

# Old English, vocabulary and pronunciation

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# OE vowels

- six vowel symbols a, e, i, o, u and y
- seventh one, æ, called 'ash'
- All of these could represent both long and short vowels

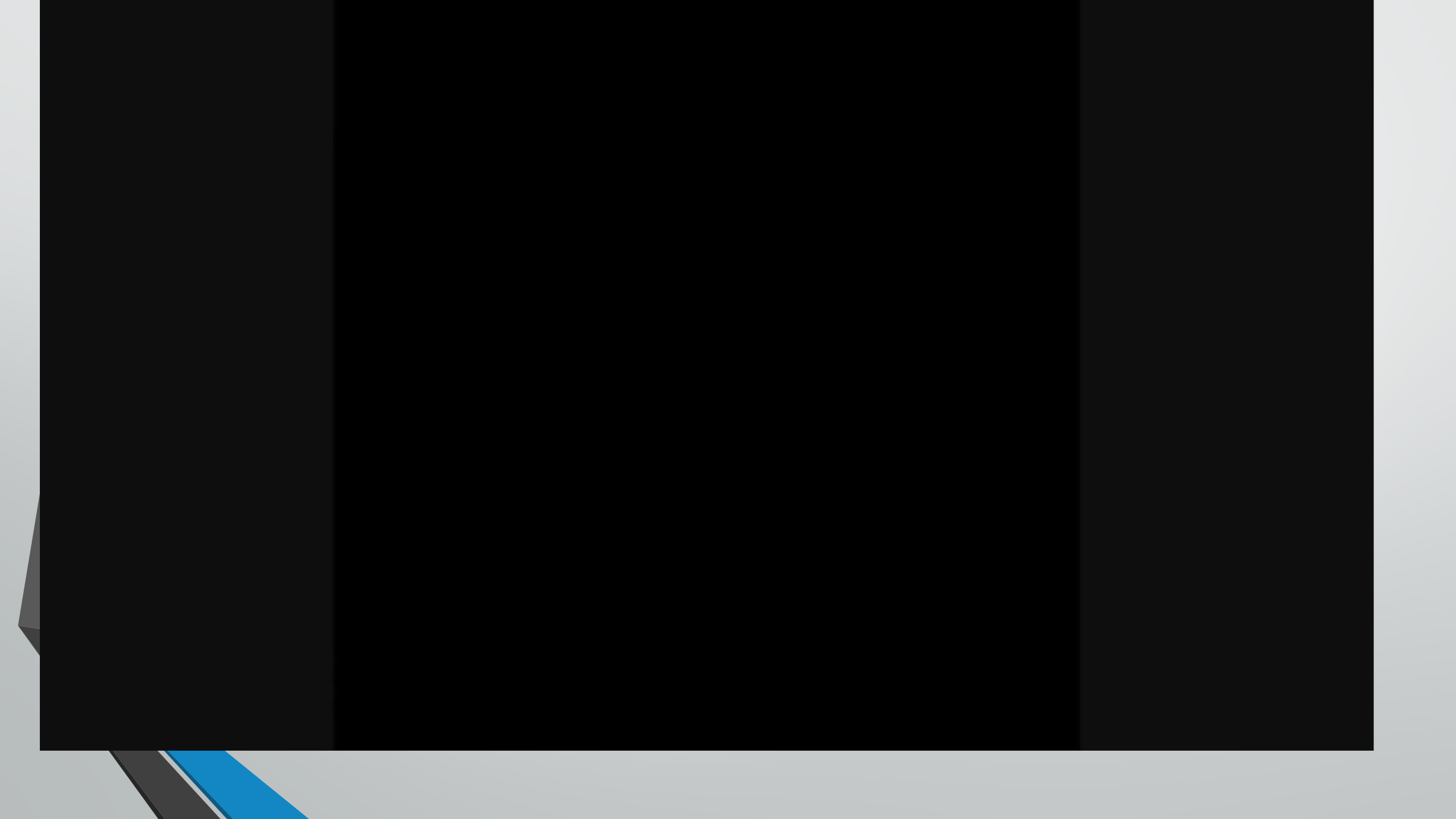
<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Pronunciation</i>	<i>Resembling the vowel of</i>
a	[ɑ]	Southern English <i>bath</i> , but shorter
æ	[æ]	Southern English <i>hat</i>
e	[e]	French <i>elle</i> , German <i>Bett</i>
i	[i]	German <i>sie</i> , English <i>tree</i> , but shorter
o	[o]	German <i>wo</i> , French <i>chose</i> , but shorter
u	[u]	English <i>room</i> , but shorter
y	[y]	French <i>cru</i> , German <i>Hütte</i>
ā	[ɑ:]	Southern English <i>bath</i>
ǣ	[æ:]	Southern English <i>bad</i>
ē	[e:]	French <i>été</i> (lengthened), German <i>zehn</i>
ī	[i:]	German <i>sie</i> , English <i>tree</i>
ō	[o:]	German <i>wo</i> , French <i>chose</i>
ū	[u:]	English <i>room</i>
ȳ	[y:]	French <i>sûr</i> , German <i>führen</i>

- All symbols represent pure vowels
- To express diphthongs, OE used digraphs: ea, eo, io and ie
- Use of double consonants – different from ME.
- Double consonant is usually used to show that the preceding vowel is short. (in ME)
- E.g. The word “copper” ...in OE - ['kopor]
- we do find OE spellings with doubled
- consonants, like assa ‘ass’,



# OE consonants

- OE uses sixteen consonant symbols
- b, c, d, f, g, h, l, m, n, p, r, s, t,
- No symbol „v“ – the symbol „f“ was used as alomorph for /f/ and /v/



# OE vocabulary

- Old English depended more on its own resources than on borrowings
- From Proto- Indo-European, the Germanic languages had inherited manyways of forming new words
- Major wor-formation processes were affixation and compounding

# Adjectives

- In Old English, adjectives could be formed from nouns by means of such suffixes as -ig, -lēas and -ful, giving words like blōdig 'bloody', frēondlēas 'friendless' and ancful 'thankful'.

# Nouns

- nouns could be formed from adjectives
- Proto-Germanic suffix \*-i.ō (prehistoric OE \*-i.a) could be added to adjectives to form abstract nouns
- on the stem of the adjective fūl 'foul, dirty' was formed the prehistoric OE noun \*fūli.a (impurity)

# Adverbs

- commonly formed from adjectives by means of suffixes such as -e and -līce: so from the adjective fæst 'firm' was formed fæste 'firmly', and from blind was formed blindlīce 'blindly'.

# Verbs

- one of the very common verbal prefix is ge-, which often has a perfective force, signifying the achievement or the completion of the action. So sceran means 'to cut', and gesceran 'to cut right through'; rīdan means 'to ride', and gerīdan 'to ride up to, conquer, occupy'.

# Compounding

- literature, arithmetic, grammar and astronomy were called bōccræft, rīmcraeft, stæfcræft and tungolcræft, that is, book-skill, number-skill, letter-skill and star-skill.



# Christianity - borrowings

- OE cirice or cyrce 'church' is derived from the Greek kuriakón, meaning '(house) of the Lord'
- OE apostol 'apostle', biscop 'bishop' (Latin episcopus)
- Native OE words to denote the concept of Christianity: Easter, hell, holy, godspell

# Basic phrases in Old English



Thank you!

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