Materials Needed (Consolidated for 4 Weeks):

- Internet access (for research, videos, audio recordings of historical English examples)
- Notebook or digital document software (for reflections, notes, and creative writing assignments)
- Pens, pencils, markers (optional for creative projects)
- Access to online etymology dictionaries (e.g., etymonline.com)
- Access to online texts or excerpts of historical English works (e.g., Beowulf, Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, Shakespearean plays/sonnets, King James Bible – many available through public domain resources like Project Gutenberg or university archives)
- Optional: Illustrated history of the English language book (for supplemental reading, e.g., excerpts from Melvyn Bragg's "The Adventure of English" or Bill Bryson's "Mother Tongue")

Week 1: The Mysterious Beginnings - Old English (Anglo-Saxon Adventures!)

Theme: Imagine you're an archaeologist of words, digging up the ancient roots of English!

Key Questions for this week: Where did English truly come from? What did it sound and look like over a thousand years ago? Who were the Anglo-Saxons and how did their culture shape the language?

Learning Goals for this Week:

- Identify the Germanic origins of the English language.
- Experience the distinct sound and basic structural elements of Old English.
- Creatively connect with the themes, style, and spirit of Old English literature, such as the epic poem Beowulf.

Activities & Projects:

1. **Time Travel Radio (Auditory Exploration):** Search online for and listen to audio recordings of Old English. Good search terms include "Beowulf in Old English reading" or "The Lord's Prayer in Old English audio." As you listen, jot down your initial impressions in your notebook. What do you notice about the sounds? Does anything sound remotely familiar? Are there patterns you can pick out?
2. **Word Detectives - Then & Now (Comparative Analysis):** Research a few common Old English words and their Modern English descendants. Examples: *hūs* (house), *mūs* (mouse), *stān* (stone), *etan* (to eat), *drincan* (to drink), *fæder* (father), *mōdor* (mother). Create a small, visually appealing "Then & Now" word chart comparing their forms and noting any sound shifts you can infer.
3. **The Anglo-Saxon Boast (Creative Writing):** Anglo-Saxon warriors and poets famously delivered boasts (*gylp*) about their accomplishments, lineage, and intentions. Write your own short, epic boast. This can be about a real achievement, a skill you have, or something entirely fantastical. Focus on using strong verbs, vivid imagery, and perhaps some alliteration (repetition of initial consonant sounds), which was common in Old English poetry. Example: "I am [Your Name], conqueror of complex equations, friend to furry beasts, wielder of words that win arguments!"
4. **Rune Quest (Optional Deeper Dive):** Briefly research the Anglo-Saxon runic alphabet (Futhorc). What were runes used for? Try writing your name or a simple English word using these ancient symbols.

Weekly Reflection:

What surprised you most about Old English this week? How profoundly different does it feel from the English you speak and write every day? Did any part of it feel unexpectedly familiar?

Week 2: The Great Mix-Up - Middle English (Knights, Chaucer, and French Flair!)

Theme: Picture England after 1066 – a linguistic melting pot where English, spoken by the common people, gets a major French makeover from the new ruling class!

Key Questions for this week: What seismic impact did the Norman Conquest of 1066 have on the English language? How did English manage to survive and transform when French became the language of power? Who was Geoffrey Chaucer, and why is he such a pivotal figure?

Learning Goals for this Week:

- Understand the significant and lasting impact of the Norman Conquest on the vocabulary and structure of English.
- Recognize and identify the extensive influence of French vocabulary that entered English during this period.
- Creatively engage with the sound and style of Middle English literature, primarily through the works of Chaucer.

