

Read the passage carefully.

The English language, now a global medium of communication, diplomacy, and literature, bears within it the marks of a long and intricate evolution. Its story is not one of sudden invention but of gradual transformation, shaped by conquest, commerce, and cultural exchange. From its humble beginnings as a cluster of Germanic dialects on the shores of early medieval Britain, English has absorbed and assimilated elements from Norse invaders, Norman conquerors, and, later, the vast intellectual and political currents of the Renaissance and Enlightenment. Each stage of its development reflects a dialogue between peoples, histories, and identities, making English less a fixed system than a living organism—constantly adapting, expanding, and renewing itself.

The study of this evolution falls within the province of philology, a discipline that unites linguistics, history, and literary scholarship. Philologists do not merely trace words; they unearth civilizations. For instance, the Old English word *cniht*, once meaning “boy” or “servant,” gradually evolved into knight, signifying a warrior of noble status. After the Norman Conquest, English incorporated French terms such as justice, prison, and jury, while native words like sheep remained alongside French-derived mutton—marking a distinction between the farmer’s work and the aristocrat’s dining table. Philologists also trace how sound shifts altered meaning: Latin *pater* became English father under Grimm’s Law, while *frater* became brother. Even paired words like hospital and hostel, both from Latin *hospes* (“guest”), reveal divergent historical meanings. Dialects in the north of England preserve Old Norse borrowings such as beck (stream) and garth (yard), reminding us that philology uncovers not only etymologies but also the very migrations of peoples.

Yet English, despite its shared foundation, has never been monolithic. Its expression varies profoundly across regions, communities, and social strata, giving rise to dialects and sociolects. Dialects, rooted in geography, reveal the music of local life: the rolling vowels of Scottish English, the clipped consonants of East Anglia, or the warm drawl of the American South. In some rural English dialects, one may still hear the archaic *thee* and *thou*, long vanished from Standard English. Alongside dialects exist sociolects, the linguistic signatures of

class, profession, or generation. A lawyer may employ precise technical vocabulary, a teenager may favour expressions such as lit or vibe, while working-class speech in London produces innovations like cockney rhyming slang (e.g., apples and pears for stairs). Sociolects therefore function as both markers of identity and tools of solidarity.

The global expansion of English, particularly during the age of exploration and colonization, also produced hybrids such as pidgins and creoles. A pidgin arises when speakers of different tongues require a simplified medium, usually for trade. It is marked by reduced grammar and limited vocabulary. Nigerian Pidgin English, widely used in West Africa, offers examples like “How you dey?” meaning “How are you?” or “I no get” for “I do not have.” When such a pidgin becomes the native tongue of a community, it grows into a creole, acquiring full grammatical complexity. Jamaican Creole, blending English with West African structures, illustrates this: “Pickney deh play” means “The child is playing,” with its own consistent syntax. Similarly, Tok Pisin in Papua New Guinea developed from an English-based pidgin into a national language, with expressions like “em i go” for “he is going.”

Thus, the interplay of philology, dialect, sociolect, pidgin, and creole demonstrates that English is neither a static monument nor a mere instrument of utility. It is a living, breathing heritage, perpetually reshaped by historical forces, intellectual currents, and the intimate interactions of ordinary speakers. To study its development is to glimpse the human spirit itself—diverse, adaptive, and ever-seeking new forms of expression.

On the basis of your understanding answer the following questions

Q1. The transformation of cniht into knight best illustrates which linguistic process?

- a) Borrowing from another language
- b) Semantic shift over time
- c) Simplification of grammar
- d) Creation of a pidgin

Q2. The coexistence of sheep and mutton in English vocabulary mainly reflects—

- a) Regional dialect variation
- b) Influence of Norman French on class distinctions
- c) Pidgin development in rural England
- d) Redundancy in vocabulary

Q3. Which of the following demonstrates how philology links language to cultural history?

- a) Legal English using precise jargon in courtrooms
- b) Dialects preserving archaisms like thee and thou
- c) Grimm's Law explaining the sound shift from pater to father
- d) Nigerian Pidgin being widely spoken in West Africa

Q4. The difference between dialects and sociolects lies chiefly in—

- a) Dialects are tied to geography, sociolects to social groups
- b) Dialects are informal, sociolects are always formal
- c) Dialects are older than sociolects
- d) Dialects belong only to rural speech, sociolects to urban speech

Q5. When hospital and hostel developed distinct meanings though sharing the same root, it shows—

- a) Influence of creoles
- b) Divergent semantic development
- c) Replacement of native vocabulary by borrowings
- d) Simplification of morphology

Q6. Why is Jamaican Creole considered a language rather than a pidgin?

- a) It uses fewer words than Standard English
- b) It is spoken only for trade purposes
- c) It has native speakers and full grammatical rules
- d) It has no vocabulary from English

Q7. The example “apples and pears” meaning stairs in cockney rhyming slang is significant because—

- a) It is a dialect borrowing from French
- b) It demonstrates sociolect creativity within a community
- c) It reveals grammatical simplification
- d) It is a survival of Old Norse vocabulary

Q8. Which of the following best explains why Nigerian Pidgin English arose?

- a) To simplify English grammar for native speakers
- b) As a bridge language between groups with different mother tongues
- c) As a regional dialect of Britain transported to Africa
- d) As a direct descendant of Old English

Q9. The passage portrays English as a “living, breathing heritage.” What does this metaphor highlight?

- a) English is immortal and cannot change
- b) English adapts continuously to historical and social forces
- c) English is uniform across the world
- d) English belongs only to scholars and philologists

Q10. The word etymology refers to—

- a) The grammatical correctness of a sentence
- b) The historical origin and development of words
- c) The ability to speak multiple languages
- d) The pronunciation patterns of a region

Q11. The expression semantic shift most nearly means—

- a) Change in spelling rules
- b) Alteration in meaning of a word over time
- c) Borrowing vocabulary from a neighbouring language
- d) Disappearance of words from usage

Q12. In the context of the passage, archaism is best understood as—

- a) A completely new word
- b) A word that has fallen out of common use but survives in some forms
- c) A technical term for law courts
- d) An incorrect pronunciation of modern English

Q13. Identify the correct transformation of voice:

“Philologists trace the history of words.” →

- a) The history of words traces philologists.
- b) Words’ history is traced by philologists.
- c) The history of words is traced by philologists.
- d) The philologists are being traced by words.

Q14. Choose the correct verb form:

“The coexistence of sheep and mutton ____ social hierarchy.”

- a) demonstrate
- b) demonstrates
- c) demonstrated
- d) are demonstrating

Q15.Assertion (A): Jamaican Creole is considered a distinct language.

Reason (R): It developed stable grammar and is transmitted as a mother tongue.

- a) Both A and R are true, and R explains A
- b) Both A and R are true, but R does not explain A
- c) A is true, but R is false
- d) A is false, but R is true

Answer:

1. b) Semantic shift over time
2. b) Influence of Norman French on class distinctions
3. c) Grimm's Law explaining the sound shift from pater to father
4. a) Dialects are tied to geography, sociolects to social groups
5. b) Divergent semantic development
6. c) It has native speakers and full grammatical rules
7. b) It demonstrates sociolect creativity within a community
8. b) As a bridge language between groups with different mother tongues
9. b) English adapts continuously to historical and social forces
10. b) The historical origin and development of words
11. b) Alteration in meaning of a word over time
12. b) A word that has fallen out of common use but survives in some forms
13. c) The history of words is traced by philologists
14. b) demonstrates
15. a) Both A and R are true, and R explains A