## Beowulf



A two-week literacy unit for Years 3 and 4 from KS2History.com

#### **About this Unit**

This pack is based on the version of Beowulf by Rob Lloyd Jones (Usborne Young Reading). There are other versions of Beowulf available for children, but this edition is most suitable for lower Key Stage 2 and the work in this pack refers directly to the Usborne text.

This ten-lesson unit of work is based on the 2014 National Curriculum for Year 3 and 4. Many schools choose to use this text alongside the Anglo Saxon history topic, although the plans are also designed to work as a standalone unit if required.

This two-week unit should be part of a wider literacy plan and is likely to build on what has been taught in other parts of Year 3 and 4 literacy work.

The ten lessons in this unit aim to give children the opportunity to read the whole story of Beowulf and to write their own hero myth based on the text. In the first week, pupils will engage imaginatively with the story of Beowulf through drama, discussion and a series of creative activities based on the text. They will become familiar with the structure of the story and the literary conventions of hero myths. There is also a SPAG focus on using powerful verbs, expanding noun phrases, using superlatives and placing commas in lists. Pupils will also have the opportunity to develop their inference skills. In the second week, pupils will use drama to develop ideas and extend their vocabulary. They will then plan their own hero myth and have the opportunity to draft and edit their stories before presenting them to an audience.

The literacy objectives covered in this unit are:

- To create a mythical character
- To use superlatives
- To describe contrasting settings
- To use 'power-of-3' to expand noun phrases
- To use powerful verbs
- To draw inferences from details in a text
- To use 'show-not-tell' as a writing technique
- To describe how tension builds in a story structure
- To create tension in my writing
- To prepare a group performance
- To identify conventions in mythical literature
- To make a plan for my writing
- To write my own hero myth
- To find words in a dictionary
- To organise paragraphs around a theme
- To edit and evaluate my writing
- To present my story to an audience



#### Week 1

#### **Monday**

- To create a mythical character
- To use superlatives (higher group)

#### Class Teaching

Talk Starter - Explain that Beowulf is an epic poem from Anglo Saxon times. Anglo Saxon poems were often performed as entertainment at feasts and would usually recount dramatic events about characters like heroes, kings, monsters and warriors (we call these 'stock characters'). Enlarge or distribute copies of the 'Characters in the story' page from the front of the book. Ask pupils to discuss what kind of stock characters these might be and to make predictions about how the characters might interact in the story.

**Main Input –** Read chapters 1-2 of *Beowulf*. Check pupils' understanding by asking:

- what was Denmark like?
- how did the king try to keep himself safe?
- what/who was the big threat to Heorot?
  Ask one pupil to pretend to be the king.
  Hot seat the king, asking him questions about what had been happening and how he felt about his warriors being destroyed by Grendel. Ask pupils to discuss what kind of great hero would be needed to step in and help the king.

#### **Group Work**

Independent or TA: Challenge pupils to work in pairs to transform each other into a great hero who could defeat a monster like Grendel. Give out post-it notes and ask pupils to label each hero attribute before sticking it (gently!) onto their partner (for example, 'arms with enormous muscles', 'a voice as loud as thunder' and 'feet that can run faster than a cheetah'). Once they have finished, pupils should write a short paragraph about their new hero. Prompt them to exaggerate to make their hero sound as great as possible (heroes in myths are usually exaggerated because they must appear naturally greater than normal people).

Teacher guided – higher group: Explain that in Anglo Saxon epics, heroes were often described using the superlative form of adjectives. This means describing things in the best or greatest forms compared to others, such as tallest, fastest or most intelligent. Use Resource A to help this group understand how to form superlatives, and then challenge them to use superlatives as they complete the independent activity above.

#### Plenary

Hold 'hero auditions' to look for a great hero who can help the king. Choose pupils to present their hero to the class, reading out the paragraph they have written. Then as a class, vote on which hero might be best placed to help the king defeat Grendel. Then read chapters 3-5 of Beowulf to find out what happens when the hero arrives.

