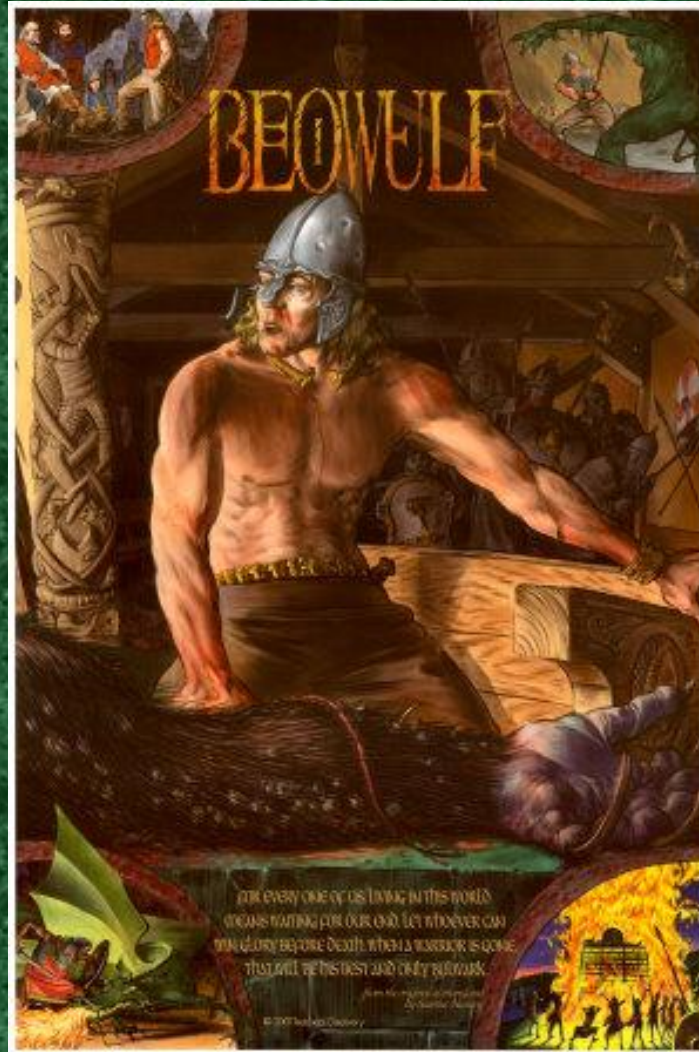


BEOWULF



Anglo-Saxon Period

- The Anglo-Saxon period is the earliest recorded time period in English history.



- The Anglo-Saxon period ranges from 449-1066.
- It ends with the Battle of Hastings where the French, under the leadership of William the Conqueror invaded England.

Anglo-Saxon Literature

- Few people read in this period
- Oral tradition – was performed and/or sung by a Bard (Scop) from memory in Old English
- This is why there are often
- several versions of the
- same story.
- **Scops** – poet/minstrels
- Authors were unknown



THE STORY OF *BEOWULF*

- **Beowulf** marks the beginning of English literature
- *Beowulf* is one of the earliest known pieces of literature known in the English language; written in Old English

Contains specific Motifs

- **Motifs** – a motif is a recurring theme or image in a work of literature
- Biblical and Christian Allusions
- Pagan Customs
- Social Customs
- Traits of the Warrior
- Beowulf Boasts

- The story of *Beowulf* wasn't written down until about 700 AD by "The Beowulf Poet" who is unknown. He wrote down the poem which for many years had been only sung or spoken.

- Scholars believe “The Beowulf Poet” was most likely a Christian monk, thus adding a Christian perspective.



HÆT SE LARDE
 na mæcra dazum. þeod cyming
 þym se þam on luda æpe lincas elle
 þe medon. of seold seapung searþe
 þeacum monegū mæghum meodo seol
 of teali esode eopil syddan aqere þe
 þe searþe funden. he þas eopre seba
 þeox unde polenum þeopd myndum þall
 oð þum aghpyle þaia som sitten dpa
 of þum þade hyran scolde som þam
 sylðan þas god cyming. ðam æra þas
 æt þe camed seowung mæcra þone god
 sende folce to eopre þym dæmpe on
 gear þe æd þuigon aldon. æt linge
 hyle þum þas lre þe puldæc þe dæd
 þeold æt þe gear. þe þe þe þe
 blæd þe spung. seold æt þe seode
 landum in. se seold æt þe seode
 se þe þe þe þe þe þe þe þe þe þe



BEOWULF is an EPIC poem.

- EPIC – a long, narrative poem that relates the great deeds of a larger-than-life hero who embodies the values of a particular society.

