

## English and Me

context *sb* sammenhæng  
 con'duct *vb* udføre  
 in'quiry *sb* undersøgelse  
 lingua franca *id* fælles sprog  
 re'mote *adj* fjern

How much is English a part of your world?

How often do you speak, read or hear English? In what contexts is English used?

Do you use English in the same way or as much as your parents? Or more?

1. Carry out a survey in class to find out how much English there is in your lives. Ask your parents, grandparents, look at adverts, the Internet, the TV, etc.
2. List 5 reasons why you think it is important for you to be good at English.
3. On a scale from 0 to 5, how good is your English, do you think?
4. In what areas do you hope to improve your English over the next two to three years? (reading, communication, writing, grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, cultural knowledge, literature ...)

In this chapter, you will see how English has become *the* global language, today's *lingua franca*, which everybody is expected to know – even in the remotest corners of the world. You will learn about the development of the English language, and afterwards you can test your knowledge on the web site (one test for each section).

English began as the language of one nation, the UK. It gained importance as Britain became an empire. It gave birth to a highly potent English with the foundation of the United States of America. And in a double process, British English and American English have become the key components of Global English.

## Old English before 1066

The history of England is one of repeated invasions. Each wave of newcomers, whether it was raiders, settlers, merchants or missionaries, brought their own language, which changed what had been, and thus shaped what we now know as 'English'.

### The origins of Old English – Celts and Romans

*This island at present ... contains five nations, the English, Britons, Scots, Picts, and Latins...* This is how monk and historian Bede described the situation in the British Isles around the turn of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, in his 'Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation', written c. 730. So what we see is a scattered population of no more than 500,000 individuals, each with their own traditions, culture and language or dialect. In the fol-

raider *sb* person der angriber og plyndrer  
 settler *sb* bosætter  
 merchant *sb* handlende  
 Celt *sb* kelter: indoeuropæisk oldtidsfolk som beboede de britiske øer  
 Briton *sb* brite  
 Pict *sb* pikter  
 ecclesi'astical *adj* kirkeleg

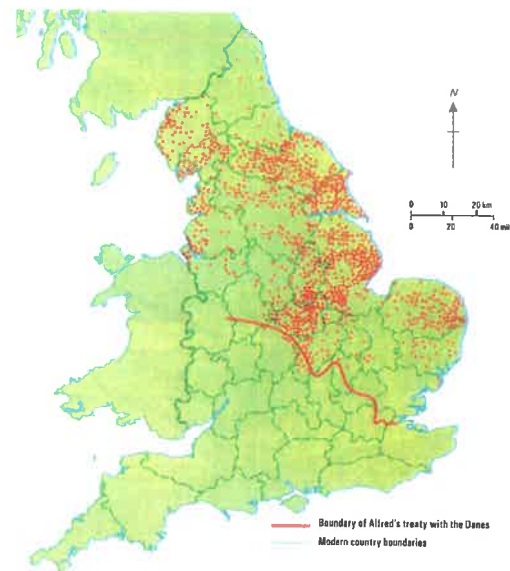
lowing we shall see how these and other peoples gradually fused into a more homogenous nation with a common language.

Not much is known about the language that was spoken then – exactly because it was *spoken*, not written down. All that we do know comes from inscriptions in the runic alphabet, along with the very few words that have survived to this day. These words mainly appear in Celtic place names such as *Thames*, *Dover* and *London*, and in Scottish and Welsh dialect where we find words like *loch* (= lake) and *ben* (= mountain).

### Old English – the Anglo-Saxon invasion

In the 5<sup>th</sup> century the British Isles were invaded by Angles (northern Germany), Saxons (Germany) and Jutes (Jutland/Denmark). Linguistically, these invaders made a clear cut, and what we know as English really started here, nearly obliterating the languages that were spoken before the series of invasions.

Old English looks very strange and unfamiliar at first glance. Even after the runic alphabet was replaced by Roman letters, a text from the 8<sup>th</sup> century would contain weird-looking letters, strange word forms, etc. However, a closer look will make it possible for a modern reader to recognize quite a few words. As a matter of fact, about one third of the words we use on any page today are of Old English origin.



ho'mogenous *adj* ensartet  
 runic *adj* rune

lin'guistic *adj* sproglig  
 ob'literate *vb* slette, udradere  
 glance *sb* blik

Scandinavian place names in England, related to the boundary line of the Danelaw

**hymn** *sb* salme  
**e'quivalent** *sb* noget  
 der svarer til  
**scholar** *sb* lærd person

Look at this extract from Bede's *Caedmon's Hymn*.

