



# Prepositions

M&R §§213–214

# Prepositions in Modern English

- express the relationship of one thing/process to another
  - govern a nominal phrase (nouns, articles, pronouns, and/or adjectives)
  - most commonly occur immediately before the governed phrase
  - spatial: in(to), on(to), by, to, under, between, before, from
  - temporal: before, during, while, after
  - abstract/other: for, of, with, regarding, concerning
- (many can be used in more than one sense, e.g. *before*, *from*, *to*)

# Prepositions with 'fixed' case

## accusative

geond 'throughout'

geondan 'beyond'

oð 'up to, until'

þurh 'through, during'

ymb 'by, concerning'

## genitive

andlang 'along'

## dative

æfter 'after, acc. to'

æf 'before'

be 'by, concerning'

ēac 'besides'

for 'before, in place of'

fram 'from, by'

mid 'with, by means of'

of 'from, of'

tōgēanes 'towards'

# Prepositions with 'fixed' case

- On þysum gēare wæs se mycla hungar **geond** Angelcynn.
- Iosue ðā flēah **andlang** ðæs wēstenes.
- Ðā cōm oðder dæg, lēoht **æfter** þēostrum.
- Ðā cōm Willelm eorl fram **geondan** sæ.
- Hīe bēoð alȳsede **ær** þām mycclum dōme.
- Se sealmwyrhta Dāuid sang **be** Criste.
- Lēoht wæs ærest **purh** drihtnes word dæg genemned.
- Crist **mid** drīum fōtwylmum ofer ȳpum ēode.

# Motion-dependent prepositions

If there is a sense of motion towards, to the extent that a boundary is crossed, these take the accusative; if not, they take the dative (cf. Latin, German, etc.).

# Motion-dependent prepositions

## **dative**

## **accusative**

|         |                                 |                                |
|---------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| æt      | ‘at, from’                      | ‘until, up to’                 |
| beforan | ‘before’                        | ‘to a point ahead’             |
| binnan  | ‘inside, within’                | ‘to within, inwards’           |
| bufan   | ‘above’                         | ‘upwards’                      |
| in      | ‘in, inside’                    | ‘into’                         |
| innan   | ‘in, inside, from within’       | ‘into’                         |
| ofer    | ‘above, upon’                   | ‘over, across’                 |
| on      | ‘in, on’                        | ‘into, onto’                   |
| ongēan  | ‘opposite, towards,<br>against’ | ‘towards, against<br>(motion)’ |
| under   | ‘under, below’                  | ‘to below’                     |

# Motion-dependent prepositions

- Bidde ēac gōdra manna bletsunge, and **æt** hālgum reliquium his hāele gesēce.
- ...ealle unrihtwisnessa þa ic gefremde fram geoguðe minre **æt** ðysne andwerdan dæg.
- Þū wære mid Iōsepe **in** Ægyptolande.
- Iōhannes ēode **in** þone cāfertūn.
- Sæs up stigon **ofer** stæðweallas.
- **On** eorðlicere cyrcan līð stān **ofer** stāne.
- Ic cōm hider **on** dōme **on** þisne middaneard.

# 'Ambivalent' prepositions

**accusative/dative**

betweox 'between, among'

būtan 'outside, except, without'

**acc./gen./dat.**

wið 'towards, against'

In practice, you will encounter almost every preposition governing more than one case.

# Postpositions

- Ðā cwæð se hælend him **tō**: ...
- Hwylce þæt ic on þāem medmestan geðōhte gesyngode, ealle ðā wæron ðær **on** āwritene. (cf. MnE *thereon*)