

First Steps in Old English and  
Old English Poems, Prose & Lessons (2CDs)  
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Exercises and Answers -  
Reading Exercises 1-17 from  
First Steps in Old English & CD2

1

- (a) ðes mann rideð
- (b) seo sunne scinð
- (c) ðis hors biteð
- (d) seo niht sweorceð
- (e) ðas menn cumað
- (f) ðæt scip abideð

- (a) This man is riding
- (b) The sun is shining
- (c) This horse bites
- (d) The night is growing dark
- (e) These men are coming
- (f) The ship awaits

2

- (a) ðes mann rideð ðæt hors
- (b) ðes mann rideð ða hors
- (c) menn biteð ðis hors
- (d) se cyning hierð tale ac tala ne lufað se cyning
- (e) oððe se æðeling oðþe se cyning oneardaþ ðis hus
- (f) ða biscopas abidað ðone cyning
- (g) ða ðegnas giefað aðas
- (h) ðas batas abideð se cyning
- (i) ðeos bryd lufað giefa ond lof
- (j) cearu and sacu adreccað ðæt folc.

- (a) This man is riding the horse
- (b) This man rides those horses
- (c) This horse bites men
- (d) The king hears a tale but the king does not love tales
- (e) Either the nobleman or the king lives in this house
- (f) The bishops await the king
- (g) The thanes are giving oaths
- (h) The king is awaiting these boats
- (i) This bride loves gifts and praise
- (j) Grief and strife afflict that people.

3

- (a) ðas menn cyðað ða lare
- (b) se æðeling ferð
- (c) ða biscopas demað
- (d) ðegnas giemað ðone cyning
- (e) we bærnað ðæt treow
- (f) ic hiere word ond gieme hie

- (g) ða hierdas fedað scep
- (h) se cyning dræfð ðone biscop
- (i) læce hæfð bota
- (j) ðu rymest bat
- (k) læcas hælað

- (a) These men are making that knowledge known
- (b) The prince is travelling
- (c) The bishops are judging
- (d) Thanes obey the king
- (e) We are burning the tree
- (f) I hear words and obey them
- (g) The herdsmen feed sheep
- (h) The king is driving the bishop out
- (i) A healer has remedies
- (j) You are making room for a boat
- (k) Doctors heal.

4

- (a) sacu adreceð cyningas on Englalande
  - (b) twegen rice cyningas and twelf ðegnas cumað
  - (c) seofon scep seceþ se hierde
  - (d) se biscop fedeð earme menn
  - (e) tien nearwe muntas ond hea bærnað
- (a) Strife afflicts kings in England
  - (b) Two powerful kings and twelve thanes are coming
  - (c) The herdsman is looking for seven sheep
  - (d) The bishop feeds poor men
  - (e) Ten narrow and high hills are burning.

5

- (a) ðæt mynster is mære geond Englaland
  - (b) liðmenn ferað be scipum
  - (c) grene treow ne bærnað na
  - (d) cwiðað hie and hælað mec mid godum botum
- (a) That minster is famed throughout England
  - (b) Sailors travel by ships
  - (c) Green trees do not burn at all
  - (d) They mourn and heal me with good remedies.

6

- (a) se liðmann befæsteð his scip þæm ðegne.
  - (b) nis se bæcere eald ne earm.
  - (c) laþlice menn ne beoþ næfre glade.
  - (d) min hus is betweonan þæm hyllum.
  - (e) nis þin hus heah, ac hit is brad ond rum.
  - (f) þis word is tweolic - ic ne cyðe hit
  - (g) buton nanre bote ðas menn beoþ sona deade
- (a) The sailor entrusts his ship to the thane
  - (b) The baker is neither old nor poor

- (c) Hateful men shall never be happy
- (d) My house is between those hills
- (e) Your house is not high, but it is wide and spacious
- (f) This word is doubtful - I shall not declare it
- (g) Without a remedy these men will soon be dead.