#### **Tuesday**

- To describe contrasting settings
- To use the 'power-of-3' to expand noun phrases

#### Class Teaching

Talk Starter - Reread chapters 1-2, asking children to think about the two contrasting settings of inside and outside Heorot. Ask pupils to make a pretend phone call to each other in pairs, imagining that one is inside and the other is outside the palace. They should describe to each other what it is like where each of them is. Main Input - Display the sentence 'The hall was decorated with ivory, silver and dazzling gold.' Explain that epic writers often used the 'powerof-3' to make descriptions easier to imagine. Enlarge the double spread picture of the hall on pages 4-5 and ask pupils to think of their own power-of-3 sentences describing the scene, such as 'The warriors feast on fresh bread, fine wine and roasted meats.' Model writing down some examples, drawing attention to the correct use of the comma.

#### Group Work Independent or TA:

Ask pupils to use the inside/outside diagram from **Resource B** to record words and phrases that describe the two contrasting settings. Then they should write sentences to describe the settings, using the power—of-3. You might like to give pupils copies of the illustrations from the text, or allow them to add their own imaginative ideas to the two settings.

# **Teacher guided – lower group:**Support this group in writing their power-of-3 sentences by modelling lots of examples together. Pupils may need help to remember where to place the comma.

Ask pupils to repeat the phone call activity from the starter, but this time they should make sure they include some power-of-3 sentences in their descriptions.

**Plenary** 

#### Wednesday

- To use powerful verbs

#### Class Teaching

Word Level Starter - Ask pupils to close their eyes and imagine that they can see a terrifying monster. The monster does not make any noises but it is moving in some way. Ask pupils to think about how the monster moves and then write down a list of words that would explain what it is doing, such as crawling, smashing, creeping, stomping.

Main Input - Read chapters 2 and 5 of Beowulf, asking pupils to listen out for the descriptions of Grendel. While you are reading, ask pupils to make a note of any powerful verbs that show Grendel moving his body. When you have finished, write some of the verbs onto small pieces of paper and put them in a small bag or box and then ask pupils to sit in a circle. Choose a pupil to secretly pick a word from the bag and act out the verb, allowing the others to guess the word. Continue until all of the words have been used.

#### **Group Work**

Independent or TA: Give pupils time to design their own monster, using Resource C. Once they have drawn their monster, they should record around the edges of their picture some powerful verbs that show how the monster moves and acts. Prompt pupils to think beyond the way the monster moves around, but to also consider how it uses its hands, eyes, mouth, head and voice.

If you want to extend this activity, you might like to challenge pupils to make

**Teacher guided – middle group:** Help this group to extend their vocabulary by using thesauruses to generate a more ambitious range of verbs.

their monsters out of clay, collage

materials or paint.

#### Plenary

Give pupils time to share their monster designs in pairs. Ask partners to give feedback about the verbs chosen for the monster, explaining which powerful verbs are most effective and suggesting additions or improvements where they can.

#### **Thursday**

- To draw inferences from details in a text
- To use show-not-tell as a writing technique

#### Class Teaching

**Sentence Level Starter –** Give out copies of the cards from **Resource D**. Ask pupils to read the sentences about the king and to match up the descriptions on the right with the emotions on the left. Explain that texts sometimes describe how characters look or act and from that we can *infer* how they feel even if the text does explain that directly. Sometimes writers call this technique 'show-not-tell'.

Main Input – Ask the pupils to quickly summarise in pairs what has happened so far in the story. Then read chapters 6-7. This is an exciting section of the story with lots of actions. Ask the pupils to discuss what we can infer from these show-not-tell sentences from the text:

- The king's face was pale. His hand shook as he pointed.
- Beowulf's lip set into a grim line.
- The men cheered and joked as dawn blazed across the sky.

