



Beowulf: A Tale of Courage and Honor

Quick Guide Grades 3-8

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Beowulf is the oldest known writing in the English language! We tell it in Renaissance play format: full of fun and participation. The story was first told about 600 AD and written down in the mid 700s. The epic poem is based upon legends and historical characters from Denmark and Sweden. Beowulf was retold in many styles by minstrels and scops during celebrations and feasts. The epic poem is almost 3,200 lines of alliterative verse.

The story was told to inspire the hero in each of us

- ❖ A person decides to do their best
- ❖ He/she battles fears and develops self-confidence
- ❖ The person becomes a positive example to others
- ❖ The person completes a great task that helps others

Language Arts

Alliteration: 2 or more words in a phrase begin with the same consonant or vowel
Players of Pipes; Makers of Music; Performers of Plays

Homophone: 2 words sound the same, spelled differently, different meanings
Tail/tale; knight/night; their/there/they're

Kenning: Descriptive poetical expressions used instead of the simple name
Battle: Storm of Swords; Hero: Protector of Peace

Fun-filled suggestions for novice knights and ladies

- ❖ Select knights and fair chatelaines as line leaders and other helpers
- ❖ Go to the great Mead Hall for lunch
- ❖ Create personal crests that depict talents and goals

Warrior Workouts

- ❖ Create personal crests that depict talents and goals
- ❖ Find examples of alliterations & homophones
- ❖ Find or make up kennings (football star: Pigskin Playmaker)
- ❖ Discuss fictional and non-fictional heroes found in world cultures and literature

The Characters

Beowulf: Geat warrior

King Hrothgar: King of Denmark

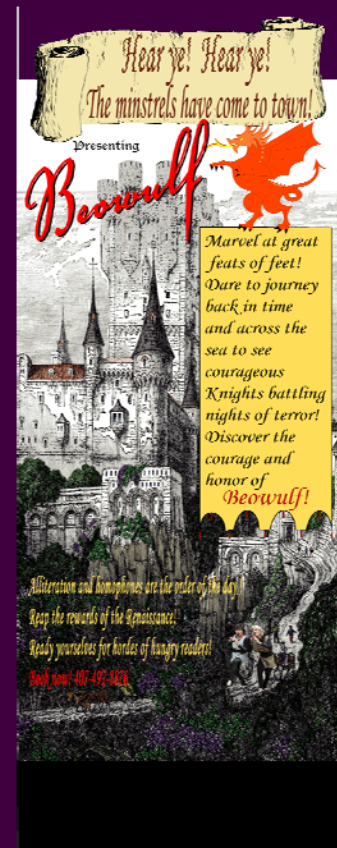
Heorot: The great mead hall of King Hrothgar

Unferth: A favorite among King Hrothgar's knights

Breca: A brave knight with whom Beowulf made a bet

Grendel: The terrible monster

Grendel's Mother: A monster more terrible than Grendel



The Tale of Beowulf ©1990 Donna Wissinger

The great warrior Beowulf learns that the King of Denmark, King Hrothgar, has a big problem. Every time he holds a feast (full of food, music and dancing, beautiful ladies and handsome knights), a terrible monster named Grendel comes up out of the swamp, carries off the handsome knights and beautiful ladies and eats them. Beowulf leads fourteen of his brave warriors across the sea to help the King. There he meets Unferth, the bravest of the King's knights, who challenges Beowulf's bravery and wisdom. After the feast which was held in the King's great hall Heorot, Beowulf lies in wait for Grendel who does come up out of the swamp to feast upon the warriors. Beowulf battles Grendel with his bare hands and rips Grendel's arm out of its socket. Grendel limps down to the swamp to die. Whereupon the King holds a grand feast (full of food, music and dancing, beautiful ladies and handsome knights). As a reward, Beowulf is taken to the Palace to sleep. Later that same night, up out of the swamp came a monster more fearsome than Grendel. It was Grendel's mother! She breaks through the doors of the great hall Heorot and kills the King's favorite knight. Upon learning that yet another monster has terrorized the Kingdom, Beowulf vows to kill Grendel's mother. He must go to the place she lives; he must go down to the most feared swamp of all. No one dares to go with him to confront the great monster. Although Beowulf is afraid, he dives into the swamp and for three days and nights he fights the monster. When all seems lost, he sees a sword in the stone walls of the deep watery cave, pulls it out, and slays Grendel's mother. The swamp turns red with blood and gore. Beowulf has prevailed. Whereupon the King holds a magnificent feast (full of food..) and honors Beowulf with princely treasures and great words of wisdom. The End.

Valuable Vocabulary:

Knight: Warrior sworn to uphold such virtues as courage & honor

Chatelaine: Lady of the house

Fair: Pleasing to the eye

Good morrow: Good morning

Minstrels: Traveling musicians, poets and actors (France & Italy)

Scops: Travels musicians, poets and actors known for recounting epic poems

Mead Hall: Place where knights dined

Tale: Story

Mail: Armor made of metal links

“WOW! Our middle school students loved Beowulf. A Tale of Courage and Honor. They learned about World History, culture, and language arts...I liked the focus on character values.”
Thomasville Cultural Center

“FABULOUS! The most worthwhile visiting artists we have had!”
Treasure Village Montessori