*Þa stod him sum mon æt Þurh swefn, ond hine halette ond grette, ond hine  
 be his noman nemnde, 'Cædmon, sing me hwæthwugu.' Þa ondswarede he,  
 ond cwæð, 'Ne con ic noht singan; ond ic for þon of þeoosum gebeorscipe ut  
 eode ond hider gewat, for þon ic naht singan ne cuðe.'*

Look closer:

The Old English alphabet had 24 letters. 22 of them are represented in the text above. Can you find them all?

Complete the list: \_\_\_\_\_ k \_\_\_\_\_ y

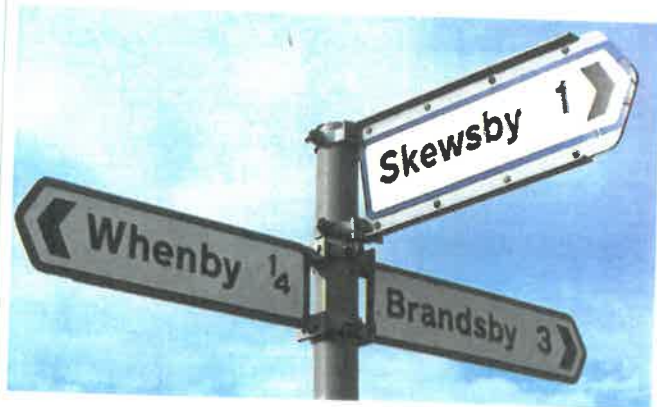
Find the Old English equivalent to the following Modern English words and see if you really are able to make sense of (parts of) Bede's text.

*Stood, him, man, and, hailed, greeted, by his name, called, sing me something, answered, not, can, I, nothing, out, because*

You may find a translation into modern English on p. 218.

During the Anglo-Saxon period, there were two major influences on the language: Latin from the Christian missionaries and scholars and Norse from the Danish Vikings, who raided and later settled as farmers in the northern parts of Britain (787-1066). Guess which of the two groups added which of the following words to the English vocabulary (answer on page 218):

*Altar, angel, birth, bull, apostle, candle, demon, die, dirt, egg, grammatical, harbour, history, hymn, knife, outlaw, priest, rotten, school, slaughter, window*



Signpost in North  
Yorkshire, England

Because the Vikings settled, establishing the Danelaw (9<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> centuries), the influence of Norse was dramatic and long-lasting. Families are still called *Henderson* and *Johnson*, thus reflecting the Norse *søn/sen*, and there are over 1,500 place names which end in *-by*, *-thorp*, and *-toft*. What is an even more remarkable Norse remnant is the pronouns *they*, *their* and *them* since they belong to some of the most commonly used words in the language – everybody used and still uses them.

## Middle English, 1066 - ca 1470 A Trilingual Nation

Invaded by the Normans from the northern part of France for hundreds of years! Why don't they speak French then? They did, as a matter of fact – but only the Norman/English king, his nobles and the elite. The common people still spoke their 'good Old English'. To complete the picture, the clergy, bishops and priests, spoke Latin. England had become a trilingual nation for a while. As we shall see, the English language survived the Norman invasion in the end. Though very much influenced by French and Latin, by ca 1470 it had already become an English that appears quite familiar to the modern eye.

Read the following quotation aloud and hear how 'modern' it sounds (translation into modern English on p. 218).

*For fro what partie of the Erthe, that men dwelle, outhur aboven or benethen,  
 it semethe always to hem that duellen, that thei gon more righte than ony  
 other folk. And righte as it semethe to us, that thei ben undre us, righte so it  
 semethe hem, that wee ben undre hem.*

Unlike the clear cut we saw from the languages formerly spoken in the British Isles to Old English, the shift from Old English to Middle English was a slow and gradual process. The changes took place in three areas: vocabulary, grammar and spelling.