Examples of other EPICS are...

- Greek “Illiad” and “Odyssey” – Homer



The Hobbit and Lord of the Rings – Tolkien



And of course there's the EPIC HERO!!!!



- EPIC HERO – must undertake a quest to achieve something of tremendous value to himself and his society

SUMMARY OF EPIC FEATURES:

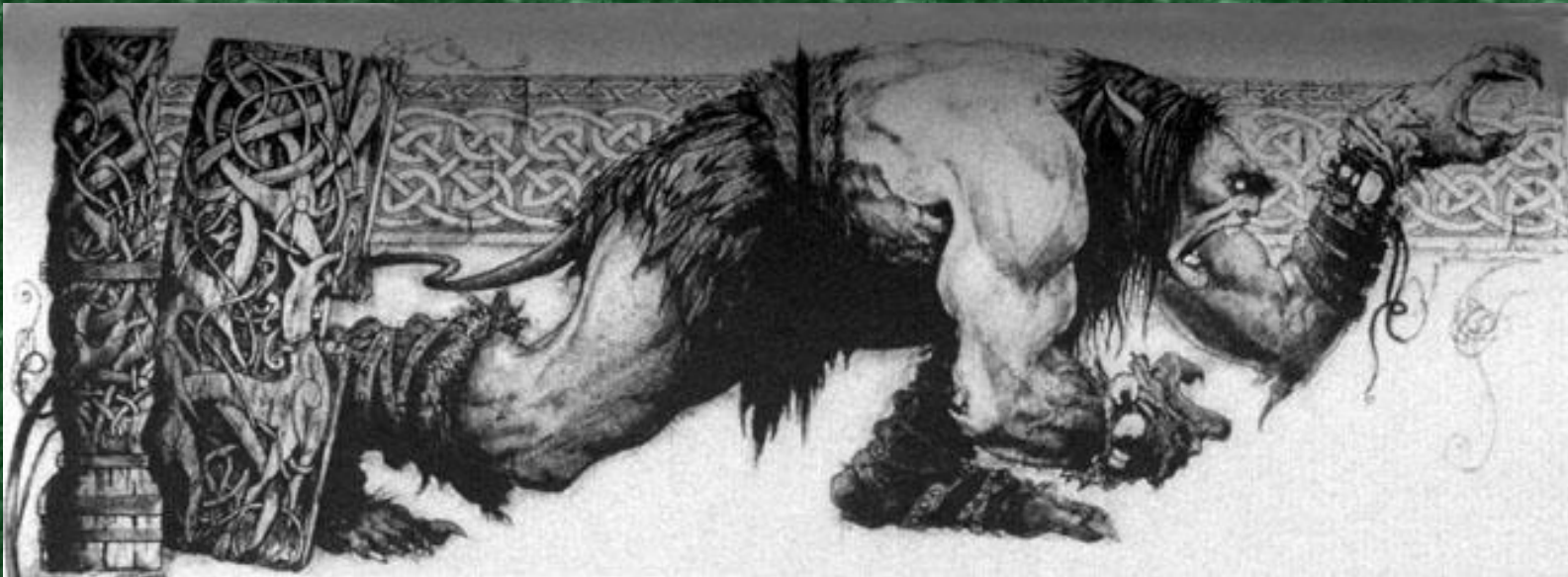
- A long narrative poem
- Larger than life hero; often with super-human characteristics
- Concerns eternal human problems like the struggle between **good and evil**
- Presented in a serious manner using elevated (poetic) language
- Hero represents widespread national, cultural, or religious values

This **EPIC** poem of **BEOWULF** is often divided into 3 sections; it is about Beowulf's 3 epic battles w/ evil.



...the Battle with Grendel

- (Grendel represents evil)



...the Battle with Grendel's Mother

(She also represents evil.)



...the Battle with the Dragon

(It not only represents evil but also Greed.)



Just in case you wanted to know,
Beowulf himself represents good:

