Activity 1.1

Describe some of the differences you can observe in the following texts, which are the beginning of the parable of the Prodigal Son from St Luke’s Gospel, Ch 15 (the verses of the chapter are numbered). Look at vocabulary, spelling, word structure and word order, and try to identify Old English words that are still part of present-day English, though sometimes considerably changed in their spelling. Notice which Old English words appear to have been lost.

**Text 1**

11 He cwæð soðlice sum man hæfde twegen suna

12 þæ cwæð se gingra to hys fæder fæder syle me mynne dæl mynre æhte. he me to gebyre. þæ dælde he hym hys æhta.

13 þæ after feawa dagum ealle hys þyng gegeaderode se gingra sunu 7 ferde wræcelice on feorlen ryce. 7 þær forspyle hys æhta lybbende on hys gelsan.

**WW translation**

11 He quoth soothly some man had two sons.

12 then quoth the younger to his father. father sell me my deal of-my property. that me to belongs. then dealed he him his property.

13 then after few days all his things gathered the younger son & fared abroad in far-off country. & there spilled his property living in his luxury.

**Text 2**

11 And he seide, A man hadde twei sones;

12 and ... seide the ȝonger of hem to the fadir, Fadir, ȝyue me the porcioun of catel, that fellith to me. And he departide to hem the catel.

13 And not after many daies, whanne alle things weren gederid togider, the ȝonger sone wente forth in pilgrymage in to a fer cuntre; and there he wastide hise goodis in lyuynge lecherously.

**Text 3**

11 And he said, A certaine man had tvvo sones:

12 and ... said the yonger of them to his father, Father, gyue me the portion of substance that belongeth to me. And he deuided vnto them the substance.

13 And not aftir many daies, whanne alle things al his things together the yonger sonne vvent from home into a fær countrie: and there he vasted his substance, ливинг riotously.
Vocabulary, spelling & word structure
(These notes to the first introductory Activity do not describe the changes comprehensively, and at this stage
omit a number of possible references to sound changes.)

**OE** | **ME** | **EMnE** | **MnE**
---|---|---|---
cwæð | seide | said | quoth/said
    | cwæð from OE cwēdan, MnE quoth now archaic.
    | seide/said from OE secgan.

Development of spellings of past tense - sæõde, saõode, sede, saiõde, seide, sede, sade, seide, sed,
seaide, seide, seyde, seid, sayde, saiõde, zayde, seyd, sayd, sayed, saied, said.

hæfde | hadde | had | had
    | Past tense of OE habban; spellings from OE to MnE include - hefde, hefde, hefede, heffede,
    | beofde, beuede, bafde, baued, beuede, beffued, befede, baudeau, bafued, befede, beuede, befete, befe,
    | bafte, hauid,badd, bajd, bedde, bede, hadde, bad bade, baid, baved, bed, hayd, bad

twegen | twei | tvvo | two
    | OE forms of the numeral were twa· (feminine) - MnE two - tu (neuter) and twegen
    | (masculine), which survives as twain.

suna | sones | sons
    | OE suna is the plural of sunu. <-a> is one of a number of different plural inflections which
    | eventually regularized to MnE <-s>.

se gingra | the zonger | the yonger | the younger
    | OE geong (other forms were giong, gung, iung) had a “mutated” comparative form
    | gingra, (as well as gyngra, geongra), which did not survive.
    | The demonstrative pronoun se is the masculine nominative form of a complex paradigm which
    | in time simplified to the single definite article the.

    | hem | them | them
    | The OE plural pronouns beginning with <h->, bie, beora, beom, were in time replaced by they,
    | them, their from ON.

fæder | fadir | father | father
    | A single <d> between a vowel and “vocalic r” spelt <cr> began to be pronounced [ð] from the

syle | 3yue | giue | sell/give
    | The meaning of syle (from sellan) has changed to give (from OE giefan).

mynne | del | porcioun | portion | deal/portion
    | del is an OE word; porcioun/portion derived from OF.
    | The possessive pronoun mynne (my) is the accusative form. The following form mynre with
    | æhte marks the possessive.
    | The spelling of minne with <y> in mynne was a common convention of writing <y> for <i>
    | which had developed in handwriting (compare bys, bym, ñyng, ryce, forspylde, lybbende for bis,
    | bim, ñing, rice, forspilde, libbende).
mynre æhte catel/goodis substance chattel(s)/substance/goods

æhte/æhta are inflected forms of OE æht (= possessions/property), respectively possessive singular and accusative plural.
catel was an early Norman French loan-word. The OF equivalent was chatel. The two forms have since become separate words, chatel and cattle.
substance was an OF loan-word.

gebyreō fallith belongeth falls/belongs

The older 3rd person present tense inflections -e, -ith, -et changed during the 16th and 17th centuries to the Northern forms with -s, -es, though surviving in dialects and literature for much longer.

dagum dagum, from OE dæg, has a dative plural inflection <-um>. The plural regularised to <-s/-es>

 İyng thingis things things

OE ðing was not inflected for its plural form, but later regularised.
OE letter <Ƿ> was later dropped for the French <th> digraph.

gegaderode gederid gathering gathered

OE gaderian is another example of the change of <d> to <th>, like fæder. The inflection <-ode> marked singular past tense in “weak verbs”. The prefix <ge-> on verbs gave them an “active” meaning – gather together.

togider together together

From OE togedere (not in Text 1), with the sound change [d] to [ð].

ferde wente went went

ferde is from OE faran, MnE fare.
went is from OE wendan, MnE wend/went.

ryce countrie country

OE rice (kingdom, country) now survives only as the suffix -ric, as in bishopric.

forspyldé wastide vvasted spilled/wasted

The OE prefix for- “denotes an increase in the signification of the verb”. OE spillan meant destroy; fors spillan therefore is something like completely wasted.
Wastide derives from the Anglo-French verb waster.

lybbende lyuinge liuing living

The 2nd and 3rd person present tenses of OE libban (live) were leofast and leofaf, from which the later form live derived. Compare OE habban (have) and hebban (beave).
The OE present participle inflection -ende did not survive.

gelsan lecherously riotously lecherously/riotously

The OE noun gelsan has a dative case inflection (base form gelsa). The other texts translate with adverbs, both from OF loan-words.
**Word order**
The basis of MnE word order is established in OE, but with some differences, illustrated in,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Æge me to gebyrēd</th>
<th>that me to belongs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Æa ādlēde he hym hys æhta</td>
<td>then dealed he him his property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>calves hys þyng gegaderode se gingra sunu</td>
<td>all his things gathered the younger son</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*then he dealed him his property*
*the younger son gathered all his things*