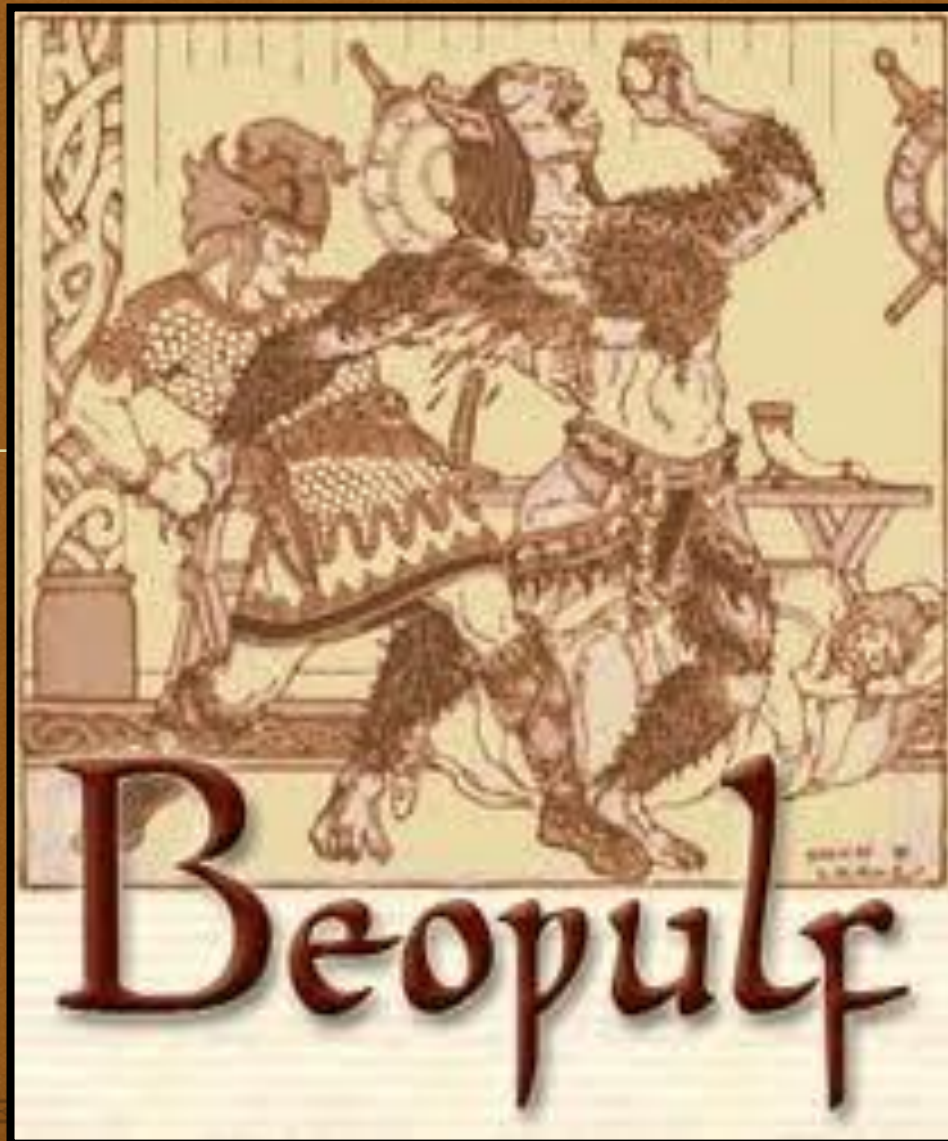
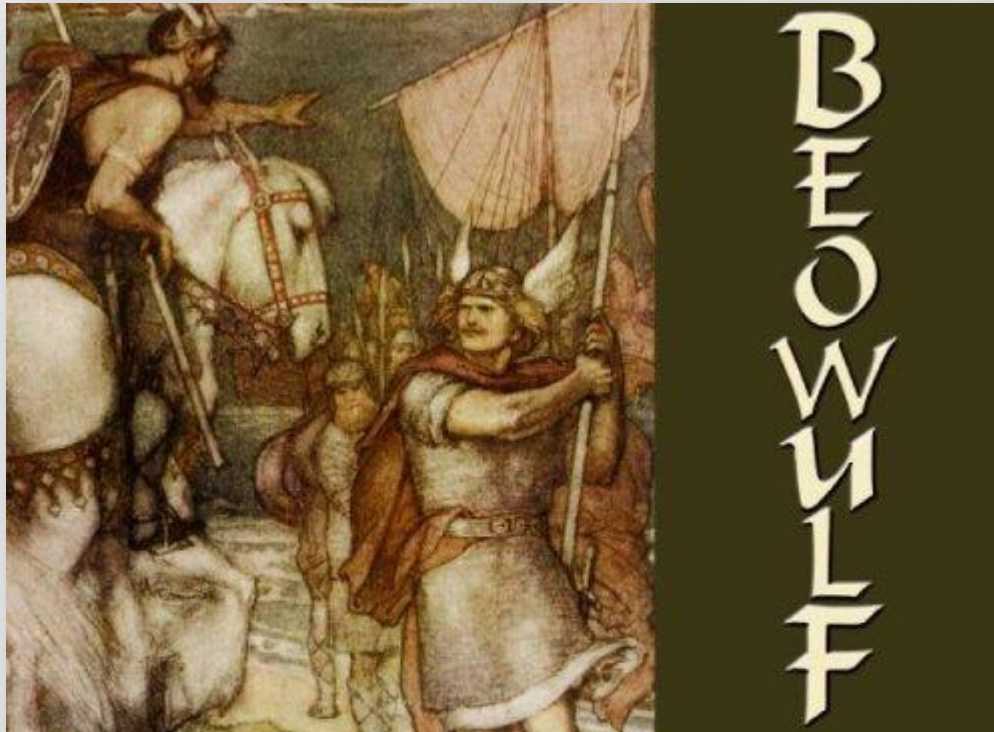


