

3: Sound Laws and Modals

Sightreading

Ic for fram fæder and com on middaneard.

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Þa þæt se ealdormon hierde, þa adrencte he hiene selfne.

His *discipuli* woldon eac þæt folc fedan: ac hi næfdon mid hwam.

Hwæt secge ge þæt ic sy?

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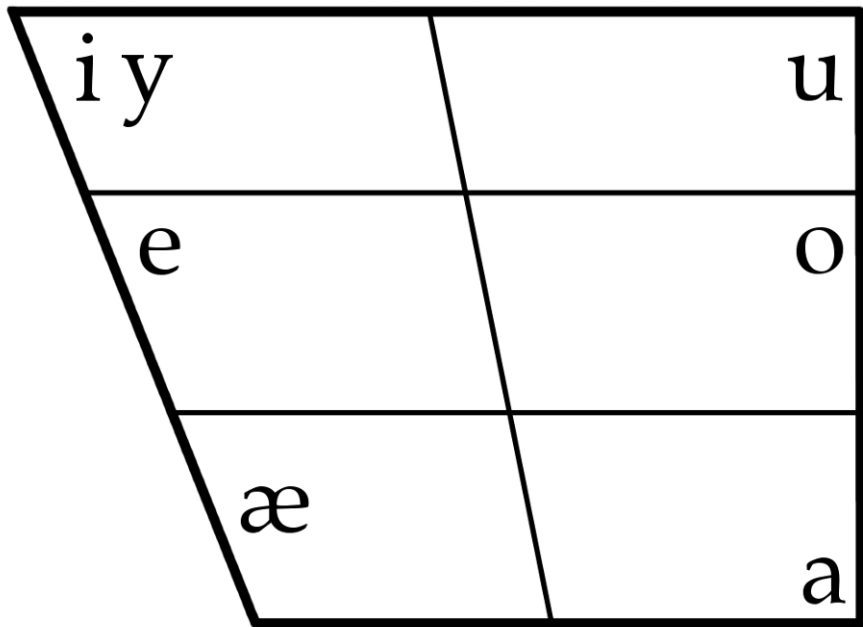
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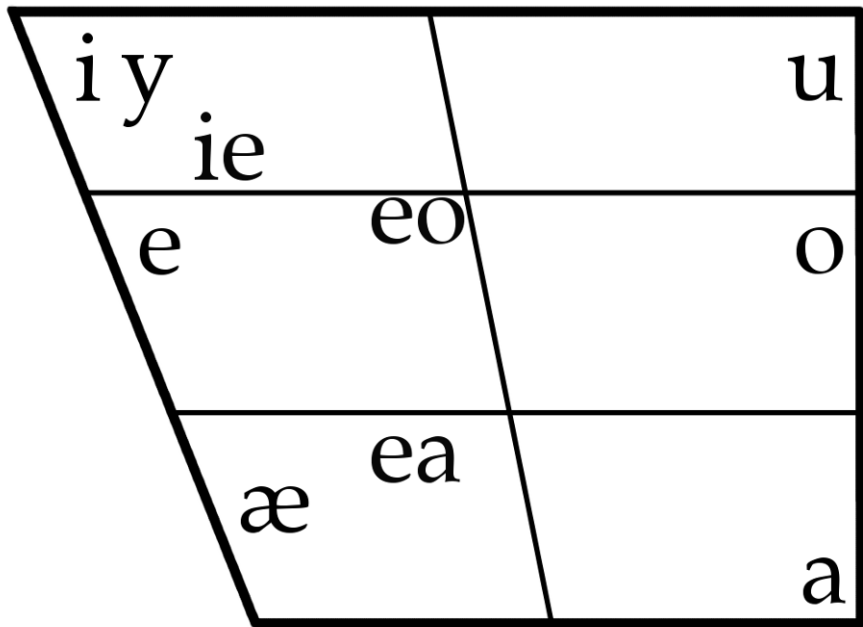
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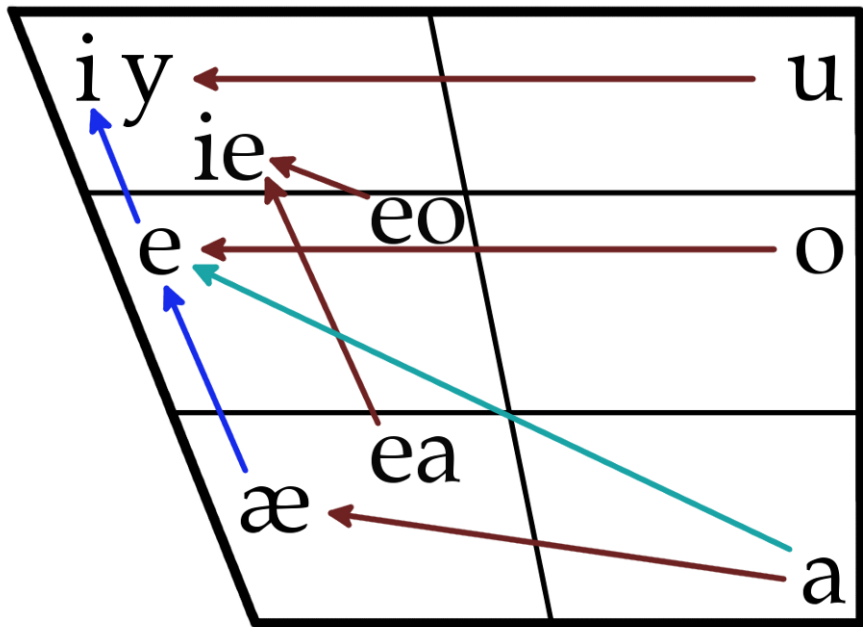
Front Mutation (*i*-Mutation)

