

# Beowulf Unit by Geoffrey Adams

LLED 7408

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## Rationale for Unit on Beowulf

In this unit, I will take the students through carefully selected portions of the Anglo-Saxon poem Beowulf and apply the reading and appreciation of this poem to a variety of reading and writing skills. I will be using excerpts from a translation by Don Ringe available online, a translation accessible for its clear modern language and its presentation in single columns. I assess the students' work through three major assessments, a journal, a narrative text, and an assessment to be arranged between me and each student. In this rationale, I will deal with the background of the value of Beowulf to the educational process, and with each of the assessments as suitable criteria for grading and advancement. I will defend the unit on the basis of three justifications found in Smagorinsky (2008): 1) literary significance; 2) cultural significance; and 3) personal development.

The work itself has both cultural and literary significance. One frequently-expressed aim of public education is to help students prepare for participation in national life by becoming acquainted with cultural institutions and by becoming critical readers of media and political material. As a source of Anglo-American tradition, Old English literature contributes to an understanding the roots of our legal and governmental systems. In addition, though, it has value as an expression of a distant culture. In the present situation in many schools, in which children of numerous cultural backgrounds share classrooms, understanding and working with people of diverse understandings becomes critical. As I present Beowulf, it becomes a medium for understanding ways of life which differ from the modern American style, and gives an appreciation for the world at large and cultural variation -- 'how life is viewed and experienced differently' (Smagorinsky 2008:142).

Nevertheless, English remains the predominant linguistic medium, and an understanding and focused use of English remain imperative for success in American society. My personal specializations emphasize language development and can serve these needs. I have therefore designed lessons directed, for example, for recognizing word-roots, word-origins, and parts of speech, to help help students at all levels of language skill -- spelling, vocabulary development, grammar, and connotation. As a key literary work in the Anglo-Saxon heritage, it can serve as

the basis for studying the language and poetry of all later ages, and its poetic style can be made accessible for composition today. All of these goals correspond to goals in the Georgia Standards, including twelfth grade.

As a literary monument, the status of Beowulf is undisputed. This epic poem, or parts of it, are often included in textbooks, and it is the *ne plus ultra* of the Old English phase of British literature and thus serves as a foundation for the later poetry and literature of the language. In addition, Beowulf has applications beyond language arts. As a poem from a distant time and place, it has value for strengthening students' performance in other academic topics, and in particular history.

For this class, I have chosen the text translated by Dick Ringler, available for general use online. His text is in accessible current English but preserves the qualities of alliteration and other poetic features. Since his translation is designed for recitation, it expands the possibilities for oral engagement. I have divided the text into thematic and structural “chunks,” each of which can serve for a deep reading lesson, and given each chunk a title of my own. The chapter divisions are the traditional ones based on the manuscript. My approach to the text is based on Monahan's idea of direct and intensive contact with a difficult text, involving reading and re-reading and student ownership of the language.

There are possible concerns about this choice for a high school setting. One complaint might be that the text is so distant in time and place that it may be perceived as having no relevance to students' lives. This concern will be dealt with by inviting students to connect the text with what they know through their own cultural experiences. Another problem could be posed by the difficulty in grasping the plot elements arising from the structure of the text. The difficulty of the text can be overcome in part by deep reading as advocated by Monahan (2008). Deep reading has the additional value of correlating with improved student performance on exams. It is to facilitate deep reading I have chosen to assign the full text of the first large section of Beowulf in a modern but poetic form, rather than the entire text in a prose translation, and to focus in class on selected segments. Each segment of the poem can be studied in depth and connected to narrative and other genres.

There is a good pedagogical foundation for these choices of assignment. Both the journal and the narrative are founded on the idea that personal expression is an effective gateway into writing. Journaling is founded on the idea that it is valuable for writers to reflect on what they know, to make room for new ideas to emerge, and to enable instructors to better understand and thus better serve the students (Smagorinsky, 2008:85). The narrative is a good foundation on which to build other modes of writing. Hillocks (2003) has asserted the value of narrative, and Blasingame and Bushman (2005:73) have insisted on its transferability to other modes of composition. In addition, narrative has value as the written form of story-telling, an important, one might say, universal tendency; story-telling is a strong part of the traditional ways of a number of diverse communities. The journal and the narrative make use of the personal as an entry way to writing skills.

The multimedia assignment is in a sense more open than the journal or narrative, in that the medium preferred by the student will be discussed with the instructor on an individual basis. While the other two assignments include reading and writing, this one invokes multiple intelligences and serves to include as many students with as many ways of learning as possible. This threefold approach to assessments not only makes use of the qualities the students bring to classes, but also addresses concerns about inclusion. While the choice of medium may vary with the imagination of the student and may be dramatic, graphic, or written in nature, I will apply strict standards as appropriate to the genre. In all of these ways, I hope to place this ancient text, sometimes viewed as dry or inaccessible, in service to the modern student.

Blasingame, J. and H. Bushman. 2005. Teaching Writing in Middle and Secondary Schools. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Hillocks, George, Jr. 2007. Narrative Writing. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Monahan, P. 2008. "You Want *Me* to Teach Reading? Confessions of a Secondary Literature Teacher."

English Journal July 2008, 98-104.

Ringler, D. 2007 Beowulf: A New Translation For Oral Delivery. Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.

Smagorinsky, P. 2008. Teaching English by Design. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Using the Four-Square Strategy to Define and Identify Poetic Terms. (2007) *ReadWriteThink*.

Retrieved 11 November 2009 from [http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson\\_view.asp?id=255](http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=255).

## **GOALS / ASSESSMENTS for UNIT**

The goals are based on readings of the text Beowulf. Each of the assessments requires the student to show awareness of form, content, and connection (with the text or between the text and larger ideas). All the rubrics are designed to take into account form, clarity, and connection.

*The italics are the 'translation' into terms used for this course.*

## **INSTRUCTIONS TO STUDENTS**

To pass this unit, you will need to present three projects (*assessments*) for grading, a **journal or dialogue journal**, a **narrative**, and a **multimedia project**.

### Journal or Dialogue Journal

The idea of a journal is to write regularly and freely on your responses to a situation or set of events. For this part of the class, keep a journal of your thoughts and feelings about the material we are studying, class discussions and activities, and any other experience you have in

connection with this text. You do not have to summarize the text, though this is allowed; the most important point is that you **refer** to the text, that is, show knowledge of its content, and **respond** to the text, that is deliver thoughts and feelings; in short, show that you are thinking about the readings and the class.

The journal does not have to adhere to the standards of written academic English (though I appreciate if it is – it makes it easier for me to read.) Write in your own style or language -- as long as I can read it! English (any variety), Spanish, German, Italian, French, Welsh, Latin, Old English, King James English, Sanskrit, and very simple Japanese are all acceptable languages – mix it up if you want! I'll tell you if it's not working.

The journal should have a minimum of 500 words (roughly two typed pages) per week, to be handed in weekly. For each entry, put the date at the beginning of the writing.

Keep in mind that I am required to share any thoughts or suggestions of violence, suicide, substance abuse, family abuse, or other harmful behavior with the school counselors.

As an alternate to the journal, you may keep a dialogue journal with another student. The two of you may write to each other about issues raised in the class, questions about the text, or other writing that shows you are responding to the text and thinking about the readings and class. A copy of written responses or a print-out of emails to each other will satisfy. The journal follows the same criteria and will be graded by the same standards as the solo journal, but will have a minimum of 800 words per week. If you are planning to use a dialogue journal, both students must let the teacher know during the first week of class.

### Narrative

Write your own story of 1000 to 1500 words from the perspective of one of the characters in the story. I will provide a list of characters, or you may make your own character who could live in the world of Beowulf (at least for a while!). Tell the story, or part of the story, through the eyes and ears and other senses of the character. Keep in mind that the character is looking at and thinking about events over which he or she has some control, but not total control. Some things

just happen as part of the plot; the person inside the story might not be able to change the situation much, but may have a very different point of view from someone else.

### Multimedia Work

By the end of this unit, you have read significant portions of a complex work of literature in Beowulf. To show what you have learned through your engagement with this epic poem, create an interpretive text in any form of your choice. It can be a traditional essay, or a drama, video, song, sculpture, painting, poem, travel guide, rap, powerpoint, playing cards, restaurant grade (with receipts), accounting ledger, a series of police reports, you name it. Just let me know what you are thinking of doing by the end of the second week of the unit.

The work should refer to the story and reflect your understanding of it, even if you also refer to more familiar world (such as your modern life). The work may retell the story or part of it, but must also show that you have been thinking beyond the story to ideas and issues it raises.

You may produce your text individually or in groups up to five.

To assess this kind of assignment requires that I (*the instructor*) consider the form appropriate to the genre of your work. For this, I may need some help from you (*the student*). If for example, you choose rap as your medium, you may have to include a sheet explaining some of the language special to this genre. Especially if the medium is purely visual (e. g. drawing or painting), it will require a written text to explain how you intended to connect the images with the story. (This will make sure that I do not miss any feature!) Thus a number of these assignments will include an exhibit (such as painting) and some additional explanation as needed. Be sure to discuss with me how to go about this.

### **RUBRIC FOR ASSESSMENT of JOURNAL**

A grade of A will be awarded to all that  
are turned in on time

have the right number of words per week

are clear enough for the teacher to read

show that the writer or writers have read and considered the text of Beowulf.

raise questions about the text

A grade of B will be awarded to all that

are turned in on time

have the right number of words per week

are clear enough for the teacher to read

show that the writer or writers have read and considered the text of Beowulf, though straying occasionally from the material.

A grade of C will be awarded to all that

are turned in on time

frequently miss the weekly total of words (even if the final number is correct)

are clear enough for the teacher to read

show that the writer or writers have read and considered the text of Beowulf, though straying frequently from the material

A grade of D will be awarded to all that

are turned in on time



never meet the weekly total of words, or the final total is too low

show consistent lack of legibility or clarity

have no clear relation to the material

A grade of F will be awarded to all that

are late OR on time and no connection to the material and no clear explanation why not.