7

Dudda is eorþling on Miercena lande; his sunu hateþ Dunnere. Oððe se eorðling oþþe his sunu ereþ ða æceras on hiera earde. Pæs eorþlinges sunu is swiþe strang - he cnyseþ treow mid his æcse. Ac Dudda nis no strang - he is eald ond seoc ond ereð seldan. His wif is dead, ac Dunnere lufaþ hine ond ereþ oftost. Hiera eard is lytel ac hie habbað sceap for wulle and to mete. Hwy ne ereþ Dudda? Forðæm þe he is eald ond seoc. Hwy ereþ Dunnere? Forþæm þe he is geong ond strang.

Dudda is a farmer in the land of the Mercians; his son is called Dunnere. Either the farmer or his son will plough the fields on their estate. The farmer's son is very strong - he fells trees with his axe. But Dudda is not strong at all - he is old and unwell and seldom ploughs. His wife is dead, but Dunnere loves him and most often ploughs. Their farm is small but they have sheep for wool and as food. Why does Dudda not plough? Because he is old and sick. Why does Dunnere plough? Because he is young and strong.

8

- (a) ic ne truwie ðone þe beotaþ
- (b) se here hergaþ on þissum lande
- (c) hie weorþiaþ heora friend ond deriaþ heora feondum
- (d) se cyning ferþ mid anum menn to gesiþe
- (e) þa wicingas þe beotiað swiþe forhtiaþ on gefeohte
- (f) ða Mierce trymmaþ ða burg wiþ ða Dene

- (a) I do not trust him who boasts
- (b) The enemy army is harrying in this land
- (c) They do honour to their friends and do harm to their enemies
- (d) The king is travelling with one person as a companion
- (e) Those vikings who boast greatly will be afraid in battle
- (f) The Mercians are strengthening the fortress against the Danes

9

- (a) Þa ic clipie, þa cymð min hors sona to me. Pæt is god hors ond strang, ac hit ne hiersumaþ awa. Hwilum bið hit fah ond ne deþ ðæt ic bidde. Ponne gremaþ hit me swiþe.
- (b) Swa hwider swa ic ga, þider gæst þu mid me to gesiðe; þu me eart god freond ond wilsum, ond ic truwie þæt þu cwiðst.
- (c) Leorna hwæthwugu fram ðisse bec - þonne bist þu wis ond welgelæred.

- (a) When I call, my horse comes to me immediately. It is a good horse and a strong one, but it does not always obey. Sometimes it is hostile and does not do what I command. Then it angers me very much.
- (b) Wherever I go, you go there with me as a companion; you are a good and willing friend to me, and I trust what you say.
- (c) Learn something from this book - then you will be wise and well-taught.

10

- (a) Min handa sind cealda þa ic fere ðurh feld on wintertida be mines hlafordes hæse.
- (b) On minum earda is micel wudu, on þæm eardiað ylfe.

- (c) Ðæs huses flor is gewrigen mid riscum.
- (d) Þines suna bryd lufode hine wel and he werede hie wið ðæm wicingum.
- (e) Ða eorþlingas eredon on ðæm æcerum, þonne ferdon hie ham on ærlicum æfne.
- (f) Denisce wicingas hergodon geond Englalond on þæm dagum, ond menn forhtodon swiþe oppæt sum Englisc cyning neredede hie.

- (a) My hands are cold when I travel through open land in wintertime at my lord's behest.
- (b) In my homeland there is a great wood, in which elves live.
- (c) The floor of the house is covered with rushes.
- (d) Your son's bride loved him greatly and he protected her against the vikings.
- (e) The ploughmen were working in the fields, then travelled home in the early evening.
- (f) Danish vikings harried throughout England in those days, and people were very afraid until a certain English king saved them.

11

Ænne on ðissum lande wæs micel dry ond rice, ðæs fæder wæs eac dry ond hæfde micelne cræft. His galdras wæron fremfule ond menn cwehton fore his hus.

At one time in this land (there) was a great and powerful magician, whose father was also a magician and had great power. His charms were effective and men trembled in front of his house.

12

Ða wigan curon Berhtwulf to cyninge and he ricsode twelf gear on ðæm lande buton unfriðe. He wæs swiðe rice heretoga and his fiend flugon oft fram his here; hiera wif hruwon.

Ða liðmenn scufon heora scip on ðære sæwe, ac an ðeow deaf fram him and fleat on ðæm wætre, freosende, ond ða wigan scuton mid bogum. Flanas flugon ac him ne deredon.

