The Aorist Tense

Talking About the Past

A lesson for the *Paideia* web-app
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The Aorist Tense

- So far we have only been able to talk about the present
- The Aorist tense is used to talk about the past
    - Like the English "simple past" tense

Aorist Aspect

- Aorist is also the "default" or "unmarked" aspect
  - We saw that present tense has significance beyond present time
    - Present "aspect" views the action as a continuing or repeated process
  - Aorist aspect has less significance
    - Views the action as a simple whole
  - Outside the indicative mood aorist is the default tense
    - No time significance
    - No particular emphasis on part of the action

Aorist Aspect

- Interpretive hazards
  - Doesn't tell us anything about the nature of the action itself
    - Doesn't mean the action is "one time" or "once for all"
  - Only about how the action is being portrayed at the moment

Parts of an Aorist Indicative Verb

Augment	Stem	Tense marker	Conn. vowel	Personal Ending	Complete form
ἐ	λυ	σ	α	μεν	ἐλυσαμεν

Primary Personal Endings

	Singular	Plural
1st person	–	$-\mu\varepsilon\nu$
2nd person	$-\varsigma$	$-\tau\varepsilon$
3rd person	$-\iota$	$-\nu\sigma\iota$

Secondary Personal Endings (Augmented)

	Singular	Plural
1st person	-ν	-μεν
2nd person	-ς	-τε
3rd person	-(ν)	-ν

1st Aorist Active Personal Endings

	Singular	Plural
1st person	–	$-\mu\varepsilon\nu$
2nd person	$-\varsigma$	$-\tau\varepsilon$
3rd person	$-(\nu)$	$-\nu$

1ˢᵗ Aorist Active Endings

	Singular	Plural
1ˢᵗ person	$-\sigma\alpha$	$-\sigma\alpha\mu\epsilon\nu$
2ⁿᵈ person	$-\sigma\alpha\varsigma$	$-\sigma\alpha\tau\epsilon$
3ʳᵈ person	$-\sigma\underline{\epsilon}(\nu)$	$-\sigma\alpha\nu$

1ˢᵗ Aorist Active Endings

	Singular	Plural
1ˢᵗ person	ἐλυσα	ἐλυσαμεν
2ⁿᵈ person	ἐλυσας	ἐλυσατε
3ʳᵈ person	ἐλυσε(ν)	ἐλυσαν

Augments with Initial Vowels

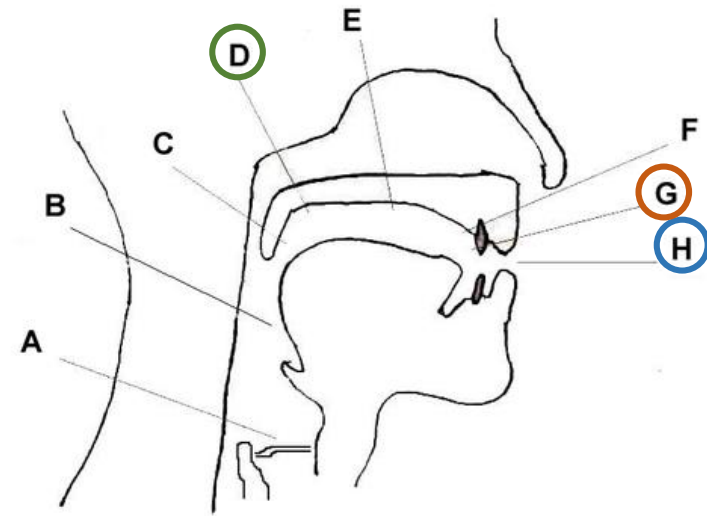| Present	1st Aor. Components	1st Aor. Form	Translation	Comments
ἀγιαζω	ἐ + ἀγιαζ + σ + α	ἠγιασα	I sanctified	An initial vowel will combine with the augment and lengthen.