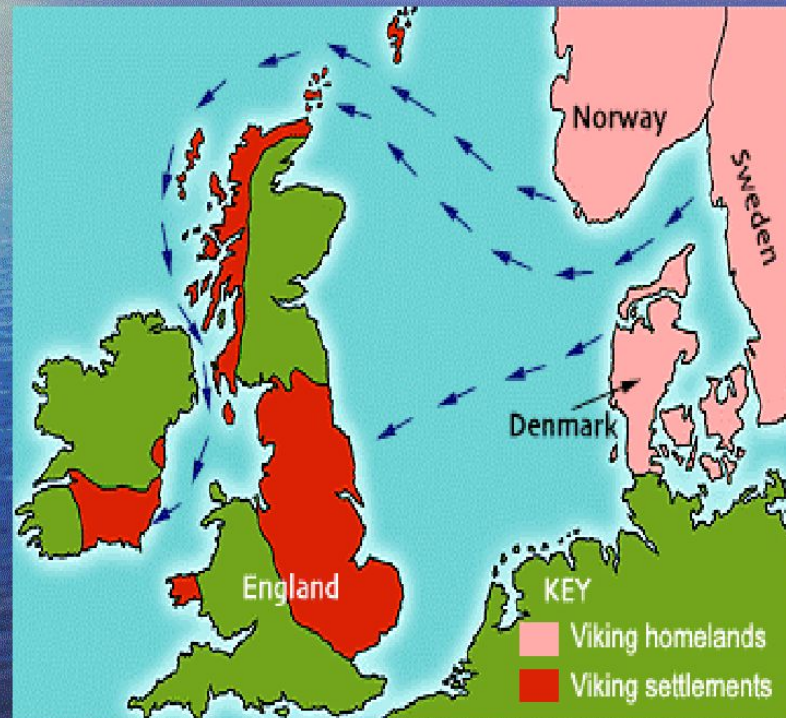
- loyalty
- valor
- Selflessness
- sense of justice



Beowulf: Where does it take place?

- Geatland and Denmark
(Modern Denmark and Sweden)

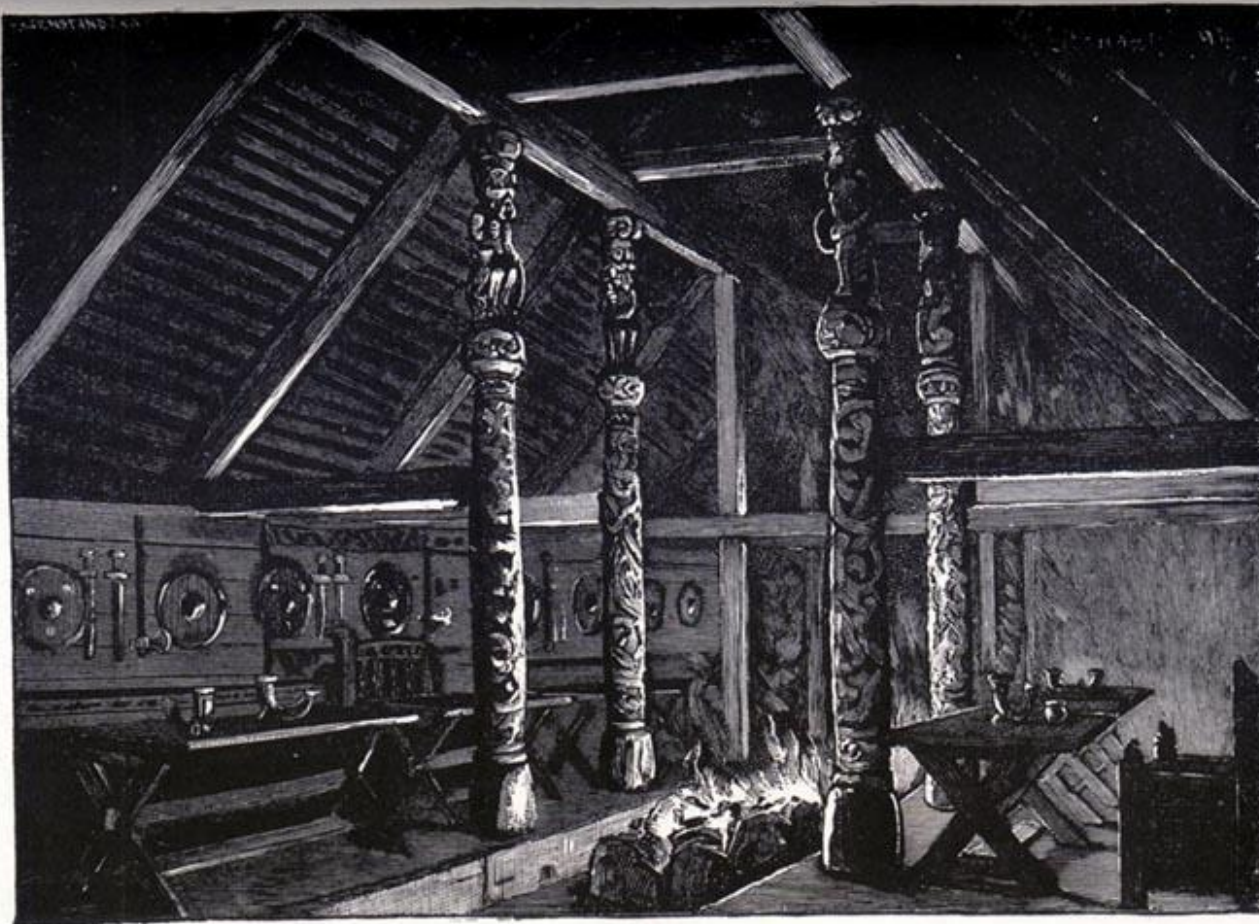
Map of Baltic Region of Scandinavia and the Viking Invasions (700-800)



More specifically...