A back vowel is fronted under the influence of an /i/ or /j/ in the following syllable.

A front vowel is raised under the influence of an /i/ or /j/ in the following syllable.

When the back vowel is /ɑ/ and a nasal intervenes between it and /i/ or /j/, /ɑ/ becomes /ɛ/ rather than /æ/.

The /i/ or /j/ that caused the shift may since have disappeared.



Front Mutation (*i*-Mutation)

- ▶ MnE *goose*, *geese*, *woman*, *women*
- ▶ German *fahren*: ich fahre, du fährst, sie fährt
- ▶ OE *fāran*: ic fāre, þū færst, hēo færd
- ▶ OE *bōc*, *bēc*; *gōs*, *gēs*; *mann*, *menn*

! In OE, dative (and feminine genitive) forms as well as plurals were affected (see overleaf).

Consonant Stems

m/f	singular	plural	singular	plural
Nom.	mann	menn	bōc	bēc
Acc.	mann	menn	bōc	bēc
Gen.	mannes	manna	bēc	bōca
Dat.	menn	mannum	bēc	bōcum

PG nsm *manniz → *menniz → OE menn

PG dsf *bōki → *bēki → OE bēc

Breaking

- ▶ Short *e* followed by *h*, or by *r* + consonant → *eo*
- ▶ Short *æ* followed by *h*; *r* + consonant; or *l* + consonant → *ea*

Thus

- ▶ bregdan, brægd, brugdon, brogden; but
- ▶ weorpan, wearp, wurpon, worpen

Syncope

The loss of an unstressed medial vowel:

- ▶ OHG adj. *truckan* → OHG verb *truckanēn* → German *trocknen*
- ▶ OE *hēafod*: genitive **hēafodes* → OE *hēafdes*
- ▶ OE *hālig*: genitive *hāliges* → OE *hālges*
- ▶ OE *micel*: genitive *micles* → OE *micles*

Expect variation.

Grimm's Law

aspirated voiced stops	→	voiced stops	→	voiceless stops	→	voiceless fricatives
bh	→	b	→	p	→	f
dh	→	d	→	t	→	θ
gh	→	g	→	k	→	x
		edere	→	etan		
		ager	→	æcer		
				piscis	→	fisc
				frater	→	brōþor
				pater	→	fæder

Verner's Law

aspirated voiced stops	→	voiced stops	→	voiceless stops	→	voiceless fricatives
bh	→	b	→	p	→	b
dh	→	d	→	t	→	d
gh	→	g	→	k	→	g
				s	→	r
if immediately preceded by IE word stress:				p	→	f
				t	→	θ
				k	→	x
				s	→	s
				<u>fr</u> ater	→	brō p or
				pa <u>ter</u>	→	fæ d er

Alternation Due to Grimm's Law and Verner's Law

- ▶ frēosan: ic frēas, wē frur**o**n
- ▶ cēosan: ic cēas, wē cur**u**n
- ▶ snīðan: ic snāð, wē snid**o**n

Auxiliary Verbs

In a clause with two verbs, the auxiliary is the finite verb, which governs an infinitive or past participle. In MnE, it is also the first verb in the verb phrase.

