

Germanic Roots

THE GERMANIC INVASIONS — (5th century) introduced a great number of idioms into Gallo-Romance, and, consequently, this popular Latin in Gaul assimilated Old High German. On the other hand, it's difficult to calculate precisely the percentage of modern French derived from Old High German (especially Gothic and Frankish). In the first place, we often limit etymologies in dictionaries to the intermediate form of Low Latin without alluding to Old High German (e.g., French **bois** from Low Latin <*boscus*). Then there are two extreme trends in estimating the percentage of Germanic borrowings — from only 500 words (1%) to 15% or even more, if we count all loan words of different Germanic languages into French: Gothic; Frankish; Old Norse; Lombard; Dutch; German; English.

FRANKISH VESTIGES — The domains affected by Old High German were various and considerable during two German-speaking dynasties in Gaul, concerning terms relative to war; 2) rural life; 3) hunting; 4) seafaring; 5) political and judicial institutions. Finally, there are also in modern French prefixes taken from Old High German still used for the formation of words: *for-* <Frankish *fir-* 'causation' [e.g., **forban** (pirate)]; *mé-* or *més-* <Frankish *mis-* 'negation', 'error' [e.g., **méfait** (misdeed), **mésaventure** (misadventure)]; and some suffixes of agent, such as: *-and* or *-an*, *-ain*, when taken from Old French *-anc*, *-enc* <Frankish *-inc* (e.g., **chambellan** (chamberlain)); *-ange* <Frankish *-ing* [e.g., **mésange** (chickadee)]; *-ard* <Frankish *-hard* [e.g., **bouillard** (fog)]; *-aud*, *-aut* <Frankish *-wald* (e.g., **crapaud** (toad)); *-esque* and sometimes *-ais* <Frankish *-isk* [e.g., **carnavalesque** (carnival-like), **français** (French)].

BORROWINGS FROM NORSE, ENGLISH AND DUTCH — The following list is partial and in no way complete, including Germanic borrowings only from the Middle Ages, a period of ten centuries (476-1453), while avoiding loan words since the year 1453. During this medieval period, borrowings from Old Norse can be explained by the settlement of **Danes in Normandy** in the ninth century [e.g., **cingler** ('to head for/toward' in navigation), formerly *sigler* (to sail); **équiper** (to equip, to fit – from *eskip* (ship)); **joli** (pretty, formerly 'merry', cf 'jolly'); **vague** (wave), etc.], while borrowings from **Middle English** were Frenchified over time (e.g., **beaupré** (bowsprit); **bouline** (bow-line); **chiffe** (chip 'fragment'); **gourmet** (groom), etc.). These borrowings from Middle English, as well as those from **Middle Dutch** [**amarrer** (to moor); **bouquin** (book); **drôle** (funny; cf. droll); **mannequin** (mannequin), etc.] are due to Anglo-French territorial cohabitation for centuries and the feudal extent of France, including the County of Flanders, up to the Netherlands. In fact, the **County of Flanders** (862-1795) was one of the original fiefs of the French crown, and at the time, this fief was bilingual and enormously prosperous: both French-speaking and Dutch-speaking, called in the Middle Ages '**Flandre royale**' or '**Kroon-Vlaanderen**'. This fief was finally removed from French control after the **Peace of Madrid in 1526** and the **Ladies' Peace in 1529**. Except for French Flanders, nowadays limited to northern France, **Royal Flanders** of the Middle Ages — formerly extending to the Netherlands — is the only part of the medieval French kingdom that is no longer part of present-day France.

Borrowings up to 1453

Germanic roots in **bold black** to the right are specifically from **Frankish** or **Gothic** roots.

abandon (surrender; abandonment)	ban 'command; summons; outlaw' <Low Latin <i>bandum</i> > <i>a + bandon</i>
abord (landing; approach)	bord 'plank, board' > <i>a + bord</i>
abraquer [to pull taut (nautical)]	<i>a + braquer</i> 'to lead, point' <Old Norse <i>brāka</i> 'to set, arrange'
abri (shelter, refuge)	berihan 'to cover' < berc , geberc 'asylum, protection' >Low Latin <i>abrigare</i> < <i>a-</i> + <i>brigare</i>