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time, *n.*, *int.*, and *conj.*

Pronunciation: Brit. /tʌɪm/, U.S. /tɑɪm/

Forms: eOE **tiema** (*West Saxon, rare*), OE **tim-** (in compounds), OE **tīma**, OE **tyma**, OE (chiefly late) ME– **time**, IOE–17 **tyme**, ME **teime**, ME **teme** (*north.*), ME **tjme**, ME **tyne** (transmission error), ME 16 **teyme**, ME 16 **tim**, ME–16 **tym**, LME **tome** (transmission error), 15 **taym**, 15 **thyme**, 18– **tahm** (*Eng. regional (north-east.)*), 18– **tahme** (*Eng. regional (north-east.)*), 18– **toime** (*Eng. regional (Lancs.) and Irish English*); Sc. pre-17 **taim**, pre-17 **tayem**, pre-17 **taym**, pre-17 **tayme**, pre-17 **tem**, pre-17 **teyme**, pre-17 **thyme**, pre-17 **tiem**, pre-17 **tyem**, pre-17 **tymm**, pre-17 **tymme**, pre-17 17 **tym**, pre-17 17– **time**, pre-17 17– **tyme**, pre-17 (19– *south.*) **teime**, pre-17 19– **tim**, 19– **toime** (*Orkney*); also *Irish English* 18 **deem** (*Wexford*), 19– **tim** (*north.*, in compounds).

Frequency (in current use):

Origin: A word inherited from Germanic.

Etymology: Cognate with German regional (Alemannic) *zīmā* (recorded in written sources as *Zimen* (neuter) time, time of the year, opportune time, opportunity (1556)), Old Icelandic *tími* (masculine) time, season, occasion, fit or proper time, prosperity, Old Swedish *time* time, period of time, hour, occasion, opportunity, appointed time, appropriate time, circumstances of the time (Swedish *timme*, now chiefly ‘hour’), Old Danish *time* time, period of time, hour, occasion, appropriate time (Danish *time*, now chiefly ‘hour’), showing a formation < the same Germanic base as **TIDE n.** with a different derivative suffix (ultimately the same Indo-European suffix as probably shown also by e.g. **GUM n.**¹, **SWIME n.**, classical Latin *sēmen*).

The origin of the shared base of **TIME n.** and **TIDE n.** is uncertain and disputed: it is often identified ultimately with the same Indo-European base as ancient Greek *δαίεσθαι* to divide, Sanskrit *day-* to divide, allot, although a different account connects it ultimately with the same Indo-European base as classical Latin *diū* for a long time, Sanskrit *dyūn* (in *anu dyūn* throughout the days, all the time), and the second element of Gothic *sinteino* always; compare also Armenian *ti* age, which may be related (it is normally derived from a reconstructed form which would be an exact parallel for **TIDE n.**), although it is difficult to connect this with either of these Indo-European bases.

Form history.

In Old English usually a weak masculine (*tīma*); in later Old English a strong masculine (*tīme*) is also attested. The West Saxon form *tiema* shows a reverse spelling after the monophthongization of *īe* (compare A. Campbell *Old Eng. Gram.* (1959) §300).

In modern Scots the form *tim* shows an unstressed variant; it is also found in Irish English (northern) in compounds, as e.g. *suppertim* supper time.

Semantic history.

In a number of specific senses probably after similar specific uses of the word for ‘time’ in Latin and in Romance languages.

In sense A. 20 (with reference to weather) probably partly after post-classical Latin *tempus* (12th cent. in this sense), and partly after Middle French *temps* weather (12th cent. in Old French in this sense).

In senses A. 23 (in prosody) and A. 29 (in music) probably ultimately after classical Latin *tempus* denoting a unit of length of sound. In uses in music at sense A. 26 probably ultimately after similar uses of post-classical Latin *tempus* (see **TEMPUS n.**) or Italian *tempo* (see **TEMPO n.**).

In sense A. 25 (in grammar) after Middle French *temps* (14th cent. in this sense) or classical Latin *tempus* (see **TENSE n.**).

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EXHIBIT

In sense A. 30 (in dressage) after French *temps* (1680 or earlier in this sense).

In Old English largely overlapping in sense with (more common) *tīd* TIDE *n.* The two words occasionally occur together, sometimes as synonyms; compare:

OE *Lambeth Psalter* xxxvi. 39 *Protector eorum in tempore tribulationis*: gescyldnes uel beweriend heora on timan uel on tide gedrefednyse.

OE *Note on Six Ages of World* (Hatton 113) in A. S. Napier *Wulfstan* (1883) 312 An yld is geteald of Adame to Noe., fife of ðam heregange to Cristes gebyrdtiman, sexte of ures drihtnes gebyrdtide to þam ende, þe god ana wat.

