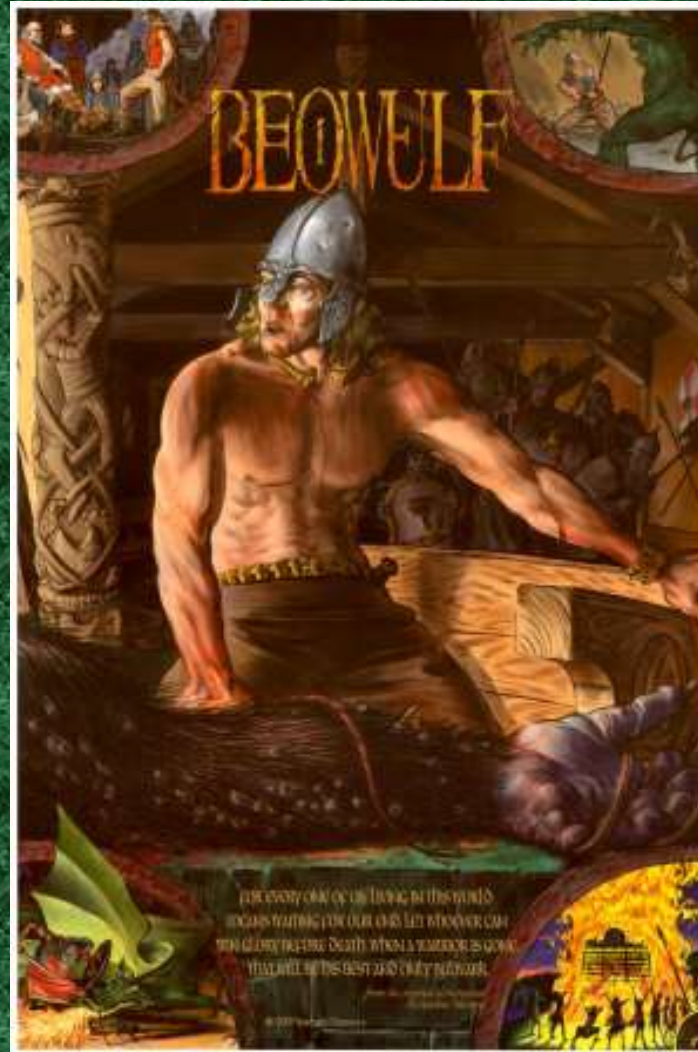


BEOWULF



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

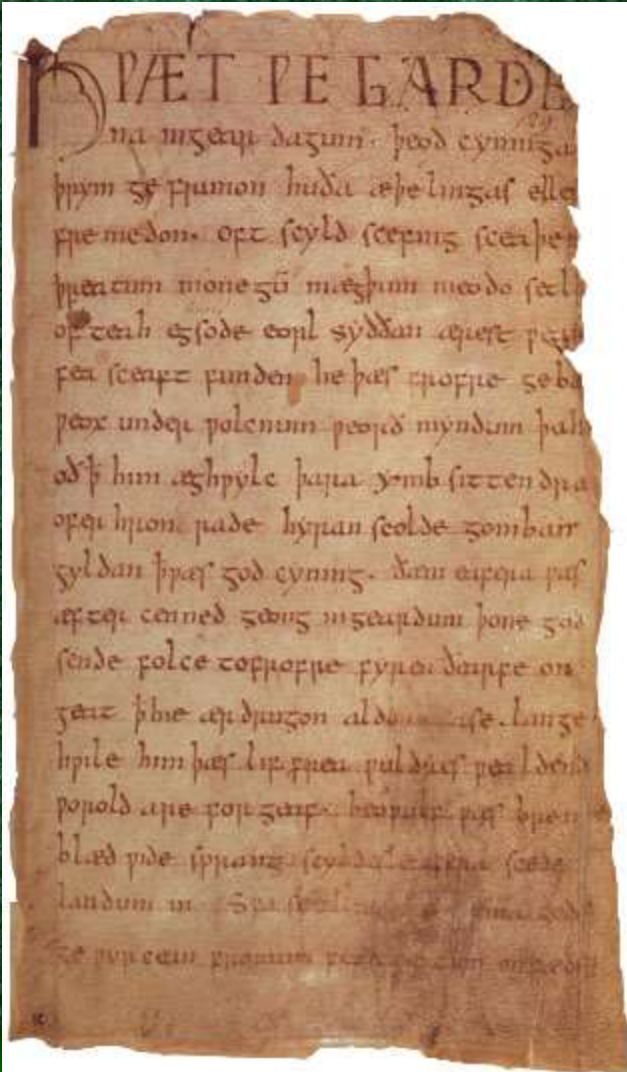
- Motifs – a motif is a recurring theme or image in a work of literature
- Biblical and Christian Allusions
- Pagan Customs
- Social Customs
- Traits of the Warrior
- Beowulf Boasts

- 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.



