

The History of the English language

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THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN THE INDO-EUROPEAN FAMILY OF LANGUAGES

How many groups of languages belong to the Indo-European family of languages?

What do you know about the historical comparative method?

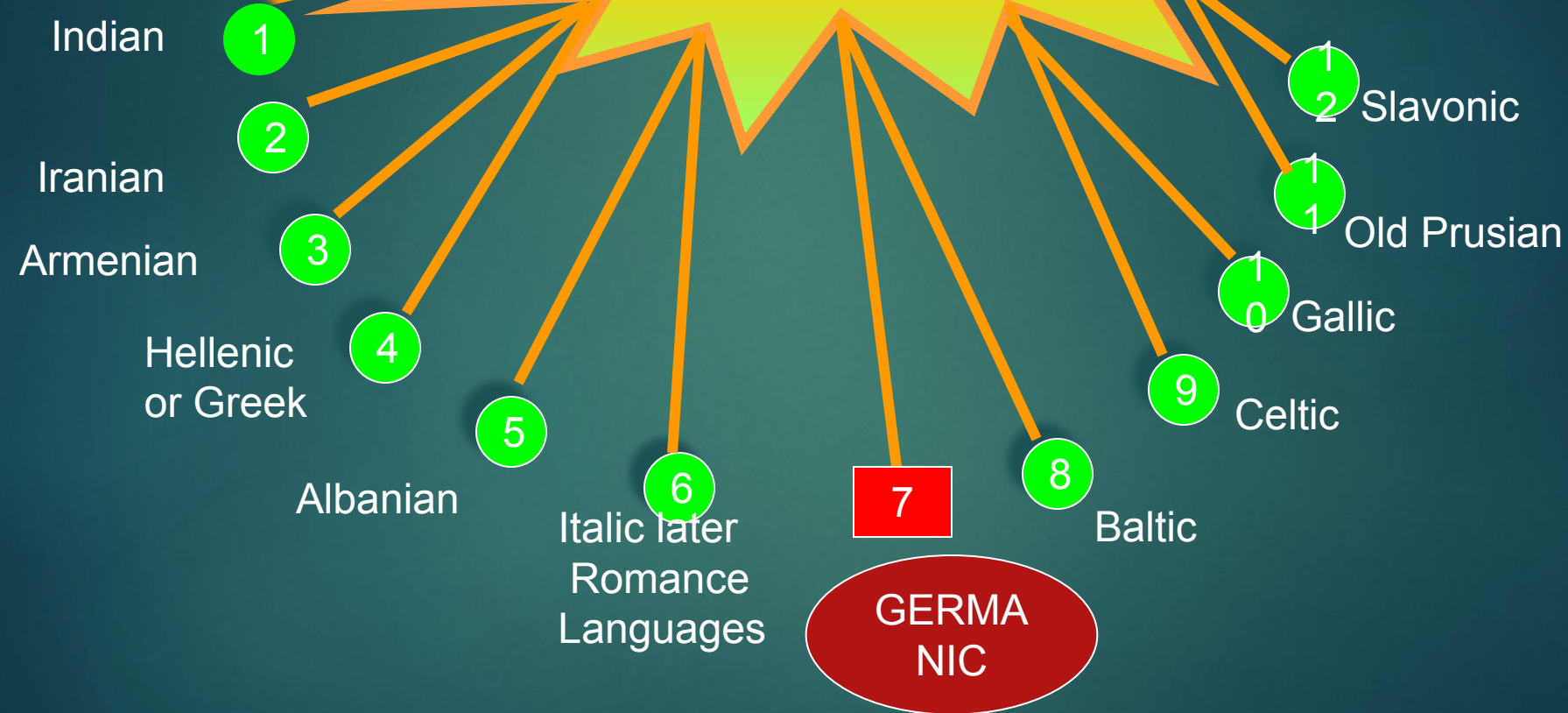
What is the parent language of the Indo-European family of languages?

Why do we have to speak about the Indo-European family of languages?

**Brainstorming
activity**



The Indo-European family of languages



Languages can be classified according to different principles. The historical or genealogical classification, groups of languages in accordance with their origin from a common linguistic ancestor. Genetically, **English** belongs to the **Germanic or Teutonic group** of languages, which is one of the twelve groups of the **Indo-European linguistic family**. Most of the Area of Europe and large part of other continents are occupied today by the Indo-European languages, and Germanic being one of their major group.