### Vocabulary

When the Normans invaded Britain in 1066, more than 90 per cent of the words were of Old English origin and by the end of the Middle Ages, this percentage had shrunk to about 75. This is clearly visible in the goldmine of written material that appeared in this period. Most of the new words – loan words – that entered English were of Norman/French origin. This is not strange at all, considering the fact that the Normans dominated government, law, administration, the church,

**Norse** *sb* oldnordisk  
**Dane Law** *sb* Dane-  
 lagen: område i Eng-  
 land, Northumbria,  
 East Anglia og dele af  
 Mercia, som de dan-  
 ske vikinger i 876-80  
 bosatte sig i efter at  
 have erobret det tiåret  
 forinden

**trilingual** *adj* trespro-  
 get  
**noble** *sb* adelsperson  
**clergy** *sb* præsteskab

**vo'cabulary** *sb* ordfor-  
 råd

learning *sb* uddannelse, lærdom  
 literary *adj* litterær  
 learned *adj* lærd

medicine, art and literature, and fashion for 150 years. As a matter of fact, the kings that ruled Britain then knew no English at all – though some of them tried.

Try to pronounce the following loan words in both French and English:

*Baron, court, government, crucifix, prison, justice, lieutenant, fashion, robe, biscuit, sausage, music, romance*

The third language of Middle English, Latin, continued its influence, especially in the areas of religion and learning. It was the language of the Bible and of the Catholic church, and several thousand Latin words entered the English vocabulary through a translation of the Bible from 1384.

Many of the loan words were adopted in the English language simply because they described things that were new to the English people. But what about foreign words for things that the English already had their own English word for? In most cases, one word gradually gave way to the other. But in some cases, up to two loan words and the English word ended up co-existing with slight differences in meaning or use. This explains why English is said to have a larger core vocabulary than other modern languages.

The list below gives sets of three words which all express the same fundamental meaning. Discuss how the words differ in meaning or stylistic effect (popular, literary, learned).

Old English	French	Latin
<i>kingly</i>	<i>royal</i>	<i>regal</i>
<i>ask</i>	<i>question</i>	<i>interrogate</i>
<i>rise</i>	<i>mount</i>	<i>ascend</i>
<i>holy</i>	<i>sacred</i>	<i>consecrated</i>
<i>time</i>	<i>age</i>	<i>epoch</i>

### Grammar

Grammatical relationships in a sentence in Old English were chiefly shown by the use of inflections – as is still the case in e.g. German and French. But this changed in the Middle Ages, and by the end of that period the former system had been replaced by the grammar we still see in English today (and which makes it so easily accessible to Danes), where word order establishes the relationships between the words in a sentence.

Here is an example:

*The slave gives the horse water.* We know who is giving what to whom here because of the word order. Try changing the word order, and the meaning changes, too. In Latin, the same meaning could be expressed in all the following ways: *servus equo aquam dat – equo servus aquam dat – servus aquam equo dat – aquam servus equo dat* – and even more. This shows that the position of each word does not change its meaning or its relation to the other words because the word ending gives all the necessary information.

Remnants of the inflectional system can be seen in the pronouns (*I, me, my; he, him, his; she, her, hers, etc.*), in the use of the genitive (*Peter's book, the women's hats*), and in the s-ending of verbs in the present tense (*Peter sings*).

### Sound and spelling

The Old English alphabet saw only few changes in the Middle Ages. It waved goodbye to *ð, θ* (replaced by 'th') and *æ* (replaced by 'a') and soon acquired the shapes that we know today.

Spelling, on the other hand, changed from lawlessness in the beginning of the period to a highly regularized system at the end. One text could have 20 different spellings of *might*, and *naure – nævre – ner – neure* ended up as the much more recognizable *never*. Difficult to read but easy to write!

The English language came out of the Middle Ages much wealthier in terms of vocabulary, much more organized and teachable in terms of grammar – and quite challenging in terms of the relationship between pronunciation and French-inspired rules of spelling.

## Early Modern English, 1476 - 1800

Early Modern – we are almost there now, almost modern. In the beginning of the period nobody knew how to write and print 'correctly', there were neither dictionaries nor grammar books – but they were working on it.

