

Methods and Resources;  
Orthography and Phonology

# “Old Norse–Icelandic Literature?”



Figure: The inclusive reading

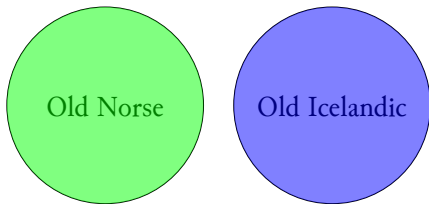


Figure: The exclusive reading

## Not so Different?

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<i>OE Prose Phoenix</i>	<i>OIce Prose Phoenix (trans.)</i>
Paradisum nis naðor ne on heofonum ne on eorþan.	Paradisus heitir staðr, sá er eigi á himnum ok eigi á jorðu;
Paradisus hangað betwýnan heofonan and eorðan wundorlice, swa hit se ealwældend gesceop.	helldr er hann í miðju lopti jafnnær himni ok jorðu, svá sem hon var sett af guði.

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# Orthography

# Orthography

etta var þ hvt aūat .et of a somu leid n  
ada e greint segia þm e kkrice hoxðu tekt  
at radi .x. at þm v þoll nauðþy at halda sig  
þ hksama kltz z at þe nka s stœluga býedi of  
þi teki .þ let krepia allra kkrun z eigna þm  
hvt ar meda þm deila floð. A þso var reis  
kka .x. hemna or glaube z þg .þ. z þada en alþw  
nes m; nltþ þlocku z seta þmnernda stovr sœnd

Figure: AM 122b, fol., 27r (detail; public domain / [handrit.is](http://handrit.is))

# Standards of Normalization

## 1 <64. kapítuli>

<...> oc ef þetta er þrofað a þingi. oc þui fe við  
barið at þu haf

2 húki fáekia þina fok ne annara þa mū ek  
fuara þui mali oc segia at ek helga-

3 ða þik a þingskala þingi at þu skyldir bæði  
mega fáekia þitt mál oc annarra,

4 oc mū fuarað úða málinv. þu flt at finna  
týrfing í bía nefi oc fl h felia þer

## 1 <64. kapítuli>

<...> ok ef þetta er prófað á þingi. Ok því sé  
við barið að þú hafir<...>

2 hvárki sækja þína sök né annarra þá mun  
ek svara því máli ok segja að ek helgaða þik  
á þingskálaþingi að þú skyldir bæði mega  
sækja þitt mál ok annarra,

4 ok mun svarað verða málinu. Þú skalt að  
finna Týrfing í Berjanesi ok skal hann selja

Figure: Diplomatic and normalized transcription (**Menota**: AM 162 B 0 fol.)

## (Normalized) Alphabet

(MS)		i		f		u	
1200	a	á	b	ð	e	é	f g h i í j k l m n o ó p r s t u ú v x y ý z þ ø ó ξ æ œ ρ ó
1300	a	á	b	ð	e	é	f g h i í j k l m n o ó p r s t u ú v x y ý z þ æ œ ρ/ǝ/ö
2018	a	á	b	ð	e	é	f g h i í j k l m n o ó p r s t u ú v x y ý z þ æ ö

NB: c, q found in manuscripts, but normalized in editions

- ▶ oc → ok
- ▶ conungr → konungr

## Stages of Old (Middle) Icelandic Orthography

According to Jóhannes L. L. Jóhannsson 1928:

### “Before 1250”

æ, œ distinct

ɛ, e distinct

ø, ɔ distinct

ó, á distinct

é /e:/

Reflexive suffix -sk

Dental suffix mostly ð

### “After 1250”

merged as æ

merged as e

merged as ɔ or ǫ, later ö

merged as á

ie /je/

became -z

in certain contexts became d, t

→ Most prose editions emulate a standard c. 1200, but without ó, ó



# Phonology

## Reconstructed Old Icelandic Pronunciation

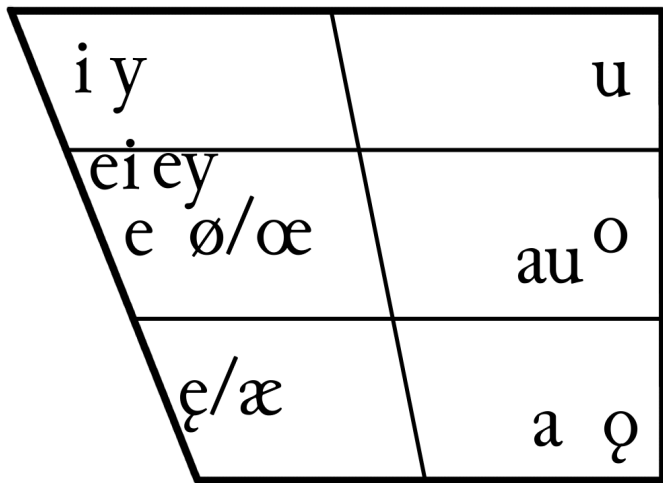


Figure: Vowel diagram using graphemes (identical long vowels omitted)