- There is only one original Beowulf manuscript existing today. It is in the British History Museum in London.

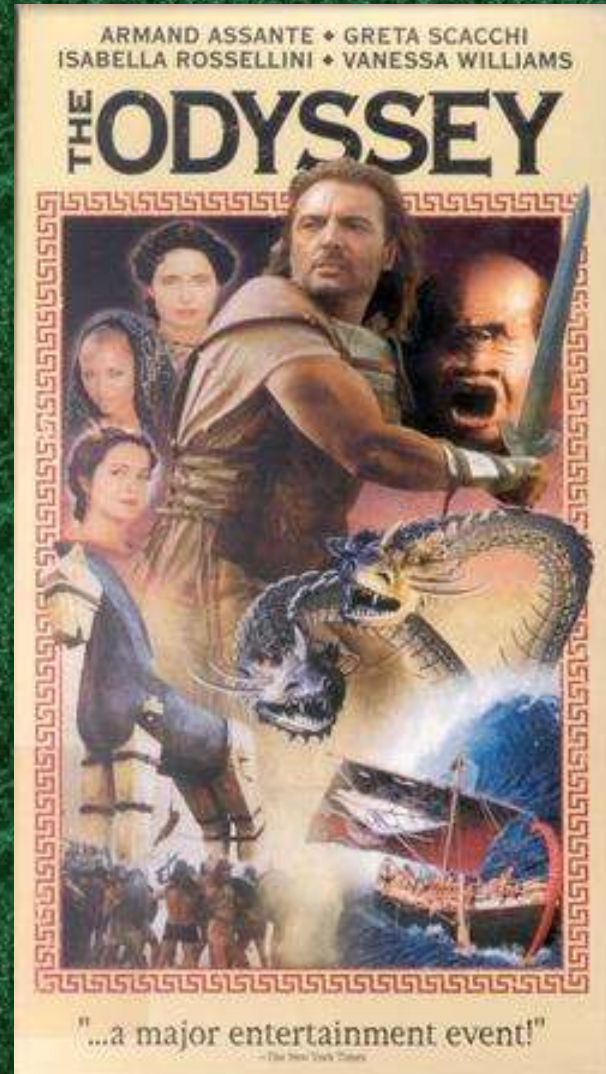


BEOWULF is an **EPIC** poem.

- 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 “Iliad” 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:

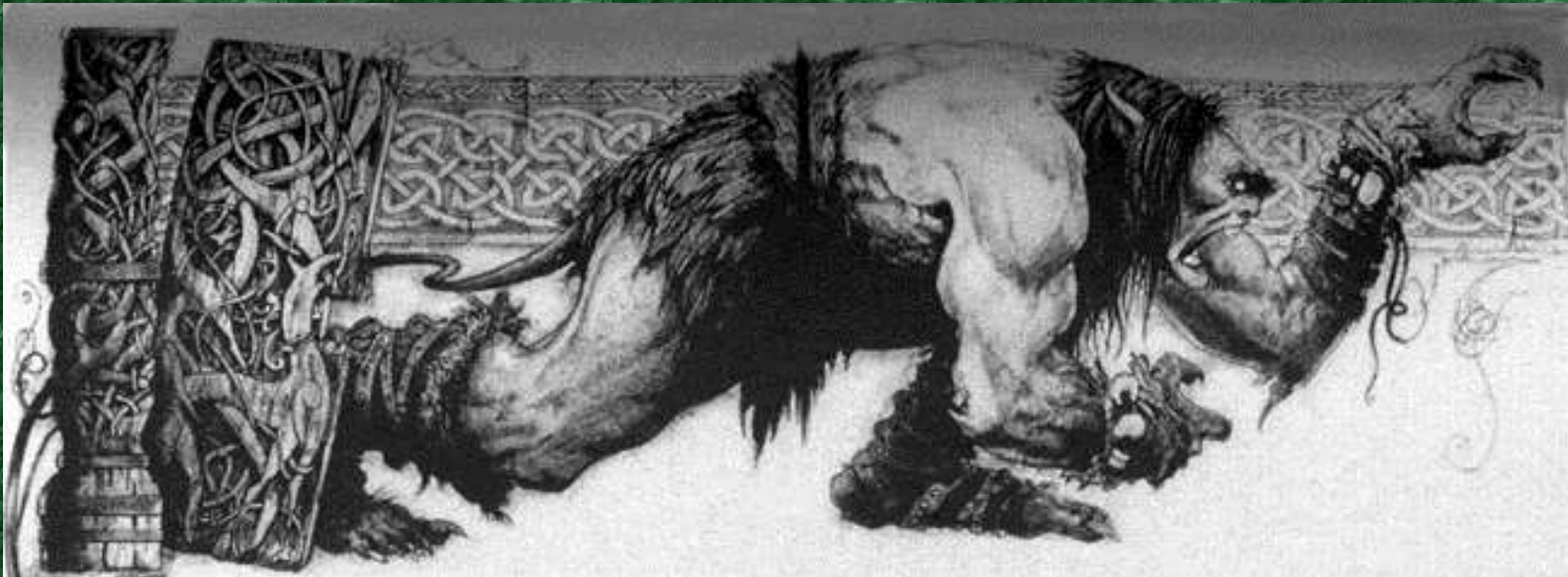
- A long narrative poem
- Larger than life hero; often with super-human characteristics
- Concerns eternal human problems like the struggle between **good and evil**
- Presented in a serious manner using elevated (poetic) language
- Hero represents widespread national, cultural, or religious values

