Welcome to today’s PowerPoint presentation. We will cover the material in Gramley, chapter 2, with some supplemental information on early Old English as it changed from West Germanic.

Old English consonant sounds were generally the same as the consonant sounds today with a couple of key differences. First we must introduce you to a new letter. Thorn is the TH sound as in the word thin, the voiceless interdental fricative theta. Edh is the TH sound as in the word then, which is the voiced interdental fricative we have seen in the IPA. C was usually pronounced as our K, the velar sound. It is also the CH sound as in the word ceorl, the Old English word for a commoner, before a front vowel that was not umlauted. More on those terms later. C will generally not be pronounced as S. G will generally be pronounced as our velar hard G phoneme in most cases, as in the OE word gar, a spear. G will also generally be pronounced as a small gamma, a throat clearing kind of sound, between back vowels and after the letters R or L as in the word swealg, swallowed. It will be pronounced palatally as a Y before or between front vowels or at the end of a word after a front vowel, as in the OE word gefrugnon, asked, or modig, brave. The compound SC will be pronounced as the SH sound in fish, and a double G will be pronounced as the J sound in bridge. I have given you the Old English versions of those words here. The long N will be pronounced as the NG sound in hring, the word for ring; it is simply an allophone of N before K or G, and it was not phonemic until late in the Middle English period. H will be sounded as we sound it today at the beginning of a word, but it will sound as the CH in the German word nicht after front vowels. It will also be pronounced as the CH in the German name Bach elsewhere. Double consonants will both be pronounced, and both will usually be voiceless, as in the word ‘to give’, sel-lan. HW undergoes metathesis and becomes WH in present-day English; hwæl in Old English is ‘whale’ today. GN or CN will be pronounced in Old English, although they are silent in present-day English, as in the words gnornian, to mourn, or cniht (today's ‘knight’), the word for youth or servant.

Let us now go to the specific vowel sounds in Old English. One should note that the sounds will not always match up with present-day English sounds, as the Great Vowel Shift had not yet occurred. Also, although vowel length will usually be marked in an introductory Old English text, one should note that vowel length will not always be marked in a medieval manuscript. When it is marked, it will look more like a French accent grave than a macron, which is the normal sign that we used to indicate a long vowel today. Short A will sound like the vowel sound in hot, while long A will sound like the vowel sound in father; the Old English examples are nam and bāt. Again, note the difference between a long A sound today and an Old English long A sound. The quantity, or length of time the sound is carried out, is included as well as the quality or tone of the sound in determining vowel length. A short æsc will sound like the A in ash, whereas a long æsc will sound like the AI diphthong in the word airy; the OE examples are pronounced þæt and wǣron. A short E will sound like the vowel sound in met, whereas a long E will sound like the long A sound in present-day English fate. The OE examples are pronounced
men and sēo. Again, this has not yet gone through the Great Vowel Shift. Short I will sound like the I in bit, whereas long I will sound like the I in machine, more like a present-day long E sound; the OE examples are pronounced ic and bītan. Short O will sound like the open O sound in the word audible, while long O will sound as it does today in the word note; the OE examples are pronounced dohtor and gōd. The short U sound will sound like the word pull, while the long U sound will sound like the double O in the word doom; the OE examples are pronounced fuhton and tilt. The vowel Y will sound like the umlauted U in the German word müsschen, whereas a long Y will sound like the U in the German word kühn; the OE examples are pronounced cyning and līt. Vowel length also indicates quantity of sound, not just quality of sound; a long vowel sound is carried out for a little bit longer than a short vowel sound.

The Old English diphthongs are again very different from the sounds we expect in present-day English. The short EA in the Old English word for helped, healed, sounds like the sound in hat plus the final sound in Cuba. The long EA diphthong sounds like the dipthong AI in airy plus the final A in Cuba, as in the word beam, for tree. The short EO diphthong sounds like the words met and poetic, as in the word for work, weorc. The long EO diphthong sounds like the vowel sounds in fate and poetic, as in beot, the word for boast. The short IO diphthong sounds like the vowel sounds in the words bit and poetic, as in the word liornian, to learn. The long IO diphthong sounds like the vowels in machine and poetic, as in the word for people or nation, liode. The short IE diphthong sounds like the vowel sounds in the words bit and Cuba, as in the word for elders, ieldran. The long IE diphthong sounds like the vowel sounds in machine and Cuba, as in the word for obey, hieran.

