the following concepts or people:

- Aelfric (text A)
- Bede (chapter 2)
- Franks casket (chapter 1)
- Grimm's Law (chapter 1)
- Heptarchy (chapter 2)
- King Alfred and the Alfredian Renaissance (chapter 2)
- Old English dialects and West-Saxon (chapter 2)
- Oswald, Aidan and Lindisfarne
- Roman Britain (chapter 2)
- *Ætheling/eorl/ þegn/cyning*
- Saint Augustine and the Gregorian Mission (chapter 7)
- Strong and weak adjectives (chapter 1)
- Strong and weak verbs (chapter 1 and 5)
- Sutton Hoo (chapter 2)
- The Anglo-Saxon invasion/Vortigern/Hengest and Horsa (chapter 2)
- The Benedictine Reform (chapter 7)
- The Danelaw (chapter 2)
- The fixation of the stress (chapter 1)
- *The Lindisfarne Gospels* (chapter 7)
- The runes (chapter 1)
- The Ruthwell Cross (chapter 1)
- The synod of Whitby (chapter 7)
- The Vulgate (chapter 7)
- The *Witan/witenagemot* (chapter 6)
- *Wergeld* (or *weregild*) (chapter 6)
- West Germanic languages and Ingvaeonic (chapters 1 and 2)

Make sure you are able to **identify and describe** these key words. After gathering the appropriate information, write a **short paragraph (do not exceed 150/200 words) for each of them**.

2. Part II (text study):

You'll also have to answer 5 or 6 short questions about a short Old English text, including:

- a question about the pronunciation of Old English,
- some questions about the Old English verbal system (strong and weak verbs, *bēon* vs. *wesan*...): see chapter 5, text #1 and the PPT presentation for further information.
- you will also be required to analyze a few noun phrases (case, number...). You won't have to justify your answers,
- Finally, you'll have to translate two or three sentences into French or Modern English. You won't have to justify your answer. Don't panic—this question will be worth 2 or 3 points at most and I'm usually rather lenient 😊!

On the day of the exam, I'll provide you with ["the magic sheet of Old English inflexions"](#) (which contains conjugation and declension tables) and a glossary.

Remember a few grammatical words

Although you are not required to learn long vocabulary lists, I would like you to remember a few very common words (time adverbs, conjunction and prepositions, for the most part). You are likely to find them in every Old English text!

ac: but

ǣr: before (adverbe, conjunction or preposition) Modern English : ere /eə/ in Shakespeare's plays

ēac: also

eall: all

for þām (þe): because

mid: with (German: mit)

ne: not (used to form negative sentences)

of = fram: from (German: ab)

siððan: after or afterwards (conjunction or adverb)

sōna: then, soon, immediately

swýþe: very, much

þā¹: then (be careful: don't muddle it with the plural definite article!) or *when* + time clause

þær: there

þe: invariable relative pronoun (= *who, which, that...*)

þonne: then (adverb) or when + time clause

Remarks:

Sometimes, it is not easy to distinguish an adverb from a conjunction because they are identical. In Old English, conjunctions were sometimes formed by adding *þām* and sometimes *þe* to the corresponding adverb.

ǣr = preposition, adverb or conjunction

ǣr þām (þe) = conjunction

æfter = preposition, adverb or conjunction

æfter þām (þe) = conjunction

b) Make sure you're able to spot the personal pronouns and the articles in a text. They are all in the 'magic sheet': *þū (you), gē, ic (I), hīe/hī (their), hēo (she), sē/sēo/þæt/þā* and their inflected forms (*ēow, þū, mē etc.*).

As pronouns and demonstratives/articles are usually unstressed words, long vowels are frequently shortened. Some vowels are also often confused: *i* often varies with *ie* or *y*. Don't be surprised to find *hy* or *hi* instead of *hie* in a text!

¹ This is probably the most frequent Old English word!