

Historical Linguistic Milestones in English

English Grammar History · Practice Test · 12 Questions

1. Which influential 1755 publication by Samuel Johnson sought to standardize English spelling and grammar?

- A) A Dictionary of the English Language
- B) The Elements of English Grammar
- C) A Short Introduction to English Grammar
- D) The King James Bible

2. Which grammatical shift, occurring between 1350 and 1700, involved a massive change in the pronunciation of long vowels in English?

- A) The Germanic Consonant Shift
- B) The Great Vowel Shift
- C) The Romance Lexical Expansion
- D) The Syntax Standardization

3. Robert Lowth's 1762 work 'A Short Introduction to English Grammar' is historically famous for popularizing which prescriptive rule?

- A) The ban on the split infinitive
- B) The requirement for the Oxford comma
- C) The rejection of double negatives
- D) The preference for passive voice

4. The English word 'grammar' originates from the Greek 'grammatike tekhnē', which literally translates to what?

- A) The art of letters
- B) The science of speech
- C) The logic of syntax
- D) The structure of sound

5. In Old English, the grammatical structure was highly inflected; which case was dropped during the Middle English period?

- A) Nominative
- B) Instrumental
- C) Accusative
- D) Vocative

6. The 'King James Bible' (1611) utilized which grammatical feature to achieve a sense of solemnity, despite it already being archaic in spoken English at the time?

- A) The use of 'thou' and 'thee'
- B) The double comparative
- C) The subjunctive mood
- D) The split infinitive

7. Which dialect of Old English became the basis for standard Modern English due to its association with London and the printing press?

- A) Northumbrian
- B) Mercian
- C) Kentish
- D) West Saxon

8. The adoption of the 'singular they' as a gender-neutral pronoun predates the 21st century; in what century did it first appear in English literature?

- A) 12th Century
- B) 14th Century
- C) 17th Century
- D) 19th Century

9. The 'Great Vowel Shift' primarily affected which variety of English?

- A) Old English
- B) Middle English
- C) Early Modern English
- D) Late Modern English

10. Which linguistic movement in the 17th and 18th centuries aimed to 'fix' the English language, often imposing Latin grammatical rules onto it?

- A) Prescriptivism
- B) Descriptivism
- C) Structuralism
- D) Functionalism

11. What grammatical structure was standard in Old English but largely lost due to the influence of Viking invasions and Old Norse contact?

- A) Subject-Verb-Object word order
- B) Complex inflectional endings
- C) The distinction between voiced and voiceless consonants
- D) The use of the pluperfect tense

12. The word 'syntax' is derived from the Greek 'suntaxis', which literally means what?

- A) A sequence of words
- B) An arrangement together
- C) The study of clauses
- D) The classification of parts