I should not have to say that if it is not your own work, it will fail.

### **RUBRIC FOR ASSESSMENT of NARRATIVE**

A grade of A will be awarded to all that

are turned in on time

are the correct length

clearly place the narrator in the world and story of Beowulf

have clear details that help make a picture of the events

show thought about the character's perspective

A grade of B will be awarded to all that

are turned in on time

are the correct length

clearly place the narrator in the world and story of Beowulf

have details that mostly help make a picture of the events, with some weakness in detail

show some thought about the character's perspective

A grade of C will be awarded to all that

are turned in on time

are the correct length

clearly place the narrator in the world and story of Beowulf

work as an outline, but do not reflect much thought about the character's perspective, and lack details

A grade of D will be awarded to all that

are turned in on time

are the correct length

do not clearly place the character in the world or story of Beowulf

do not reflect thought about the character's perspective, and lack details

A grade of F will be awarded to all that

are late OR on time and no connection to the material and no clear explanation why not.

I should not have to say that if it is not your own work, it will fail.

## **RUBRIC FOR ASSESSMENT of MULTIMEDIA WORK**

As stated above, to assess this kind of assignment requires that I (*the instructor*) consider the form appropriate to the genre of your work. For this, I may need some help from you (*the student*). If for example, you choose rap as your medium, you may have to include a sheet explaining some of the language special to this genre. Especially if the medium is purely visual (e. g. drawing or painting), it will require a written text to explain how you intended to connect the images with the story. (This will make sure that I do not miss any feature!) Thus a number of these assignments will include an exhibit (such as painting) and some additional explanation as needed. Be sure to discuss with me how to go about this.

A grade of A will be awarded to all that

are turned in on time

have the required parts

show consistent connection with the text of Beowulf and the issues it raises.

A grade of B will be awarded to all that

are turned in on time

have the required parts

show mostly consistent connection with the text of Beowulf and the issues it raises, OR

the explanation of the piece is OK, but the exhibit shows a minimum of thought or care.

A grade of C will be awarded to all that  
are turned in on time  
have the required parts  
show no consistent connection with the text of Beowulf and the issues it raises, OR  
the explanation of the piece is OK, but the exhibit shows a minimum of thought or care.

A grade of D will be awarded to all that  
are turned in on time  
have some of the parts  
show no consistent connection with the text of Beowulf and the issues it raises.

A grade of F will be awarded to all that  
are late OR on time and have no parts and no clarity

I should not have to say that if it is not your own work, it will fail.

(Descriptions and Rubrics adapted from Smagorinsky, 2008:85-87, 91-91, 103-104)

## **DAILY LESSON PLANS (including HANDOUTS)**

### **12 Grade British Literature Unit on Beowulf**

The classes are 55-minute sessions.

I am treating this as class of 28 students, which can be formed conveniently into seven groups of four. The term “Group Work” refers to these (admittedly idealized) groups working together on an in-class project. The numbers will have to be adapted to actual class sizes.

### **Routine Classroom Procedures**

### In-class reading procedure

Readings are to be read the night before the class. Of this assigned homework, one section will become the focus for reading and discussion in the class.

The teacher reads the text out loud. (Or a student may volunteer.) Repeats are as required for general understanding or at the request of the students.

Reading is followed by five minutes of silent re-reading, five minutes for questions and answers. Individual or group work on an in-class project may be connected with the reading.

### Journal Process

After the journal project has been introduced, the students will have part of the class (ten minutes) on journal days available to work on journals. If the journal is complete, it can be turned in at the end of that class session or the beginning of the next. The teacher returns the journal entry to the student after recording it and making comments.

Each journal has a prompt, which is an optional question to guide the student through the text. Alternatively, the student may write a reaction to the reading or related discussion in accord with the

as long as the student meets the requirements of the rubric.

## **Week One**

### **Monday 20 September 2010**

*3 minutes:* Attendance, Housekeeping (Lift chairs, do not drag.)

15 minutes: Introduction to Course

The teacher explains that we will be reading Beowulf. Reading this poem is like entering another world. In it we will notice that people are in some ways like us, and in other ways are very different. We must understand that people have feelings and needs as we do in different times and places, but also behave differently in response to different conditions of life and a different view of the world which they believe in and value.

Hand out syllabi and briefly introduce the requirements for the course and point out that the ways to do the Journal, Narrative and Multi-media project will be explained in sequence.

Distribute the adapted Ringler Beowulf text to all students. This is the take-home text for the unit. Explain that this slim volume must be brought to every class session.

*5 minutes:* Explain survey serving as the opening introductory activity for the class. The object is to bring to the fore some of the ideas implicit in the text. This survey also serves the purpose of being a kind of pre-reading to prepare the students to recognize the same ideas when they are encountered later in the text.

The survey will be in the form of statements with scaled responses running Agree Strongly, Agree, Agree Somewhat, No Opinion, Disagree Somewhat, Disagree, and Disagree Strongly. I would allow students to write answers individually, then go to small group discussion and finally to whole-class discussion to give room to all of the students, while allowing those more inclined to speak up to have their say as well.

### Survey Statements

If I swear a sacred oath to stay with someone, I should stay with that person even at the risk of my life.

Who your parents are contributes to how important you are.

It is better to be brave and die sooner than to be a coward and continue living.

Giving gifts to people increases your importance.

It is acceptable for my family to choose my marriage partner.

Giving gifts increases people's respect for you.

Sometimes great courage can change our fate.

We die at the time we are meant to die.

If I promise to do something great, I will look worse if I do not do it.

An insult should never be ignored.

I should speak more carefully to more important people.

The more friends I have, the more important I am.

It is an honour for a child to be raised by people of higher status than the parents.

It is a greater honour to me to defeat someone stronger than I.

*10 minutes:* Students take Survey individually.

*22 minutes:* Review of survey and discussion.

## **Tuesday 21 September 2010**

*3 minutes:* Attendance, Housekeeping (Lift chairs, do not drag.)

*37 minutes:* Introduction to Old English

I hand out a section of the poem in the original language (lines 1-22 of the Prologue). Many of the words are recognizable to a modern reader. The easiest to recognize tend to be pretty simple words. The students are informed that it is indeed English, and that some of the words are familiar. After a few seconds, students begin to shout out ones they recognize, moving from easier to ever-more difficult and creative interpretations. These can be splashed across the board.

The question prompts by the teacher follow: What sort of words are these? How can you characterize them? What sort of words are missing? From here, we can move on to making guesses as to what it might be about, and write some options down.

*15 minutes:* Writing followed by spoken suggestions: What might this poem be about?

Once the students have dived into the text in this way for a bit, they can begin to make guesses on what it might be about, and write some options down. By the end of this, the students have scribbled up the pages and 'own' the section of the poem in its original language. This exercise introduces historic differences, and arouses curiosity about topic and leads a great deal of inference along the way.

## **Wednesday 22 September 2010 Introduction to Poetic Terms**

*3 minutes:* Attendance, Housekeeping (Lift chairs, do not drag.)

*10 minutes:* Brief lecture introduction to the Anglo-Saxons and their poetry.

*42 minutes:* "Foursquare Strategy" or graphic organiser. The teacher has the students draw out the graphic organiser (circle or whatever in the center, four squares or whatever around it). I have added further instructions to add complexity, but not overwhelming complexity, to the process. My instructions include a space at the bottom of the page labelled 'Honesty and Completeness,' which is explained later. The teacher then introduces and pronounces the target terms (alliteration, imagery, metaphor, kenning). The teacher explains that we will explore some definitions of these today, but that we will work more with them later as well. The students label each square with each of the four terms, then search for or think of definitions for the terms and write them in the appropriate squares, then find or think of examples of each.



The teacher instructs the students to write any source of knowledge (website, brain, or other student's name) in the 'Honesty and Completeness' box. The teacher may need to model this. The students are informed that it is alright to ask someone else for a definition or example, but that the helpful person's name should be written in the box. The object of this procedure is to teach citation, the essential idea of which is to acknowledge where ideas and information come from; you may ask someone else for examples, but say who gave them to you. The class shares definitions and examples.

### **Thursday 23 September 2010 Introduction to Journal**

*3 minutes:* Attendance, Housekeeping (Lift chairs, do not drag.)

*5 minutes:*

The teacher goes over description and rubric for Journal project in more detail. Explain that generally journals will be assigned one session, then collected the next, and returned the following. So for example, a journal assigned Monday is due Tuesday and will be returned to the student Wednesday.

The class will require 20 journal entries of 200 words or more each, that is 3 per week (or 18 journal entries for six weeks). These journals are personal responses to the reading – thoughts, impressions, interpretations, reactions. Today, after the activity, we will model this process.

*24 minutes:* Foursquare Activity. The students make the same organizer with the same categories as the day before or, if there is room left on them, use the same organizers. The teacher reintroduces the Old English, but this time with a modern translation. (Recite for class.)

Students look for examples of alliteration and so forth in this passage and enter the examples in their organizers. Again, they may assist each other, but the source for the 'Honesty and Completeness' box now becomes the Beowulf Poet.

*15 minutes:* Teacher directs the students to do a practice journal writing. This will count as Journal 1. Each journal will have a suggested theme connected with the reading, but you may write on whatever you find to be important in the text for the day.

Students write Journal 1 on impressions of the reading and recitation. The prompt is, “What can we tell about where and when this is happening? Why did anyone care enough to write it down?”

*7 minutes:* Garner reactions on student impressions of the characters in the story.

*1 minute:* Assign homework: Read Prologue and Chapter I through “Generation D.”

## Friday 24 September 2010

*3 minutes:* Attendance, Housekeeping (Lift chairs, do not drag.)

*15 minutes:* Review of Poetic terms with examples.

*15 minutes:* In-class Reading: "Burial at Sea."

*10 minutes:* Journal 2: Why bury someone at sea when you are on land?

*10 minutes:* In-class review of journals.