1440 *Promptorium Parvulorum* (Harl. 221) 494 Tyme, *idem quod* tyde [1499 *Pynson* tyme, whyle, *tempus*].

And sometimes with (more or less) clearly distinct senses; compare:

OE *Guthlac A* 754 Hwæt we þissa wundra gewitan sindon! Eall þas geeodon in ussera tida timan.

OE *Judgement Day II* 83 Nu þu scealt greotan, tearas geotan, þa hwile tima sy and tid wopes.

OE *Laws: Nordhymbra Preosta Lagu* (Corpus Cambr.) xxxvi. 382 Gif preost on gesetne timan tida ne ringe oððe tida ne singe, gebete þæt.

c1175 (†OE) *Ælfric's Homily on Nativity of Christ* (Bodl. 343) in A. O. Belfour *12th Cent. Homilies in MS Bodl. 343* (1909) 78 Nes nan timæ ne nefræ nane tide, ne nan oðre gesceaft þe he ane ne isceop.

Compare also *time* and (also or) *tide* at Phrases 1h.

In senses A. 18, A. 19 the usual word in Old English and early Middle English is *stīthe* *n.*

A. *n.*

I. An extent of time.

* Considered as a period.

1.

a. A finite extent or stretch of continued existence, as the interval separating two successive events or actions, or the period during which an action, condition, or state continues; a finite portion of time (in its infinite sense: see sense A. 34a); a period. Frequently with preceding modifying adjective, as *a long time*, *a short time*, etc.

OE tr. Defensor *Liber Scintillarum* (1969) ix. 96 *Multi enim se credebant longo tempore uiuere* : soðlice hi gelyfdon lange timan lybban.

c1225 (†?c1200) *St. Katherine* (Bodl. 34) (1981) 159 (*MED*) He heold on to herien his heaðne maumez wið misliche lakes, long time of þe dei.

a1375 *William of Palerne* (1867) l. 318 (*MED*) Þei ful faire han me fostered and fed a long time.

a1450 (†a1338) R. MANNYNG *Chron.* (Lamb.) (1887) i. l. 4190 [Caesar] tok his leue..To wende fro þem for longe teymes.

c1450 *Pilgrimage Lyfe Manhode* (Cambr.) (1869) 55 It is a long time gon that no wiht bledde of his blood.

1516 R. FABYAN *New Chron. Eng.* vii. 505 Some..were holdyn in for a tyme, to practis & shewe vnto the newe how they shuld ordre & guyde the sayd offyces.

1567 W. PAINTER *Palace of Pleasure* II. xxix. f. 315 During the time that supper was preparing.

a1616 SHAKESPEARE *Tempest* (1623) III. ii. 86 After a little time Ile beate him too.

1670 SIR S. CROW in *12th Rep. Royal Comm. Hist. MSS* (1890) App. v. 15 [Hangings] that—for a time—will look better to the eye.

1712 J. ADDISON *Spectator* No. 475. ¶2 She hopes to be married in a little time.

1794 A. RADCLIFFE *Myst. of Udolpho* II. xii. 460 Annette..was absent a considerable time.

- 1833 *Philos. Mag.* 3 242 If a person inspire deeply, he will be able immediately after to hold breath for a time, varying with his health.
- 1882 *Manufacturer & Builder* May 112/3 A jelly-like carbonaceous mineral..was found in a peat bog at Scranton, Pa., a short time ago.
- 1910 *Crimson-White* (Univ. Alabama) 6 Oct. 1/3 Then the two teams lined up and scrimmaged for quite a time.
- 1949 *Times* 2 May 6/3 This year's tennis championship..is taking an unconscionable time to get into its stride.
- 1982 I. HAMILTON *Robert Lowell* xxiv. 430 He hesitated for a time over signing a necessary deed.
- 2004 D. LODGE *Author, Author* II. viii. 186 It was a long time since Henry had worked on the play, and he was impatient for rehearsals to begin.

b. A specific period of time.

†(a) An hour. Compare TIDE *n.* 2. *Obs. rare.*

- a1325 (†c1250) *Gen. & Exod.* (1968) l. 80 His firme kinde dei was a-gon On walkenes turn, wid dai and nig
Of foure and twenti time rigt.
- c1390 *Castle of Love* (Vernon) (1967) l. 1405 (*MED*) Riht into helle he eode; Fourti tymen [*v.r.* tymes; Fr. *ures*] þer he wes þo þat he vprisen ches.

(b) A period of time mentioned in certain biblical passages, usually understood to be a year.

Almost entirely in the form *a time and times and half a time*, this being sometimes used hyperbolically to denote an extremely or inordinately long time.

