

† eye, *n.*²

Forms: OE *æge*, OE *ege*, IOE *ēge* (*Kentish*), IOE–eME *eige*, eME *æze*, eME *æie*, eME *eaye*, eME *eze*, eME *e3ze* (*Ormulum*), eME *e3ie*, eME *eige*, eME *eizhe*, eME *zeie*, eME *heie*, eME *heize*, eME *heye*, ME *a3eie*, ME *ay*, ME *aye*, ME *ayze*, ME *egh*, ME *eie*, ME *eize*, ME *ey*, ME *eye*, ME *eyze*, ME *eyhe*, ME *hey*, ME *yie* (in a late copy); *N.E.D.* (1885) also records a form eME *æize*.

Origin: A word inherited from Germanic.

Etymology: Cognate with (in different stem classes) Old High German *egī* (strong feminine) fear, discipline (Middle High German *ege*), Old Icelandic *agi* (weak masculine) terror, uproar, discipline (compare *AWE n.1*), Gothic *agis* (strong neuter) fear < an ablaut variant of the Germanic base of Gothic *og* I fear (see *OWE n.*).

Compare *OWE n.* and later *AWE n.1*

In Old English a strong masculine (*i*-stem) *ege*. The underlying Germanic base was apparently originally an *s*-stem (reflected in the extended forms discussed at *EYESFUL adj.*), which was probably partly reinterpreted as an *i*-stem (with nominative singular ending *-s) at an early date, and subsequently passed into other stem classes in the individual languages. Compare ancient Greek *ἄχος* pain, distress (also an *s*-stem: see *OWE n.*).

Later development.

During the Middle English period the sense development of this word ran parallel with the ultimately related *AWE n.1* which superseded it by the end of that period. *EYE n.2* and *AWE n.1* appear to have sometimes been perceived as regional variants of the same word.

Obsolete.

1.

a. Fear, terror, dread.

eOE *Anglo-Saxon Chron.* (Parker) anno 457 Ða Brettas þa..mid micle ege flugon to Lundenbyrg.

OE *St. Mary of Egypt* (Julius) (2002) 72 Ða wæs he ærest swiþe afyrht., ac sona swa þeahhwæþere mid Cristes rodetacne getrymmede hine and him þone ege fram awarearp.

c1175 *Ormulum* (Burchfield transcript) l. 19957 Ne birrþ uss nohht forr e3ze off dæþ Flen godess soþ to seggenn.

c1330 (‡a1300) *Arthur & Merlin* (Auch.) (1973) l. 6419 For sorwe and drede and eize Ðai flowen euerich his weiþe.

?a1400 (‡a1338) R. MANNING *Chron.* (Petyt) (1996) II. l. 5384 Of non þe had ay.

c1475 (‡c1399) *Mum & Sothsegger* (Cambr. Ll.4.14) (1936) II. l. 9 Some stode astonyed..For eye of þe egle.

b. A feeling of profound reverence or respect, mixed with fear or dread, typically as inspired by God or the divine; awe.

eOE tr. Bede *Eccl. Hist.* (Tanner) IV. v. 276 Ic bidde eow eac..for ege & lufan ures Hælendes [L. *propter timorem et amorem Redemptoris nostri*], þæt we ealle gemænelice smeagan for ussum geleafan.

OE (Northumbrian) *Lindisf. Gospels: Matt.* xxviii. 8 *Exierunt cito de monumento cum timore et magno gaudio currentes nuntiare discipulis eius* : eodun hreconlice from byrgenne mið ege & mið micle glædnise iornende beada uel sægca ðegnum his.

?a1160 *Anglo-Saxon Chron.* (Laud) (Peterborough contin.) anno 1135 God man he wes, & micel æie wes of him: durste nan man misdon wið oðer on his time.

c1275 (►?a1200) LA! AMON *Brut* (Calig.) (1978) l. 9354 Þenne heo sculde..mid æie [c1300 *Otho* heye] vnimete halden luue swete.

c1325 (►c1300) *Chron. Robert of Gloucester* (Calig.) l. 9617 Þe child louede him..Ne he nadde of no man more loue ne eye.

c1460 (►?c1400) *Tale of Beryn* l. 931 (MED) It had be wel bettir he had be wele I-lernyd..& had I-had som hey.

c1475 in *Archiv f. das Studium der Neueren Sprachen* (1913) 130 300 (MED) Exortung thy peple to haue a specyall ey, That the to prayse they neuer cese.

2.

a. Something which inspires fear or awe; an action, event, etc., that is a source of terror, dread, or wonder.

eOE *Royal Psalter* cxliv. 6 *Uirtutem terribiliorum tuorum dicent* : mægen egena [!OE *Salisbury Psalter* egena] ðinra hy cweþað.

c1175 (►OE) *Homily: Hist. Holy Rood-tree* (Bodl. 343) (1894) 12 Me bicom swa mycel fyrht on for þan ege þe ic þer iseah, þet ic on eorþan feol.