Beowulf

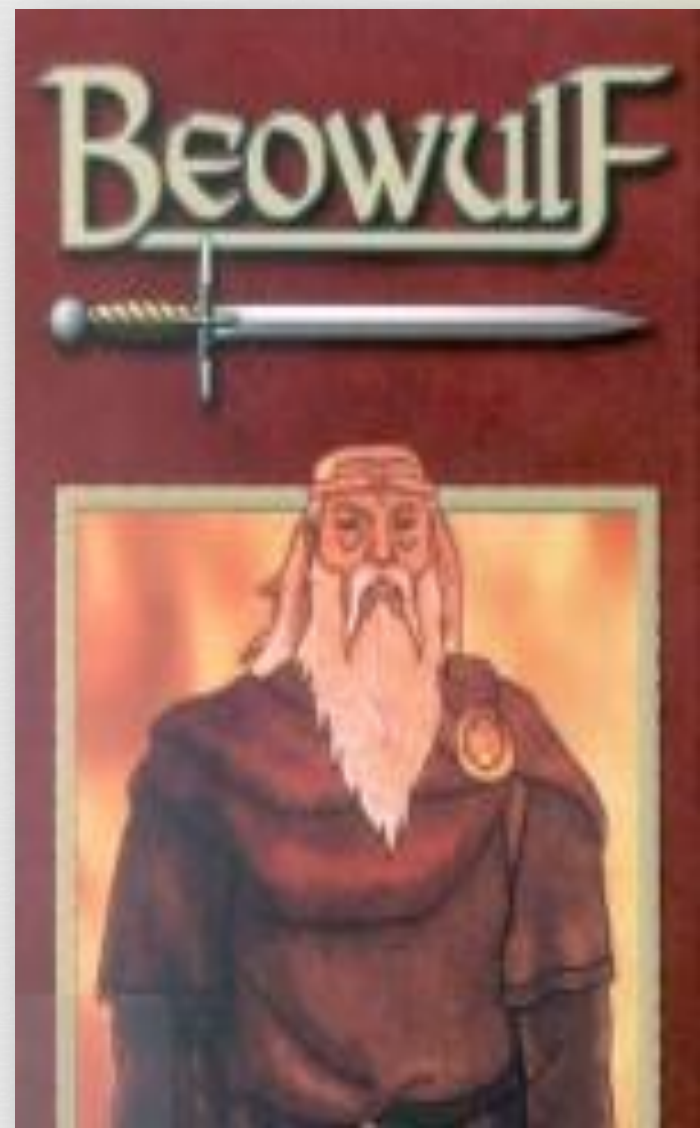


The poem

- Beowulf is the conventional title of an Old English epic poem consisting of 3182 alliterative long lines, set in Scandinavia, the oldest surviving epic poem of Old English and thus commonly cited as one of the most important works of Anglo-Saxon literature, and also arguably the earliest vernacular English literature.



