Old English (OE)

450 — *449* *Angles, Saxons, Jutes, and Frisians move into Britain and take over. Local Celtic language loses.*

500 —

550 —

600 — *597* *St. Augustine of Canterbury begins conversion of English by baptizing King Ethelbert of Kent. Latin becomes smart investment.*

650 —

700 —

750 — *730* Ecclesiastical History of the English People *(Venerable Bede)*

800 —

850 —

900 — *871* *Alfred becomes King of Wessex and rallies English against Scandinavians.*

950 —

1000 — *991* *Olaf Tryggvason invades. English get butts kicked at Maldon.*

Example of Old English:
On angynne gesceop God heofonan and eorðan. Seo eorðe was soðlice idel and æmtig, and þeostra wæron ofer ðære nywelnysse bradnysse; and Godes gast was geferod ofer wæteru. God cwæð ða: Gewurðe leoht, and leoht wearð geworht.

Some highlights:

Sounds it had that we don't:
- y, ʏ, x, ɣ, ç; true long/short vowel distinction; k and h before some consonants

Sounds we have that it didn't:
- phonemic v, ð, ŋ, ʒ (these only existed as positional variants of their unvoiced counterparts)

Letters it had that we don't:
- æ, ð, þ; a different character for w that looked rather like p

Letters we have that it didn't:
- j, q, u (as distinct from v – but note that v was the original shape for what is now u)

Inflections it had that we don't:
- 3 genders (m, f, n) and 4 cases (nominative, accusative, genitive, dative)
- several classes of each gender of noun, each with its own inflection patterns, and all productive
- dual number in pronouns
- many more "strong" verbs, with productive "strong" inflections (new words could be inflected according to them)
- agreement of adjectives with nouns and inflection of adj.s for definiteness
- use of infinitive for passive (*heo heht hine læran* "he ordered him to teach" = "he ordered him to be taught")
- more common use of subjunctive and in more circumstances
- much more common use of impersonal verbs: e.g., *swa me þyncþ* "so [it] seems to me" (from which "methinks")
- preference for parataxis (indication of relation through juxtaposition) rather than subordinate clauses
- freer word order and more inversions
- double negatives and double superlatives

Inflections we have that it didn't:
- articles (an, the) – OE could use demonstratives, but those were more emphatic
- heavy use of auxiliaries in verb phrases (would, have, etc.) – OE used these less and had fewer of them, and consequently used the two main tenses (present and past) to cover more (e.g., simple past to cover pluperfect)
- standard post-verbal (or post-auxiliary) negative (*not*) – OE used pre-verbal *ne* and also formed contractions with it (e.g., *nille* "will not," *næfþ* "has not")

Middle English (ME)

1000 — *1000-ish* Beowulf

1016 Canute becomes king of England, starting Danish dynasty.

1042 Edward the Confessor becomes king, ending Danish dynasty.

1050 —

1066 English get butts kicked at Hastings. William of Normandy takes over, brings family. French becomes all the rage among the smart set.

1100 —

1150 —

1200 —

1204 King John loses Normandy to the French. Continent starts to seem slightly farther away.

1250 —

1300 —

Hundred Years' War with France starts. French not so
1337 fashionable anymore.

1350 —

Statute of Pleadings Act is
1362 enacted, requiring all court proceedings to be conducted in English. (That would be nice.)

1400 — *1400 Geoffrey Chaucer dies. Stops adding to the* Canterbury Tales.

1450 —

1476 William Caxton sets up first printing press in England.

1500 —

Example of Middle English:
In the first made God of nought heuen and erth. The erth forsothe was veyn withinne and voyde, and derknesses weren vp on the face of the see. And the spirite of God was yborn vp on the waters. And God seid, "Be made light," and made is light.

Some highlights:
It would be a mistake to characterize ME as a unitary, consistent language. There were many dialects, and it changed considerably over 400 years.

What changed in vocabulary:

- A large number of words were taken from French. There was also some Scandinavian influence. Many OE words were replaced.