?c1250 (►?c1175) *Poema Morale* (Egerton) l. 277 in R. Morris *Old Eng. Homilies* (1868) 1st Ser. 177 Eure þer is vuel smech, þusternesse and eie [a1225 *Digby* ezie].

c1275 (►?a1200) LA! AMON *Brut* (Calig.) (1963) l. 4552 Muchele is & stor þe eize, tacnen þer beoð on sterren, an monen & on seonnen.

a1400 (►c1303) R. MANNYNG *Handlyng Synne* (Harl.) l. 617 (MED) Y aske wheþyr ys grettyr eye, A lesyng or a fals tale seye.

c1600 (►c1350) *Alisaunder* (Greaves) (1929) l. 451 (MED) Philip..hathe all Greece at his graunte for his grete yie.

b. Wild or violent anger; rage, madness, fury.

c1175 *Ormulum* (Burchfield transcript) l. 16151 He ne namm þwerret ut nan gom. Off all þe follkess e33e.

c1275 (►?a1200) LA! AMON *Brut* (Calig.) (1963) l. 945 Al was heora gristbatinge al swa wilde bares e3e.

c1330 *Otuel* (Auch.) (1882) l. 877 3ef ani sarazin wiþ eie, Comeþ to lette me of mi weie.

?a1400 (►a1338) R. MANNYNG *Chron.* (Petyt) (1996) II. l. 839 Wrothfulle wordes of eye.

3. The capacity or power to inspire fear or awe. Frequently with reference to God's power.

Apparently arising from a reinterpretation of the Old English objective genitive as a possessive, e.g. in quot. OE the genitive phrase *godes ege* 'fear of God' came to be reinterpreted as 'God's awesome power'. This reinterpretation had occurred by the second half of the 13th century; slightly earlier examples such as quotes. *a1225*¹, *a1225*² may possibly already have been understood as showing this new sense.

[OE ÆLFRIC *Catholic Homilies: 1st Ser.* (Royal) (1997) i. 185 Ða wæs þa sume hwile godes ege [*a1225 Vesp. A.xxii godes 3eie*] on mancynne, æfter þam flode.

a1225 (►OE) *Rule St. Benet* (Winteny) (1888) Prol. 5 Cumeð ye, mine biernes, 3ehyreð me; Godes eye ic eow tece.

a1225 (►?OE) *MS Lamb.* in R. Morris *Old Eng. Homilies* (1868) 1st Ser. 21 Muchel is þines eorðliches louerdes eie, and hunfold mare is cristes eie.]

c1275 (►?a1200) LA! AMON *Brut* (Calig.) (1978) l. 8964 Þu scalt habben þis lond & þin æie beon muchel & strong.

c1300 *Body & Soul* (Laud Misc. 108) (1889) 41 Were was i bi wode or wey3e..Ðat i ne was ay under þin ey3e?

a1450 (►?1348) R. ROLLE *Form of Living* (Cambr.) in *Eng. Writings* (1931) 94 And thynk with how mykel, and how gude will þou presentes þi voves before hym: for till þat he hase hys egh.

PHRASES

to stand eye of and variants: to regard (someone or something) with awe; (in early use) to be fearful or terrified of, to dread. Cf. [to stand awe of at AWE n.¹ Phrases 1a](#), [to stand in awe of at AWE n.¹ Phrases 1b](#).

a. Originally with *eye* as the subject of *stand*, the person affected by fear expressed as the dative object (often placed before the verb), and the cause of the fear frequently specified after *of* (or less commonly *to*, *from*), e.g. Old English *him stent ege of ðe* 'eye of thee stands (or will stand) to them' (i.e. there is (or will be) fear of you on their part).

OE *Old Eng. Hexateuch: Deut.* (Claud.) xxviii. 10 Ealle men geseoð ðæt ðu Drihten lufast; him stent ege of ðe [L. *timebunt te*].

OE *Paris Psalter* (1932) lxxv. 9 To þam egsan sceal æghwylc habban, þe wera gastum wealdeð and healdeð; eorðcyninegum se ege standeð.

a1225 (►?c1175) *Poema Morale* (Lamb.) l. 18 in R. Morris *Old Eng. Homilies* (1868) 1st Ser. 161 Mare eie stondeð men of monne þanne hom do of criste.

c1275 (►?a1200) LA! AMON *Brut* (Calig.) (1963) l. 5834 Him ne stod æie to na-þing [*c1300 Otho* him ne stod eye of no-þing].

c1330 (►?c1300) *Guy of Warwick* (Auch.) l. 7090 Of wer no þurt ous stond no aye.

a1450 *St. Faith* (Bodl.) l. 105 in *Archiv f. das Studium der Neueren Sprachen* (1889) **82** 325 Of þy torment ne stondiþ me non eye.

b. With the dative object reanalysed or recast as subject of *stand* and *eye*

as the object, e.g. ‘We stood no eye of them’.

a1200 *MS Trin. Cambr.* in R. Morris *Old Eng. Homilies* (1873) 2nd Ser. 39 He þat is recheles and non eige
ne stand of louerde.

c1330 *Otuel* (Auch.) (1882) l. 530 A3ein to bataille þei wente..Neueron of oþer ne stod eie.

?a1400 (▶a1338) R. MANNING *Chron.* (Petyt) (1996) II. l. 150 He stode of him non eye.

a1450–1509 (▶a1300) *Richard Coer de Lyon* (A-version) (1913) l. 3633 Off hym and hys we stode swilk
eye.

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