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.)



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...the Battle with the Dragon

(It not only represents evil but also greed.)



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

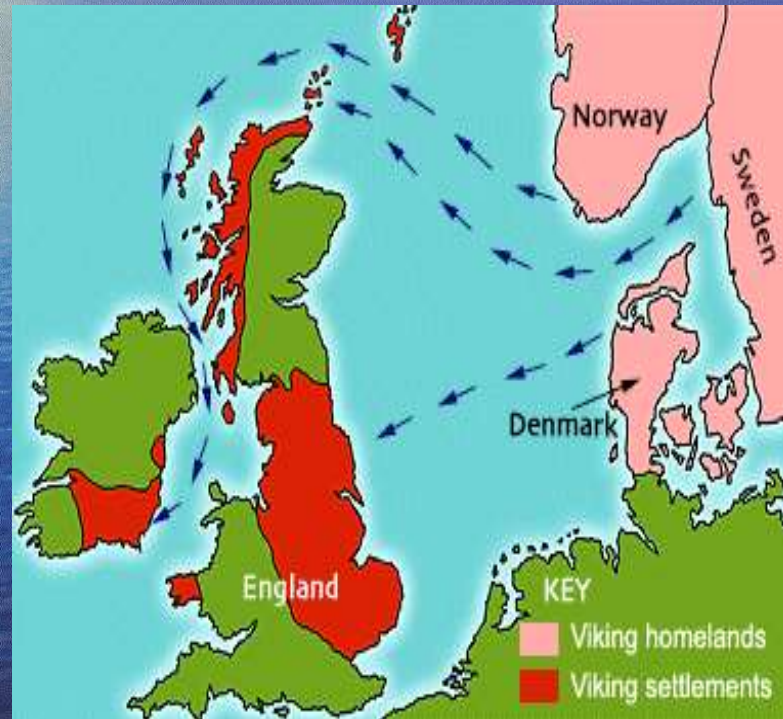
- loyalty
- valor
- selflessness
- sense of justice



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)



Note:

None of the action
takes place in
England!!!

The Scary, Horror Movie “Where”



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)



I like to think of them this way, in terms which may mean more to your or my generation:

Our bed on a stormy night when
we are alone in the house (where
we should feel safe.)



A murky lake or a beach where
Jaws takes place.



JAWS

Copyright 1975 Universal Studios

The dark recesses of the earth: a
cave, or even your own dark
basement!!!



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
 - birth, death, fame/success/glory, honor, friendship, conflict, home, country, adventure, spirituality
 - all of these things transcend English literature and matter to all people)

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.

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.

Alliteration in tongue twisters.



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

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.

Elegy

- An elegy is a poem that mourns the death of a person or laments something lost.



Epithet

- An epithet is an adjective or other descriptive phrase that is regularly used to characterize a person, place, or thing.
- Examples:
 - Richard the Lion-Hearted
 - King Alfred the Great
 - America the Beautiful
 - The Lord of all Life
 - The Ruler of Glory