What changed in spelling:

- *þ*, *ð* were dropped in favour of *th* (although *þ* was retained in some common words such as þe and þat).
- *æ* was dropped.
- The OE shape of *g* (ȝ) became a distinct character from *g* and stood for [j], [x], [ç] – ultimately it became *g* or was misconstrued as *z*.
- A new shape, *u*, for the vowel [u] (then written as *v*), was imported and the two shapes were used interchangeably for [u] and [v]; the old character for *w* was replaced with *w*.
- [ʃ] was represented by *sh* rather than OE *sc*; [dʒ] was represented by *g* or *gg* rather than *cg*; *c* could stand for [s]; *o* was sometimes used for [u] (for reasons of legibility), and *ou* for [u:].

What changed in sound:

- [f], [s], and [θ] were voiced in some contexts.
- [v], [ʒ], [y] and [ð] became phonemic.
- [ɣ] became [w] in many positions.
- [h] was lost before consonants.
- [w] and [v] were lost in some contexts, and [tʃ] was lost in unstressed endings (*-lic* became *-ly*).
- The final *n* in inflectional endings was dropped.
- A qualitative distinction emerged in mid-height long vowels ([ɛ]/[e], [ɔ]/[o]).
- Unstressed vowels fell together as [ə], usually written *e*, sometimes *y*.
- [y] and [ʏ] became [i] and [ɪ] or [e] and [ɛ].
- [a:] became [ɔ:] (but not in the North; compare "home" and "hame").
- [æ:] became [ɛ:] and [æ] became [a].
- There were assorted changes in diphthongs.
- There were several changes in vowel length, including lengthening before some consonant pairs, lengthening in open syllables, and shortening in closed syllables, unstressed syllables, and syllables followed by two unstressed syllables.
- Final [ə] was often dropped.

What changed in grammar:

- Thanks to sound changes (due to lazy tongues) as well as to influences from French and Scandinavian, noun and verb inflections were greatly reduced and simplified.
- Adjectival agreement and definite/indefinite distinction were reduced, then lost altogether.
- Grammatical gender was lost.
- Most noun inflections fell together, and a few things were generalized: *-s* became universal for the singular genitive, and *-s* also became universal for the plural genitive and was applied to most nom/acc plurals.
- Word order became more fixed.

Modern English (ModE) Early Modern English (EModE)

1500

Henry VIII becomes "Supreme Head of the Church of England." Latin stocks slip.

1534

1550

1549 Book of Common Prayer *adopted. Latin stocks crash.*

Drake whups Spanish armada, facilitating English expansion.

1588

1590 *Shakespeare starts writing.*

1600

1604 A Table Alphabeticall *(Robert Cawdrey), the first English dictionary*

1611 Authorized (King James) Version of the Bible

1650

1700

1702 *First daily newspaper, London.*

1712 A Proposal for Correcting, Improving, and Ascertaining the English Tongue *(Jonathan Swift). Sigh.*

1719 Robinson Crusoe *(Daniel Defoe)*

1750

1755 Dictionary of the English Language *(Samuel Johnson)*

1762 A Short Introduction to English Grammar *(Robert Lowth). Arrgh.*

1775 *American colonists revolt. End up establishing first independent Anglophone nation outside of Britain.*

1800

1805 *Nelson whups French at Trafalgar. Britannia rules the waves.*

1828 American Dictionary of the English Language *(Noah Webster)*

1850

Spanish-American war establishes US as a major world power with overseas

1898 *turf. Colonial jargon gains cachet.*

1900

1906 *First radio broadcast.*

1922 *BBC established.*

1928 New English Dictionary on Historical Principles *completed. Reissued in 1933 as the* Oxford English Dictionary.

1950

1936 *BBC starts "high-definition" telly.*

1983 *Internet invented.*

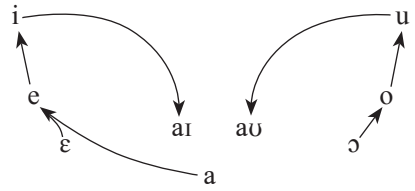
1992 *First web browser released. Makes linguistic dumpster diving much easier.*

2000

Example of Early Modern English:
In the beginning God created the Heaven, and the Earth. And the earth was without forme, and voyd, and darkenesse was vpon the face of the deepe: and the Spirit of God mooued vpon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

Some highlights:
Changes from ME to EModE were for the most part fairly small and gradual. This is even more the case for changes between EModE and ModE.