Explain that pupils are going to write a letter home from one of the warriors who watched the fight take place, explaining what they saw. Model writing part of the letter, using lots of show-not-tell sentences to suggest how the characters felt without directly telling the reader.

#### **Group Work**

Independent or TA: Give children time to write their letters home from the warrior to describe what happened in the fight. Challenge them to show characters' feelings and thoughts using the show-not-tell technique.

Teacher guided – selected group: Target pupils who will find the concept of show-not-tell difficult. Talk about show-not-tell together, acting out some of the ideas from Resource D and talking about how they show us what the characters might be feeling. Focus on how faces and bodies look when we experience different emotions. Then support these pupils to include some show-not-tell sentences in their writing.

highlight the show-not-tell sentences that they used in their letter. Then choose a few pupils to read aloud their writing to the class, asking the others to identify the show-not-tell sentences and to infer what they tell us about the characters' feelings.

**Plenary** 

Ask pupils to

#### **Friday**

- To describe how tension builds up in a story structure
- To create tension in my writing

#### Class Teaching

Text Level Starter - Explain that Beowulf follows the same structure as conventional hero myths, where a hero needs to defeat a monster. As the hero gets closer the monster, the tension builds and it begins to look like the hero may not survive, but at the last minute the hero finds strength and overcomes the monster. There is a good example of this in chapter 7 of Beowulf. As Beowulf journeys towards Grendel's Mother, the setting of the lake gets progressively spookier and more and more dangerous obstacles are introduced as the tension in the plot builds. The tension peaks at the point where it looks like Beowulf may be defeated and then the tension is completely relieved when Beowulf emerges triumphant from the lake. Show the pupils the tension mountain from Resource E and ask them to decide where on the diagram each of the cards at the bottom would go to show how tension builds up. You could do this together as a class or in small groups. Main Input - Give out copies of chapter 7 and ask pupils to highlight any words or phrases that describe the setting. Ask pupils if they can find the point in the narrative where it seems like Beowulf might not be able to overcome the monster.

Look together at the completed tension mountain from the starter activity and add in some of the words and phrases that pupils highlighted, discussing where to put them on the mountain.

#### **Group Work**

Independent or TA: Challenge pupils to design a set for a computer game where the hero is journeying towards a monster and then fighting it. The setting should become progressively spookier and more difficult to travel through as tension builds on the journey. Pupils should draw a journey map of how the hero travels through the setting, labelling the difficulties that the hero encounters along the way, with the monster waiting at the end. Encourage them to think about natural elements (like fog or rain), physical features (like caves or stalactites) and obstacles added by the enemy, such as magic spells or trap doors. The hazards should become progressively more dangerous as the journey unfolds.

#### Teacher guided - higher group:

Explain that another way that authors build tension is to vary their sentence length, by mixing long sentences filled with description with shorter sentences, usually with action or important details in them. Ask pupils to look through chapter 7 again, spotting how longer sentences and shorter sentences work together to build tension. Then, once pupils have designed their journey maps as in the independent activity, challenge them to write a short description of the journey through it, mixing long and short sentences together.

#### Plenary

Give pupils the chance to share their journey maps in groups, telling the story of the hero travelling through as the tension mounts. Pupils in the higher group should try to use a mixture of sentence lengths as they recount their journey.

Now read the rest of the story to the end, discussing the similarities and differences between the encounter with Grendel's Mother and the encounter with the dragon.

#### Week 2

#### **Monday**

- To prepare a group performance
- To identify conventions in mythical literature

#### Class Teaching

Text Level Starter - Remind pupils that Beowulf does not come from a story written today but from an Anglo Saxon epic poem, created to be performed aloud as entertainment during feasts. The characters are exaggerated and the events dramatic to make it entertaining to listen to, and the language is often alliterative and full of story-telling phrases to move the plot along. Although we are reading a modern translation written especially for children, the original poem was written down in the 8<sup>th</sup> Century in a language called 'Old English'. Listen to a reading in the original language here. <a href="http://tinyurl.com/jy7ew3b">http://tinyurl.com/jy7ew3b</a>. Ask pupils if they can hear or see any words that look familiar.

