

History of the German Language

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1. Proto-Germanic (500 BC - 500 AD)

- Proto-Germanic was the common ancestor of all Germanic languages, spoken by tribes in Northern Europe.
- It evolved from Proto-Indo-European and was spoken around 500 BC.

2. Old High German (500 - 1050 AD)

- Old High German developed from the southern dialects of Proto-Germanic.
- Notable works in this period include the "Hildebrandslied" and "Ludwigslied".

3. Middle High German (1050 - 1350 AD)

- Middle High German emerged after the High German consonant shift.
- Significant literary works like the "Nibelungenlied" were written during this era.

4. Early New High German (1350 - 1650 AD)

- The printing press greatly influenced the standardization of the German language.
- Martin Luther's translation of the Bible into German had a profound impact.

5. Modern German (1650 AD - Present)

- The period saw the rise of a standardized written language known as "Hochdeutsch".
- Notable figures like Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Friedrich Schiller contributed to German literature.

6. Contemporary German

- Today, German is the most widely spoken language in the European Union.
- Variants like Swiss German and Austrian German exist alongside Standard German.

Understanding the history of the German language provides insights into its evolution, cultural significance, and linguistic diversity.