Activities & Projects:

1. **Chaucer's Corner (Auditory & Textual Analysis):** Find and listen to a reading of the Prologue to Geoffrey Chaucer's "The Canterbury Tales" in Middle English. Afterward, locate a Modern English translation. Read a small, manageable section (e.g., the description of one or two pilgrims) of both versions side-by-side. What are the most noticeable differences and similarities in vocabulary, spelling, and sentence structure? Which words seem to have French origins?
2. **Word Origins - The French Connection (Etymological Research):** A vast number of English words used today, especially those related to government (e.g., *parliament, majesty, sovereign, council*), law (e.g., *judge, jury, felony, attorney*), cuisine (e.g., *beef, pork, mutton, poultry, sauce, boil, fry* – compare to Old English *cow, pig, sheep, hen*), and fashion (e.g., *gown, robe, button, fashion*), derive from French. Create a list of 15-20 common English words you suspect might have French origins. Verify at least 5-7 of them using an online etymology dictionary. Note the original French word if possible.
3. **Middle English Mashup (Creative Application):** Choose one of the following creative options:
   - **Option A - Chaucer Remixed:** Take a short, relatively simple passage from Chaucer (perhaps 5-10 lines describing a character or scene) and "translate" it into very modern slang, text speak, or even emoji sentences. The goal is to capture the essence in a contemporary voice.
   - **Option B - Your Own Canterbury Tale:** Imagine a modern-day character (perhaps yourself or someone you create) going on a pilgrimage or a significant journey. Write a short introductory sketch of this character, focusing on their personality, profession, and quirks, much like Chaucer did for his pilgrims.
4. **Linguistic Archaeology - Triple Text (Comparative Timeline):** If possible, find a short, well-known text (like the Lord's Prayer or a psalm) in Old English, Middle English, and Modern English versions. Create a three-column chart to compare a few lines across these three stages. What are the most striking changes you observe from Old to Middle English, and then from Middle to Modern English?

Weekly Reflection:

How do you think the massive influx of French words changed the character and feel of the English

language? Did it make English richer, more nuanced, or perhaps more complicated? Can you imagine English today without this French influence?

Week 3: Shakespeare, Printing, and a World of Words - Early Modern English (The Renaissance of Language!)

Theme: The printing press arrives, standardizing language like never before! William Shakespeare dazzles the world with his linguistic creativity, and English begins its journey across the globe with explorers and colonists.

Key Questions for this week: How did the invention of the printing press revolutionize the English language and its standardization? What was Shakespeare's monumental impact on English vocabulary and expressions? How did exploration and colonialism lead to the borrowing and coining of new words? What was the Great Vowel Shift and how did it change pronunciation?

Learning Goals for this Week:

- Appreciate William Shakespeare's significant contributions to English vocabulary and common idiomatic expressions.
- Understand the pivotal role of the printing press in promoting linguistic standardization and literacy.
- Explore how new words were coined or borrowed from other languages during this period of global expansion.
- Creatively experiment with the style and vocabulary characteristic of Early Modern English.

Activities & Projects:

1. **Shakespeare's Word Hoard (Lexical Exploration):** William Shakespeare is credited with inventing or popularizing hundreds of words and phrases still commonly used today (e.g., *eyeball, swagger, bedazzled, watchdog, lacklustre, in a pickle, break the ice, wild goose chase*). Research and list 10-15 such words or phrases. For each, note its meaning and try to find an example of its use in one of his plays or sonnets (many searchable online). Were you surprised by any of his coinages?
2. **Insult Like Shakespeare (Creative & Humorous Writing):** Shakespearean insults are legendary for their creativity and bite! Find an online Shakespearean insult generator or a list of insult components (Column A adjectives, Column B adjectives, Column C nouns). Create 3-5 truly epic (but still classroom-appropriate!) insults. Have fun with the flamboyant language! (e.g., "Thou art a toad-spotted, pottle-deep, hugger-mugger!")
3. **The Great Vowel Shift - Sound Detectives (Brief Conceptual Research):** The Great Vowel Shift was a series of major changes in the pronunciation of long vowels in English that occurred primarily between the 1400s and 1700s. This is a key reason why the spelling of many English words (fixed largely before or during the shift) no longer directly corresponds to their pronunciation. Briefly read an article or watch a short explanatory video about it (search "Great Vowel Shift explained simply"). Try to identify one example of a word whose spelling reflects its pre-shift pronunciation but whose sound has changed (e.g., the 'i' in 'time' or 'name').
4. **Explorer's Log - New World, New Words (Creative & Historical Writing):** Imagine you are an English explorer in the 16th or 17th century encountering previously unknown plants, animals, foods, or cultural practices in a new land (e.g., the Americas, Asia, Africa). Write a short "log entry" or "letter home" where you describe one or two of these novelties. Try to coin a new English word for one of them, or describe how you might adapt a word from a local indigenous language. Explain your word choice or adaptation.
5. **The Power of Print (Critical Thinking & Discussion):** Reflect on the impact of Johannes

Gutenberg's invention of the printing press with movable type in Europe around 1440. How do you think widespread printing changed how people saw their language? Did it make English more fixed and standardized? More accessible to a wider audience? What were the pros and cons?