The pre-written history of English and cognate languages was first studied by the **methods of historico-comparative** linguistics evolved in the 19th c. By applying these methods linguists discovered the kinship of what is now known as the Indo-European (IE) family of languages and grouped them into Germanic, Slavonic, Romance, Celtic, and others. Modern linguistics has improved on the method of historico-comparative linguistic research applied in the 19th c.

What is the parent language of Germanic languages?

What do you know about the ancestor of the Germanic tribes?

What did the famous scholars say about classification of the Germanic tribes?

By whom was the parent language of Germanic languages spoken?

Where was the parent language of Germanic languages spoken?

**Brainstorming
activity**

The history of the Germanic group begins with the appearance of what is known, as the **Proto-Germanic** (PG) language (also termed **Common or Primitive Germanic, Primitive Teutonic and simply Germanic**).

PG is the linguistic ancestor the parent-language of the Germanic group. It is supposed to have split from related IE tongues sometime between the **15th and 10th c. B.C.** There would be **Germanic tribes** belonged to the western division of the IE speech community. As the Indo-Europeans extended over a larger territory, the ancient Germans or Teutons moved further north than other tribes and settled on the southern coast of **the Baltic Sea in the region of the Elbe.**

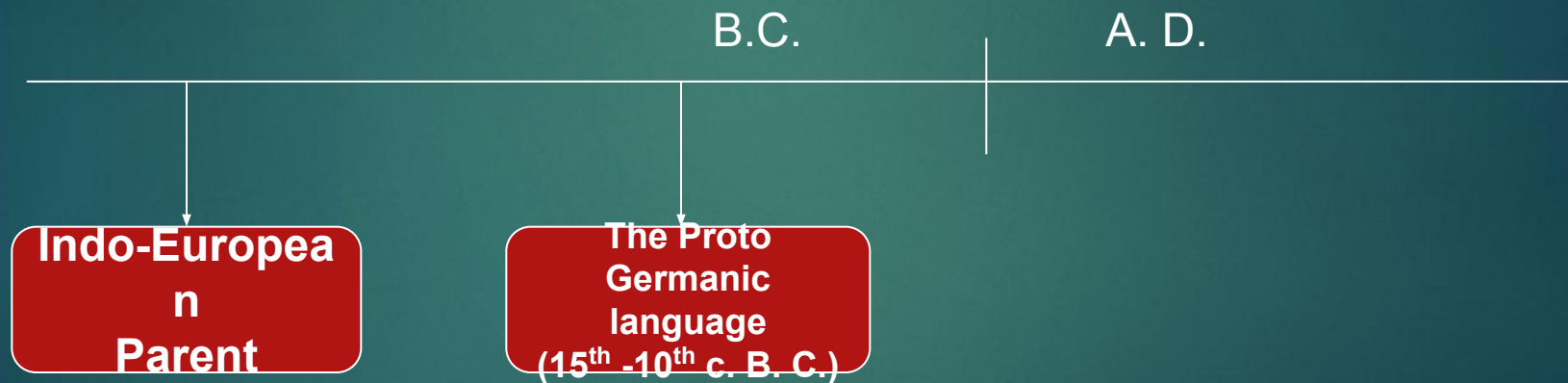
3. The Roman historian **Tacitus** compiled a detailed description of the life and customs of the ancient Teutons. In his work he reproduced Pliny's classification of the Germanic tribes.

What do **Greek**
and Roman
writers say about
the ancient
Teutons?

1. The Roman general, statesman, and writer **Julius Caesar** (100—44 B.C.). In the **Commentaries on the War in Gaul (Commentarii de bello Gallico)** Caesar wrote that the Germans lived in tribes and tribal unions. It was of particularly great value for the historians. It also follows from Caesar's account that the Teutons were nomads in his time.

4. F. Engels in **ON THE HISTORY OF THE ANCIENT GERMANS and THE ORIGIN OF THE FAMILY, PRIVATE PROPERTY AND THE STATE**. Having made a linguistic analysis of several Germanic dialects of later ages F. Engels came to the conclusion that Pliny's classification of the Teutonic tribes accurately reflected the contemporary dialectal division.

