

9: Middle English

Side by Side

Old English

Fæder ure þu þe eart on heofonum,
si þin nama gehalgod.

Tobecume þin rice.

Gewurþe ðin willa

on eorðan swa swa on heofonum.

Urne gedæghwamlican hlaf syle us
todæg

and forgyf us ure gyltas,

swa swa we forgyfað urum

gyltendum.

And ne gelæd þu us on costnunge
ac alys us of yfele.

Middle English

Oure fadir that art in heuenes,
halewid be thi name.

Thi kyngdoom come to.

Be thi wille don

in erthe as in heuene.

3yue to vs this dai oure breed ouer
othir substaunce

and for3yue to vs oure dettis,

as we for3yuen to oure dettouris.

And lede vs not in to temptacioun
but delyuere vs fro yuel.

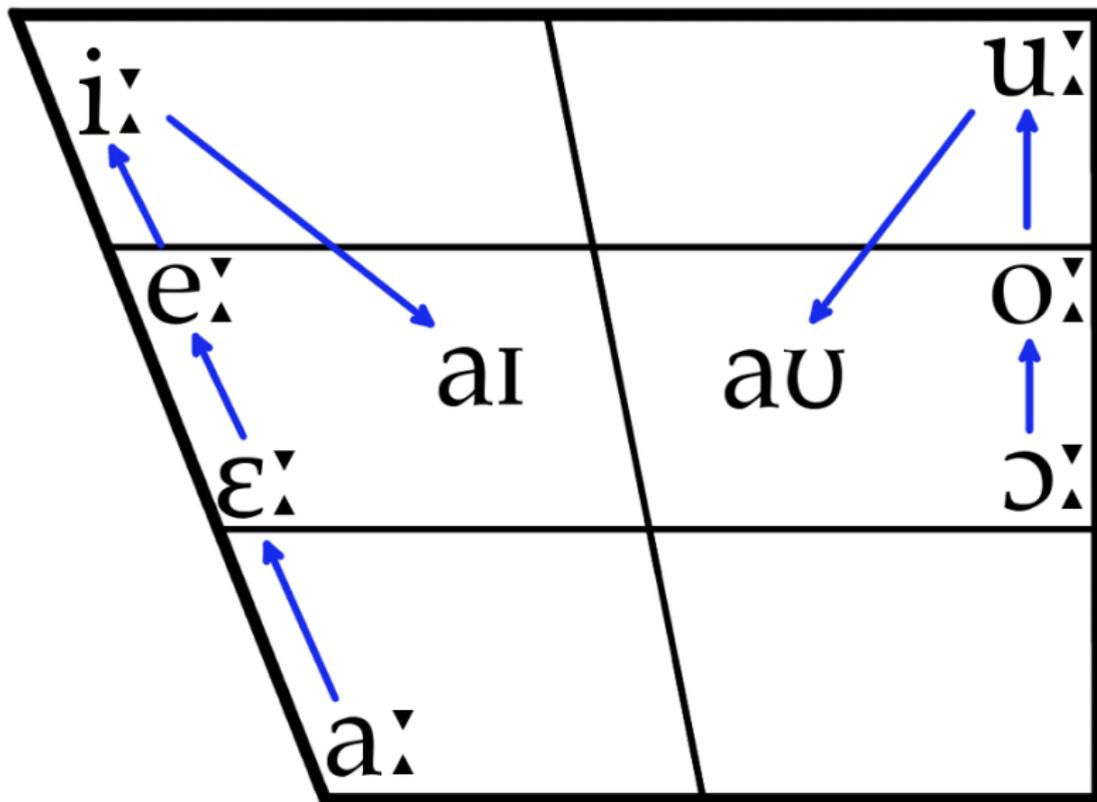
Differences from Old English

- ▶ Morphological: inflectional levelling
- ▶ Syntactic: Development of a more fixed word order
- ▶ Lexical: French and Norse borrowings
- ▶ Orthographical: Anglo-Norman spellings (see next slide)

Orthographical Innovations

- ▶ e for /ǣ/
- ▶ ea for /æ/
- ▶ o, ue, u for /ø/
- ▶ y for /i/ (following the unrounding of /y/ described below)
- ▶ u for /y/ in dialects where that sound survived
- ▶ o, ou, ow for /u/
- ▶ ay, ey, oy for /ai, ei, oi/
- ▶ aw, ew, ow for /au, eu, ou/
- ▶ qu for cw
- ▶ ch instead of c for /tʃ/
- ▶ v for voiced f
- ▶ ȝ for /j/ (in OE ȝ was interchangeable with g) and sometimes for word-final /ts/
- ▶ ȝ for /ç/, leaving h for /h/
- ▶ wh for hw (but qu in the north)
- ▶ sch instead of sc for /ʃ/
- ▶ ð disappeared in c13; th introduced as an alternative for þ
- ▶ uu, vv, w instead of p for /w/

Differences from Modern English



Differences from Modern English

- ▶ Phonological: Great Vowel Shift
- ▶ Lexical: Borrowings from Latin, Greek, many other languages
- ▶ Syntactic: further regularization of word order
- ▶ Orthographical: abandonment of ȝ, þ

Middle English Phonology and Pronunciation

- ▶ The vowels are like German vowels
- ▶ The consonants are not (High German Consonant Shift)
- ▶ Dutch and Low German come closest, but these lack /θ, ð/