# Modern Icelandic Pronunciation

## Grapheme      Phonemic Transcription

<y>                      /i/

<á>                      /au/

<é>                      /jɛ/

<ó>                      /ou/

<æ>                      /ai/

<ö>                      /ø/

<œ>                      /ai/

## How Much Front Mutation?

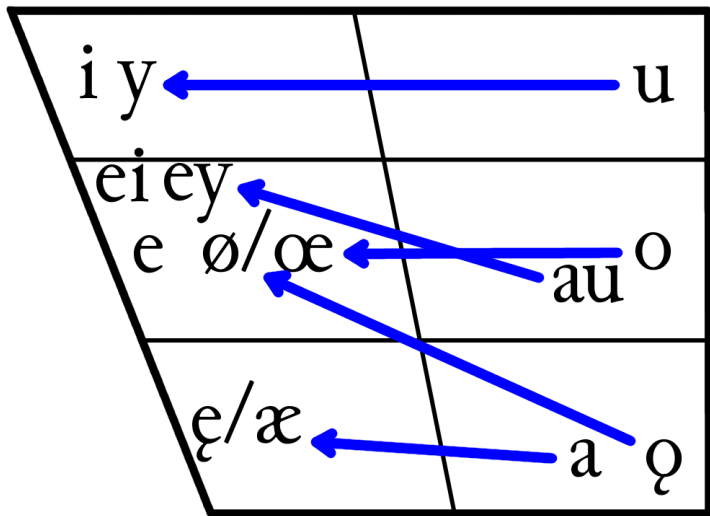


Figure: Front mutation

## How Much Front Mutation?

active voice							
<i>present indicative</i>				<i>present subjunctive</i>			
<i>1sg</i>	ek fer	<i>1pl</i>	vér fõrum	<i>1sg</i>	ek fara	<i>1pl</i>	vér farim
<i>2sg</i>	þú ferr	<i>2pl</i>	þér farið	<i>2sg</i>	þú farir	<i>2pl</i>	þér farið
<i>3sg</i>	hon ferr	<i>3pl</i>	þau fara	<i>3sg</i>	hon fari	<i>3pl</i>	þau fari
<i>preterite indicative</i>				<i>preterite subjunctive</i>			
<i>1sg</i>	ek fór	<i>1pl</i>	vér fõrum	<i>1sg</i>	ek fœra	<i>1pl</i>	vér fœrim
<i>2sg</i>	þú fórt	<i>2pl</i>	þér fóruð	<i>2sg</i>	þú fœrir	<i>2pl</i>	þér fœrið
<i>3sg</i>	hon fór	<i>3pl</i>	þau fóru	<i>3sg</i>	hon fœri	<i>3pl</i>	þau fœri
<i>preterite infinitive</i>				fõru			
<i>past participle</i>	<i>f.</i>	farin	<i>m.</i>	farinn	<i>n.</i>	farit	
<i>imperative</i>	<i>2sg</i>	far	<i>1pl</i>	fõrum	<i>2pl</i>	farið	

Figure: *fara* VI “go, travel”

## How Much Front Mutation?

active voice							
<i>present indicative</i>				<i>present subjunctive</i>			
<i>1sg</i>	ek beiði	<i>1pl</i>	vér beiðum	<i>1sg</i>	ek beiða	<i>1pl</i>	vér beiðim
<i>2sg</i>	þú beiðir	<i>2pl</i>	þér beiðið	<i>2sg</i>	þú beiðir	<i>2pl</i>	þér beiðið
<i>3sg</i>	hon beiðir	<i>3pl</i>	þau beiða	<i>3sg</i>	hon beiði	<i>3pl</i>	þau beiði
<i>preterite indicative</i>				<i>preterite subjunctive</i>			
<i>1sg</i>	ek beidda	<i>1pl</i>	vér beiddum	<i>1sg</i>	ek beidda	<i>1pl</i>	vér beiddim
<i>2sg</i>	þú beiddir	<i>2pl</i>	þér beidduð	<i>2sg</i>	þú beiddir	<i>2pl</i>	þér beiddið
<i>3sg</i>	hon beiddi	<i>3pl</i>	þau beiddu	<i>3sg</i>	hon beiddi	<i>3pl</i>	þau beiddi
<i>preterite infinitive</i>				beiddu			
<i>past participle</i>	<i>f.</i>	beidd	<i>m.</i>	beiddr	<i>n.</i>	beitt	
<i>imperative</i>	<i>2sg</i>	beið	<i>1pl</i>	beiðum	<i>2pl</i>	beiðið	

Figure: *beiða* 1 “request, demand”

## How Much Front Mutation?

	singular	plural
<b>Nom</b>	maðr	menn
<b>Acc</b>	mann	menn
<b>Gen</b>	manns	manna
<b>Dat</b>	manni	mönnum

Table: *maðr* 5 “person; man”

Why Vowel Alternations as in *hond*, *handar*?