*1 minute.* Homework: Finish Chapter I

## Week Two

### Monday 27 September 2010 Introducing Narrative

*3 minutes:* Attendance, Housekeeping (Lift chairs, do not drag.)

*5 minutes:* Teacher presents some possible meanings of narrative. Make clear that narrative has a **setting**.

*47 minutes:* Activity

The teacher projects or hands out image of hall (from E. V. Gordon's An Introduction to Old Norse) and explains that this is the kind of building where this story is set.

Questions for the class:

What features do you notice in the hall? What are they doing there? Extend with further questions. Collect list of features and put on board.

The teacher then explains the task for seven groups:

Imagine that you live in this large wooden building (hall). There are no separate rooms for most people. There is no electricity. There is no plumbing. The only heat comes from the fireplace. How do you manage to do these daily activities:

Getting food

Washing clothes

Cooking and washing dishes

Staying warm (or cool in summer)

Bathing and using the toilet

Sleeping arrangements

Entertainment

These items can be distributed among the seven groups, with the additional question, What are some important chores to do every day? In groups of four the students work on these questions and report to the class.

This establishes some idea of some possible routines for the characters in the narrative.

### **Tuesday 28 September 2010**

*3 minutes:* Attendance, Housekeeping (Lift chairs, do not drag.)

*26 minutes:* Writing Activity:

Imagining the Setting Continued. Imagine you are in the hall. (Play sounds of hall by group "Carnyx" – people milling about, some shouting; musician plays lone instrument)

Brief in-class writing. Write from the senses: What do you see? Hear? Smell? Touch?

Collate answers on the board. Volunteers may read.

Explain that the students have created one good setting for the narrative. **Inform the class that the first draft of the narratives are due Wednesday 13 October.**

*15 minutes:* In-class reading: "Hrothgar and His Hall"

*10 minutes:* Journal 3: How can the text add to your view of the setting (the hall)

*1 minute:* HW: Read Chapter II

### **Wednesday 29 September 2010**

*3 minutes:* Attendance, Housekeeping (Lift chairs, do not drag.)

*15 minutes:* In-class Reading: “Grendel” and “A Visitor from the Darkness”

*10 minutes:* Open questions to class on their impressions of who Grendel is? What might he look like?

The teacher suggests that one way of seeing Grendel is as a concentrated form of the fears of a group of people. Who or what is your “Grendel”? What scares you late at night? What keeps you up worrying?

minutes In-class writing on this topic.

Students meet in groups and decide on four lines out of their writings that express their fears well. Samples put on board for discussion.

*10 minutes:* Journal 4: Based on in-class work or any journal with the prompt Who is Grendel and why is he angry?

### **Thursday 30 September 2010 the Narrator**

*3 minutes:* Attendance, Housekeeping (Lift chairs, do not drag.)

*5 minutes:* The teacher explains that a **narrative** also needs a narrator, that is, a person from whose perspective the story is told. Many narratives are “third person,” that is, someone who is not in the story, the author, is telling the story. Other narratives are “first person,” told from the point of view of someone in the story, and this is the sort of narrative you are writing for this class.

To do this, you must think about who you would like to “be” to tell your story. In the world we are entering, there are number of named characters who appear in the story, others who are not named, and many more whom we may guess belong in the world of the poem somewhere. You may choose any of these to be your narrator.

*5 minutes:* Briefly discuss the society of beowulf in terms of classes and professions, and the agricultural base.

*17 minutes:*

Teacher gives out handout of List of Possible Narrators for your narrative. And explains that there may well be many more.

Some of the individuals named or identified in the poem Beowulf are:

Beowulf King (Hrothgar) Queen (Wealhtheow)

Grendel Coastguard Unferth

Singer Doorkeeper / Porter

In addition, a participant in the story could be  
a warrior with Beowulf a Danish warrior a court servant

Not appearing as characters in the story, but who must have existed and support the main characters “behind the scenes”:

Sailor

Craftsman / Craftswoman (carpenter or builder, boatwright, blacksmith, goldsmith, silversmith, brewer)

Serf / Sharecropper

Cupbearer

Sea monster / Lake monster

Thief

Free farmer

The teacher points out that as we go through the poem, a character page will be useful to take notes on the characters as they appear, or to speculate on who may be present, but is missing in the story as we read it.

You will be using one of these named or imaginative characters as the narrator of your narrative. More later.

Explain that a narrator takes a point-of-view and introduce the reading for the day.

*15 minutes:* In-class reading; “A Day in Church” Discuss, among other issues, the definition of “heathen.”

*10 minutes:* Journal 6: What seems to be the Poet's point-of-view in matters of religion?

## **Friday 1 October 2010 Introducing Genre**

*3 minutes:* Attendance, Housekeeping (Lift chairs, do not drag.)

*15 minutes:* The teacher explains that a genre is a type of writing, with its own word-use, and conventions. An epic poem, such as the Odyssey or Beowulf, is one genre of writing.

The teacher can easily solicit examples of genre in music, novels, movies and other art forms and list them on the board.

The teacher explains that the third project for the unit, the Multi-media Project, will be a Genre Project, that is the student will write in the style of a chosen genre, The teacher reviews the instructions and rubric in more detail.

The teacher distributes a list of suggested genres and explains that this is not the only possible list The genres can be realized in writing or in graphic or sound or video form. The only requirements are the tie to the themes in the text as explained in the assessment.

Genre list adapted from R. Fecho, LLED 7420 Fall 09 Home

(<http://lled7420fall09.wetpaint.com/page/Multigenre+Stuff>)

## **Genre List**

**Some genres which may be useful for this project**

Ad	Editorial		
Advice column	Epilogue		
Alliterative Poem	Essay		
Anecdote	Feature article		
Anthem	Headline	Menu	
Autobiography	Health Code Rating	Memos	Sermon
Award	History	News article	Song
Ballad	Horoscope	Obituaries	Sonnet
Biography	How-To's	Pamphlets	Speech
Bumper sticker	Inner Dialog	Parody	Sports article
Cartoon	Interview	Play	Story
Character sketch	Invitation	Poem	TV commercial
Collage	Job Application	Rap	Travel brochure
Comic	Jokes	Report	Travel log
Couplets	Letters	Resumé	Want Ad
Conversation	Lyrics	Review	Will
Definition	Magazine article	Riddles	
Description	Map	Satire	
Dialogue	Memoirs	Sequels	
Diary			

Example approaches might be:

Health Code form: How would you rate the hall? Grendel's lair?

Travel Brochure: what might attract someone to Denmark?

Editorial: What to do about Grendel?

*36 minutes.* Genre practice: Teacher shows series of images (photos, paintings, cartoons) on overhead or screen, then asks class to choose one and write about it in a familiar genre form, from the list or their own experience. Groups share genre types. Move to sharing with whole class and discuss features of the genres. Instruct the students to prepare a draft of a preferred genre for Wednesday 20 October.

*1 minute:* Homework: read Chapter III.

## Week Three

### Monday 4 October 2010

*3 minutes:* Attendance, Housekeeping (Lift chairs, do not drag.)

*27 minutes: Group Work:* Go back through the text we have read so far (Chapters I through III) and select three or more statements that seem to express opinion or advice. Groups share their discoveries with the class. Collect these and put them on the board. Discuss who has said each and how this establishes point-of view. Do any of these remind us of anything on the Survey on Day One?

*15 minutes:* In-class Reading: “Beowulf Himself”

*10 minutes:* Journal 7: Who is Beowulf, and what is motivating him?

### Tuesday 5 October 2010

*3 minutes:* Attendance, Housekeeping (Lift chairs, do not drag.)

*minutes.* Activity. Refer to character list from last Thursday. Students in groups generate three more more statements from the point of view of one of the characters. They can be as simple as “I” statements with verbs (“I wear mail.” “I eat people.”) to statements of philosophical outlook such as can be found in the text. These they give to other groups to guess who the character is. This can be developed as a game.

*15 minutes:* In-class Reading: “Getting Past the Coastguard”

*10 minutes:* Journal 8: How would you get past the coastguard? (Or write on the day's activity and discussion.)

*1 minute:* Homework: Read chapters IV and V to “They're All Packing.”

### Wednesday 6 October 2010

*3 minutes:* Attendance, Housekeeping (Lift chairs, do not drag.)

*25 minutes:* Group work: Remind the class of the meaning of “kenning.” Handout:

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READING BEOWULF (Chapters Prologue to V)

Certain combinations of words refer to characters and beings in Old English poetry, for example, instead of simply 'sea' or 'ocean,' the poet will refer to the 'whale-road.' These combinations of words are known as **kennings**.

Who or what do the following kennings refer to?

In the Prologue:

Ring-giver:

In Section II:

The Light of life:

Heaven's king:

An eerie death-shadow:

The soul-slayer:

In Section III:

Hall-sloucher:

In Section V:

A stand of ash-trees:

-----  
Students locate these kennings in the poem we have read so far and we review them as a class.

*26 minutes:* Activity: in groups, students make new kennings to describe familiar objects in our familiar world, such as "gas-guzzler," "dead trees," and so on. Groups can take turns guessing what the kennings mean.

*1 minute:* Homework: Finish Chapter V

**Thursday 7 October 2010**

*3 minutes:* Attendance, Housekeeping (Lift chairs, do not drag.)

*26 minutes:* Teacher wears mail and brings shield and sword to class. Well-attended lecture on weapons and armor and their relation to status.

*15 minutes:* In-class reading: “They're All Packing.”

*10 minutes:* Journal 9: Why do Beowulf and the other characters respond to each other the way they do?

*1 minute:* Homework: Read Chapter VI.

## **Friday 8 October 2010**

*3 minutes:* Attendance, Housekeeping (Lift chairs, do not drag.)

*15 minutes:* Lecture on overarching structure of Beowulf (large tripartite structure (Grendel, Mother, Dragon), structure of the parts we are reading in this unit.)

*12 minutes:* Review of story so far (Traditional elicitation of class by teacher.)

*15 minutes:* In-class Reading: “Job Application”

*10 minutes:* Journal 10: What does the court of Hrothgar look for as good qualities in a man? What about a woman? (You may have to do some guessing here at this stage!)