Weekly Reflection:

If you had the power to add any new word to the English language today, just as Shakespeare seemingly did, what word would you create, what would it mean, and why do you think it's needed?

Week 4: English Goes Global and Digital - Modern English & Beyond!

Theme: From the Industrial Revolution's impact on society and language, to the rise of American English, and now the digital age, English continues to evolve at an astonishing pace!

Key Questions for this week: How has modern technology, especially the internet and social media, shaped contemporary English? What are some key differences between major varieties of English (e.g., British vs. American)? What is slang, why does it emerge, and why does it change so rapidly? What might the future hold for the English language?

Learning Goals for this Week:

- Recognize the ongoing evolution of English, including the significant influence of technology and its status as a global lingua franca.
- Compare and contrast lexical and spelling differences between prominent varieties of Modern English.
- Analyze the nature, function, and lifecycle of slang and informal language.
- Creatively and critically speculate on the future trajectory of the English language.

Activities & Projects:

1. **English Around the World - A Tale of Two (or More) Englishes (Comparative Analysis):** Create a list of 10-12 words that differ between British English and American English (e.g., *lift/elevator, flat/apartment, lorry/truck, crisps/chips, biscuit/cookie, boot/trunk [of a car], queue/line, petrol/gas*). For each pair, note which is typically British and which is American. Briefly research or discuss why you think these distinct vocabularies developed despite a shared linguistic root. You can also briefly look into a few unique words from other Englishes (e.g., Australian, Indian, Canadian).
2. **Slangopedia - Your Guide to Today's Lingo (Creative & Observational Project):** Choose one of these options:
   - **Option A - Modern Slang Dictionary:** Create a mini "dictionary" or glossary of 10-15 current slang terms, internet acronyms, or text-speak abbreviations that you or your peers use or observe. For each entry, provide its definition, an example sentence demonstrating its use, and (if you can research it or make an educated guess) its possible origin or the context in which it emerged.
   - **Option B - Slang Translation Challenge:** "Translate" a well-known historical document excerpt (e.g., a few lines from the Declaration of Independence), a famous literary quote, or a traditional nursery rhyme entirely into modern slang and informal language. The goal is to be both accurate in meaning and creative in your contemporary rendering.
3. **The Internet's Influence - Friend or Foe of English? (Debate Preparation & Critical Reflection):** Consider the statement: "The internet, social media, and text messaging are 'ruining' the English language with excessive informality, abbreviations, and grammatical

errors." Prepare brief arguments for both sides of this debate. List 3-4 points supporting the idea that these technologies are detrimental, and 3-4 points arguing they are enriching English or simply represent natural linguistic evolution.

4. **Word of the Future - Linguistic Innovation (Inventive Creation & Presentation):** Invent a brand new English word for a modern concept, technology, social phenomenon, or feeling that currently lacks a perfect, concise term. Your task is to: a) State your new word. b) Clearly define what it means. c) Explain why this word is needed in modern English. d) Describe how your word is formed (e.g., is it a blend of existing words, borrowed, an acronym, onomatopoeia, etc.?). e) Provide an example sentence using your new word. Prepare to present your word as if you are pitching it for inclusion in the next edition of the dictionary.

5. **Future Speak - Gazing into the Linguistic Crystal Ball (Speculative Writing):** Based on everything you've learned over the past four weeks about how English has changed, write a short paragraph (150-200 words) offering your predictions for the English language 100 years from now. Will it be simpler or more complex? Will one global standard emerge, or will dialects further diverge? What new influences might shape it?

Final Grand Reflection:

Looking back over your four-week journey through the history of English, what was the single most surprising or interesting fact, concept, or linguistic change you learned about? How has this exploration changed the way you think about the words you use, hear, and read every day?