Main Input – Share the table from Resource F. The table lists some of the conventions of hero myths like *Beowulf*. Work together as a class to fill in the first column of the table to show how each convention is demonstrated in the *Beowulf* story. Challenge pupils to find evidence from the text where possible, especially Year 4 children.

#### **Group Work**

**Mixed Ability Groups:** Children will work in groups of three to develop ideas for their own hero myth. Ask them to act out a story about a hero who steps in to save a king or queen from a terrible monster. Each group should include a narrator, whose job it is to move the story on using storytelling phrases. Prompt pupils to build tension as the hero journeys towards the monster and to use body language and facial expressions to show how characters are feeling.

#### Plenary

Give each group time to show their performance to the class. Ask the others to comment on how well the performance followed the conventions of hero myths.

If you want an extension or homework activity, you could challenge pupils to research other hero myths, like The Odyssey, to see how they follow the same conventions.

#### **Tuesday**

- To plan a hero myth

#### Class Teaching

**Drama Starter –** Explain that some hero myths include a special power or a magical object that is given to the hero by the gods, such as the supernatural strength in Beowulf's hands that he uses to defat Grendel. Ask pupils to sit in a circle and to imagine that you are passing around a magical pot. As the imaginary pot is passed to each pupil, they should mime pulling out a magical object that gives them a special power and showing how it is used (for example, magic glasses that allow you to see through walls or special gloves that turn enemies into stone when they touch them). The others should guess what the special object or power is. Main Input - Tell pupils that today they will be planning their own hero myth. Show pupils the planning template from Resource G and demonstrate filling it in together, giving pupils plenty of time to discuss ideas.

#### **Group Work**

Independent or TA: Children record their ideas for their own hero myth using Resource G (enlarge to A3). They should use the boxes at the bottom to record useful words and phrases, thinking back to the powerful verbs and show-not-tell phrases that they were developing last week.

Teacher guided – selected group: Take the opportunity to work with children who find it difficult to think of their own ideas. You may like to reread sections of the book to this group to help them to think of some similar ideas of their own and to put them in a logical sequence.

#### Plenary

Ask children to tell their own stories to a partner by following their plan. Partners should take feedback from each other, including ideas for improvements or additions to the word lists at the bottom.

#### Wednesday

- To write my own hero myth

#### Class Teaching

Sentence Level Starter - Display the sentence 'Monsters walked on the moors'. Ask pupils to improve the sentence by expanding it and adding descriptive phrases and adverbials. See how many different variations you can come up with as a class.

Main Input – Show children the checklist from Resource H (version A only for now). This should help them to improve the quality of their writing by using the skills they have been working on during this unit. Then model writing the beginning of a hero myth, referring to the checklist as you go and taking suggestions for improvements from the class. Emphasise that as hero myths are intended to be read aloud, they should use plenty of storytelling language to keep the listener interested.

#### **Group Work**

Independent or TA: Children should work on writing a first draft of their own hero myth, following the plans that they made yesterday. Remind them to use the checklist from **Resource H** as they go. Make available other resources that may support, such as the word lists from last week.

Teacher guided – higher group: Use the opportunity to extend your higher group as they write their first draft of a hero myth. Prompt them to use superlatives to describe their hero and add the challenges of adding alliterative phrases and varying sentence lengths for effect. Allow them to work on version B of the checklist, which includes some extra challenges. You may need to model writing these features to the group.

#### Plenary

Ask the children to use their checklists to evaluate their own written work. Can they underline the features from the checklist in their own writing?