Biggest change from ME to EModE:
The Great Vowel Shift! Over a period of a couple of hundred years, the long vowels shifted, though not all at once and not to the same degree everywhere. The general end results (change between ME and current English) may be depicted as follows:



There were also changes to short vowels (including shifting of [a] to [æ]) and to diphthongs, but they were less dramatic.

Some other things of note:

- Printers fixed spellings more consistently, but they tended to fix it according to ME usage rather than current pronunciation.
- The imported type from the continent forced the use of *y* for the few remaining instances of *þ* (giving y^e and y^t as short forms for "the" and "that").
- In the 18th/19th centuries, *j* became a separate character from *i* and *v* from *u* rather than in each case there being two forms for one letter than had two sounds, one a vowel and one a consonant (with each form usable for either sound).
- Some words were respelled on the basis of etymology, accurate or misconstrued.
- Some respelled words changed pronunciation on the basis of the new spelling (e.g., *faut* became *fault*, and the *l* came to be pronounced).
- Other spelling pronunciations also took hold, e.g., [ɪŋ] for *-ing* although [ɪn] had been standard even in the most proper educated use.
- The sound [x] was dropped or changed to [f], and [ç] was dropped.
- Grammatical prescriptivism wrought many changes, some based on Latin, some based on "logic" and often a misunderstanding of the functions and origins of the construction in question; "rules" about infinitives, prepositions, superlatives, and negatives, among others, were invented in the 18th century.
- The *-s* inflectional endings for genitives were misconstrued as coming from *his* and apostrophes were consequently inserted.
- Inflected forms of strong verbs changed variously and not altogether consistently.
- Many new words have been added, and many words have shifted meaning.
- Many longstanding uses of words have come to be condemned, often in a mistaken belief that they are innovations.

Some old words that have interesting histories

asparagus: Lat *asparagus* > MedLat *sparagus* > ME *sperage*, reverted to *asparagus* due to use of Latin by botanists; subsequently *sparrowgrass* by folk etymology

awful: From *awe* (OE *ege*) + *full*; OE *egefull* "causing dread" > ME *awful* "worthy of, or commanding, profound respect or fear" > EModE (1660) "solemnly impressive; sublimely majestic" > ModE (1809) "frightful, very ugly, monstrous" (originally slang)

carouse: Germ *gar aus* "all out" > "last call" > "a last drink" > EModE n. *garaus*, *carouse* "drinking till closing" > v. "drink all evening"

cloud: OE *clud* "hill" or "rock"; ME "cloud" was *welkin* fr. OE *wolcen*; sky is fr. Old Norse *sky* "cloud"; OE "sky" was *heofan* > ModE *heaven*

dinner: Lat *disieiunare* "stop fasting" > VulgLat *disiunare* "eat one's first meal" > OFr *disner* "breakfast" > ME *dinner* "breakfast", "first big meal of the day" > ModE "main meal of the day"

farm: MedLat *firma* "fixed, steady" > Anglo-Norman *ferme* "fixed payment" > EModE *farm* "fixed yearly amount payable as rent" > "land occupied on farm terms" > "cultivated agricultural land"

glitch: First print ref. 1962 by John Glenn to refer to "a spike or change in voltage in an electrical current"; probably fr. Yid *glitsh* "slip, lapse", fr. MHighGer *gliten* "glide"

hearse: Lat *hirpex* "harrow" > MedLat *hercia* > OFr *herce* "harrow, frame" > ME *hearse* "framework for holding candles" (including but not limited to over coffin at a funeral) > 16c "funeral pall" > 17c "bier, coffin" > late 17c "vehicle that carries the coffin"