Language changes when society changes, and the period from 1476 to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century was most definitely a time of change. Unknown parts of the world were explored, scientific discoveries were made at the same time as the classical Greek and Roman literatures had their renaissance. The English suddenly lacked words: New things, concepts, techniques and inventions required new words. At the end of the period, a standard English language had arisen, much helped by the printing revolution.

remnant *sb* rest  
 pronoun *sb* pronomen, stedord  
 present tense *sb* præsens, nutid  
 ac'quire *vb* få  
 pronunciation *sb* udtale

re'quire *vb* kræve  
 a'rise *vb* opstå

in'flection *sb* bøjning  
 ac'cessible *adj* tilgængelig

William Caxton, the first British printer, setting up his press at Westminster



### Changes in society

1476, when William Caxton set up the first printing press, is considered a crucial year in the history of the English language. Suddenly, a book was no longer the product of many months of hard work by a monk or a scribe – and thus a luxury commodity. The printing press could now mass produce texts for mass circulation. And suddenly, the printer had all sorts of decisions to make; if the books were to sell well, the language they contained had to be understandable throughout the country. This meant that the considerable lack of uniformity in terms of spelling, punctuation, vocabulary, etc. as well as the problems with dialects and foreign loan words had to be dealt with.

Caxton put the dilemma like this: *Certainly, it is harde to playse [please] euery man by cause of dyuersite [diversity] & chaunge of langage. For in these dayes euery man that is in ony reputacyon in his countre wyll vtter [utter] his commynycacyon [communication] and maters in such maners & termes that fewe men shall vnderstonde theym.* (Caxton in his preface to 'Eneydos', 1490)

Naturally, the subjects and the contents of the books were diverse, and they were responsible for the greatest change in the transition from Middle English to Modern English – the explosion in vocabulary with words from more than 50 languages. The Bible was translated (again) and in the wake of the Reformation many religious texts were produced. Classical texts in Greek and Latin were translated, printed and studied. Shakespeare's plays and poems were printed and so saved for posterity. Moreover, people were curious to read all about Copernicus's

crucial *adj* skelsættende, meget vigtig  
scribe *sb* skriver  
com'modity *sb* vare  
circu'lation *sb* distribution  
uni'formity *sb* ensartethed  
punctu'ation *sb* tegnsætning  
vo'cabulary *sb* ordforråd  
di'verse *adj* forskellig  
tran'sition *sb* overgang  
wake *sb* kølvand  
pos'terity *sb* eftertiden  
Copernicus, Nikolaus, 1473-1543, polsk videnskabsmand, fremsatte i 1543 teorien om det heliocentriske verdensbillede

discoveries of the universe, Newton's scientific methods, and Columbus's adventures in the new world.

Hence, some of the new words in the new age would be the following: *lexicon, explain, encyclopaedia, utopian, pneumonia, temperature, virus* (Latin and Greek), *balcony, opera, sonnet, stanza* (Italian), *armada, Negro, guitar* (Spanish and Portuguese), *coffee, kiosk* (Turkish), *harem* (Arabic), *canoe, potato* (Amerindian), *troll* (Norwegian).

### Language and literature

Two distinct factors in particular dominated the development of Modern English: Shakespeare's works and the King James Bible (1611).

Shakespeare (1564 - 1616) is celebrated as a poet and playwright, admired for the inventiveness and beauty of his language. What is perhaps less widely known is that many words and idiomatic phrases that are common in Modern English were actually coined by the old Bard. A closer look at Shakespeare's language will give us a fairly good idea of what Early Modern English was like. As we saw in the previous chapter on Middle English, the inflection of words had almost disappeared by 1476. However, in Shakespeare for instance, we can trace the change of one of the last remnants when the *-(e)th* ending in the third person singular gradually became the *-s* that many English-learners struggle to get right: *The lady doth protest too much.* ('Hamlet'); *He hath given his empire up to a whore.* ('Anthony and Cleopatra').

In the same way, the translation and printing of the so-called King James Bible in 1611 introduced a large number of words and idiomatic phrases into English that have stayed in the language ever since.

Make sure you know the meaning of all the idioms in the list below. Then, create a dialogue between Shakespeare and 'King James' in which you use as many of the idioms as possible.

#### Shakespeare

*Make a virtue of necessity*  
*It is but early days*  
*Green-eyed jealousy*  
*Blinking idiot*  
*Love is blind*  
*Mine own flesh and blood*  
*In the end, truth will out*  
*It was Greek to me*  
*Dead as a door-nail*  
*Give the devil his due*  
*I'll send him packing*  
*Pomp and circumstance*  
*What the dickens*

#### The King James Bible

*The apple of his eye*  
*The salt of the earth*  
*The sign of the times*  
*An eye for an eye*  
*Eat sour grapes*  
*Cast pearls before swine*  
*In sheep's clothing*  
*New wine into old bottles*  
*A lamb brought to the slaughter*  
*If the blind lead the blind*  
*In the twinkling of an eye*  
*Money is the root of all evil*  
*His enemies shall lick the dust*