2. In the 1st c. A.D. **Pliny the Elder** in **NATURAL HISTORY (NATURALIS HISTORIA)** made a classified list of Germanic tribes grouping them under six headings.



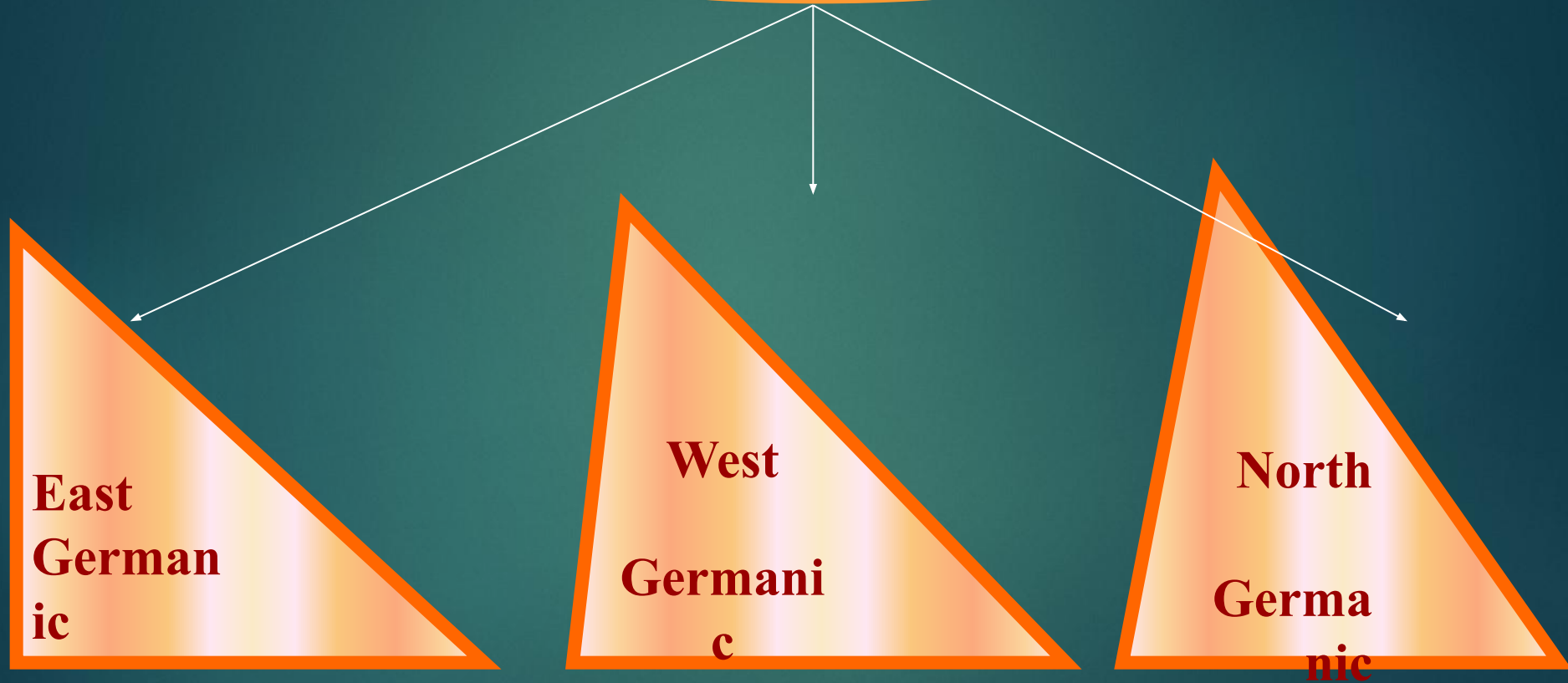
Which Germanic languages are the most important from the linguistic point of view?