internecine: Lat *internecinus* "fought to the death, murderous" > EModE *internecine* "fought to the death" (1663); Samuel Johnson misunderstood the use of *inter-*, which in this case had been an intensifier in the Latin, and defined the word as "endeavoring mutual destruction" > ModE "relating to internal struggle"

jaunty: Lat *gentilis* "belonging to the same family" > OFr *gentil* "high-born, noble" > ME *gentile* "courteous" > EModE "soft, mild" > ModE *gentle*; OFr *gentil* > EModE *gentile* "well-bred; of or appropriate to the gentry" > ModE *genteel*; same EModE *gentile* with influence of Fr pronunciation > *janty* "well-bred" > 1670s "easy or unconcerned in manner" and hence "sprightly, lively" > ModE *jaunty*; also Lat *gentilis* > ME (14c) *gentile* "non-Jewish"

mess: Lat v. *mittere* "place" > n. *missus* "course of a meal" > ME *mess* "a quantity of food" > ModE (19c) "unpalatable mixture of food" > modern usage; also ME *mess* > 16c "group of persons who eat together" > ModE "group dining place"

methinks: OE *me þyncþ* "it seems to me" (OE impersonal verb *þyncan* "to seem", not OE verb *þencan* "think, consider", whence modern *think*) > ME *me thinketh* > ModE *methinks*, by reanalysis "I think"

nice: Lat *nescius* "ignorant" > OFr *nice* "foolish, without sense" > ME (13c) *nice* "foolish, without sense" > 15c "overrefined, overdelicate", whence modern "fastidious" and "precise, subtle" > 18c "good" (vague term of approval); Johnson (1755) disapproved of this use, and it is debated in Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (1817)

scan: Lat *scandere* "climb" > "scan a verse of poetry" (perhaps beating one's foot) > ME (14c) *scannen* "scan a verse" > 16c *scan* "criticize, examine minutely, interpret, perceive" > "look at searchingly" (1798) > "look something over to find something" > present "look over quickly"

silly: OE *sælig* (cf. Ger *selig*) "happy, blissful, fortunate" > ME *seli* > (1225) "blessed, pious" > (1290) "innocent" > (1297) "deserving of pity, insignificant, poor" > ME (1529) *sely*, *seely* "foolish, simple"; first spelled *silly* early 15c, and the two spellings *seely* and *silly* existed side by side for several centuries

skirt: Germanic *skurtaz* "short undergarment covering top and upper legs" > OE *scyrte* "short garment" > ModE *shirt* "garment for upper body"; Gc *skurtaz* > Old Icelandic *skyrta* "knee-length tunic" > ME *skirt* "lower part of a garment or garment for lower body"

slipshod: EModE *slip-shoe* "slipper" > 1580 *slipshad* or *slipshood* "wearing slippers" > 1605 *slip-shod* > 1687 "loose or untidy" > 1815 "slovenly, careless"

soccer: *Football Association of England* (formed 1863) > *Association Football* > *Assoc.* > late 19c *socker*, *socka*, etc. (cf. *rugger* fr. *Rugby*) > *soccer*, a term thought of as an Americanism since the early 20c (since Americans took it to use in place of *football*, the standard English term) although it originated in England

surly: ME, EModE *sirly* "lordly" > 1566 *surly* "lordly, majestic" > "masterful, imperious, arrogant" > "ill-tempered" (by 1670)

tawdry: St. Audrey (Anglo-Saxon queen, d. 679 of throat tumour) founded a monastery in Ely (near Cambridge); at an annual fair in Ely in her honour, laces to be worn on the neck were sold and called *St. Audrey lace* > *tawdry lace*; the lace came to be known for being of low quality, and *tawdry* was reanalyzed as an adjective signifying this