The warriors chose Berhtwulf as king and he ruled for twelve years in that land without peacebreaking. He was a very powerful war-leader and his enemies often fled from his army; their women mourned.

The sailors shoved their ship into the sea, but one slave dived from it and floated in the water, freezing, and the warriors shot with bows. Arrows flew, but did not harm him.

13

Torhta, se swearta smið, ongann swincan, his hlafordes sweord scierpan; þæs ecg he grand, þone hilt he band, his naman cearf on þære gehrodenan sceaþe. Ða hwile þe he swanc on ðære deorcan smiððan, sang he ond dranc ealu; þa spearcas flugon ymb, hruron ond sturfon. Ða se dæg swearc, þa wearð he werig æt his anfilte; hæfde gemærsod þæt wæpn mid heardum slegum ond mid wisum cræfte. Ða his hlaford feaht mid þæm miclan sweorde, ða stang he ðone feond swifte. Ne swac hine þæt sweord on gefeohte.

Torhta, the dark smith, began to toil, to sharpen his lord's sword; its edge he ground, the hilt he bound, carved his name on the ornamented sheath. While he toiled in the dark smithy, he sang and drank ale; the sparks flew around, fell and died. When the day grew dark, he became tired at his anvil; he had glorified the weapon with hard blows and with wise skill. When his lord fought with the great sword, he stabbed the enemy quickly. The sword did not fail him in battle.

14

Ða wicingas fuhton wið Engle æt fleotes muðan; hæfdon hie burg getimbroda þær. Binnan sæton hæftlingas, wefende ond grindende, swincende mid micelre sorge. Hie forhtodon forþam þe hie

næron freo. Wicinga gewuna wæs þæt hie ne burgon hiera hæftlingas, ac sendon hie forþ on gefeohte, ond þær sturfon hie. Sum hæftling creap fram þære byrig ond deaf on þæt wæter, swamm oþ Engla fyrde hors ond ræhte þone ealdormann hwær þara wicinga scipu wæron. Þonne sende se Englisca heretoga sume wigan forð, ond hie crupon on riscum ond sprungon wiþ Dene, batweardas fliemende mid miclum bennum. Þa þa Dene ongeaton þæt hiera scipu ðurhdrifenu wæron, þa ongunnon hie forhtian swiðe.

The vikings fought against the English at the mouth of a stream; they had built a fortress there. Inside captives sat weaving and grinding, toiling with great sorrow. They were afraid because they were not free. The vikings' custom was that they did not protect their captives, but sent them out into the fighting, and there they died. A certain captive crept from the fortress and dived in the water, he swam to the horses of the English army and told the commander where the vikings' ships were. Then the English warleader sent some warriors out, and they crept among the rushes and sprang against the Danes, driving off the ship-keepers with great wounds. When the Danes perceived that their ships had been pierced, they began to be very afraid.

15

Trumhere wæs ceapmann. He hæfde an micel scip þætte he het hladen mid Engliscum godum ond þonne for he mid scipmannum geond þære sæwe on elðeodisc land, hwilum east, hwilum suð. Þær bohton menn his hlæst wið gyldene sceattas, þa þe on Englalande swiðe weorðe wæron. Ac Trumhere cneow wel þæt ða sceattas næron swa weorþe swa sumu elðeodisc god þe he sohte þær. Ærest sohte he elþeodiscra manna wyrtgemang; þonne gold, ond wæda, ond wæpnu, ond win, ond missenlice metas.

Trumhere was a merchant. He had one large ship which he had loaded (ordered to be loaded) with English goods and then journeyed with seamen over the sea into foreign lands, sometimes eastwards, sometimes southwards. People there bought his cargo in exchange for golden coins which were very valuable in England. But Trumhere knew well that the coins were not as valuable as certain foreign commodities which he was looking for there. First he was seeking the foreign peoples' spice mixture; then gold, and garments, and weapons, and wine, and sundry foods.