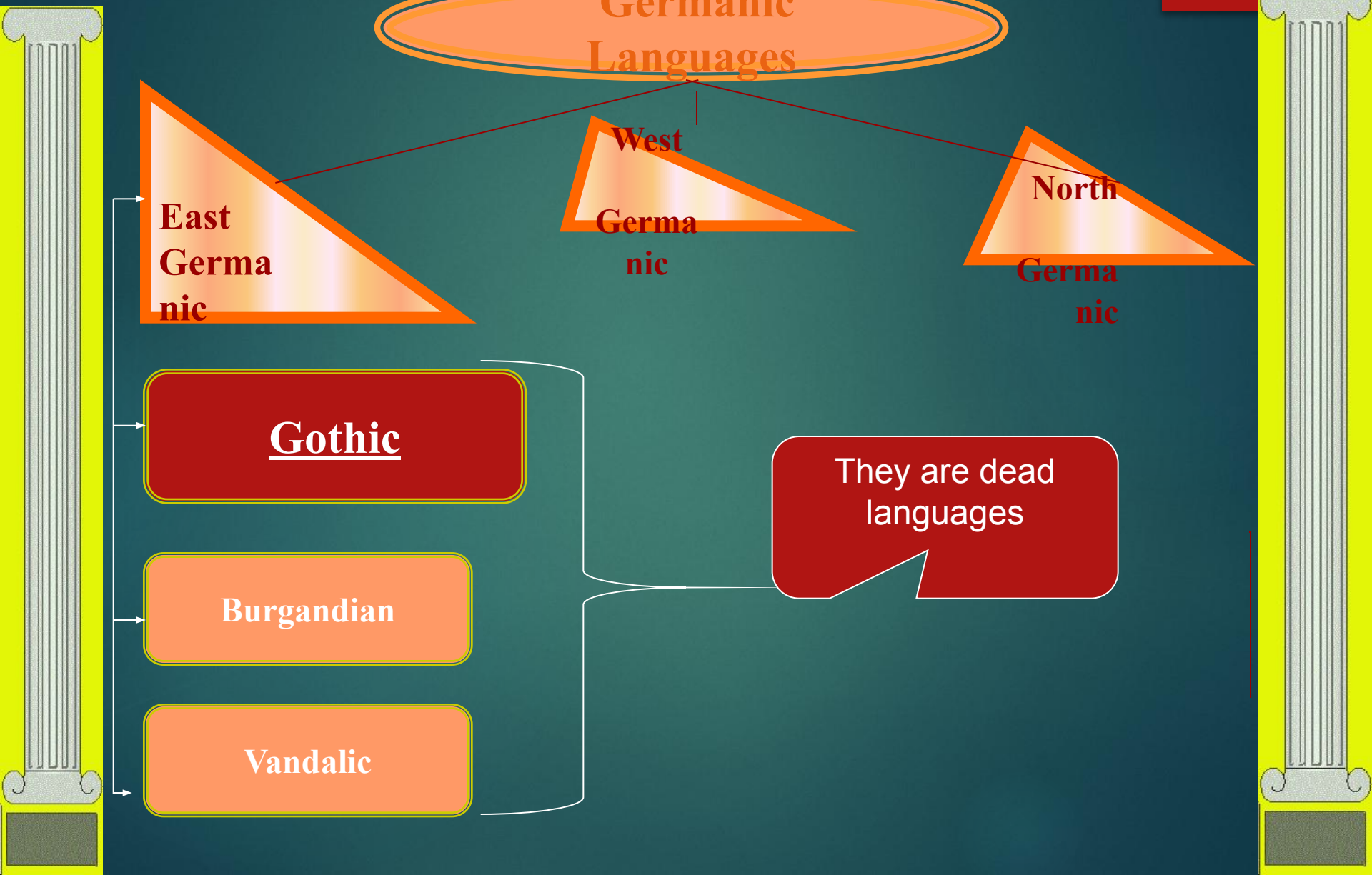
Which Germanic languages are dead?

Which Germanic languages are the most important from the point of territorial extent?