#### **Thursday**

- To edit and evaluate my writing
- To organise paragraphs around a theme
- To use the first two or three letters of a word to check its spelling in a dictionary

#### Class Teaching

# **Text Level Starter –** Revise the basics of how to use paragraphs by visiting <a href="http://tinyurl.com/coadzyw">http://tinyurl.com/coadzyw</a> and playing the BBC Bitesize paragraphs game. Ask children to look through their work from yesterday with a partner and check together that their paragraphing is correct. **Main Input –** Remind the children how to find words in the dictionaries using the first 2 or 3 letters. Hand out dictionaries and

see how quickly they can find it. Explain that children will need to use these skills for editing their work using dictionaries and thesauruses. Show pupils the editing toolkit from **Resource I**, discussing each of the elements. Explain that children will use the toolkit while editing their work today, colouring in each piece of the puzzle that they use as they edit.

play a quick game of Dictionary Challenge,

where you call out a word and the children

#### **Group Work**

Independent or TA: Ask the children to edit their myths by both correcting and improving them. They should use their editing toolkits and colour in the pieces as they use each one. Not all pupils will colour in every piece but everyone should be able to complete at least some of the pieces. Remind them to use their dictionary and thesaurus skills to improve the vocabulary choices and to correct spellings.

Teacher guided – middle group: If you have children in your middle group who have included all of the features in their checklist and have written a strong myth, give them version B of the checklist and challenge them to include one or two of the extra features, with support.

#### Plenary

Give the children time to read their story to a randomly selected partner. In these pairs, ask pupils to select one thing that their partner has done well and one thing that they could improve further.

#### **Friday**

#### - To present my story to an audience

#### Class Teaching

**Talk Starter** - In small groups, ask the children to think of ways of completing these sentences:

I am Grendel's Mother, and I am happy because....

I am Grendel's Mother, and I am sad because....

I am Grendel's Mother, and I am angry because....

I am Grendel's Mother, and I am excited because....

When the children have completed the sentences, ask each group to read them aloud to the class, using their voices to express the emotion each time. Discuss how people's voices change when they are talking about each different emotion.

Main Input - Watch a clip of a storyteller reading part of Beowulf (https://tinyurl.com/hcjo582) or read a section yourself in a dramatic way. Ask the pupils to think about how the storyteller made the story come alive, particularly noting his use of intonation, facial expressions and way of emphasising important words. Explain that the pupils are going to become storytellers and perform their own myths out loud.

#### **Group Work**

All children: Give children time to practise performing their story. Prompt children to try out different ways of bringing their story alive, including

- reading bits in a louder/quieter voice
- speeding up a little in action-filled sections
- slowing down a bit to add suspense
- using body language, gestures or facial expressions
- making eye contact with their audience at appropriate moments.
- emphasising important words and phrases for effect.

Teacher guided – selected group: Work with children who will find it intimidating to read their story to an audience. Help them to practise reading their story and give encouragement and constructive feedback as you go.

#### Plenary

Give children the opportunity to read their final stories to an audience. You may wish to do this in one of the following ways:

- allowing each pupil to perform to their small group
- making a video of their performances and watching them as a class
- arranging for pupils to read their stories to another year group
- organising an assembly or performance in front of parents or other pupils.

## Resource A Super Superlatives!

The **superlative form** of an adjective shows the most extreme version of something, like the *strongest* or the *bravest*.

Use the following rules to form the superlative:

- · For most simple words, just add -est
- · e.g. longest, shortest, fastest
- If the root word ends in <u>consonant + -y</u> (like happy), change the -y to an -i and add -est e.g. happiest, speediest, heaviest
- If the root word ends in <u>consonant + -e</u> (like late), remove the -e and add -est e.g. latest, closest, nicest
- If the root word ends in <u>consonant + vowel + consonant</u> (like hot), double the final consonant and add –est e.g. hottest, biggest, saddest
- If the root word has two or more syllables and does not end in y (like beautiful), add the word most and omit the suffix
  - e.g. most beautiful, most powerful, most careful