- ▶ I **have** eaten.
- ▶ We **will** see.
- ▶ I hear that he **was** beaten.

In German, the same word order is typical of headclauses.

- ▶ Ich **habe** gegessen.
- ▶ Wir **werden** sehen.
- ▶ Ich habe gehört, dass er **geschlagen** wurde.

Modal Auxiliaries

Express “modality”, i.e. degrees of (un)certainty, permission, or obligation. The tenses have developed to express further degrees of (un)certainty.

- ▶ I **can** dance.
- ▶ I **could** dance.
- ▶ I **will** visit.
- ▶ I **would** love to visit.
- ▶ She **may** succeed.
- ▶ She **might** succeed.

Modal Auxiliaries

MnE “present”	MnE “past”	OE origin	OE preterite
can	could	cunnan	cuðe
may	might	magan	mihte
must	—	mōtan	mōste
shall	should	sculan	scolde
will	would	willan	wolde

- ▶ OE preterites used for tense *or* to express greater uncertainty;
- ▶ Also used as lexical verbs (esp. *cunnan*, *willan*)
(Cf. “God **wills** it”, “we **must** away”);
- ▶ ! Sense may differ from that of the modern reflex.

Modal Auxiliaries: Sense

cunnan	know how to; be able, can; as independent verb: know, be familiar with
magan	be able (cf. <i>cunnan</i>); be allowed (cf. <i>mōtan</i>)
mōtan	be allowed to, may
sculan	obligation or necessity (must, ought); authoritative expectation (shall); reported claims (is supposed to)
willan	want, wish less commonly pure futurity (will, shall)

Modal Auxiliaries

Most OE modals are **preterite-present verbs**:

- ▶ Their presents were originally preterites;
- ▶ Their new preterites are weak.

Compare:

<i>faran</i> VI preterite	<i>mōtan</i> present	<i>mōtan</i> preterite
ic fōr	ic mōt	ic mōste
þū fōre	þū mōst	þū mōstest
hēo fōr	hēo mōt	hēo mōste
wē fōron	wē mōton	wē mōston

Modal Auxiliaries

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Compare:

<i>crēopan</i> II preterite	<i>sculan</i> present	<i>sculan</i> preterite
ic crēap	ic sceal	ic scolde
þū crupe	þū scealt	þū scoldest
hēo crēap	hēo sceal	hēo scolde
wē crupon	wē sculon	wē scoldon

Modal Auxiliaries

cunnan	ic can, þū canst, hē can, wē cunnon ic cūðe, þū cūðest, hē cūðe, wē cūðon
magan	ic mæg, þū meahst, hē mæg, wē magon ic mihte, þū mihtest, hē mihte, wē mihton
mōtan	ic mōt, þū mōst, hē mōt, wē mōton ic mōste, þū mōstest, hē mōste, wē mōston
sculan	ic sceal, þū scealt, hē sceal, wē sculon ic sceolde, þū sceoldest, hē sceolde, wē sceoldon
willan	ic wille, þū wilt, hē wile, wē willað ic wolde, þū woldest, hē wolde, wē woldon

Modal Auxiliaries

Of ælcum trēowe ðises orcerdes ðū **mōst** **etan**.

Hēo ne **mihte** þæt cild **gehȳran**.

Nān man hine ne **cūðe** **gecnāwan**.

Ælc cristen man **sceal** pater noster **cunnan**.

Wē **willað** ūs tō scype **gangan**.

Þū **scealt** grēot **etan** þīne lifdagas.

Ne **mihtest** ðū āne tīde **wacian**?

Lof **sceolde** hē drihtnes **wyrcean**.

Hwȳ ne **meaht** þū hit **ongītan**?

Ðū geherdest reccan þætte Iōb **sceolde** **bīon** se hēhsta god.

Modal Auxiliaries

(Of ælcum trēowe ðises orcerdes) [ðū] mōst etan.

[Hēo] ne mihte <þæt cild> gehýran.

[Nān man] <hine> ne cūðe gecnāwan.

[Ælc cristen man] sceal <pater noster> cunnan.

[Wē] willað <ūs> (tō scype) gangan.

[þū] scealt <grēot> etan <þīne lifdagas>.

Ne mihtest [ðū] (āne tīde) wacian?

<Lof> sceolde [hē] <drihtnes> wyrcean.

(Hwý) ne meaht [þū] <hit> ongītan?

[Ðū] geherdest reccan (þætte) [Iōb] sceolde bīon [se hēhsta god].