**Brainstorming
activity**

Modern Germanic Languages





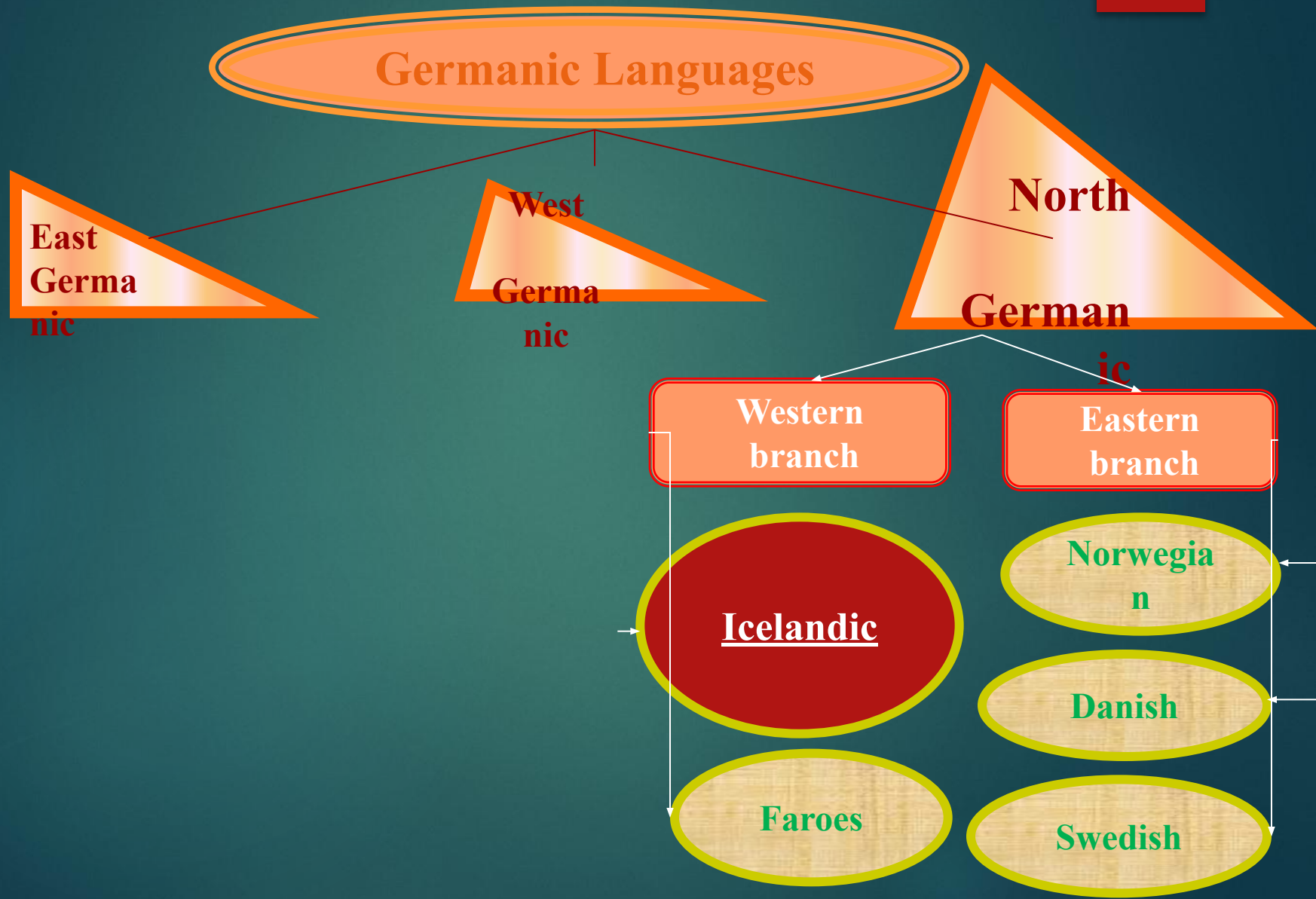
The Gothic language

Because only the Gothic language left its historical written monument, which is called

SILVER CODEX (CODEX ARGENTEUS).

It was written by Ulfilas, a West Gothic bishop, in the 4th c. It is written on red parchment with silver and golden letters, and kept now in Uppsala, Sweden.