they: Old Norse *their*, *theira*, *theim* gradually replaced OE *hie*, *hiora*, *him* starting in 12c and continuing through to end of ME, starting in northern England and working south, probably at least in part due to the increasing resemblance between the 3p pl pronouns and the 3p sg ones in English; there is one survival of the OE forms, ModE colloquial *'em*, often thought to be reduced from *them* but actually descended from *him* (3p pl dat)

throw: OE *þrawan* "twist, wring, turn to one side" > ME *throw* > ME (1300) "project or propel through the air"; compare *warp* (below); the verb *cast* was the main verb used for projectile motion in EModE while *warp* and *throw* were exchanging main senses

tide: From OE *tid* "time, hour, period, season" (similar in meaning to *tima*); survivals of this older sense are *Yuletide* and *time and tide*

travel: VulgLat n. *tripalium* "rack (for turture)" > v. *tripaliare* "torture on the rack" > OFr *travailler* "torture, torment, trouble" > "tire, wear out" (incl. "wear out by a journey") > ME *travail* (whence also ModE *travail*) , which came to include the sense "journey" > ModE *travel* "journey"; noun forms have existed in parallel since ME

warp: OE *weorpan* "throw" > ME *werpe*, *warp* > (15c) "bend,

curve, or twist out of shape"; compare *throw* (above)

weird: IE *wert-* "turn" > OE *wyrd* "fate", also used for the goddesses who wove people's lives > EModE *weird*, used by Shakespeare in *Macbeth* to refer to the witches (*the weird sisters*); from this instance, the word was reinterpreted as an adj, and taken to mean "strange, eerie"

Some newer words illustrative of word-formation techniques

24/7: (1983) "every hour of every day"; first known use is in *24-7-365*, and early uses have *24-7* more often than *24/7*

affluenza: (1979) "a variety of psychological maladies afflicting those with too much wealth and leisure"; blend of *affluence* and *influenza*; Lat *affluentia* "state of flowing towards" > Fr *affluence* > ME/EModE (1447) *affluence* "plentiful flow" > 1603 "abundance of possessions"; MedLat *influentia* "influence" > Ital *influenza* "influence" > "disease caused by influence of evil spirits"; note same Lat *fluent-* "flow" root in both

blurb: (1906) "a brief description, usually on a book cover"; Invented by Gelett Burgess, first as the name of a cartoon woman on the jacket of a book (Miss Belinda Blurb), then as a term for the descriptions found on book jackets

canola: (1978) from *Canada, oil low acid*; "a genetically engineered variety of rapeseed low in saturated fats and high in monounsaturates"; although it is Canada's second-largest cash crop and the oil is common in Canada and the US, it is still not in the *Oxford English Dictionary*

car bra: (1986) "a protective fabric or plastic item fitting the front end of a car"; the item so named had been on the market (under other names) for as over 15 years by 1986; *car* comes by way of ME and OFr from Lat *carra* "two-wheeled wagon"; *bra* is a shortening (1936) of *brassiere* (1911), from Fr *brassière* "an undergarment worn to support the breasts", originally used to mean "a child's jacket with sleeves", from OFr *braciere*, from *bras* "arm"

carjacking: (1991) "commandeering of a car by violent means"; blend of *car* and *hijacking*; *car* comes by way of ME and OFr from Lat *carra* "two-wheeled wagon"; *hijack* is of uncertain origin

cocooning: (1986) "retreating into the privacy of one's home for leisure rather than going out; building a shell of safety around oneself for protection from the world"