Newton, Isaac, 1642-1727, engelsk matematiker og naturvidenskabsmand, fremsatte i 1687 sine tre fysiske love for legemers bevægelse og i øvrigt den mest betydningsfulde videnskabsmand i 1600-tallets videnskabelige revolution  
Columbus, Christoffer, 1451-1506, spansk opdagelsesrejsende, (gen-)opdagede Amerika i 1492  
di'stinct *adj* tydelig, særlig  
playwright *sb* skuespilforfatter  
in'ventiveness *sb* opfindsomhed  
idio'matic phrase *sb* fast vending  
coin *vb* opfinde  
bard *sb* skjald, bruges ofte som tilnavn til Shakespeare  
in'flection *sb* bøjning  
remnant *sb* rest

virtue *sb* dyd  
blinking *adj* forbandet  
due *sb* hvad der tilkommer en  
pomp and circumstance *sb* pomp og pragt  
twinkling *sb* blinken

**inkhorn** *sb* blækhorn  
**con'troversy** *sb* uover-  
 ensstemmelse  
**flood** *sb* oversvøm-  
 melse, syndflod  
**ancient** *sb* person fra  
 antikken  
**spirit** *sb* åndrighed  
**in'terpreter** *sb* over-  
 sætter  
**influx** *sb* import  
**con'demn** *vb* for-  
 dømme  
**en'richment** *sb* beri-  
 gelse  
**pronun'ciation** *sb*  
 udtale  
**dis'tinguish** *vb* skelne  
**prospect** *sb* udsigt

## The Inkhorn Controversy

The flood of changes in the language in an increasingly changing world naturally caused some concern. Many authors in particular were deeply worried that their works would not be understandable by future generations. The author Jonathan Swift expressed his worries in this way: *How then shall any man, who hath a genius for history equal to the best of the ancients, be able to undertake such work with spirit and cheerfulness, when he considers that he will be read with pleasure but [for no more than] a few years, and in an age or two shall hardly be understood without an interpreter.* The poet Edmund Waller made a similar point: *Poets that Lasting Marble seek / Must carve in Latin or in Greek / We write in Sand...*

Just like many Danes today are discussing whether Danish is dying or developing as a result of globalization, there was a heated debate called 'The Inkhorn Controversy'. The opponents formed two sides: one that argued that the influx of foreign words must be condemned, since it was a danger to the English language and culture. The other side saw the influx as an enrichment of the English language, and argued that a language will and must change with the times. In spite of the differences of opinion, all could agree that the introduction of dictionaries, grammars, spelling guides, and pronunciation manuals would certainly be a good thing. The first proper dictionary of the English language was published in 1755 by Samuel Johnson, followed by Robert Lowth's 'A Short Introduction to English Grammar' in 1762 and John Walker's 'Pronouncing Dictionary' in 1774.

Perform a 'battle' between the two opposing standpoints.

By the end of the Early Modern English period, English seemed not all that different from the English we know today. Still, it makes good sense to distinguish between Early Modern and Modern English as many words have acquired new or different meanings and the pronunciation has changed considerably. A few examples will illustrate this perfectly. In Jane Austen's novel 'Emma', published in 1816, a modern reader might easily misunderstand it when it says *She made her first essay (essay = attempt), He was an inmate of Mansfield Parsonage (inmate = a person living in a house, not a prison), the prospect was highly grateful to her (grateful = satisfactory).*

However, as the examples also show, though you might misunderstand a word or two, you would definitely be able to understand the essence of what was said if you were to meet Jane Austen today.

## Modern English from 1800

During the Modern English period, the grammar of Standard English has continued to change but at a much slower rate than in the previous centuries. The major changes in Standard English that have taken place reflect the multiple social, scientific, technological and economic developments that the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries saw and thus, it is into the English vocabulary that we should look: With imperialism, urbanization and industrialization hundreds of thousands of words were added to the English vocabulary. *Embryology, ohm, watt, joule, chromosome, Jurassic, claustrophobia, silicon, cocaine* – were all new in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, simply because what they describe was new or hitherto unknown.

Other additions to the vocabulary came from quite different parts of society. A fairly new trend among writers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was to include the lower classes in their works. A Victorian like Charles Dickens, who is famous for his depictions of the lives and conditions of poor people, would renew the language with hundreds of words from his characters' worlds.

