



# Prepositions

M&R §§213–214

ENG240Y Old English / Fri 15 Oct 2010

# 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'

ǣr '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 alýsede **ær** þām mycclum dōme.
- Se sealmwyrhta Dāuid sang **be** Criste.
- Lēoht wæs ærest **purh** drihtnes word dæg genemned.
- Crist **mid** drīum fōtwylmum ofer yþum 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, against’	‘towards, against (motion)’
under	‘under, below’	‘to below’

# Motion-dependent prepositions

- Bidde ēac gōdra manna bletsunge, and **æt** hālgum reliquium his hāle 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 lið 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*)