Frankenfood: (1992) "genetically engineered plant and animal foodstuffs"; first used in a letter to the editor printed in the *New York Times* June 28, 1992 (*Frankenstein food* was in use by 1989); used a few days later in a headline in the Sunday *Times*, and picked up rapidly thereafter by other newspapers; a blend of *Frankenstein* and *food*; *Frankenstein* was the title character of a famous novel by Mary Shelley, a mad scientist who made a monster of parts from human corpses, although it has more often since been used to refer to the monster; *food* comes from OE *foda* and has not changed meaning (though metaphorical and expanded uses have been added)

gastroporn: (1985) "enticing language and pictures depicting food in the most tantalizing way"; a blend of *gastro-* and *porn*; *gastro-* is directly from Classical Greek, a combinative form of γαστερ "stomach"; *porn* is shortened from *pornography* "sexually prurient material", which is derived from *pornographer*, from Classical Greek πορνογραφος "writing of harlots"

gaydar: (1982) "ability to discern whether a person is homosexual"; blend of *gay* and *radar*; *gay* exists first in the sense "joyous, cheery", and from this (by 17c) addicted to social pleasures and dissipations; "homosexual" is attested by 1935, but only eclipsed other senses in late 20c; *radar* is an acronym for *radio detection and ranging*

hot button: (1966) "something known to generate a strong, specific response"; *hot button* has a long history of street use for "clitoris"; was used first in marketing in this sense; as a political term for strong motivating factors for voters (the most common current use), the first attestation is 1981

incent: (1977) "give incentive to"; backformation from *incentive* (ultimately fr. Lay *incendere* "set on fire, kindle"); cf. *edit* from *editor*, *peddle* from *peddler*, *sedate* from *sedative*, *diagnose* from *diagnosis*, *donate* from *donation*, *laze* from *lazy*

Mondegreen: (1954) "a misunderstood or misinterpreted word or phrase resulting from mishearing"; coined in an article by Sylvia Wright in *Harper's*, wherein she talked of learning the ballad "The Bonny Earl of Murray" as a child, including the lines *They hae slay the Earl of Murray,/And Lady Mondegreen*, the second of which as an adult she learned was actually *And laid him on the green*; thus, this word could be characterized as an eponym – or perhaps better, a pseudeponym

NIMBY: (1982) from *not in my back yard*; "a person who objects to a new project in his or her neighbourhood that he thinks will affect neighbourhood quality"; whence *nimbyism*

push-polling: (1994) "conducting telephone 'polls' that imply potentially damaging (or beneficial) things about the subject to influence subjects rather than actually to gather data"; *polling* comes from EModE v. *poll* "to count heads" fr. ME n. *polle* "human head"

sabermetrics: (1977?) "the mathematical and statistical analysis of baseball"; from an a quasi-acronymic form of *Society of American Baseball Research* plus *-metrics* "measurement" (from Classical Greek μετρικος, from μετρον "measure"); it thus has nothing at all to do with sabers and is a rather interesting mix of word-formation means

virtual reality: (1987) "a computer-generated simulacrum of reality generated by a computer"; first use of *virtual* to mean "not physically existing but made to appear so by computer" attested 1959 (*virtual memory*); Lat *virtus* "virtue" > adj. *virtualis* > ME (1398) *vertual*, *virtual* "possessed of certain innate virtues or capacities" > EModE (1654) "being so in essence or effect, although not formally or actually"

zine: (1965) "a special-interest, usually amateur-published magazine"; originally *'zine*; shortened from *fanzine* and similar terms such as *skatezine* and *freezine*, all of which blends using the last syllable of *magazine* as a combining morpheme (making *zine* a word like *ology* or *ism*), although it is originally not: Arabic *kazana* "to store up" > *makzin* "storehouse" > Ital (14c) *magazzino* > Fr (1409) *magasin* > EModE (1583) *magosine* "storehouse" (by 17c *magazine*) > 1731 "periodical publication containing articles by various writers"