16

Ða Trumhere for fram þæm elþeodiscan lande ond laþ ofer sæwe ongean Englaland, þa wæs unweder ond stormsæ ond þa liþmenn nyston hwæðer hie oferliþan mihton oððe forliþan. Hiera sum wæs forhtful ond ongann galan uncuþ galdor, ond þæt scip glad ofer yþum swa swa on ise. Se liþmann, se wæs iu hæftling Deniscra manna, bifode swiþe and clipode, ac his gesiþas fægnodon þæs scipes snelnysse. Sona comon hie on still wæter, þa menn and se hlæst onsunde, ond þæt scip fleat oþ sume iege.

On þære iege wæs lytel tun, ac næs nan mann þær; þæs miclan huses hrof wæs forbærned ond sceap wunodon þærin. Twegen liþmenn Trumheres reowon on bate wið þære iege, ond clipodon buton andsware. Þonne wiston hie ealle þæt ða Dene hæfdon þa iege forhergod. Trumhere nyste hwær hie wæron - hie losodon on þæm storme - ac he wiste þæt hie scoldon west faran.

Ða hie þa ongunnon faran fram þære iege, þa seah sum liðmann rec astigan fram næsse; þær wæs lytel geteld.

When Trumhere travelled from the foreign land and sailed over (the) sea towards England, there was bad weather and a stormy sea and the sailors did not know whether they would be able to cross over or be shipwrecked. One of them was afraid and began to chant an unfamiliar charm and the ship slid over the waves as if on ice. The sailor, who had previously been a captive of the Danish people, trembled greatly and called out, but his companions were glad at the ship's

speed. They soon came into peaceful water, the men and the freight safe, and the ship floated up to an island.

On the island there was a small farm, but there was no person there; the big house's roof was burnt away, and sheep were living in there. Two seamen of Trumhere's rowed in a boat towards the island, and called out without reply. Then they all knew that the Danes had ravaged the island. Trumhere did not know where they were - they had become lost in the storm - but he knew that they must travel west.

When they then began to travel away from the island, a sailor saw smoke rising from a headland; there was a little tent there.

17

Torhta æt georne - hungrode he þrie dagas æfter þæm þe þa wicingas comon - ond gefafode þæs þe he lædde Trumhere oþ þa hyðe þe man ær sohte on westdæle Englalondes. Ðonne foron hie twegen dagas on renigum wedere west, oððæt hie comon on miclan muðan and þærin sawon hie þone port. Þær on þære ea fluton tu Denisc scipu - oþer mid getorenum segle, oþer buton mæste ond sumes forbærned - and nan mann on borde.

Trumheres scip com sona on port, ond he sohte ðone portgerefan, his god to bebycganne þe man hlod on elþeodiscum lande. Se portgerefa, Cuðred gehaten, nom cyninges dæl þæs hlæstes ond bohte self sum wæfels, gylden fæt, gehroden sweord ond tu fatu wines. Þa gefrægn Trumhere hwæt þa scipu wæron þe mon on ea seah ond him andswarode Cupred: "Þas sind Deniga scipu þe wæron on strande befangen; þa wicingas fuhton wið cyninges fierde ac we oferfliton hie, fordydon sume ond oþre læddon hider on cospum. Þa hæfdon Englisce hæftlingas on heora scipum þe nu freo sind. Se cyning wille hie asendan eft ham, ælc mid sumum dæle ðæs feos þe hie nomon us fram."

Torhta ate gladly - he had gone hungry for three days after the vikings had come - and agreed that he would lead Trumhere up to the harbour which they had previously been seeking in the western part of England. Then they travelled for two days in rainy weather westwards, until they came into a large estuary and saw the market town in it. There in the river two Danish ships floated - one with a torn sail, the other without a mast and somewhat burnt - and no-one on board. Trumhere's ship soon came into the market town, and he looked for the town reeve to sell his goods which had been loaded in a foreign land. The town reeve, named Cuthred, took the king's portion of the cargo and himself bought a cloak, a golden container, a decorated sword and two vessels of wine. Then Trumhere asked what the ships were which had been seen in the river, and Cuthred answered him: "These are Danes' ships which were seized on the shore; the vikings fought against the king's force but we overcame them, killed some and brought the others here in fetters. They had English captives on their ships, who are now free. The king intends to send them back home, each with a part of the property which they took from us."