□ The full poem survives in the manuscript known as the Nowell Codex, located in the British Library. Written in England, its composition by an anonymous Anglo-Saxon poet is dated between the 8th and the early 11th century. In 1731, the manuscript was badly damaged by a fire that swept through Ashburnham House in London that had a collection of medieval manuscripts assembled by Sir Robert Bruce Cotton. The poem's existence for its first seven centuries or so made no impression on writers and scholars, and besides a brief mention in a 1705 catalogue by Humfrey Wanley it was not studied until the end of the 18th century, and not published in its entirety until Johan Bülow funded the 1815 Latin translation, prepared by the Icelandic-Danish scholar Grímur Jónsson Thorkelin. After a heated debate with Thorkelin, Bülow offered to support a new translation by N.F.S. Grundtvig – this time into Danish. The result, *Bjovulfs Drape* (1820), was the first modern language translation of *Beowulf*.



The main hero



Beowulf, a hero of the Geats in Scandinavia, comes to the aid of Hroðgar, the king of *Denmark* has been under attack by a monster known as Grendel. After Beowulf slays him, Grendel's mother attacks the hall and is then also defeated. Victorious, Beowulf goes home to Geatland in Sweden and later becomes king of the Geats. After a period of fifty years has passed, Beowulf defeats a dragon, but is fatally wounded in the battle. After his death, his attendants bury him in a tumulus, a burial mound, in Geatland.

The first chapter: battle with Grendel

- Beowulf begins with the story of King Hrothgar and his warriors spending their time singing and celebrating, until Grendel, a troll-like monster who is pained by the noise, attacks the hall and kills and devours many of Hrothgar's warriors while they sleep.
- Beowulf, a young warrior from Geatland, hears of Hrothgar's troubles and with his king's permission leaves his homeland to help Hrothgar.



□ Beowulf and his men spend the night in Heorot. After they fall asleep, Grendel enters the hall and attacks, devouring one of Beowulf's men. Beowulf has been feigning sleep and leaps up to clench Grendel's hand. Beowulf's retainers draw their swords and rush to his aid, but their blades cannot pierce Grendel's skin. Finally, Beowulf tears Grendel's arm from his body at the shoulder and Grendel runs to his home in the marshes and slowly dies.



The second chapter: Grendel's mother

- The next night Hrothgar and his men sleep in Heorot. Grendel's mother appears and attacks the hall. She kills Hrothgar's most trusted warrior, Æschere, in revenge for Grendel's defeat. Hrothgar, Beowulf and their men track Grendel's mother to her lair under a lake.



□ Beowulf dives into the lake. Grendel's mother is unable to harm Beowulf through his armour and drags him to the bottom of the lake. In a cavern containing Grendel's body and the remains of men that the two have killed, Grendel's mother and Beowulf engage in fierce combat. Grendel's mother appears to prevail. Beowulf discards it in fury. Beowulf is again saved from his opponent's attack by his armour.



□ Beowulf grabs a magical sword from Grendel's mother's treasure, and with it beheads her. Beowulf discovers Grendel's dying body and severs its head. The blade of the magic sword melts like ice when it touches Grendel's toxic blood, until only the hilt is left. This hilt and the head of Grendel is what Beowulf carries out of the cavern, which he presents to Hrothgar. Beowulf returns to Heorot, where Hrothgar gives Beowulf many gifts, including the sword Nægling. The hilt prompts a long reflection by the king, sometimes referred to as "Hrothgar's sermon", in which he urges Beowulf to be wary of pride and to reward his thanes.

The third chapter: Dragon

- Beowulf returns home and becomes king of his own people. fifty years after Beowulf's battle with Grendel's mother, a slave steals a golden cup from the lair of an unnamed dragon at Earnaness. When the dragon sees that the cup has been stolen, it leaves its cave in a rage, burning everything in sight. Beowulf and his warriors come to fight the dragon, but Beowulf tells his men that he will fight the dragon alone and that they should wait on the barrow.



□ Beowulf descends to do battle with the dragon but finds himself outmatched. His men creep back into the woods. One of his men, Wiglaf, comes to Beowulf's aid. The two slay the dragon, but Beowulf is mortally wounded. After Beowulf's death, he is ritually burned on a great pyre in Geatland while his people wail and mourn him. After, a barrow is built on his remains, which is able to be seen from the sea.



Thanks for watching!