- †c1384 *Bible* (Wycliffite, E.V.) (Royal) (1850) Apoc. xii. 14 She is fed bi tyme, and tymes, and the half of tyme [*v.r.* half a tyme; L. *alitur per tempus et tempora et dimidium temporis*].
- †c1384 *Bible* (Wycliffite, E.V.) (Douce 369(2)) (1850) Dan. xii. 7 For in to tyme, and tymys, and the half of tyme [L. *in tempus, et tempora, et dimidium temporis*].
- 1482 CAXTON tr. *Higden's Prolicionycion* III. iii. f. cxvii He shal greue god almyghties holy people that shal be bitaken vnto his hande vnto the tyme and tymes and halfe a tyme that is vnto a yere and two yeres and half a yere.
- 1526 *Bible* (Tyndale) Rev. xii. 14 She is norysshed for a tyme, tymes, and halffe a tyme. [Similarly in later versions.]
- 1584 E. PAGET tr. J. Calvin *Harmonie vpon Three Euangelists* 643 First he spake thus, the calamitie of the church shall endure for a time, times, and halfe a time. But now he rekeneth the thre yeares and sixe moneths by dayes.
- 1631 B. JONSON *Staple of Newes* III. ii. 129 in *Wks.* II The Saints do write, they expect a Prophet, shortly, The Prophet Baal, to be sent ouer to them, To calculate a time, and halfe a time, and the whole time, according to Naömetry.
- 1657 J. ROWLAND tr. J. Johnstone *Hist. Constancy of Nature* 10 That Woman in the Apocalyps..which had lain hidden there for a Time, Times, and Half a time, or 245. yeares.
- 1772 G. KILLINGWORTH *Paradise Regained* 16 The time which their prophecy will continue..is a time, times, and an half time, or 1200 days.
- 1841 *Gospel Mag.* Nov. 347 He will wield his sword with terrific violence..causing them to retreat to their chambers in each other and each other until the times and times and half a time shall have ended.

- 1905 S. N. HASKELL *Story Seer of Patmos* iii. 64 A parable of the church history during the time, times, and half a time—the three and one half years of the papal supremacy.
- 1922 *Atlantic Monthly* Nov. 591/1 I see a group of Chinese gentlemen..spend ‘time, times and half a time’ delicately fingering a few jades.
- 1984 G. W. BUCHANAN *Jesus, King & his Kingdom* vi. 203 The ‘time, two times, and half a time’ that took place between the defilement and the rededication of the temple.

c. With *of* or (more commonly) genitive. The space of a specified period of time. Esp. after *in* (also *within*) indicating a limit of time.

The premodifying genitive plural is frequently written without an apostrophe.

- c1430 N. LOVE *Mirror Blessed Life* (Brasenose e.9) (1908) 44 Thou moste abyde the tyme of nyne monthes: that is while thou art noȝt perfyȝtly grounded in vertues.
- 1450 in *Sections Assembly Bk. A Shrewsbury Guild Hall* 34 (MED) Un to the tyme that the time of vj yere of on apprentice be fully compleshed & passed.
- c1565 R. COPLAND *Seuen Sorowes Women* iii. sig. B.iv Would God sayth she that I were vnplaced Or els may chaunce with chylde that she go Of .x. wekes tyme.
- 1600 C. TOURNEUR *Transformed Metamorph.* sig. C^v One day? nay sure a twelue-months time t'will be, Ere seriant death will call me at my doore.
- 1656 EARL OF MONMOUTH tr. T. Boccalini *Ragguagli di Parnasso* l. xxviii. 77 The Macedonians..thought to have sipt up every mans State in less then a months time.
- 1693 C. MATHER *Diary in Coll. Mass. Hist. Soc.* (1911) 7th Ser. VII. 167 A Distemper, which in less than a Week's time usually carried off my Neighbours.
- 1748 J. WESLEY *Wks.* (1872) II. 92 There was to begin in an hour's time a famous cockfight.
- 1786 P. LOVELESS *Law's Disposal Person's Estate* (ed. 2) 175 In the time of six days they could not procure any other land or place to put in the cattle.
- 1843 J. H. INGRAHAM *Fanny* ix. 27 You shall be in Boston in an hour and a half's time.
- 1898 *Cosmopolitan* July 264/1 Within a year's time Uncle Sam will have five more battleships.
- 1904 *Collier's* 7 May 19/3 (advt.) It costs you but a few minutes time.
- 1910 *Carpenter* Aug. 29/1 A candidate failing to present himself for initiation within the time of four weeks, after his initiation fee had been paid in full.
- 1946 *Harper's Mag.* Dec. 555/1 Well sure enough, they wasn't hardly two months' time betwixt the weddin' and the funeral.
- 2010 *Independent on Sunday* 27 June (New Review) 5/2 Bikes in 20 years' time will be chainless.