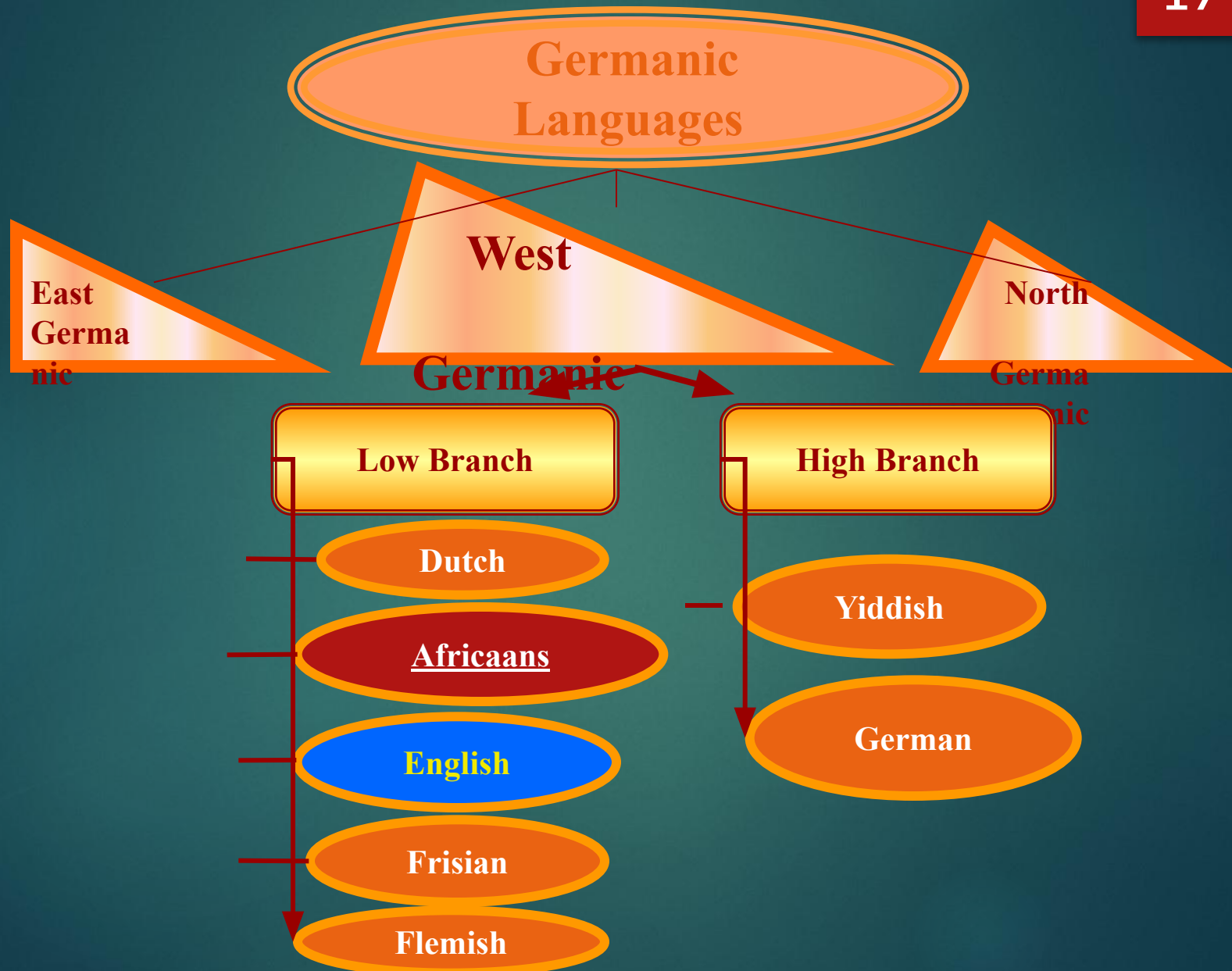
The SILVER CODEX is one of the earliest texts in the languages of Germanic group; it represents a form of language very close to PG and therefore throws light on the pre-written stages of history of all the languages of Germanic group, including English.



The Icelandic language

As compared with other North Germanic languages **Icelandic** has retained a more archaic vocabulary and grammatical system. **Modern Icelandic** is very much like Old Icelandic and Old Norse, for it has not participated in "the linguistic changes which took place in the other Scandinavian languages, probably because of its geographical isolation. Old Icelandic written records date from the 12th and 13th c, an age of literary flourishing.

The most important records are:
the **ELDER EDDA** (also called the **POETIC EDDA**) —
a collection of **heroic songs** of the 12th c,
the **YOUNGER (PROSE) EDDA**
(a text-book for poets compiled by
Snorri Sturluson in the early 13th c.)
and the Old Icelandic sagas.