# Thematic Vowels

<i>1sg</i>	audiō
<i>2sg</i>	audīs
<i>3sg</i>	audit
<i>1pl</i>	audīmus
<i>2pl</i>	audītis
<i>3pl</i>	audiunt

Table: Class 4 Latin conjugation

## Thematic Vowels

<i>1sg</i>	audiō
<i>2sg</i>	audīs
<i>3sg</i>	audit
<i>1pl</i>	audīmus
<i>2pl</i>	audītis
<i>3pl</i>	audiunt

Table: Class 4 Latin conjugation

<i>1sg</i>	heyri
<i>2sg</i>	heyrir
<i>3sg</i>	heyrir
<i>1pl</i>	heyrum
<i>2pl</i>	heyrið
<i>3pl</i>	heyra

Table: Class 1 weak ON conjugation

## Thematic Vowels

<i>Nom sg</i>	man <u>us</u>	<i>Nom pl</i>	man <u>ū</u> s
<i>Acc sg</i>	man <u>um</u>	<i>Acc pl</i>	man <u>ū</u> s
<i>Gen sg</i>	man <u>ū</u> s	<i>Gen pl</i>	man <u>u</u> um
<i>Dat sg</i>	man <u>u</u> ī	<i>Dat pl</i>	man <u>i</u> bus
<i>Abl sg</i>	man <u>ū</u>	<i>Abl pl</i>	man <u>i</u> bus

Table: Class 4 Latin declension

## Thematic Vowels

<i>Nom sg</i>	man <u>us</u>	<i>Nom pl</i>	man <u>ūs</u>
<i>Acc sg</i>	man <u>um</u>	<i>Acc pl</i>	man <u>ūs</u>
<i>Gen sg</i>	man <u>ūs</u>	<i>Gen pl</i>	man <u>uum</u>
<i>Dat sg</i>	man <u>uī</u>	<i>Dat pl</i>	manibus
<i>Abl sg</i>	man <u>ū</u>	<i>Abl pl</i>	manibus

Table: Class 4 Latin declension

<i>Nom sg</i>	h <u>o</u> nd
<i>Acc sg</i>	h <u>o</u> nd
<i>Gen sg</i>	handar
<i>Dat sg</i>	hendi
<i>Nom pl</i>	hendir
<i>Acc pl</i>	h <u>o</u> ndu
<i>Gen pl</i>	handa
<i>Dat pl</i>	h <u>o</u> ndum

Table: *u*-stem ON noun declension

## Thematic Vowels

<i>Nom sg</i>	man <u>us</u>	<i>Nom pl</i>	manū <u>s</u>
<i>Acc sg</i>	man <u>um</u>	<i>Acc pl</i>	manū <u>s</u>
<i>Gen sg</i>	manū <u>s</u>	<i>Gen pl</i>	man <u>uum</u>
<i>Dat sg</i>	manuī	<i>Dat pl</i>	manibus
<i>Abl sg</i>	manū	<i>Abl pl</i>	manibus

Table: Class 4 Latin declension

<i>Nom sg</i>	h <u>o</u> nd	<i>Nom</i>	*hand <u>u</u>
<i>Acc sg</i>	h <u>o</u> nd	<i>Acc</i>	*hand <u>u</u>
<i>Gen sg</i>	handar	<i>Gen</i>	handar
<i>Dat sg</i>	hendi	<i>Dat</i>	hende
<i>Nom pl</i>	hendir	<i>Nom pl</i>	hendir
<i>Acc pl</i>	h <u>o</u> ndu	<i>Acc pl</i>	*hand <u>u</u>
<i>Gen pl</i>	handa	<i>Gen pl</i>	handa
<i>Dat pl</i>	h <u>o</u> ndum	<i>Dat pl</i>	handum

Table: *u*-stem ON noun declension

Table: Proto-Norse declension

## *u*-Stems and Back Mutation

PN Nom. sg.	*hand u	→	hɔnd
PN Dat. pl.	*hand u m	→	hɔndum
PN Gen. sg.	*hand u ar	→	handar
PN Gen. pl.	*hand u a	→	handa