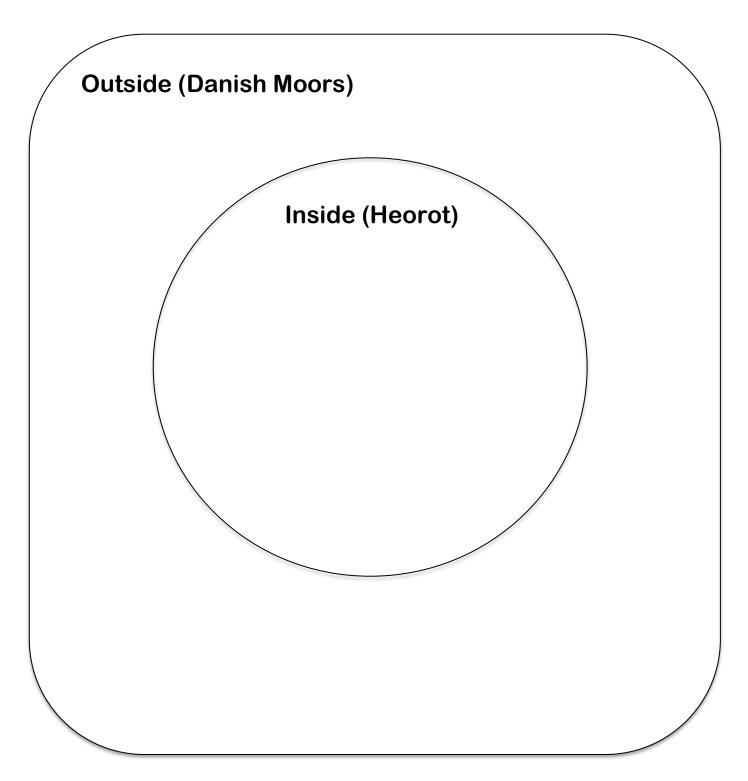
#### Change these adjectives into the superlative form

strong	hungry	high	steady
red	long	thoughtful	busy
close	important	large	thin
quick	powerful	angry	wise

### Resource B Inside/Outside



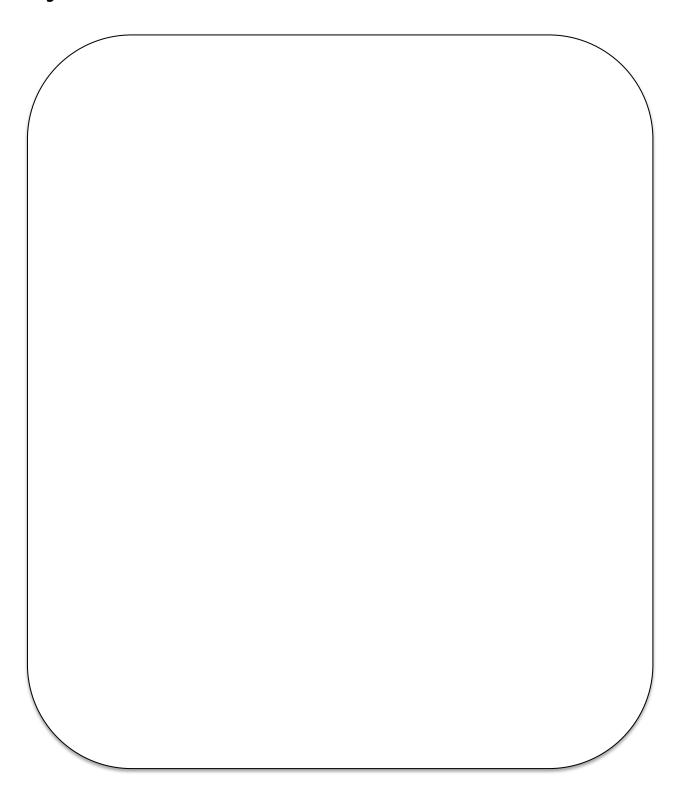
Use the diagram below to record words and phrases that describe the inside and outside settings.



Now use your words to make some power-of-3 sentences to describe the settings.