The big challenge for Standard (British) English language, though, came from overseas. In the following two chapters, we shall explore how English became *the* global language.

## American English

In 1776 America gained its independence from Britain, and as a new nation they needed a new language, they thought. You may not think there is much difference between British English and American English, but to the newly independent Americans, ridding themselves of British (linguistic) influence was seen as one of many vital tools in the building of a new uniform national identity. In 1806 Noah Webster published his first *American* dictionary in which he wrote that *a difference between the English orthography and the American is an object of vast political consequence.* Webster's major principle was the omission of all superfluous and silent letters, and it is mainly thanks to Webster that a fairly clear distinction exists between the two languages.

This open linguistic rebellion, which showed the painful truth that no one can own a language, did not please the British. In 1833 a Scottish visitor to the USA remarked: *The amount of bad grammar in circulation is very great; that of barbarism enormous. The privilege of barbarizing the King's English is assumed by all ranks and conditions of men.*

**urbani'zation** *sb* urba-  
 nisering, at folk flytter  
 til byerne  
**hitherto** *adv* hidtil  
**Vic'torian** *adj, sb* fra  
 dronning Victorias  
 regeringstid, 1837-1901

**rid** *vb* frigøre  
**lin'guistic** *adj* sproglig  
**vital** *adj* afgørende  
**uniform** *adj* ensartet  
**or'thography** *sb* ortog-  
 rafi, retskrivning  
**vast** *adj* enorm  
**con'sequence** *sb* her:  
 betydning  
**o'mission** *sb* udela-  
 delse  
**su'perfluous** *adj* over-  
 flødig  
**dis'tinction** *sb* skelnen,  
 forskel  
**rank** *sb* stand, klasse  
**con'dition** *sb* stand,  
 samfundsstilling

In the following you can study the four major areas of differences between British English and American English.

### 1. Spelling

The major differences in spelling were:

- changing *-re* endings to *-er* (from *theatre* and *centre* to *theater* and *center*)
- omitting *u* from words ending in *-our* (from *harbour, colour* and *labour* to *harbor, color* and *labor*)
- one vowel instead of two (from *annaeitic* and *encyclopaedia* to *annetic* and *encyclopedia*)
- dropping a vowel (from *axe* and *dialogue* to *ax* and *dialog*)
- *z* instead of *s* in verb endings (from *analyse* and *advertise* to *analyze* and *advertize*)
- replacing *-ce* by *se* (from *defence* and *offence* to *defense* and *offense*)

### 2. Vocabulary

Other differences are found in the vocabulary as this short list of examples will show:

American English	British English
gasoline	petrol
baggage	luggage
truck	lorry
line	queue
freeway	motorway
cab	taxi
apartment	flat
elevator	lift
cookie	biscuit

The really tricky vocabulary differences occur when a word exists in both languages but does not mean the same thing!

When they say...	the Americans mean what the English mean	the English mean what the Americans call...
the first floor	the ground floor	the second floor
potato chips	potato crisps	french fries
a purse	a handbag	a wallet
pants	trousers	underpants

### 3. Pronunciation

Give it a try!

American English	British English
[fɑ:mə]	[fɑ:mə]
farmer	farmer
[r]	[r]
car	car
[lɛtə]	[lɛdə]
letter	letter
[stju:dənt]	[stju:dənt]
student	student
[nju:z]	[nju:z]
news	news
[æ] as in cat	[ræðə]
rather	rather
[a:] as in	[kænt]
can't	can't
father	[æfə]
half	[hæf]
other words	[təmeɪtʊ]
tomato	[təmeɪtʊ]
either	[ɪðə]
anti-	[sɛnti]
process	[prɔ:sɛs]
z (the letter)	[zi:]
	[təma:təu]
	[ɪðə]
	[sɛnti]
	[prɔ:sɛs]
	[zi:]

**4. Intonation**  
 Lastly, there are also differences in intonation. Whereas British English has a pitch range of 90-300, American English will range between only 90 and 200. In this way Americans may sound very calm and dull compared to the British who then again may sound overly excited to the Americans.

Try to read aloud a text in British English and American English respectively. Remember pronunciation and intonation.

intonation sb intonasjon, 'sprogmeleod' pitch range sb forskel mellem højeste og laveste tone  
 respectively adv henholdsvis