*1 minute:* Homework: Read Chapter VII.

## **Week Four**

### **Monday 11 October 2010**

*3 minutes:* Attendance, Housekeeping (Lift chairs, do not drag.)

*15 minutes:* In-class Reading: “An Old Man Reminisces”

*27 minutes:* Group work: Based on this reading and our reading so far, make a timeline for the life of King Hrothgar. What might be appropriate symbols for each stage of life? What are the significant moments. Where might this line be headed in the future?

Teacher begins by demonstrating the timeline pattern on the board or with a handout or on a screen. If there is time, draw attention to allusions to the future doom of Heorot.

Extension question: Can we know the future? Which of our survey questions on Day One might relate to this issue?

*10 minutes:* Journal 11: Draw a timeline of your own life, with several significant moments, or the life of your narrative character (either is OK).

## **Tuesday 12 October 2010**

*3 minutes:* Attendance, Housekeeping (Lift chairs, do not drag.)

*10 minutes:* In-class Reading: “An Invitation to Dinner”

*10 minutes:* Brief lecture on the production and taste of mead. (I doubt even the most liberal of high schools could allow me to bring samples of home-made brew.)

*29 minutes:* Group work dealing with question: What kind of food goes well with mead? What is it and how is it cooked? Pictures and recipes encouraged. Share with the class.

*10 minutes:* Journal 12: What is the importance of eating together, as a family, tribe, church group, or...?

*1 minute:* Homework: Read Chapter VIII. Remind students to bring first drafts of narratives to class tomorrow.

## **Wednesday 13 October 2010 First draft of narrative due**

*3 minutes:* Attendance, Housekeeping (Lift chairs, do not drag.)

*15 minutes.* Introduce the idea of a peer review – that good writers help each other – and distribute handout. Read through and explain some of the terms used in English composition.

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## **PRACTICE PEER REVIEW**

Read your partner's paper and comment on each of the following areas as they arise. (Think of I, II, and III as areas to look at simultaneously.) Treat your partner as you would be treated. Write here or on your partner's paper. Use the back of the page or any other page if you need.

## **I.**

What parts did you find very effective, interesting, or exciting? Give example passages and discuss the impression these passages made on you. (For example, refer to tone, word choice, sensitivity...) Look for the author's voice; does the writer seem distinctive or do passages sound like something you have heard often before?

## **II.**

Does the author have good sense of audience? (That is, does the level of word choice consistently please you, or is it otherwise appropriate to the academic forum?)

Which senses does the author appeal to and how?

Does one paragraph flow into another? Choose one instance of a good transition between paragraphs.

Which paragraph did you like best and why?

## **III.**

A. Judging from the first three paragraphs, what is the central idea of this paper? Restate the thesis in your own words in a sentence or two.

B. What are some good examples (stories, images, metaphors, memories) to bring light to central idea?

C. Are there repeated problems in punctuation and grammar? Which are the most annoying? Does the author vary the sentence structure in fun ways?

#### ENDNOTE

Restate what you thought the paper was about and whether the author guided you effectively.

Make three suggestions to improve the paper overall. Mention recurring difficulties. Say anything else you are burning to say about this paper.

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*27 minutes.* Students find a partner to exchange papers with, do review, and attach to the paper to hand back. The teacher makes clear at the beginning of this assignment that the drafts with reviews must be turned in to the instructor.

Students hand in drafts with attached reviews to teacher.

#### **Thursday 14 October 2010**

*3 minutes:* Attendance, Housekeeping (Lift chairs, do not drag.) Teacher returns drafts with student peer reviews and makes whatever general comments may be necessary.

*10 minutes:* In-class Reading: “Insults”

*32 minutes:* Group Work: If you made a film of “Beowulf,” whom would you cast as each of the characters? Who would be the king? The queen? Beowulf? Grendel? Especially Unferth? Where would be a good location? Who would be a good director?

*10 minutes:* Journal 13: What is Unferth's Problem?!

## **Friday 15 October 2010**

*3 minutes:* Attendance, Housekeeping (Lift chairs, do not drag.)

*15 minutes:* In-class Reading: “A Babbling...”, “A Big Fish Story (and Continued)”

*26 minutes.* Group Work. Draw columns contrasting Unferth's and Beowulf's version of the swimming match. How do the two report the same story and “facts”? Class discussion.

*10 minutes:* Journal 14: Read “Scandal!” Why does the king favor Beowulf after his exchange with Unferth?

*1 minute:* Homework: Read from “Party Night” to the end of Chapter IX.

## **Week Five**

### **Monday 18 October 2010**

*3 minutes:* Attendance, Housekeeping (Lift chairs, do not drag.)

*15 minutes:* Work on metaphors.

Weather permitting, take students (carrying paper, pens, and notebooks) outdoors to an area full of trees with a path nearby. Ask the students to revive their definition of metaphor from the Four-Square project. (It is in essence an image, a mental picture that represents an idea.) Explain that everything around us can be a metaphor, and that it is a process and way of thinking that adds life and interest to writing and to poetry.

The teacher models the idea of image-as-metaphor by pointing to common objects – tree, path, stone, sun – and eliciting what these are commonly metaphors of.

Students work individually to write two or three sentences containing metaphors. Some may volunteer to read.

*32 minutes:* Group work: Students generate lists to challenge each other with. On one side of the page are images. On the other, a series of possible applications, but in scrambled order. Another team must match the image to the intended application, and explain in writing why the metaphor works.

This is akin to interpreting metaphors in reading. In your writing, the more metaphors you reach for, the better I'll like it.

*4 minutes:* Return to classroom.

*1 minute:* Homework: Journal 14 (done at home): Identify some metaphors in Beowulf or write more of your own.

Remind students to bring the Genre list tomorrow.

## **Tuesday 19 October 2010**

*3 minutes:* Attendance, Housekeeping (Lift chairs, do not drag.)

*27 minutes:* Activity: Generating Criteria for Peer Review of Genre Projects.

Remind students that the genre / multi-media project draft is due tomorrow. Peer reviews will be different this time. The students themselves must develop criteria.

In groups of four, each student introduces the genre he or she has chosen, and the group generates a list of three expectations for that genre. The teacher models with, e. g., newspaper editorial letter (begins “Dear Editor,” has smallish paragraphs, expresses an opinion clearly.)

Be sure to explain how this list will be used. The same groups tomorrow will use the criteria to decide how well the drafts work as representative of the genre and how they can be improved. The teacher makes sure each group has a list and collects the lists.

*15 minutes:* In-class Reading: “Party Night” and Beowulf’s Newest Boast”

*10 minutes:* Journal 15: Is the queen important? If so, in what ways?

## **Wednesday 20 October 2010 Draft of Genre / Multi-media Project due.**

*3 minutes:* Attendance, Housekeeping (Lift chairs, do not drag.)

*52 minutes:* Group work. Form the same groups as Tuesday. The teacher returns the criteria lists and makes clear that the drafts with reviews must be turned in to the instructor. The groups apply the criteria to the drafts and produce a written set of suggestions for each draft. Groups attach their review to the draft to hand back.

Students hand in drafts with attached reviews to teacher.

*1 minute:* Homework: Read Chapter X

## **Thursday 21 October 2010**

*3 minutes:* Attendance, Housekeeping (Lift chairs, do not drag.)

*10 minutes.* Quickwrite: Summary of story so far.

*14 minutes:* Class discussion: What features of the story stand out most in memory and why? What makes it a good narrative, and what is unlike our expectations for a narrative?

*15 minutes:* In-class Reading: “Off with the Armor.”

*10 minutes:* Journal 16: Is leaving the armor off a good move? Why or why not?

*1 minute:* Homework: Read Chapter XI

## **Friday 22 October 2010 Music**

*3 minutes:* Attendance, Housekeeping (Lift chairs, do not drag.)

*5 minutes:* Teacher briefly take the students back to the setting and the conditions of life.

*32 minutes.* Group work: Groups have three options for discussion and group writing:

1. What would be appropriate music for scenes in a Beowulf film?
2. What sort of music might have been played in the hall setting? Where would people get instruments and what would they be made of? Online sources encouraged.
3. What music would be appropriate to the poem Beowulf itself? Consider timing, rhythm, poetic features.

*15 minutes.* Teacher tunes and plays Anglo-Saxon harp to demonstrate early medieval playing techniques.

*1 minute.* Homework: Re-read “A Knight to Remember” and write Journal 17 (done at home): What is motivating each of the two fighters?

## **Week Six**



**Monday 25 October 2010**

*3 minutes:* Attendance, Housekeeping (Lift chairs, do not drag.)

*10 minutes.* Introducing modern poem inspired by ethos of Northern Europe.

Handout Kipling poem “Runes on Weland's Sword”

Explain the meaning of “rune” both as “mystery” and as a letter in an ancient alphabet. Wayland is mentioned as a famous sword-maker in Beowulf.

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THE RUNES ON WELAND'S SWORD

1900

RUDYARD KIPLING

A SMITH makes me  
To betray my Man  
In my first fight.

To gather Gold  
At the world's end  
I am sent.

The Gold I gather  
Comes into England  
Out of the Deep Water.

Like a shining Fish  
Then it descends

Into the deep water.

It is not given  
For goods or gear,  
But for the Thing.

The Gold I gather  
A King covets  
For an ill use.

The Gold I gather  
Is drawn up  
Out of the deep water.

Like a shining Fish  
Then it descends  
Into deep water.

It is not given  
For goods or gear,  
But for the Thing.

---

*5 minutes:* Class reads poem together, then again individually.

*10 minutes:* Questions for class discussion:

What is the mood of the poem and what creates this mood?

What is it about? (No “right” answer!)

What sort of music might be good for this poem?

*5 minutes:* Listen to the Leslie Fish sung version.

*10 minutes.* Questions for discussion. Does the music good choice for the poem?

*12 minutes.* In -class reading: “Knockdown” and “A Change of Décor.”