Beowulf takes place in a “once upon a time world” which taps into “three archetypal sites of fear.”

1. The barricaded night house / Mead Hall (Grendel)



Rekonstruierte nordische Halle. Nach Valtyr Gudmundsson, Den islandske Bolig i Fristatstiden.
(Aus Olrik, Nordisches Geistesleben. Verlag von Carl Winter, Heidelberg.)

2. The infested underwater lair (Grendel's Mother)



The Reptile-taunted rocks of a wilderness and cave (Fire Breathing Dragon)



WHY?

Why do we read *Beowulf*?

- It's a very creative, imaginative, poetic masterpiece.
- It gives us insight into the origins of the British people, the culture, who, through seafaring conquests, founded the world we currently live in.
- It gives us insight into the origins of our language.

Why do we read it?

- It gives us insight into all people everywhere and throughout time (time, birth, death, fame/success/glory, honor, friendship, conflict, home, country, adventure, spirituality – all of these things transcend English literature and matter to all people)
- It's challenging and we love a good challenge!!!

Why do we read it?

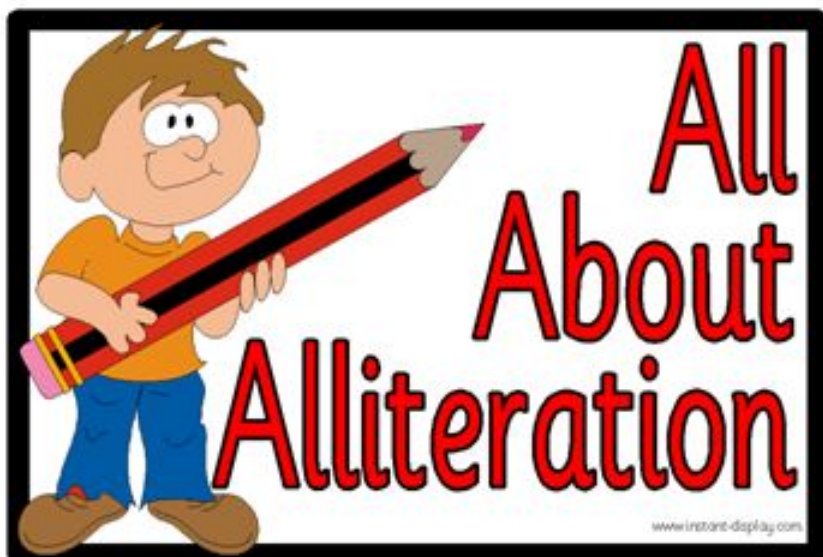
- It's scary and gets us to think about our own worst fears
- It's a VERY important piece of literature historically (This is the “because we have to” reason!!)

Characteristic features of Anglo-Saxon Literature

- Alliteration
- Kennings
- Caesura

Alliteration

- The repetition of beginning consonant sounds in lines of poetry



What is alliteration?



Alliteration is the repetition of a consonant sound at the beginning of words e.g. Awful Alice ate ants.

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Alliteration in familiar phrases.



Many common phrases use alliteration e.g. hale and hearty, fit as a fiddle, down in the dumps and turn the tables.

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Alliteration in tongue twisters.



Tongue twisters rely on alliteration e.g. She sells sea shells on the sea shore.

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Kenning

- **Kenning** – a metaphorical phrase used to replace a concrete noun
- Ex: sea = whale's home
- Ex: battle = spear play
- It is like a mini-riddle



Caesura

- – a natural pause in the middle of a line of poetry.
- 2 part line – each line is separated by a pause or break in the middle of the line; each part generally has 2 strong beats.
- (Put simply, it is a dramatic pause in the middle of a line.)

Caesura example:

Then the Scylding warrior savage and grim,
Seized the ring-hilt and swung the sword
Struck with fury despairing of life
Thrust at the throat broke through the bone
rings:
The stout blade stabbed through her fated
flesh.