One of the more important things to know about the movement from Germanic to Old English is that several sound changes occurred which still leave their mark on the language today. Today we will be examining them in temporal order. The changes we will examine are some early vowel changes; E to I before a nasal; gemination; the A to Æ change; breaking; palatal diphthongization; I/J umlaut, and the loss of final I and medial J.

Moving from Germanic to early Old English to the Old English of the year 1000, there were three early changes in the vowels and diphthongs whose effects are widespread. The diphthong sounded / ai / lost its second sound and became ā in Old English. The diphthong sounded / au / became ēa in Old English; the Gautar or Goths recorded in some early texts may be the verbal ancestors of Beowulf’s Geats. The diphthong eu became long ēo in Old English.

The next important sound change is the E to I change. As its name suggests, the vowel E would change to I before a nasal (M or N) in Primitive Germanic when the N was followed by a second consonant and a J in the following syllable. For example, the Germanic noun bend, a knot (as in
today’s ‘sheet bend’), would become the verb *bendjanan, ‘to tie or bind’, when the –janan verb-forming suffix was attached. Note the reduplicating ending, which lost one of the –an’s when it became Early Old English. The N and D at the end of the stem were followed by a J in the verb-forming suffix, which mutated the E to an I. J would eventually drop out to give us the Late West Saxon form bindan, ‘to bind’.

If you look at the PDE words sell, bill, funny, clammy, folly, two things will become apparent. The first and more obvious is that all the words have a double consonant; after a bit of observation, you may note that they also all have a short vowel sound. The former is the result of a sound change called gemination, and while some words with short vowels experienced gemination in the Old English period, other words came to have the double consonant by assimilation later in the Middle English period.

The Latin gemini means “twins,” hence gemination – a twinning or doubling of a single consonant (except r) after a short vowel and before a j. For a quick summary: a Germanic word with a short vowel followed by a single consonant and a j will double that single consonant. Again, R does not geminate; if you see a double r (as in the word “terrible”) today, very likely it comes from a Latin root, such as error or terror, not a Germanic root. The J will usually drop, as we will discuss later. For example, less some intermediate steps to be discussed later, the West Germanic *saljan will eventually yield Old English sellan, to give, the ancestor of Modern English “sell.”

The next vowel change which we will look at is the A to Æ change, also sometimes referred to as A-fronting. In many Germanic words, the letter A would frequently mutate to Æ (moving forward in the mouth). For example, the reconstructed Germanic word *dag became the word dæg in Old English. This is, of course, our modern word day. There is an exception to the rule, however. If the Germanic letter A was followed by a single consonant and then an A, U, or O, the A would not front. To follow up on our previous example, the Germanic plural dagas would not undergo any mutation, and therefore the Germanic and Old English words for ‘days’ would look identical.

The sound change that we must look at next is breaking, which is a diphthongization of a single vowel due to the presence of certain consonants following the vowel. Æ, E, and I are the three major vowels that break. In the first case, Æ breaks to EA before R followed by any consonant but J; for example, the –æ- in early Old English *heard would break to heard, ‘hard’. R+ J would often be subjected to IJ umlaut, as we will discuss later. Æ would also break before L followed by any consonant and it would also break before H. E would break to EO before R followed by any consonant but J, before LH, and before H. I have given feothan, to fight, as an example of
the broken Germanic *fehtan. I would break to IO before R followed by any consonant but J (for example, *hird would go to *hiord and eventually to heord, a herd of cattle) and it would also break before LH and before H. Manuscripts in the late tenth and early eleventh century indicate that in Late West Saxon, the broken form -īo- often went to -eo-.