## **Tuesday 26 October 2010 Film: “The Thirteenth Warrior” part I**

*3 minutes:* Attendance, Housekeeping (Lift chairs, do not drag.)

*3 minutes.* Introduce the film and explain that it is based in part on “Beowulf.”

*40 minutes.* Viewing time.

*8 minutes.* Brief Discussion: draw attention to statements of point-of-view in the film.

*1 minute.* Remind the students that the narratives are due tomorrow. Homework: Journal 18 (for home): How would your Narrative character view the fight between Beowulf and Grendel? This can be part of the Narrative!

## **Wednesday 27 October 2010 Narratives due.**

*3 minutes:* Attendance, Housekeeping (Lift chairs, do not drag.). Collect narratives.

*40 minutes.* Continue viewing the “Thirteenth Warrior”

*8 minutes.* Discussion: In what ways does this presentation of the hall differ from the idea you have developed about the setting and world of Beowulf? In what ways is it similar?

*1 minute:* Homework: Journal 19 (for home) In what ways does the presentation of the hall setting in the “The Thirteenth Warrior” differ from the idea you have developed about the setting and world of Beowulf? In what ways is it similar?

## **Thursday 28 October 2010**

*3 minutes:* Attendance, Housekeeping (Lift chairs, do not drag.)

*25 minutes.* Conclusion of “The Thirteenth Warrior”

*26 minutes.* Runes. Explain that his alphabet was used by ancient people in the countries where Beowulf originates, and that the letters have names and also were thought to have power in themselves, hence they were written on swords, cups, and so on.

Handout list of runes with their names.

Challenge: Write in Runes

Teams can challenge each other by writing in the runes and attempting to guess the messages from the other students. The challenge can be increased by using pictures as substitutes for the runes based on the runes' names. A further level of complication can be introduced by scrambling the names of characters in Beowulf.

*1 minute.* Homework: Journal 20. This journal, unlike the others, has a mandatory prompt (two choices): 1. Do the characters in the film “The Thirteenth Warrior” express similar ideas and outlook to the characters in Beowulf? OR

2. Choose a character in Beowulf and compare the point-of-view of this character to your own.

## **Friday 29 October 2010 Genre pieces due.**

*3 minutes:* Attendance, Housekeeping (Lift chairs, do not drag.) Return narratives. Collect genre pieces

*32 minutes.* Projects can be shared with the class on a volunteer basis

*20 minutes.* Post-mortem: In-class writing. Response to the unit! What have yo gained from this unit? What was the most enjoyable part? What was the least enjoyable? (And why do you think so to both!)

The genre pieces will be returned during the next unit.

## STRUCTURE OF TEXT OF BEOWULF

### PART ONE: Family History

#### **Prologue**

#### **Generation A** **Burial at Sea**

## **PART TWO: A Hall is Raised, A Hall is Cursed**

### **Chapter I Generation B**

Generation C

### **Generation D**

**King Hrothgar and His Hall  
Grendel**

### **Chapter II**

**A Visitor from the Darkness**

**A Change in Sleeping Arrangements**

**Bad News Travels Far**

**A Day in Church**

## **PART THREE: Journey to the Hall**

### **Chapter III**

**King's Sorrow**

**Beowulf Himself**

**Sea Voyage**

**Getting Past the Coastguard**

### **Chapter IV**

**Beowulf's Answer to the Coastguard**

**An Official Reply**

**Approaching the Hall**

### **Chapter V**

**They're All Packing**

**Getting Past Security**

**The Buck Stops Here**

## **PART FOUR: In the Hall**

### **Chapter VI**

**The King Approves**

**Hail to the King**

**Beowulf's Resume**

**Job Application**

### **Chapter VII**

**An Old Man Reminisces**

**Hazard Pay**

**An Invitation to Dinner**

### **Chapter VIII**

**Insults**

**A Babblers Gets Sat Down**

**A Big Fish Story**

### **Chapter IX**

**Fish Story Continued**

**Scandal!**

**Party Night**

**Beowulf's Newest Boast**

**Party On**

**Bedtime for the Old King**

## **Chapter X**

**Bedtime Continued**

**Off with the Armor**

**Could You Sleep at a Time Like This?**

## **PART FIVE: Fight in the Hall**

### **Chapter XI**

**Now Grendel Came...**

**Grendel's Last Supper**

**A Knight to Remember**

### **Chapter XII**

**Knockdown**

**A Change of Decor**

### **Chapter XIII**

**A Forensic Investigation**

**A Danish Vacation**

ADAPTED RINGLER TEXT OF BEOWULF



Text is by D. Ringler, 2007 Beowulf: A New Translation For Oral Delivery. Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.

## PART ONE: Family History

### Prologue

#### Generation A

We have heard tell of the high doings  
of Danish kings in days gone by,  
how the great war-chiefs gained their renown,  
how Scyld Scefing shattered his foes,  
mastered the meadhalls of many peoples,  
conquered their kings. He came to Denmark  
as a lone foundling, but later he thrived;  
his name was renowned beneath the skies  
and kings and kingdoms across the whale-road,  
the surging sea, swore him allegiance,  
paid him tribute. He was a peerless king!  
Later the Lord of life gave him  
a son who would someday succeed him in Denmark,  
a pledge to its people: their plight had moved him,  
their time of trial and terrible grief  
lacking a leader. The Lord bestowed  
success and honor on this son of Scyld,  
and Beowulf the Dane could boast a name  
known everywhere in Scandinavia.  
In just such a manner, with generous gifts  
from his father's hoard, a future king  
insures that one day unshrinking friends  
will stand by his side if strife should come,  
will support their prince: it is praiseworthy deeds  
that win warriors' willing allegiance.

#### Burial at Sea

At his foreshaped hour Scyld departed,  
grey-haired, vigorous, into God's keeping.

Care-stricken comrades carried his body  
to the edge of the sea, honoring the wish  
he had made when still master of his speech,  
he who had so long held the kingdom.  
His ring-beaked ship was ready to sail, ice-clad, impatient, eager for the voyage.  
They laid their beloved lord in its hold,  
rested their ring-giver in its roomy hull  
near the heel of the mast. They heaped beside him  
fabulous wealth from far-off lands;  
I have never heard of such magnificent things,  
mailcoats and swords and mask-helmets  
and bright war-shields; on his breast lay many  
dazzling jewels destined to travel  
to the far reaches of the flood's domain.  
His men equipped him with much more treasure  
than the warriors who had once sent him  
wandering the wastes of the wide ocean,  
alone and friendless, a little child.  
Finally the Danes affixed a golden  
standard above him, let the stream have him,  
the sea-surge take him. Their souls were troubled,  
numb with mourning. No man on earth,  
not even the wisest, can ever know  
or say for certain who received that cargo.

## **Chapter I**

### **Generation B**

When Scyld Scefing's ship had set sail,  
leaving behind the land of the Danes,  
they crowned Beowulf king in his stead  
and for many years he remained their leader.

### **Generation C**

His highborn son Healfdene followed  
and ruled in his turn the realm of Denmark,  
fathering four famous children  
who were given by God to this great war-king:

## **Generation D**

Heorogar, Hrothgar, Halga the Good,  
and a blithe daughter, the bride of Onela,  
sweet bedfellow of the Swedish king.

## **King Hrothgar and His Hall**

Glory in battle was given to Hrothgar,  
fortune in war, so his followers all  
obeyed him gladly and his band of young  
comrades increased. It occurred to him then  
to command a mighty meadhall to be built,  
richer and rarer than the race of men  
had ever seen on earth before,  
and in that stately hall to distribute all  
the gifts God had given him,  
except for public land and people's lives.  
They tell us he assigned the task of building  
that marvelous meadhall to many races  
from around the earth. It rose quickly,  
soaring to the clouds, and soon it was finished,  
noblest of buildings. He named it Heorot,  
he whose word and will had wide dominion.  
He stood by his vow, distributing gold  
from the hoard, while high overhead the great  
wooden rafters waited for floods  
of fire to enfold them, for the fated day  
when the tragic hate of two in-laws  
would flash into flame, into fierce warfare.

## **Grendel**

A dread demon who dwelt in the shadows  
daily endured desperate pain,

obliged to listen to the bright music  
of heroes in hall, the harp ringing  
to the song of the singer singing the story  
of earth's creation ages ago,  
how almighty God made this glorious  
world of wonders washed by the sea,  
how he set on high the sun and moon  
as undying lights for dwellers on earth  
and trimmed the distant tracts of the world  
with branches and leaves, bringing forth life  
in every kind of earthly creature. Thus Hrothgar's thanes reveled in joys,  
feasting and drinking, until their foe started  
his persecutions, a creature of hell.  
Grendel, they called him, this grim spoiler,  
a demon who prowled the dark borderlands,  
moors and marshes, a man-eating giant  
who had lived in a lair in the land of monsters  
ever since God had outlawed him  
along with the rest of the line of Cain.  
Abel's murder had angered the Lord,  
who avenged that deed of violence on Cain,  
driving him far from the dwellings of men.  
Spooks and spirits are spawned from his seed,  
elves and goblins and evil ghouls  
and those bold giants who rebelled against God,  
asking for trouble. They earned their reward!

## **Chapter II**

### **A Visitor from the Darkness**

When darkness came the demon set out  
for the silent hall to see how the Danes  
had bedded down in it after their beer-drinking.  
They were sound asleep, sated and carefree  
after the banquet, a band of warriors  
slumbering softly without sorrow or dread.  
He attacked them at once with terrible swiftness,  
grimly, greedily grabbing from their beds

thirty unlucky thanes of the king,  
gloating, glorying in the grisly deed,  
then shambling home with his shameful spoil.  
Later, in the grey light of morning,  
his vast violence was revealed to men.  
Weeping was heard in the wake of laughter,  
noises of lament. Noble Hrothgar,  
the best of rulers, sat bowed with grief,  
dazed by the dreadful death of his friends,  
while he gazed at the ghastly gore-spattered track  
left by the monster. That lethal assault  
by night was his first, but the next evening  
he again raided the great meadhall  
murdering many men brutally,  
prowling pitiless and impenitent.