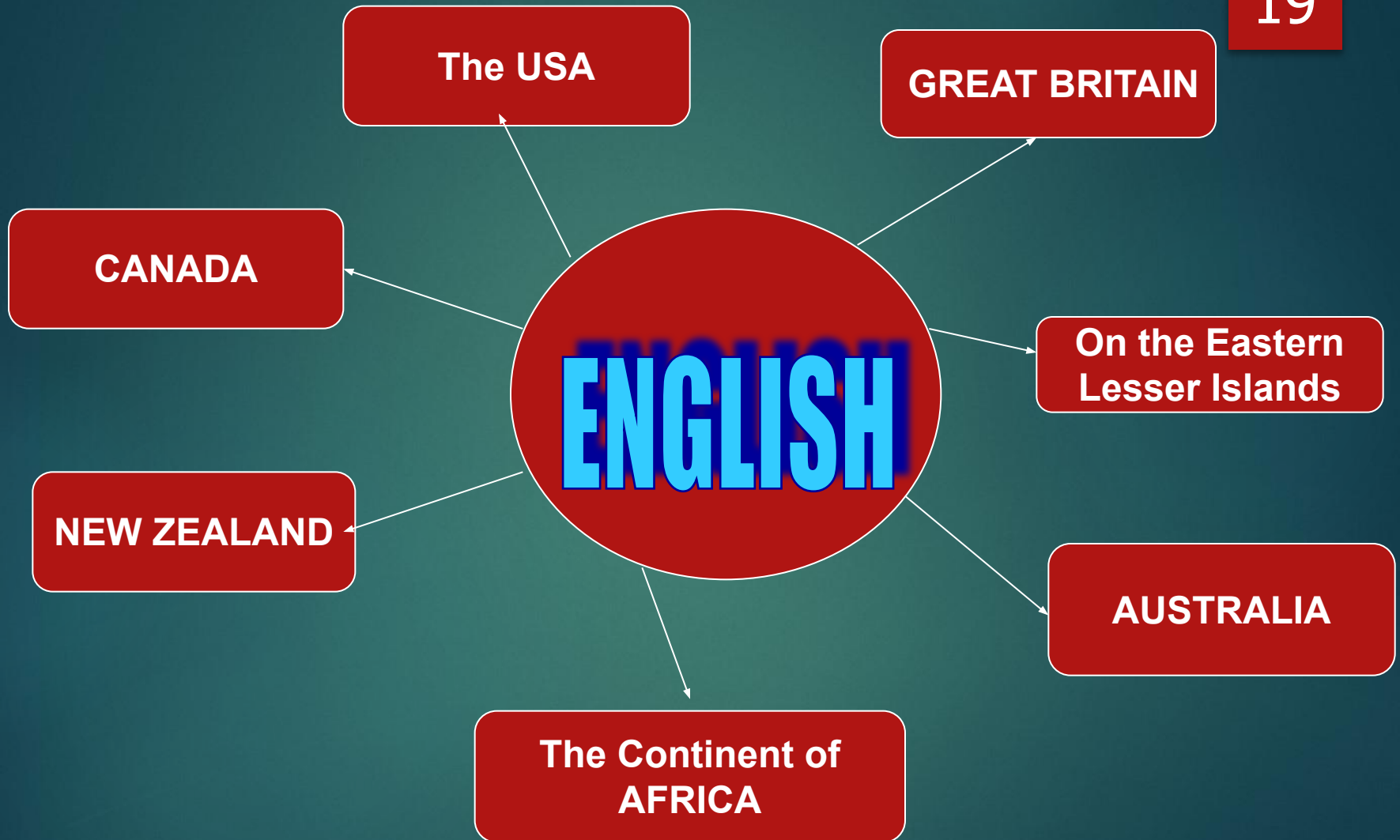
The Afrikaans language

Because the **Afrikaans** language is the **youngest language** among all the languages of the West Germanic group.

It exist for about **200 years**.

About three hundred years ago the Dutch language was brought to South Africa by colonists from Southern Holland. Their dialects in Africa eventually grew into a separate West Germanic language, Afrikaans. Afrikaans has incorporated elements from the speech of English and German colonists in Africa and from the tongues of the natives.

Writing in Afrikaans began as late as the end of the 19th c. Today Afrikaans is the mother-tongue of over four million Afrikaners and coloured people and one of the state languages in the South African Republic (alongside English).



Germanic languages

