

archaisms

Archaisms. Definition.

- Archaisms are words which were once in common use but now replaced by synonyms. There is no difference in the denotational component of meaning of both words, they differ only in their connotation, mainly in their stylistic and emotional colouring, imparting to the process of nomination a special ancient flavour, making it lofty and in a way out-of-the ordinary, creating a special atmosphere.

Archaisms can be classified into lexical and grammatical.

- Lexical archaisms are
 - words: woe (sorrow), nigh (near), aught (anything).
- Grammatical archaisms are old grammatical
 - forms: thou (you), the -est inflexion for the 2nd person singular, -th for the 3rd person singular, the plural form of brother (brethren), tense forms like wilt, spake, builded.

There are 3 stages in the aging process of words:

- 1. The beginning of the aging process when the word becomes rarely used.
- To this category first of all belong morphological forms belonging to the earlier stages in the development of the language. In the English language these are the pronouns thou and its forms thee, thy and thine, the corresponding verbal ending -est, wilt (thou makest, thou wilt), the ending -(e)th instead of -(e)s (he maketh) and the pronoun ye.

2. The second group of archaic words are those that have already gone completely out of use but are still recognised by the English-speaking community: e. g. methinks (it seems to me); nay (=no).

3. The third group, which may be called archaic proper, are words which are no longer recognizable in modern English, words that were in use in Old English and which have either dropped out of the language entirely or have changed in their appearance so much that they have become unrecognizable, e. g. troth (=faith); a losel (=a worthless, lazy fellow).

Examples of archaisms in literature:

- "The old man raised the axe and split the head of John Joel Glanton to the thrapple." (the throat or windpipe)
- (Cormac McCarthy, Blood Meridian, 1985)
- ...He shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.(Song of Solomon 1:13)
(between)
- "Though thou hast ever so many counsellors, yet ("yet" is generally not an archaism, but it is in this context) do not forsake the counsel of thy own soul." (English proverb) (you have, but, your)
- "To thine own self be true." (William Shakespeare) (your)
- It's what a cove knows that counts, ain't it, Sybil? (The Difference Engine, by Bruce Sterling and William Gibson) (fellow)