### **A Change in Sleeping Arrangements**

And afterward it was easy enough  
to find heroes who preferred sleeping  
in the outbuildings, once the evil fiend's  
mayhem was made manifest to all,  
the marks of his malice: men who escaped  
those cruel clutches found quarters elsewhere.  
The ruthless marauder ravaged Heorot,  
one against many, until the wide ale-hall  
stood unused at night. As the years passed  
the Danish king sank deeper in sorrow;  
it was a tragic time, twelve winters.

### **Bad News Travels Far**

The ogre's evil went on so long  
that news of his raids was known everywhere,  
leaping from land to land in songs,  
how Grendel warred grimly with Hrothgar,  
fought with him fiercely, feuded season  
after sad season, sought no parley  
of peace, no pact with the prostrate Danes,  
and was deaf to demands for indemnity;  
the king's councilors had no cause to expect

rich reparation from the ravager's hoard!  
Instead the monster stalked and slaughtered  
old men and young, an eerie death-shadow  
lurking at night, lying in ambush  
on the misty moors. Men never know  
where wandering fiends wait in the dark!  
And so the sinister slayer of men  
roamed in blackness and reveled in crime,  
ravaging the hall, ranging its shadows  
and dim depths in the dead of night,  
for the Lord never allowed him the joy  
of that bright building in broad daylight.  
It was a cruel fate for the king of the Danes,  
misery of mind! His men often  
assembled in council, seeking a way  
to end Grendel's evil attacks  
and sudden onslaughts.

### **A Day in Church**

Sometimes they practiced  
demon worship at dark altars,  
offered sacrifice, asked the Devil,  
the soul-slayer, to send them help  
in their dreadful need: a damnable custom,  
the hope of heathens. Hell had possession  
of their erring minds; they were ignorant  
of the Light of life, the Lord almighty,  
and of how to pray to heaven's King,  
the God of glory. Grim is the lot  
of heedless men who hurl their souls  
into the clutch of fire, who cut themselves off  
from grace forever! Glorious the lot  
of men who rely on the Almighty for peace  
and who find mercy in the Father's arms.

### **Chapter III**

#### **King's Sorrow**

Thus Healfdene's son was harrowed by grief,  
by sorrow that seldom ceased churning.  
Nothing could help him: the nightly assaults  
were too terrible and too prolonged,  
the dark bedevilment dogging his people.

### **Beowulf Himself**

But at long last, in the land of the Geats,  
Hygelac's thane heard about Grendel.  
In that day of this life  
no earthly man had equal strength  
or equal courage. He asked for a swift  
seagoing ship, said he intended  
to visit Hrothgar over the vast waters,  
now that the war-king was in need of help.  
Much as they loved him, men did not try  
to dissuade the prince from his set purpose  
but urged him on. The omens were propitious.  
He chose from among his choicest followers  
a keen company of comrades, the bravest  
he could find in the land. With fourteen others,  
a seasoned sailor, he sought out his ship,  
leading the way to land's end.

### **Sea Voyage**

With little delay they launched the vessel  
beneath the solemn bluffs. Excited mariners  
clambered aboard while currents swirled,  
the surf on the sand. Seamen of the Geats,  
laughing with pleasure, loaded the hold  
with burnished swords and bright armor,  
then shoved the nail-clinched ship out to sea.  
Spurred by gusts it splashed and scudded  
through the wild waters like a wind-blown bird,  
until by noon the next day  
the swift vessel had made such headway  
that the lookout at last saw land ahead,

wide sea-cliffs, windswept, sunswept,  
and vast headlands. The voyage was over,  
the sea had been crossed, and sailors leapt  
into the welcome surf and waded ashore.  
They moored the vessel, their mailcoats rustling,  
and gave grateful thanks to God almighty  
that their sea-crossing had been safe and easy.

### **Getting Past the Coastguard**

From rocks up above them Hrothgar's sentinel, whose task was to guard  
and patrol the sea-cliffs, saw strangers who bore stout battle-gear and sturdy war-shields striding  
down the gangplank; he needed to know who these newcomers were. Mounting his horse he  
made for the beach, brandished his spear and bluntly challenged the foreign sailors with formal  
words: "Who are you, you unknown ironclad men, alien troops armed in mailcoats,  
bringing your boat from abroad, crossing  
the sounding sea? I have served for years  
as coastguard here, carefully watching  
to defend these shores against foes meaning  
to wreak havoc in the realm of the Danes.  
Never before have unknown sailors  
landed on our coast with less concealment,  
even though you came without asking leave  
of noble Hrothgar; never before  
have I seen a man of such eminence  
as your leader in his lordly mail,  
a hero, I think, no hall-sloucher,  
unless he is counterfeit! Quickly, now, tell me  
what land you come from, before I let you proceed  
a league farther in the land of the Danes---  
spies, perhaps! Suspicious voyagers!  
Seafarers! Hear my simple thought:  
it would be wise of you--- you would be well advised!---  
to tell me instantly what tribe you come from."

### **Chapter IV**

#### **Beowulf's Answer to the Coastguard**



The bold captain of the band of comrades quickly replied in careful words:  
"We are mariners, men of the Geats, hearth companions of Hygelac our king. My father was famous for his fierce warfare, a noble chieftain; his name was Ecgtheow. He had a long life and at last he died, wise and worshipful. War-chiefs of even modest wisdom remember him still! As for us, we have come in honest friendship, seeking your king, the son of Healfdene. Kindly give us counsel! We carry important news for your master, for noble Hrothgar, though only when we meet can it all be disclosed, not before. You know if the tales they have told us are true, the terrible stories that among the Danes, when midnight approaches, some awful monster (but I have only heard shadowy hints!) shows his hatred, gorging on their flesh. I can give Hrothgar some useful advice, young though I am, how the king and his comrades can quell this monster, if it is fate's will that he should find relief, consolation for his long sorrows, and his dread and despair are destined to end. Otherwise, ever after, he is doomed to live in anguish, as long as his great hall-building stands with its high gables."

### **An Official Reply**

The coastguard replied in careful language where he sat on his horse: "A seasoned warrior has the wisdom to weigh both words and actions, to assess their worth. I perceive clearly that you seafarers are sincere friends of the king of the Danes. Keep your weapons and travel onward. I will teach you the way. And I will also order my men to guard your vessel with great vigilance from foes, where it lies all freshly caulked

with tar on the sand, until the time comes  
when the splendid ship with its spiral prow  
bears the hero back to his homeland.  
So gallant a man, so great in virtue,  
is bound to survive battle unharmed."  
Men started moving, marching inland;  
motionless, the ship lay moored behind them,  
tethered tightly. On top of their helmets,  
above cheek-guards of chased silver,  
bronze boar-figures bright from the forge  
protected them.

### **Approaching the Hall**

The troop, advancing  
at a smart pace, soon caught a glimpse  
of the hall Heorot, high and glittering,  
Hrothgar's residence, radiant with gold,  
the best, most brilliant building on earth, lighting the land for leagues around it.  
Pausing, the coastguard pointed it out  
to the keen warband, so they might more quickly make  
their way to its door, then wheeled his horse  
and spoke in parting to the resplendent troop:  
"I must leave you here. May the Lord almighty,  
the King and Father, keep you from harm  
in this bold venture. I must go back to the coast  
to hold sea-watch against hostile fleets."

## **Chapter V**

### **They're All Packing**

A pathway with stone paving guided  
the marching men. Their mailcoats gleamed,  
and the hard rings of handlocked iron  
sang noisy war-songs as they neared the hall  
for the first time in their fierce array.  
Sea-weary sailors unslung their shields  
and leaned them slanting against the long wall.

Mailcoats rustled as men wearily  
sank onto benches, while their slim spear-shafts  
still stood upright, a stand of ash-trees  
grey on top. Those good weapons  
were an honor to their owners.

### **Getting Past Security**

An eagle-eyed sentry  
who stood in the doorway studied them closely.  
"What country do you come from with your curved shields,  
your meshed war-shirts and mask-helmets,  
your iron spears? I am the herald  
of noble Hrothgar. I have never seen  
so bold or brave a band of foreigners,  
so it is less likely that you are landless strays  
than valiant adventurers visiting my king."  
The man of the Geats, the mariners' chief,  
presently replied in the pride of his youth:  
"In our homeland we sit at Hygelac's table,  
next to our master. My name is Beowulf.  
If you are curious why I came to Denmark,  
I would rather explain to Hrothgar himself,  
Healfdene's son, if the high war-king  
will only grant us an audience."  
The other answered, an eminent Wendel  
whose name, Wulfgar, was known among men  
for truth and wisdom: "I will tell Hrothgar  
my ring-giver, ruler of the Scyldings,  
about your visit here, will convey the news  
to my king as you request me to,  
and will come back at once to bring you the reply  
my dread master deigns to give you."

### **The Buck Stops Here**

He walked rapidly to where the wise one sat,  
immensely old in the midst of his thanes;  
he strode firmly until he stood at last,

polite and proper, in his lord's presence.  
Wulfgar saluted the war-king of Denmark:  
"Mighty Hrothgar! Men of the Geats  
have come to our shores, cruising the wide  
waste of waters. Warriors call  
the leader Beowulf. My lord Hrothgar!  
Their only desire is to ask humbly  
to speak with you, O splendor of kings.  
Do not deny them their deepest wish!  
In their war-harness they are worthy, I think,  
of a prince's approval. An impressive youth,  
a hero, has led them here to our land."