The next major sound change we must consider is palatal diphthongization, which occurred early in the Old English period, but later than breaking. This is a diphthongization that occurred if a word began with a palatal C (like the CH in church), g (the Y sound in yes), or sc (the SH sound in fish). Æ would diphthongize to EA and long Æ would diphthongize to long EA (for example, *scēft > scēaft, a shaft or arrow, and *gar to gear, a year). E would diphthongize as IE (for example, *gefan would go to giefan, to give, and *sceran would go to scieran, to cut or shear). In Late West Saxon, the diphthong -ie- can appear written as -i- or -y-, so one must be aware of variant forms.

The next major (and very frequent) sound change is I or J umlaut. Very simply stated, an I or a J in the syllable following certain vowels changed the vowel sound before the I or J; the I or J itself eventually dropped out or changed to I in certain circumstances. The major effects of I/J umlaut were as follows: A before nasals would become E; A would become Æ (note that this is NOT the A to æ change); Æ would become E; E would become I; long or short O would become E; long or short U would become Y as in the modern German ü; long or short EA would become IE; and long or short IO would become IE. The reason this sound change occurs is that the I sound is a high front vowel, and J is the consonantal version of the sound. The back vowels A, O, and U (long or short) move forward to anticipate this I or J sound and assimilate to their front counterparts Æ, E, or Y (long or short). The front vowels Æ and E assimilate more closely to the I sound by moving up. For these reasons, I/J umlaut is also called “front mutation”.

For some examples of I or J umlaut, let’s look at the word we started discussing above, “to give”. The Early West Germanic *saljan would become *sæljan by the a to æ change, then would become *sælljan due to gemination, then *selljan due to I/J umlaut, and then finally would become sellan due to the loss of medial J. The Early West Germanic verb “to save”, *narjan, would become *nærjan due to the a to æ change, then *nerjan due to I/J umlaut, and then finally Old English nerian when the medial J changed to I. With nerian, remember that R does not geminate, which is why we skipped that step.

I or J umlaut has had some effects that have lasted into modern nouns. For example, the Germanic nominative singular *mann has an I in the plural, yielding *männi; the I mutated the A in the plural, giving the Old English nominative singular mann, but menn in the plural, yielding present-day English man and men. What modern singulars and plurals do you think come from
gos, mus, and fot? That’s right – goose and geese, mouse and mice, and foot and feet. The noun forming suffix -ip took the original strang and made it into*strangip, then strengip, the ancestor of today’s word strength. However, this change did not always survive into present-day English. The Old English nominative singular for book was boc, but bec in the plural; this word assimilated to French endings after the Norman Conquest and took the present-day English form book in the singular and books in the plural. This change was not always consistently carried through into present-day English.

I or J umlaut also has had some effects on modern verbs. For example, the noun dōm (judgment or “doom”) had the form *domjan when the verb-forming suffix was added; as the root vowel was long, it did not undergo gemination but did undergo I/J umlaut, yielding *demjan, which resulted in the Old English deman, “to judge”, the ancestor of Modern English “to deem”. The Old English adjective ful, “full”, became *fuljan with the addition of the verb-forming suffix, then *fulljan as a result of gemination, then *fylljan due to I/J umlaut, and finally Old English fyllan (“to fill”) with the loss of medial J. As we will see below, weak verbs have no ablaut changes, but the verb sellan, sealde, seald (sell, sold, sold) has vowel changes not resulting from an ablaut series. What accounts for this difference? In Germanic, the verb’s principal parts were *saljan, *salide, and *salid. We have gone through the changes that occurred to form sellan above and need not rehearse them here; however, in the second and third principal parts, the verbs did go through the a to æ change, but because the -i- in the last syllable was unstressed, it dropped out before the time when I/J umlaut took place. As a result, the second and third principal parts did not undergo I/J umlaut, but they did undergo breaking, yielding an EA in those principal parts.