Some facts about some "errors"

actionable: The sense "cause for legal action" dates to 1591; the non-legal (and often scorned) sense "able to be acted on" has been with us since 1913, in the absence of an equally efficient means of conveying the concept

amongst: The adverbial genitive form *amonges* was first used in the 14c; by the 16c the *-es* was changed to *-est* by association with superlative endings; cf. *amidst*

anyways: From *any* + *ways*, adverbial genitive form of *way* (not plural!), so "of or by any way"; found as *any ways* in the *Book of Common Prayer*

apostrophe for plurals: Not a new practice; apostrophes for plurals after vowels can be seen in texts from the 17c

can (for *may*): The permission (rather than ability) sense of this word has been in use since the latter half of the 19c; Tennyson used it thus in 1879

comprised of: This use, the converse of the "proper" use, has been around since at least 1874

dangling modifiers: These have been used since at least the medieval period, but have only been the subject of criticism for the last century or so

decimate (to mean "destroy most of" rather than "kill one tenth of"): Both the "correct" and the "incorrect" uses have been in English since the 17c

different than: The OED has *different from* starting 1590, *different to* starting 1526, and *different than* starting 1644; *different than* sometimes avoids rather circuitous constructions; note that the argument on the basis of *differ from* would also force a change of *according to* to *according with*

double negatives: Double negatives were common in OE and ME and were often enough seen in EModE; they are also normal in Romance languages; they are a form of agreement between word parts, but when the concept of agreement has been lost from a language and some rather simplistic ideas of logic have been added, double negatives can seem incorrect, even as they persist in colloquial usage and arise naturally from the mouths of children

double superlatives: Double superlatives were common in OE and all the way to Shakespeare (the famous *most unkindest cut*) and beyond; in a language that has agreement between different words it may seem reasonable, while in one that has lost all its agreements (like ModE) this relic of agreement might seem merely pleonastic

from whence: This has been used since at least 1377 (seen in the work of William Langland); we should note that other Germanic languages require inflected forms of pronouns following prepositions, as did OE, and *whence* is in origin a genitive of *where* rather than merely a short form for "from where"

gift (v.): The verbal use of *gift* "to give a gift" has been around since at least the 16c

good (adv.): *Good* was used as an adverb regularly from the 14c to the 18c

grow (trans.): The transitive use of *grow* is attested from 1774, and it has been used for a variety of things, not all of which are organic

hopefully (sentence adv.): Sentence adverbs have been in use since at least 1644 (*seriously*); their use increased greatly in the 20c; since the late 1960s there have been attacks on *hopefully* but not so much on other sentence adverbs

impact (for *affect*): As a transitive literal verb, *impact* dates from 1600 (the intr. form is first attested in 1916), but the modern figurative use dates from 1935 and has increased since the latter half of the 20c

implement (v.): The verbal use of *implement* began in Scotland in the early 19c and spread more generally in the mid 20c

lay (for *lie*): Use of *lay* to mean "lie" was common in the 17c and 18c and has been seen in texts as early as 1300

less (for *fewer*): The use of *less* with countable objects comes from the OE partitive *læs* + a genitive plural ending; the genitive inflection was lost but the use of it in this application continued; it can be seen as early as 888, and was used by Caxton in 1484 and in the journal *Nature* in 1873

like (for *as*): This usage can be seen as early as 1530 and can be found in the works of Shakespeare

slow (adv.): The adverbial use of *slow* comes from OE, when it had an adverbial *-e* ending, which was lost in ME so that the adverb became identical with the adjective

the hoi polloi: Dryden and Byron both used *the* before *hoi polloi*, even when writing it in Greek (οι πολλοι); the use of it to mean "snobs" dates from the 1950s

unique (with qualifiers): The word *unique* was regarded as a foreign loan from the 17c to the mid 19c; since then, it has been in wide use, often with a weakened meaning, as often happens to words borrowed from other languages

verbing nouns: This is, in fact, a time-honoured form of deriving new usages in English; it has been a part of the language as long as the language has existed

Sources:

Algeo, John, and Thomas Pyles. *The Origins and Development of the English Language.* Fifth edition. Toronto: Thomson Wadsworth, 2004.

Editors of the American Heritage Dictionaries. *Word Histories and Mysteries: From Abracadabra to Zeus.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004.

Fowler, H.W. *The New Fowler's Modern English Usage.* Ed. R.W. Burchfield. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988.

Oxford English Dictionary. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006. Available at dictionary.oed.com.

Soukhanov, Anne H. *Word Watch.* New York: Henry Holt, 1995.