## **Chapter VI**

### **The King Approves**

Hrothgar replied, ruler of Denmark:  
"I recollect him well, though he was a lad when I once  
befriended Ecgtheow his father, to whom Hrethel,  
the Geatish king, had given his daughter.  
Their son Beowulf has sought us now,  
looking for a loyal and reliable friend.  
Voyagers of ours, visiting the Geats,  
taking them gifts and tokens of love,  
have told us often, after returning home,  
that the hero's hard hand-grip has in it  
thirty men's strength. I think it likely  
that God almighty has graciously sent him  
here to Denmark to help us in our struggle  
against Grendel's attacks. I will give this youth  
wealth in abundance to reward his daring.  
Return to them at once and tell them to enter  
and look on my court of loyal kinsmen.  
Let your words warrant how welcome they are  
here in Heorot!" The herald returned  
and said loudly from inside the doorway:  
"My sapient lord has sent me back  
to announce that he knows your noble lineage  
and to give such great and glorious heroes  
a loving welcome in the land of the Danes.  
You may now enter his renowned presence  
wearing your mailcoats and war-helmets;

but leave your lances and lindenwood shields  
outside here to await the success of your words."  
Beowulf stood up, about him a throng  
of tried retainers. He told some of them  
to wait there, guarding their weaponry;  
the rest hurried under the roof of the hall,  
guided by Wulfgar. Their great-hearted leader  
strode to the high-seat, stood facing it  
and spoke, conspicuous in his splendid mail,  
the wonderful workmanship of Wayland the smith:

### **Hail to the King**

"Hail, great Hrothgar! I am Hygelac's thane  
and kinsman. Though young, I have acquired honor  
through gallant deeds. Grendel's outrages  
are known everywhere in my native land:  
many visiting merchants have told us  
that nowadays this magnificent hall  
stands idle and useless, empty of men,  
as soon as the sun has set in the west.  
I was urged, therefore, by my own people,  
by the worthiest and wisest among them,  
to come to the court of King Hrothgar.

### **Beowulf's Resume**

They knew my nearly preternatural strength;  
they had watched when I strode, washed in battle-blood,  
from a fight where I fettered five enemies,  
butchered some giants who were bent on mischief,  
and slew monsters in the sea at night;  
I slaughtered those foes because they had assaulted the Geats;  
I ground them to gruel. Now it is Grendel's turn  
to feel the fury of my fierce grip,  
my lethal wrath.

### **Job Application**

Lord of the Danes!  
Prince of the Scyldings! I implore you now,  
when I have come so far from my country to ask  
your dear indulgence: do not refuse me  
one request, O worthy Hrothgar,  
but allow me, alone with only  
my comrades here, to cleanse Heorot.  
Men have told me that our murderous friend  
scoffs at weapons, scornful and reckless,  
so I swear solemnly that as I seek to deserve  
the heartfelt love of Hygelac my lord,  
I will not carry my noble sword  
into battle, but fight with my bare hands,  
fiercely and fearlessly, fully prepared  
to win or to lose; for one of us  
must die, submitting to the doom of God.  
The terror master will try, if he can,  
to dine on us Geats in the dark meadhall  
as easily as he has always enjoyed  
having Danes for dinner. If death should take me,  
noble Hrothgar, you need not give me  
a big funeral or bury my corpse,  
for he will have it: he will haul my bloody  
carcass away crushed in his jaws.  
You will not even need to provide me  
with meals or a bed a moment longer.  
If he should slay me, send Hygelac  
the grey mailcoat that guards my breast,  
the work of Wayland; it was once King Hrethel's.  
Well, fate is certain to unfold as it must."

## **Chapter VII**

### **An Old Man Reminisces**

The peerless king replied: "You have come here  
to repay a debt of past kindness.  
Once, in the country of the Wylfings, your sire  
killed Heatholaf, kindling such a feud  
that afterward even his own people  
dared not harbor him, dreading reprisals.  
An outcast, exiled by his own Geats,  
he fled to Denmark to find asylum.

I was barely more than a boy at the time,  
just beginning my reign in this great kingdom;  
my older brother, the heir to the throne,  
Healfdene's son Heorogar the prince,  
a heroic youth, had recently died,  
an abler warrior than I. I settled  
your father's feud, freely sending  
the Wylfings treasure over the wide ocean.  
I saved your father; he swore me allegiance.

### **Hazard Pay**

It is bitter to be obliged to tell  
anyone on earth what awful grief  
Grendel has caused me with his grim hate-thoughts  
and dreadful attacks. My dear war-band  
dwindled as fate dashed them away  
into Grendel's maw. God, if he wished it,  
could easily end this orgy of death.  
Emboldened by beer, my best warriors  
would often, emptying their ale-cups, vow  
to wait for Grendel and his wild onslaught  
here in the meadhall with hard war-swords.  
But when the light of dawn at last appeared,  
these spacious walls would be spattered with gore,  
the bench-planks splashed with bloody stains,  
the floor dripping. My faithful band  
had shrunk once again, shamefully butchered.

### **An Invitation to Dinner**

Now sit at the banquet and say what you think;  
tell us how you hope to triumph over Grendel."  
Benches were cleared in the bright meadhall  
so the seafarers could sit together;  
strong in spirit, those sturdy warriors  
assumed their places. A servant presently  
brought them embossed beer-cups and poured  
the sweet mead. Sometimes the poet

with his ringing voice would rouse the company of Danes and seamen drinking together.

## Chapter VIII

### Insults

Unferth, the son of Ecglaf, was sitting at the king's feet; he was court spokesman. Bristling, he broached a battle challenge; Beowulf's unbidden bold arrival annoyed him enormously, since he was never pleased when anyone was honored more or more highly esteemed than he was. "Are you the Beowulf," he said, "whom Breca defeated and soundly trounced in a swimming match? The pair of you agreed out of pride and folly to race in the ocean at the risk of your lives and could not be dissuaded by a soul on earth, neither friend nor foe, from this freakish scheme. You paddled out into the pitching waves, embraced the breakers in bold folly, climbed them with arms crazily flailing as you slogged through the spray. For seven nights the two of you tirelessly toiled in the icy billows of winter. He beat you soundly; he was much stronger. In the morning the waves washed him ashore in the wild country of the Battle-Rams, from where the brave hero at last reached his home, the land of the Brondings, and his high gift-throne, where he handed out rings and swayed his subjects. The son of Beanstan scored a great success and made good his vow. And thus, though from this or that fracas you may, possibly, have emerged unharmed, you will find your match, I fancy, if you wait here in this meadhall for a whole night."

### A Babblers Gets Sat Down



The prince of the Geats replied with a grin:  
"Friend Unferth, fuddled with beer  
you've been babbling away about Breca's deeds.  
No one but me knows what happened.  
I have shown more strength and shared more hardship  
in the ocean than any other warrior.  
Breca and I, when both of us  
were mere children, made an agreement  
to wager our lives in the wintry sea,  
to demonstrate our daring. We did so, too,  
brandishing bright blades in our fists  
to fight off whales in the freezing waves.  
Breca could never have bettered my speed  
or swum more swiftly in the surges, while I  
was reluctant to leave him lagging behind me.  
We fought with the flood for five nights,  
swimming side by side, until a sudden storm  
and deep darkness drove us apart.

## **A Big Fish Story**

Battle-fierce blasts blew from the north  
straight in our faces, stirring up the depths,  
exciting the sea-monsters, who swarmed to attack me.  
But my hard mailcoat helped me withstand them:  
grey and hand-linked, it guarded my breast  
with its thousands of rings, and thwarted their malice.  
Then an obscene sea-beast seized me, dragging me  
down to the deepest depths of the ocean  
fast in its clutches; but fate was with me  
and let me skewer the loathsome brute  
with my iron blade: I was able to kill  
that evil creature with my own hand.

## **Chapter IX**

### **Fish Story Continued**

This only provoked the other horrors  
into pursuing me; but I served them all,  
right and proper, with my wrathful blade,  
and the nasty things took no pleasure  
in their bestial attempts to batten on me,  
sitting round a feast on the sea-bottom.  
When morning came they were mere flotsam  
littering the beach, lulled into sleep  
by iron music, and ever since  
they have ceased to be a serious menace  
to sailors at sea. The sun came up,  
God's bright beacon; the gale subsided,  
and soon I saw sea-cliffs in the distance,  
fair and windswept. Fate spares warriors  
whose days are not numbered and who do their utmost.  
With my mighty sword I managed to kill  
nine sea-monsters. I have never heard  
of so cruel or conclusive an encounter by night,  
nor a man more menaced in the midnight sea.  
But I survived those foes' venomous assault  
and the flood swept me far, far away,  
alone and exhausted, to the land of the Finns.

### **Scandal!**

I cannot ever recall hearing  
such a tale of triumph told about you---  
your big battles! Breca has never,  
and neither have you, known such success  
in battle (I scorn to boast of it!)  
though it is quite clear that you killed your brothers,  
your own kinsmen: an evil deed  
for which, friend Unferth, you will one day roast  
shamefully in hell, shrewd though you are.  
Son of Ecglaf, I say to you frankly  
that this grim monster Grendel would never  
have wrought such ruin to Hrothgar, here  
in Heorot, if your mind were half as bold  
or swashbuckling as you yourself suppose.  
But the fiend has learned to fear no resistance,  
no wrath or reprisal from wretches like you,  
no vengeance from the valiant 'Victory Danes.'  
He exacts his toll, he exempts no one  
of Scylding blood, shredding, ripping,

gnawing, knowing he has nothing to fear from the nerveless Danes. But now I will show him the full fierceness and fury of the Geats, how they clear accounts. And then, tomorrow, when the sun rises in the south, clothed in morning radiance, men will again laugh in this meadhall, delivered from fear." Hrothgar, the white-haired ruler of Denmark, was filled with relief and fresh hope that succor was near: he had seen the hero's quick resolve and courage in action.

### **Party Night**

Warriors relaxed and the walls echoed with winsome words. Wealhtheow, Hrothgar's queen, adept at court etiquette, went round the room, radiant in gold, greeting the thanes. She gave the mead-cup first to Hrothgar, the father of Denmark, bidding him be blithe at the beer-drinking since he was loved by all; her lord gratefully took the cup and turned to the feast. The highborn lady of the Helmings next served each of the thanes, both old and young, with mellow mead, until the moment came when, circling the room, she slowly drew near the bench in the beer-hall where Beowulf sat. She greeted the prince, giving God thanks that her long-held wish had at last come true, that at last she could look to a living soul for solace in her sorrow.

