

THE GREAT VOWEL SHIFT

REORGANIZATION OF THE VOWEL SYSTEM OVER SEVERAL CENTURIES



GVS

- The shift happened between 1400-1600
- 7 long vowels changed:
 - [i:]
 - [u:]
 - [e:]
 - [o:]
 - [ɛ:]
 - [ɔ:]
 - [ɑ:]



FIRST SHIFT

Middle English

[i:](sounding ee)

Modern English

[aɪ](sounding i)



Mice way back then would have been called meece

2ND SHIFT

MIDDLE ENGLISH

MODERN ENGLISH

[u:]

Eg: Moose

[au]

Mouse



MIDDLE ENGLISH

MODERN ENGLISH

- [e:]



[i:]

Green would have been pronounced as Gran

4TH CHANGE

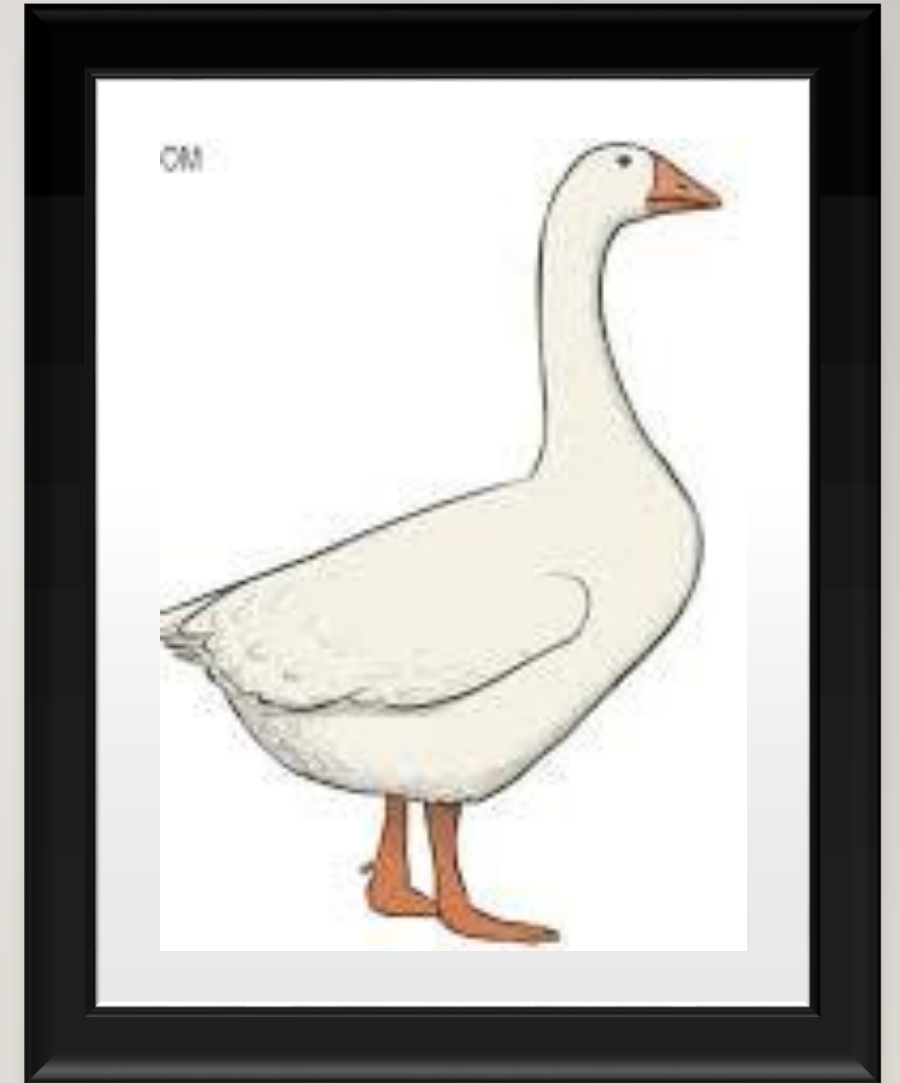
MIDDLE ENGLISH- MODERN ENGLISH

[o:]

[u:]


Goose[u:] must have been pronounced as

[go:s]



MIDDLE ENGLISH

MODERN ENGLISH

- [ɛ:] [i:]
 - Maybe Heat[hɛ:t] just became [hit]
 - Some words with Middle English [ɛ:] were left behind at [e:]
 - GREAT ,BREAK,STEAK
- 

MIDDLE ENGLISH

MODERN ENGLISH

- [ɔ:]

[o:]

Br[ɔ:]cken now called Br[o:]ken

MIDDLE ENGLISH

MODERN ENGLISH

- [a:]

B[a:]ke

[e:]

B[e:]k

Cool Summary: OE > ME > EME > PDE

Long Vowels from Old English to Present-Day English

OE Vowel	OE Examples	ME Vowel	ME Letter	15th-16th Century	17th-18th Century	PDE Examples	PDE Letter
[i] [y]	rīdan lif bī mȳs	[i]	i, y	[ai > ai]	[ai]	ride life by mice	i, y
[ē] [ēa] [æ]	fēdan grēne þēof dēop stræt	[ē]	e, ee	[i]	[i]	feed green thief deep street	ee, ie
[æ] [æa]	dæl mæn nædl hæl bēatan bēam ēast lēaf	[ɛ]	e, ee	[ē > ei]	[ei/i]	deal mean needle heal beat beam east leaf	ee, ea
[ā]	nama talu lanu	[ā]	a, aa	[æ > ē > ē]	[ei]	name tale lane	a
[ū]	mūs hūs nū dūn tūn pūnd	[ū]	ou, ow	[au > au]	[au]	mouse house now down town pound	ou, ow
[ō]	fōda fōt nōn gōd brōm bōk flōd blōd	[ō]	o, oo	[ū]	[u/u/ə]	food foot noon good broom book flood blood	oo
[ā]	hām pāl gād rāte tācen bāt	[ō]	o, oo	[ō]	[ou]	home pole goad throat token boat	o, oa