As noted last week Modern English has natural gender, in which grammatical gender matches the identified gender or lack thereof of the object described (this is most obvious in pronouns today). Men and male animals are called “he/him” and women or female animals “she/her”, and inanimate objects are considered neuter, being referred to as “it.” Old English nouns, on the other hand, have an arbitrary grammatical gender assigned and are considered masculine, feminine, or neuter regardless of their natural gender. Back in Common Indo-European, this may originally have had less to do with masculinity or femininity than concreteness or abstractness. Concrete things were often put in declensions later labeled as “masculine” and abstract concepts were in declensions later labeled “feminine”; we can see this in Old English because women are often given names that represent abstract concepts while men are named after concrete things (e.g. Queen Modthryth’s name in Beowulf means “strength of mind”, while the historical King Æthelstan’s name means “noble stone”). This has some interesting effects on the gender of nouns. For example, stan (stone) is masculine, as is wer (man), but wifmann (woman) is grammatically masculine because mann, the last element in the word, is grammatically masculine. Sawol (soul) is feminine, but so are bat (boat), wund (wound), and giefu (gift); women are often associated with gifts in Old English literature, but sailing and wounds are often associated with men. Lim (limb) is neuter; ironically, though, so are meæden (maiden) and mancynn (mankind).
To review from last time, Common Indo-European probably had eight noun cases; by the time Germanic had divided to yield West Germanic and eventually Old English, the number of cases had been reduced to five. The nominative case is used for the subject of a sentence, a predicate noun that identifies the subject, or a predicate adjective that modifies the subject. The genitive case is roughly equivalent to the modern possessive case. The dative case is used for the indirect object of a sentence, and certain verbs and prepositions also take a dative object. The accusative case will usually be used for the direct object of the sentence and the object of certain prepositions. The instrumental case is used to indicate that a person or object is being used as a means, agent, or instrument.

In present-day English, we have two articles; *the* is the definite article, and *a* is the indefinite article. The words most often used as articles in Old English, however, can have several other functions as well. The first thing an article does is to indicate the case of a noun. In the example here, the nominative masculine singular *se* shows that *man* is the subject of the sentence. In the second example, the article can stand by itself as a pronoun; the feminine nominative singular article *seo* indicates that the woman who was the subject of the sentence is happy and is read simply as “she”. As noted in the last video, in a technical sense, Old English articles are really demonstratives, so in the second example, the sentence could also be understood to say “That woman” instead of simply “she”; one must look at the context of the sentence to see if reading an article as a demonstrative is warranted. In the fourth example, an article can be paired with itself as a relative pronoun; in this case, the neuter *þæt* functions as an article at the start of the sentence, but also serves as the subject of the relative clause to indicate which maiden was fair, i.e., the one who laughed.

In this chart, I have listed the personal pronouns in the 1st and 2nd person. We can see the ancestors of *I, me, mine, thou, thee, thine, we, our, us, ye, you,* and *your.* In addition to the singular and plural, Old English had a dual number, which was like a plural for the specific case of two people. The first person dual forms would be translated as “we two”, “of us two”, “to the two of us”, and “the two of us”. In the second person, the duals would be translated as “you two”, “of you two”, “to the two of you”, and “the two of you”. In present-day English, the dual has been absorbed into the plural. If you examine the accusative case in all three numbers, you will note that the accusative form will sometimes be identical to the dative form. This shows that by the year 1000, the dative form was starting to replace the accusative form. In present-day English, these pronouns have a subject, possessive, and object case; this is the result of the leveling of the accusative with the dative which began in Late West Saxon but was still present in early Middle English. In Middle English, the pronouns *thou* and *you* carry connotations of familiarity and formality. The singular *thou* is used for someone with whom one is familiar, or to address a social inferior. The word *you,* on the other hand, was used for formal purposes or to
address any social superior. In Old English, however, this distinction is not observed in *pu* and *ge*, as it came in with Norman French.