Vowel Lengthening

Short	Long
ε	η
α	η
ο	ω

Square of Stops

	Voiceless	Voiced	Voiceless Fricative
Labial	π	β	φ
Velar	ϰ	γ	χ
Dental	τ	δ	θ

Square of Stops and Combining Rules

	Voiceless	Voiced	Voiceless Fricative
Labial	π	β	ϕ
Velar	$\varkappa$	γ	χ
Dental	τ	δ	θ

combined with σ

$$\text{labial} + \sigma = \psi$$

$$\text{velar} + \sigma = \xi$$

$$\text{dental} + \sigma = \sigma$$

Combining Stops

Present	Aor. Components	Aor. Form	Translation	Stop Combination
καθιζω	ἐ + καθιζ + σ + α	ἐκαθισα	I sat	dental stop + σ = σ
διωκω	ἐ + διωκ + σ + α	ἐδιωξα	I pursued	velar stop + σ = ξ
βλεπω	ἐ + βλεπ + σ + α	ἐβλεψα	I saw	labial stop + σ = ψ

1st Aorist Liquid Verbs

Present	Aorist Components	Aorist Form	Translation	
μενω	ἐ + μειν + σ + α	ἐμεινα	I stayed	A final liquid consonant (ρ, ν, λ) in the stem often absorbs the tense marker.
στελλω	ἐ + στειλ + σ + α	ἐστειλα	I erected	
ἐγειρω	ἐ + ἐγειρ + σ + α	ἠγειρα	I lifted	

Lengthened Stem Vowels

Present	1ˢᵗ Aor. Components	1ˢᵗ Aor. Form	Translation	Vowel lengthening
ζαω	ἐ + ζα + σ + α	ἐζησα	I lived	
ζητεω	ἐ + ζητε + σ + α	ἐζητησα	I sought	
δουλοω	ἐ + δουλο + σ + α	ἐδουλωσα	I enslaved	A short vowel at the end of the verb stem is usually lengthened
ἱστημι (1 aor.)	ἐ + στα + σ + α	ἐστησα	I stood	

1ˢᵗ Aorists that Use a K

Present	Aorist Components	Aorist Form	Translation	Comments
φερω	ἐ + ενεγ + κ + α	ἤνεγκα	I carried	A few 1ˢᵗ aorist verbs also have a different aorist stem.

They sometimes use κ instead of σ as the tense marker. |
| τιθημι | ἐ + θε + κ + α | ἐθηκα | I put | |
| διδωμι | ἐ + δο + κ + α | ἐδωκα | I gave | |

The 2ⁿᵈ Aorist

- The first way to make an aorist verb
  - Add σ tense marker
  - Change to α connecting vowel
- The other way to make an aorist verb is to change the stem
  - No σ tense marker
  - No α connecting vowel
- E.g., the aorist forms of ἔρχομαι use the stem ελθ-

2ⁿᵈ Aorist Active Endings

	Singular	Plural
1ˢᵗ person	-ν	-μεν
2ⁿᵈ person	-ς	-τε
3ʳᵈ person	-(ν)	-ν

2ⁿᵈ Aorist Active Endings

	Singular	Plural
1ˢᵗ person	-ον	-ομεν
2ⁿᵈ person	-ες	-ετε
3ʳᵈ person	-ε(ν)	-ον

2ⁿᵈ Aorist Active Examples

	Singular	Plural
1ˢᵗ person	ἤλθον	ἤλθομεν
2ⁿᵈ person	ἤλθες	ἤλθετε
3ʳᵈ person	ἤλθε(ν)	ἤλθον

Common 2ⁿᵈ Aorists and Their Stems

Present	2ⁿᵈ Aor. stem	Aor. Components	2ⁿᵈ Aor. form	Translation
ἐρχομαι	ελθ-	ἐ + ελθ + - + ο + ν	ἠλθον	I came
λαμβανω	λαβ-	ἐ + λαβ + - + ο + ν	ἐλαβον	I took
πιπτω	πεσ-	ἐ + πεσ + - + ο + ν	ἐπεσον or ἐπεσ<u>α</u>	I fell
φευγω	φυγ-	ἐ + φυγ + - + ο + ν	ἐφυγον	I ran away
ἐχω	εσχ-	ἐ + εσχ + - + ο + ν	ἐσχον	I had

Common 2ⁿᵈ Aorists and Their Stems

Present	2ⁿᵈ Aor. stem	Aor. Components	2ⁿᵈ Aor. form	Translation
ἄγω	ἀγαγ-	ἐ + αγαγ + - + ο + ν	ἤγαγον	I led

Different Verb Supplies Aorist Stem

Present	Aorist Components		Aorist Form	Translation	Comments
ὁράω	ἐ + ιδ + - + ο + ον		εἶδον	I saw	A completely different verb for the aorist stem.

