

The Changing Language

Language is constantly changing there are words you know that your parents never knew when they were children.

Take a trip through history and see what you can recognise – these passages are all in the 'English language' of the day. Try highlighting all the words you recognise....

1. 10th century – author unknown

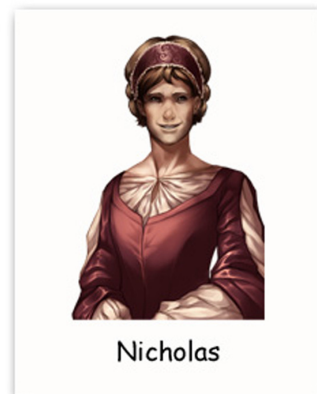
Hwæt, ic swefna cyst secgan wylle, hwæt me gemætte to midre nihte siþþan reordberend reste wunedon. þuhte me þæt ic gesawe syllicre treow on lyft lædan leohte bewunden, beama beorhtost. Eall þæt beacen wæs begoten mid golde; gimmas stodon fægere æt foldan sceatum, swylce þær fife wæron uppe on þæm eaxlegespanne. Beheoldon þær engeldryhta fela fægere þurh forþgesceaft; ne wæs þær huru fracodes gealga, ac hine þær beheoldon halige gastas, men ofer moldan, and eall þeos mære gesceaft.

This is a modern translation

Behold, I wish to tell the best of dreams which I dreamt at the middle of the night, after speakers remained in rest. It seemed to me that I saw a wondrous tree rise into (the) air surrounded by light, brightest of trees. The entire symbol was covered with gold; beautiful gems stood on the earth's surface, likewise there were five up on the crossbeam. Many angel hosts there looked on, beautiful throughout creation; nor was (it) there indeed a criminal's gallows, but holy spirits looked on it there, men above heaven and all this glorious creation.

2. 13th Century – author Chaucer

Whilom, as olde stories tellen us, Ther was a duc that highte Theseus; Of Atthenes he was lord and governour, And in his tyme swich a conquerour, That gretter was ther noon under the sonne. Ful many a riche contree hadde he wonne, What with his wysdom and his chivalrie; He conquered al the regne of Femenye, That whilom was ycleped Scithia, And weddede the queene Ypolita, And broghte hir hoom with hym in his contree, With muchel glorie and greet solempnytee, And eek hir yonge suster Emelye. And thus with victorie and with melodye Lete I this noble duc to Atthenes ryde, And al his hoost, in armes hym bisyde



Nicholas

This is a modern translation

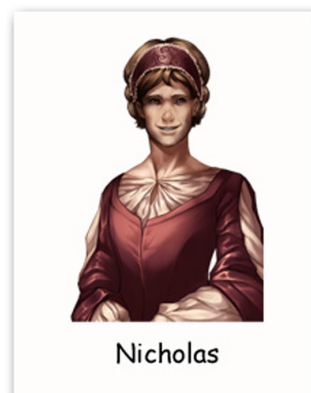
Once on a time, as old stories tell to us, There was a duke whose name was Theseus: Of Athens he was lord and governor, And in his time was such a conqueror That greater was there not beneath the sun. Very many rich countries had he won; What with his wisdom and his chivalry He gained the realm of Femininity, That was of old time known as Scythia. There he married the queen, Hippolyta, And brought her home with him to his country. In glory great and with great ceremony, And, too, her younger sister, Emily. And thus, in victory and with melody, Let I this noble duke to Athens ride With all his armed host marching at his side.

3. 16th century - author Shakespeare

As I remember, Adam, it was upon this fashion bequeathed me by will but poor a thousand crowns, and, as thou sayest, charged my brother, on his blessing, to breed me well: and there begins my sadness. My brother Jaques he keeps at school, and report speaks goldenly of his profit: for my part, he keeps me rustically at home, or, to speak more properly, stays me here at home unkept; for call you that keeping for a gentleman of my birth, that differs not from the stalling of an ox? His horses are bred better; for, besides that they are fair with their feeding, they are taught their manage, and to that end riders dearly hired: but I, his brother, gain nothing under him but growth; for the which his animals on his dunghills are as much bound to him as I.

This is a modern version

I remember, Adam, that's exactly why my father only left me a thousand crowns in his will. And as you know, my father commanded my brother, Oliver, to make sure that I was brought up well—and that's where my sadness begins. Oliver keeps my brother Jaques away at school, and everyone says he's doing extremely well there. But he keeps me at home in the country—to be precise, he keeps me stuck at home but doesn't support me. I ask you, is this any way to treat a gentleman as nobly born as I am, to pen me in like an ox? His horses get treated better than I do—at least he feeds them and trains them properly, and spends a lot of money on trainers for them. All I've gained from his care is weight, which makes me as indebted to him as his animals on the manure pile are.



Nicholas

4. 19th Century – Author Charlotte Bronte

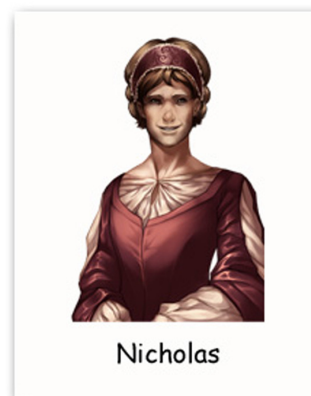
There was no possibility of taking a walk that day. We had been wandering, indeed, in the leafless shrubbery an hour in the morning; but since dinner (Mrs. Reed, when there was no company, dined early) the cold winter wind had brought with it clouds so sombre, and a rain so penetrating, that further out-door exercise was now out of the question.

I was glad of it: I never liked long walks, especially on chilly afternoons: dreadful to me was the coming home in the raw twilight, with nipped fingers and toes, and a heart saddened by the chidings of Bessie, the nurse, and humbled by the consciousness of my physical inferiority to Eliza, John, and Georgiana Reed.

You don't need it I expect but here is a translation of this one.

There was no chance of a walk that day. We had walked for an hour in the leafless garden that morning but since dinner (which was early because if no one was visiting Mrs Reed ate early) the cold wind had brought dark clouds and so much rain that going outdoors was out of the question.

I was glad. I never liked long walks especially on chilly afternoons. I hated coming home in the cold twilight with freezing fingers and toes. I always felt sad because Bessie was always telling me off and because I felt so aware of how much less appealing I was in every way compared to Eliza, John and Georgiana Reed.



Nicholas