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In this chart, I have displayed the third person pronouns. In the masculine and neuter, you can see ancestors of our present day forms *he*, *his*, *him*, and, with the loss of initial H, *it*. The masculine accusative form *hine* over time fell out of use and was replaced with the dative *him* form, yielding the subject, object, and possessive cases the pronoun has today. You can see the ancestor of *her* in the feminine genitive and dative-instrumental singular; over time, the nominative *heo* became *she* by the process of assimilation to *seo*. Note that in the plural, all genders have the same forms. Three words to be especially careful of are *hie*, which looks like *he* but is actually either *she* or *they*; *hiere*, which looks like *her* but is actually *their*; and *him*, which can be either *him* or *them*.

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Like German, Old English has two kinds of verbs, strong verbs and weak verbs. There are seven classes of strong verbs that are formed from an ablaut series. These verbs have four principal parts: the infinitive, the preterite first and third person singular, the preterite plural, and the past participle. (Preterite is a technical way to say ‘the simple past’.) The weak verbs have three classes and three principal parts, which are formed by adding endings to roots as opposed to using an ablaut series. The three principal parts are the infinitive, the preterite first and third person singular, and the past participle.

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To examine the principal parts of strong verbs with ablaut series, we will use the class one strong verb *scīnan*, to shine. The four principal parts are *scīnan*, *scān*, *scinon*, *scinen*, with an ablaut series of ī, ā, -i-, and -i-. We will look more at the other ablaut series next time. The infinitive (‘to shine’) is indicated by an –AN ending. In order to form the first and third person preterite indicative singular (I/he/she/it shined), we use the second principal part as it is with no modification. To form the second person singular ‘you shined’, we take the -ON ending off the third principal part to form the preterite stem and attach an -E ending. All of the preterite plurals (‘we, you, they shined’) are the third principal part as it is with no modification. The fourth principal part is the past participle ‘shined’ and is indicated by an –EN ending; often, it may also have a GE- perfective prefix.

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The first class of weak verbs has two basic subclasses. The first has a geminated or doubled consonant in the infinitive and a vowel before the preterite singular ending. The second subclass has no gemination in the infinitive and no vowel before the ending in the preterite singular. The second class of weak verbs has an I in the infinitive. The third class has a geminated consonant in the infinitive and may be affected by Verner’s Law, and it also may have variations in the root vowel that occur as the result of non-ablaut sound changes. As noted above, the
principal parts of the verb are the infinitive, the preterite first and third person singular, and the
past participle. Despite all these variations, though, the second principal part of a weak verb will
have one of four endings: -ede, -de, -ode, or –te. The past participle will usually end in –d or –t.

Although most Old English verbs conform to some pattern and are ‘regular’ in that sense, there
are some verbs that follow unusual patterns which still have effects today. The verb beon, to be,
is a composite verb. An older Germanic verb produced present indicative forms, but so did beon;
the beon forms are understood as the future tense or lasting truths, while the forms from the
Germanic *es/*os root are usually understood to be the present tense and are the ancestors of
today’s am, art, and is, although art is considered archaic today and has been replaced by are.
The forms from beon are beo, bist, and bip in the singular and beop in the plural, which have all
leveled to be today. The preterite forms of beon are taken from the Class 5 strong verb wesan,
which has a regular conjugation of its own, and are the ancestors of today’s was and were. The
next group of irregular verbs are the preterite present verbs, which are formed from old strong
verb preterites that took on a present meaning. New weak forms were constructed for the
preterite, and new strong forms were created for the imperative, infinitive, gerund, and present
participle. Many of these verbs are defective, as some of the potential forms would not make
logical sense, and they often survive today as modals; the OE mæg, cann, sceal, scolde, will,
wolde, and moste survive as may, can, shall, should, will, would, and must. The contract verbs
are strong verbs whose stems ended originally with an H between two vowels which was lost,
and then the two adjacent vowels (or vowel and diphthong) contracted into a single long vowel
or diphthong. For example, *tēohan, with the reconstructed verb ‘to drag or draw’, the -h-
between the vowels -o- and -a- was lost, and then the -a- was absorbed into the -eo- to give the
Old English form teon. Note that teon is also affected by Verner’s Law in the last two principal
parts, tugon and togen; as a result, the words tow and tug are both related to this one verb.

Thank you for your attention, and we will continue our discussion next time with Old English of
the year 1000.