Thematic 2nd Aorists

- Some verbs have a long stem vowel that dominates
  - Irregular 3rd person plural ending (as if 1st aorist)

	Singular	Plural
1st person	ἐγνων	ἐγνωμεν
2nd person	ἐγνως	ἐγνωτε
3rd person	ἐγνω	ἐγνωσαν

γινωσκω
(γνω-)

Thematic 2ⁿᵈ Aorists

- Some verbs have a long stem vowel that dominates
  - Irregular 3ʳᵈ person plural ending (as if 1ˢᵗ aorist)

$\beta\alpha\iota\nu\omega$
$(\beta\eta\text{-})$

	Singular	Plural
1ˢᵗ person	ἐβην	ἐβημεν
2ⁿᵈ person	ἐβης	ἐβητε
3ʳᵈ person	ἐβη	ἐβησαν

Thematic 2ⁿᵈ Aorists

- Some verbs have a long stem vowel that dominates
  - Irregular 3ʳᵈ person plural ending (as if 1ˢᵗ aorist)

$ἵστημι$

when 2ⁿᵈ aorist

$(στη\text{-})$

	Singular	Plural
1ˢᵗ person	ἐστην	ἐστημεν
2ⁿᵈ person	ἐστης	ἐστητε
3ʳᵈ person	ἐστη	ἐστησαν

So Which Do I Use?

- Students often wonder at first whether to use 1st or 2nd aorist endings.
- It depends on the verb
  - Each verb will use either the 1st or 2nd aorist
  - You just have to remember which a particular verb uses
  - The vocabulary chart in Paideia gives the aorist form for verbs
- A strategy
  - Learn the 2nd aorist forms
  - Assume that all the other verbs are going to use the 1st aorist

Augment Issues in 1ˢᵗ and 2ⁿᵈ Aorists

Present	Aorist Components	Aorist Form	Translation	Comments
προσφερω	προσ + ἐ + ενεγκ + - + α	προσηνεγκα	I offered	
προσκυνεω	προσ + ἐ + κυνε + σ + α	προσεκυνησα	I worshipped	
περιπατεω	περι + ἐ + πατε + σ + α	περιεπατησα	I walked	The augment comes after a prefixed preposition.
ἀποθνῃσκω	ἀπο + ἐ + θαν + - + ο + ν	ἀπεθανον	I died	
ἀποδιδωμι	ἀπο + ἐ + δο + κ + α	ἀπεδωκα	I gave	
παριστημι	παρα + ἐ + στα + - + ο + ν	παρεστην	I presented	

Augment Issues in 1ˢᵗ and 2ⁿᵈ Aorists

Present	Aorist Components	Aorist Form	Translation	Comments
εὐσεβεω	ἐ + ευσεβε + σ + α	εὐσεβησα	I feared God	The augment sometimes can't lengthen an initial diphthong and disappears.
αἰτεω	ἐ + αιτε + σ + α	αἰτησα	I asked	
εὑρισκω	ἐ + εὑρ + - + ο + ν	εὑρον	I found	

Odd Exceptions

- θελω, "I want"
  - Uses η instead of ε for its augment
    - Because the original stem was ἐθελ-, starting with an ε
  - Inserts an η in front of the tense marker
    - As if the original stem were ἐθελε-
    - Vowel lengthens before the tense marker

Present	Aorist Components	Aorist Form	Translation
θελω	ἐ + (ε)θελ(ε) + σ + α	ἠθελησα	I wanted

Keep Learning

- You can learn more about the aorist tense (and aorist aspect) here:
  - Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek* (3rd edition)
    - verbal roots and verbal stems, 20.1-20.5 (pp. 168-169)
    - first aorist active and middle, 23.1-23.20 (pp. 204-209)
    - second aorist active and middle, 22.1-22.17 (pp. 195-199), 22.19 (pp. 201-202)
    - irregular augments, 21.24 (192)
    - the square of stops, 10.17-10.21 (pp. 84-85)