



Brynjólfur, or *Brynjúlfur*, is an Icelandic male first name (Old Icelandic *Brynjólfr*, *Brynjúlfr*) made of *brynj-*, from *brynja* ‘coat of mail, armor’ and *úlfur* (*-ólfr*) ‘wolf’. The meaning of this compound name is therefore ‘armored wolf’, denoting a warrior, and it is typical for Old Icelandic. Among other Icelandic names containing ‘wolf’ as the second part is *Thórólfr* (*Þórólfr*, Old Icelandic *Þórólfr*) ‘wolf of Thor (the thundergod)’. A similar name in Old English is *Beowulf* (meaning either ‘bee-wolf, i.e. bear’ or ‘war wolf’), the legendary hero of the famous epic poem named after him. The Icelandic word *brynja* has cognates (related forms) in other Germanic languages, including Old English *byrne* ‘byrnie, coat of mail’. It is perhaps of Celtic origin (cf. Old Irish *bruinne* ‘breast’) and thus an ancient culture word that the early Germanic tribes would have adopted, due to contact with Celts on the European continent, several centuries before the settlement of Iceland in the 9th century AD. Icelandic *úlfur* (and English *wolf*) is an ancient word which has cognates in many other Indo-European languages, including Latin *lupus* and Ancient Greek *lukos* ‘wolf’. Icelanders typically do not have family names, but rather patronymics (‘son (or daughter) of so and so’), and thus, the form *Brynjólfsson* means ‘son of Brynjólfur’; a woman would be *Brynjólfsdóttir* ‘daughter of Brynjólfur’. Among famous Icelanders named *Brynjólfur* is a viking featured in one of the Old Icelandic sagas, who, perhaps unsurprisingly, was famous for being exceptionally fierce in combat, biting the shoulder of his enemy on one occasion, and a 17th century bishop, who was one of the first collectors of precious Old Icelandic manuscripts. Today, the latter is featured on the Icelandic 1000 krónur bill.



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