### **Beowulf's Newest Boast**

The son of Ecgtheow accepted the cup with sincere thanks, then spoke earnestly, spurred to valor and burning for battle. Beowulf replied: "When I first set out on this far adventure with my faithful thanes, I was firmly resolved

either to end the evil plight  
of Denmark forever or to die fighting  
your ancient enemy, either to achieve  
a mighty victory or to meet death,  
grim and inglorious, in this great wine-hall."

### **Party On**

Pleased with this promise from the prince of the Geats,  
Hrothgar's consort, radiant with gold,  
solemnly returned to sit by her lord.  
And now, once again, noise mounted  
in the meadhall, mirth, revelry,  
and proud boasting, until presently

### **Bedtime for the Old King**

Hrothgar decided to rise and take  
his nightly rest; he knew the enemy  
had been waiting to raid the wondrous hall  
all the day long, from the hour of sun-up  
until blackest night blankets the world  
and shapes of shadow come shambling forth  
in the dread darkness. The Danes stood up.  
As he left, Hrothgar saluted Beowulf,  
wished him a watchful and wary stewardship  
of the splendid hall, and spoke these words:  
"Never before, since I knew how to heft  
the hilt of a sword, have I handed control  
of this ale-hall to anyone but you.  
Guard the greatest of gift-seats well,  
be strong and steady---and stay awake!  
If you survive the fight I vow to reward you  
with all the riches you could ever desire."

### **Chapter X**

## **Bedtime Continued**

Royal Hrothgar, ruler of the Danes,  
strode from the meadhall with his staunch war-band;  
he wanted to find Wealhtheow and share  
his consort's couch. The King of heaven  
had given the Danes a great-hearted hall-guard  
to deal with Grendel and to do Hrothgar  
a special service dispatching giants.

## **Off with the Armor**

The prince of the Geats was putting his trust  
in his great strength and in God's favor.  
Off came the hero's iron mailcoat  
and hard helmet; he handed over  
his trusty sword to an attendant thane  
and asked him to safekeep all that war-gear.  
Confident, the prince climbed into bed  
and vowed solemnly in vaunting words:  
"I know that my hand is no less ready  
for grim grappling than Grendel's is.  
I disdain, therefore, to destroy this fiend  
with the edge of the sword, though I easily could.  
Adept though he is in deeds of malice,  
he is ignorant of iron weapons  
and their unique virtues; we will not, therefore,  
duel with swords if he dares to meet me  
in close combat. When we come together,  
God in his wisdom will grant victory  
to whichever of us he chooses to."  
Beowulf lay down, burying his face  
in a rich pillow, while around him his troop  
of seamen anxiously sank to their rest.  
Not a man among them imagined he would live  
to behold his hearth or homeland again,  
the dear precincts where his days had begun,  
for they knew that here in this benighted hall  
the fiend had slaughtered far too many  
of the men of the Danes. But almighty God  
would give the Geats the glory, thanks  
to one man's strength, of worsting their foe,  
so that all might share the honor, Geats

together with Danes. God's sovereignty  
over men and their fates has been manifest  
from the beginning of time.

### **Could You Sleep at a Time Like This?**

Now Grendel came  
striding the shadows. The staunch warriors  
who defended the hall had fallen asleep,  
all but one. It was obvious  
that the prowling fiend could not pull men down  
to grim destruction unless God willed it,  
since tonight a man who was not asleep  
waited for battle, watchful and angry.

### **Chapter XI**

#### **Now Grendel Came...**

Now Grendel came, gliding like mist  
across the bleak moorland, bearing God's wrath.  
The merciless monster meant to ensnare  
fresh victims in the fear-stricken hall.  
He strode rapidly beneath the starless sky  
until at last Heorot loomed before him,  
gleaming with gold. This greedy visit  
to the home of the Danes was hardly his first,  
though before tonight he had never found  
hardier hall-thanes or harder luck.  
Now Grendel came, grim and joyless,  
to the entrance door. Its iron, fire-forged  
bolts shattered at his bare touch.  
Raging and ravenous he wrenched open  
the mouth of the building and his monstrous feet  
trod on its precious tile-covered floor;  
in the eerie dark his eyes darted  
rays of raging red hellfire.  
He saw before him in the silent hall

a throng of youthful thanes and kinsmen  
lying in their beds. He laughed in his heart  
out of pure pleasure: he planned to separate  
those sleeping men's souls from their bodies  
long before daybreak; he looked forward  
to fabulous feasting. But fate would forbid him  
to eat people ever again  
after that night, for there lay Hygelac's  
kinsman, alert and carefully watching  
how the murderer meant to proceed.

### **Grendel's Last Supper**

The monster was not minded to dawdle  
but swooped suddenly on a sleeping man;  
slobbering with greed he slit him open,  
guzzled the blood gushing from his veins  
and gulped down great gobbets of flesh;  
he polished him off completely, hands  
and feet included. The fiend stepped closer,  
stretching his stealthy steel-clawed fingers  
toward a still figure who stirred suddenly  
and braced himself, then sat bolt upright  
and grabbed Grendel's groping forearm.

### **A Knight to Remember**

The ruthless marauder realized at once  
that he had never met another man  
anywhere on earth with such awesome strength  
in his ten fingers; but the terror that froze  
his heart was of no help in escaping.  
Frightened now, he longed to flee to the darkness  
of his devils' den; this dreadful encounter  
was nothing like those he had known before!  
Beowulf recalled his boasting words at last night's banquet; he leapt to his feet  
and grasped Grendel in a grip of steel.  
Fingers shattered as the fiend made  
a lunge for the doorway, longing to get clear;

the ogre intended, if only he could,  
to flee to the fens; his fingers, he knew,  
were in his foe's power. It was a fateful trip  
the twilight prowler had taken to Heorot!  
The crashes and cries coming from the hall  
filled the Danes with dread, like draughts of bitter  
and baleful beer. Both combatants  
were blind with fury. The building shuddered  
and it was a miracle it managed to survive,  
withstanding the shock instead of collapsing,  
but it was reinforced and firmly braced  
outside and in with iron, the work  
of master smiths, though the mead-benches trimmed  
with gold were shattered into glum wreckage  
(I have heard it said) during that hostile clash.  
How could the builders of Heorot imagine  
that any man by any means  
could damage it, adorned with ivory,  
could ravage and ruin it, unless raging flames  
should someday swallow it? The sounds grew louder,  
pulsing eerily; panic and dread  
harrowed the Danes who heard the noise,  
the wild wailing through the wall of the hall,  
the ghastly screams of God's enemy,  
the horrid captive of hell keening,  
howling in defeat, held by Beowulf.  
A man with more might was not living  
in those days of this world.

## **Chapter XII**

### **Knockdown**

The noble hero had no intention  
of letting the monster leave the meadhall:  
he valued that vicious violent life  
at next to nothing. And now, at last,  
Beowulf's men brandished their swords  
and tried to protect their protector's life  
with their own dear blood, if only they might.  
But how could those hardy heroes have known,  
as they swung their bright swords and crowded  
the evil creature on every side,



straining to strike him, that their strokes were useless,  
that no weapon known among men,  
no iron on earth could ever touch him:  
with his magic spells he had made them all blunt  
and thus useless. And therefore his death  
on that day in this world  
was destined to be vile, and his damned spirit  
to fall afterward into fiends' clutches.  
The scourge who had slain such scores of victims  
with mirthful murderous mind in his feud  
with God, now perceived with gathering dismay  
that his vast body availed him nothing,  
now that Hygelac's hard-bitten nephew  
held him by the hand. Their hatred for each other  
was boundless. And now the brute's shoulder  
could stand the enormous strain no longer;  
his muscles gave way and massive stress  
snapped his sinews. Success in battle  
was given Beowulf and Grendel fled,  
mortally hurt, to his marsh hideout,  
his dismal abode, doomed and despairing;  
he knew that his hours were numbered and felt  
death upon him.

### **A Change of Decor**

The Danes, however,  
were filled with delight when the fight was over.  
Wise and worshipful, the warrior prince  
who had come from afar had cleansed the great  
hall of Hrothgar. The hero was pleased  
with his night's labors; he had now fulfilled  
the mighty promise he had made the Danes,  
ending their years of agony  
and wreaking ready and rough vengeance  
for the violence and vast cruelty  
they had suffered so long, as could be seen by them all  
when the noble Geat nailed Grendel's  
arm and shoulder, all of the monster's  
hideous grip, to Heorot's gable.

## Chapter XIII

### A Forensic Investigation

In the morning, they say, many warriors gathered together at the great meadhall. Folk-chiefs had traveled from far and near to stare at a marvel: the strange being had left behind him large, bloody footprints in the ground. His fate gratified men who followed that monstrous spoor and saw how he stumbled, sad and stricken, dying, defeated, dragging agonized lagging footsteps to the lair of sea-beasts, where the waves were all awash in blood, their red surges reeking and steaming and heaving, hideous with hot gore. He died joylessly, doomed and despairing, forfeited life in his fen-refuge, and hell swallowed his heathen soul.

### A Danish Vacation

Mounting their horses, men headed home from the water in high spirits, elated and laughing, light-hearted youngsters riding side by side with seasoned thanes; they talked of the hero's spectacular success, saying that neither to the south nor the north nor anywhere else on earth, beneath the wheeling sky, did a warrior live wiser or worthier of a wide kingdom, though they meant with this no diminishment of great Hrothgar, their gracious king. Sometimes they raced their swift horses, hardy warriors in high spirits, where the woodland ways were wide and the tracks safe and easy; sometimes a thane of the king's would perform, a consummate poet who knew and could sing numberless tales, could relate them in linked language, in words

arrayed properly, and who was already at work  
blazoning Beowulf's brilliant achievement,  
composing a poem of praise, skillfully  
weaving its web.

Ringler, D. 2007 Beowulf: A New Translation For Oral Delivery. Hackett Publishing Company,  
Inc.