# Morphology

# Article

## Indefinite

None

- ▶ Hér er maðr

## Definite

Suffixed to the noun; can appear preposed with adjectives

- ▶ Maðrinn er hér
- ▶ Inn stóri maðr er hér / Maðr inn stóri er hér

→ Even when suffixed, article *and* noun are declined

- ▶ víkingarnir



## Reflexive Form

Formed by suffixing a derivative of the reflexive pronoun *sik* or *mik* to the verb. Three sense types:

1. Reflexive: *þvásk* “wash oneself” (cf. *sich waschen*)
2. Reciprocal: *berjask* “fight each other” (cf. *sich streiten*)
3. Middle voice (roughly passive)
  - A. Grammatical subject describes interested party, not logical agent: *finnask* “be found; exist” (cf. *sich befinden*)
  - B. Grammatical subject does not describe the interested party: *sýnask* “seem”

# Strong and Weak

Verbs	Tense formation: ablaut vs dental suffix
Nouns	Weak is just another noun class; happens to be relatively homogenous
Adjectives	Two declensions for each word; weak if preceded by <i>inn</i> , <i>sá</i> , <i>þessi</i>

# Resources

halda VII “hold, keep”

“hold prisoner; stop, hinder; withhold; steer; head”

transitive (dat/acc: varies by sense)/impersonal transitive

active voice					
present indicative			present subjunctive		
1sg	ek held	1pl	vér höldum	1sg	ek halda
2sg	þú heldr	2pl	þér haldið	2sg	þú haldir
3sg	hon heldr	3pl	þau halda	3sg	hon haldi
preterite indicative			preterite subjunctive		
1sg	ek helt	1pl	vér heldum	1sg	ek helda

Germanic Lexicon Project

Home Texts

## An Icelandic-English Dictionary

Title: An Icelandic-English Dictionary  
 Author: Richard Cleasby and Gudbrand Vigfusson  
 Year: 1874

Downloads

- Download the entire text of Cleasby/Vigfusson (11Mb, updated weekly)

Credits to the online edition:

Sean Crist initiated and is directing the project, and also did the OCR, major software scanning and preparation of these page images was made possible by a grant from the Foundation for their generous support for this project.

### Old Norse Winter Texts

sets:

- 01 pers. pron.
- 02 strong adj.

Do it!

.: rollover flashcards  
 Hover over to shuffle

Satt eitt hefi ek þér sagt
Þá vil ek gefa þér skipit, ef þú vill þiggja
Ólafur Tryggvason var .iii. vetr á Vindlandi, áðr Geira, konungur sótt, þá er hana leiddi til bana
Ek em konungs dóttir ok konungs systir
Þá kemr þar bóndi ok bað Ólaf gefa sér kyr þær, er hann þú ert maður minn
En þar er þú mintir mik, at ek væra þinn maður, þá veit ek at þú ert minn maður
Henni fylgði fóstrafaðir hennar
Ertu þá meiri konungur en þinn faðir

### Course Materials

wk	slides	wk	handouts
1	Methods and Resources	1	Paternoster
7	The Eddic Tradition	1	Syllabus
9	Law	2	Mutations
10	Faith and Power	5	Strong Verb Classes
11	The Sagas of Icelanders	5	Verbs
12	The Legendary Sagas		
13	Voyages		

Figure: Paradigms; Cleasby–Vigfusson; Flashcards; Course Website

## Resources

- ▶ Course website: [studium.langeslag.org/norse18](http://studium.langeslag.org/norse18)
- ▶ Book draft (“Grammar”): StudIP
- ▶ Dictionaries
  - ▶ Cleasby–Vigfusson
  - ▶ ONP
  - ▶ Zoëga
- ▶ Verb paradigms: <http://paradigms.langeslag.org>
- ▶ Flashcards: <http://flash.langeslag.org>

## Where Can I Learn More? I

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<http://vsnrweb-publications.org.uk>.

Craigie, William A. *Easy Readings in Old Icelandic: With Outlines of Grammar and Vocabularies*. Edinburgh: Hutchen, 1924.

Gordon, E. V. *An Introduction to Old Norse*. 2nd ed. Edited by A. R. Taylor. Oxford: Clarendon, 1956.

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Valfells, Sigrid, and James E. Cathey. *Old Icelandic: An Introductory Course*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981.

## Where Can I Look Things Up? I

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Zoëga, Geir T., ed. *A Concise Dictionary of Old Icelandic*. Medieval Academy Reprints for Teaching 41. Oxford: Clarendon, 1910. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2004.

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Haugen, Odd Einar, Haraldur Bernharðsson, Alex Speed Kjeldsen, and Marco Bianchi, eds. “Medieval Nordic Text Archive.”

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Jóhannes L. L. Jóhannsson. “Athugasemd um stafsetning fornaldarrita.”  
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P. S. Langeslag