2.

a. A particular period indicated or characterized in some way, either explicitly (usually with *of*) or by anaphoric reference (as *at the time*, etc.).

for the time: see Phrases 3i(a).

peacetime, plague time, war time, etc.: see the first element.

OE ÆLFRIC *Catholic Homilies: 2nd Ser.* (Cambr. Gg.3.28) xx. 194 Hit is awriten be ðam yfelum timan.

OE WULFSTAN *Last Days* (Hatton) 134 Wa ðam wifum þe þonne tymað & on þam earmlican timan heora cild fedað.

- ?a1160 *Anglo-Saxon Chron.* (Laud) (Peterborough contin.) anno 1137 On al þis yuele time heold Martin abbot his abbotrice xx wintre & half gær & viii dæis.
- c1325 (▷c1300) *Chron. Robert of Gloucester* (Calig.) l. 1321 Þe prinse..þat in time of worre as a lomb is boþe mek & milde & in time of pes as leon boþe cruel & wilde.
- 1340 *Ayenbite* (1866) 68 Yef me him zent aduersete, pouerte, ziknesse, dyere time, rayn, druþe.
- c1400 (▷c1378) LANGLAND *Piers Plowman* (Laud 581) (1869) B. x. l. 72 Sithen þe pestilence tyme.
- ?a1425 (▷c1400) *Mandeville's Trav.* (Titus C.xvi) (1919) 59 (MED) In þat tyme þere weren iij heroudes of gret name & loos for here crueltee.
- 1474 CAXTON tr. *Game & Playe of Chesse* (1883) II. iv. 53 As the Knyghtes shold kepe ye peple in tyme of peas.
- 1551 R. ROBINSON in tr. T. More *Vtopia* sig. ✕v^v Ye old acquayntaunce, that was betwene you and me in the time of our childhode.
- 1589 T. NASHE *To Students* in R. Greene *Menaphon* Epist. sig. **3^v Saint Iohns in Cambridge, that at that time was..shining so farre aboue all other Houses, Halls, and Hospitalls.
- 1665 G. HAVERS tr. P. della Valle *Trav. E. India* 78 The See of Goa at the time of my being there was not finish'd.
- a1680 S. BUTLER *Genuine Remains* (1759) I. 114 To pass his Times of Recreation In choice and noble Conversation.
- 1706 *Serious Admon. Youth* ii. 20 A Man some Years since Executed at Dorchester, whose Legs rotted off during the time of his Confinement.
- a1774 A. TUCKER *Light of Nature Pursued* (1777) III. iv. 389 Though the time for them be over, yet Time itself is not exhausted.
- 1808 SCOTT in Dryden *Wks.* XV. 379 John Taylor..wrote eighty books, which not only made such sport at the time, but were thought worthy of being remitted into a large folio.
- 1875 B. JOWETT in tr. Plato *Dialogues* (ed. 2) IV. 233 All times of mental progress are times of confusion.
- 1920 *Stage Year Bk.* 51 Film stock..became scarce, for there was no plant for manufacturing this in Britain at the time.
- 1991 *Christian Sci. Monitor* 31 Oct. 16/3 For me, it was a time of simplification, a slow unburdening.
- 2010 *Searcher* Feb. 42/1 Newark siege pieces were produced during the time of the British Civil Wars in the mid-17th century.

b. With *the*. Used in various expressions to indicate the extent to which an action, state, etc., takes place, occurs, or endures, or has always been the case, as ***all the time***, ***much of the time***, etc.

- 1684 L. W. FINCH in L. W. Finch et al. tr. Cornelius Nepos *Lives Illustr. Men* Ded. sig. a8 He is the Master of true Courage, that all the time sedately stemms the Ship.
- 1712 R. STEELE *Spectator* No. 296. □7 The Ladies..laugh immoderately all the Time.
- 1726 *Philos. Trans. 1725* (Royal Soc.) 33 427 We try'd under a double reef'd Mainsail, great Part of the Time.
- 1833 A. SUTTON *Narr. Mission to Orissa* xi. 322 The generality of the people heard well some of the time, and some of them all the time.
- 1879 *Scribner's Monthly* July 357/1 The women are occupied much of the time in preparing *farinha*.
- 1923 E. HEMINGWAY *Three Stories & Ten Poems* 18 Part of the time he talked in D'Ampezzo dialect and sometimes in Tyroler German dialect.
- 1947 J. VAN DRUTEN *Voice of Turtle* II. ii. 90 Isn't it funny, to think that all those things, like electricity, were there all the time..just waiting to be discovered?

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