

only a few innovations were made: a few new digraphs were adopted with borrowed words, such as *ph*, *ps* — NE *photograph*, *psychology*, *ch* — NE *chemistry*, *scheme* and *machine*, *g* — *genre*.

In the 18th c. the sound changes slowed down. Standard pronunciation (later known as RP — Received Pronunciation) and standard spelling were firmly established, and the gap between the spoken and written form of the word was perpetuated. The conventional use of letters had prevailed over their original, “phonetic” use.

§ 416. Spelling always lagged behind the changing pronunciation, but this discrepancy grew in the NE period. In Early NE vowels and consonants were subjected to extensive changes, while spelling changes were few and inadequate. Mod E spelling shows the pronunciation of words in the late 14th and in the 15th c., that is before the Early NE sound changes. That is why modern spelling is largely conventional and conservative, but seldom phonetic.

Those are the main historical reasons for the gap between Mod E spelling and pronunciation and for the specifically English use of Latin letters. In order to explain modern spellings one must trace the history of the sounds and their graphic representation, especially in ME and Early NE. The following table contains a list of modern sounds and their most common spelling; it supplies information about the origin and history of sounds, which account for the spellings (it does not include the most obvious phonetic spellings of the type *not*, *it*, *bed*, — which do not require any special historical explanation).

Table 12

§ 417. Main Historical Sources of Modern Spellings

Sound	Spelling	Examples	Sound changes accounting for the spelling	Notes and references
Vowels			ME NE	
Monophthongs				
Short				
æ	a	cat, man	a > æ	§ 392
ɔ	a after w	was, want	wa > wɔ	§ 392
e	ea before d, th	head, death	ɛ: > e: > e	§ 383, 400
u	oo before t, k	foot, book	o: > u: > u	§ 383, 400
ʌ	o, u	come, nut	u > ʌ	In ME both u and o could stand for [u]. § 359, 393
	oo before d	flood	o: > u: > u > ʌ	§ 383, 393, 400
ə	-er, -re, -or	reader, centre, tutor	r } > ə ər }	§ 397

Table 12 (continued)

Sound	Spelling	Examples	Sound changes accounting for the spelling	Notes and references
Long				
i:	ee, ie, e, ea	meet, field, he, meat	e: > i:	§ 383
a:	ar	arm	ε: > i:	§ 383
	a before st, nt, ft	blast, plant, after	ar > a:	§ 397
ɔ:	or, oar, ar	for, board, warm	a > a:	§ 399
	after w		or > ɔ:	§ 397
ə:	au, aw	cause, draw	war > wɔ:	§ 392, 397
	er, ir, ur	her, bird, turn	au > ɔ:	§ 359, 383
u:	oo	moon	ir } > ə:	§ 397
			ur } > ə:	§ 397
			er } > ə:	§ 397
			o: > u:	§ 383
Diphthongs				
eɪ	ai, ei, ay	rain, rein, day	ai } > eɪ	§ 359, 380
	a in open syllables	make, late	ei } > eɪ	§ 359, 380
aɪ	i, y in open syllables	time, my	a: > eɪ	§ 372, 383
	i before ld, nd, mb	mild, kind, climb	i: > aɪ	§ 359, 383
	i before gh, ght	sigh, night	i: > aɪ	§ 371, 383
au	ou, ow	sound, now	ix' > i: > aɪ	§ 383, 395
ou	o in open syllables, oa	rode, no, oak	u: > au	§ 359, 383
	ou, ow, o before ld	soul, row, old	ɔ: > ou	§ 383, 386
ɪə	ere, eer, ear	here, beer, ear	ou — ou	§ 359, 380
ɛə	ear, ere, are	bear, there, hare	ɔ: > ou	from OE [a/ea] Early ME [a:] § 371, 383
ɔə, ɜ:	ore	more	e:r > ɪə	§ 383, 397
uə	oor	poor	ε:r > ɪə	Diphthongs and triphthongs with ə-glides arose due to vocalisation of [r] after long vowels at different stages of the Great Vowel Shift.
Triphthongs			ε:r > ɛə	
aɪə	ire	shire	a:r > ɛə	
auə	our, ower	our, power	ɔ:r > ɔə	
			o:r > uə	
			i:r > aɪə	
			u:r > auə	