## Resource C **My Monster Design**

Design your own mythical monster. Then write some powerful verbs to show how your monster might move his body.



#### Resource D

#### Show-not-tell

Match the show-not-tell descriptions with the emotions.

angry

As the king welcomed his guests, his eyes shone as bright as torches. He spoke quickly and loudly, laughing and joking as more and more warriors arrived. Finally, he bounded towards the long table and lifted his glass into the air with an enormous cheer.

excited

The king raised a shaking hand and very slowly opened the door. He glanced across the vast ocean and then firmly closed the door again, bolting it shut with four different locks. "I need a hero," he whispered to nobody in particular, through gritted teeth and guivering lips.

frightened

Smiling as he wiped the sweat from his brow, the king let out a big sigh. His shoulders relaxed for the first time in days. As he looked across the hall, he knew that now was the time that he could put his shield to one side and enjoy feasting with his warriors.

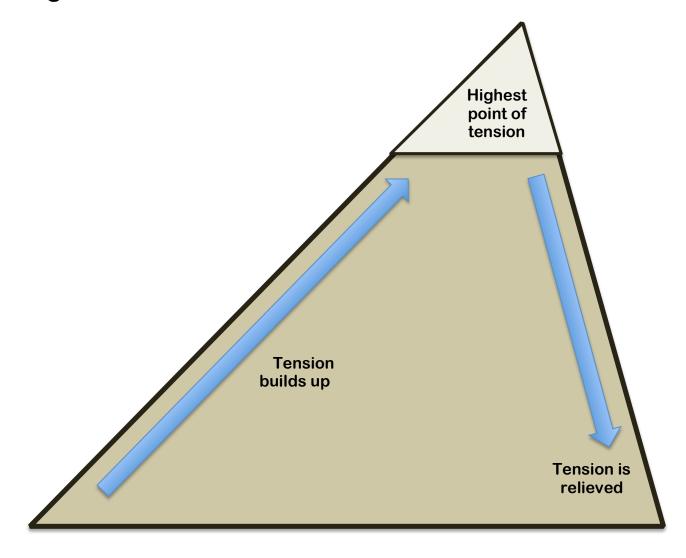
relieved

Everybody could hear the king's boots marching down the hall. He slammed his fists hard onto the long feasting table, knocking cups and plates onto the floor. "We will take this no more!" he cried, glaring with hardened eyes across the room. Everybody fell silent as they watched the king fiercely pick up his armour ready for action.

#### Resource E

#### **Tension Mountain**

Place the cards below on the correct place on the diagram to show how tension builds.



Grendel's mother and Beowulf start to battle.	Beowulf is dragged into an underwater cave, full of stalactites and skulls.	Beowulf dives deep into the lake and the light begins to fade.	Grendel's mother grips Beowulf into a dark spell from which no man has ever before broken free. Beowulf's friends fear that he has been defeated.
The light disappears completely and a long tentacle wraps itself around Beowulf.	The warriors reach the lake and are greeted by swirling fog and slimey water.	Beowulf and his warriors set of towards the lake.	Beowulf emerges from the lake triumphant, gripping the monster's head in his hand.

## Resource F Conventions of Hero Myths

Use the table to record how the different conventions are shown in Beowulf.

Conventions of hero myths	How are they demonstrated in Beowulf?
A brilliant hero who is better than other warriors	
The hero boasts about how great he/she is	
A monster or threat that somebody needs rescuing from	
A perilous journey for the hero	
Storytelling language and alliteration	
Somebody gives the hero a special task or quest	
The hero is nearly overcome by the monster but triumphs at the last minute	
A big reward for the hero	

## Resource G My Hero Myth Plan

The Setting of my story (Inside/Outside)			
The monster/threat	The hero (in	cluding any special powers /weapons)	
The hero's journey (w	vith increasing tension)		
The battle The hero's reward			
Powerful Verbs	Show-not-tell phrases	Power-of-3 phrases	

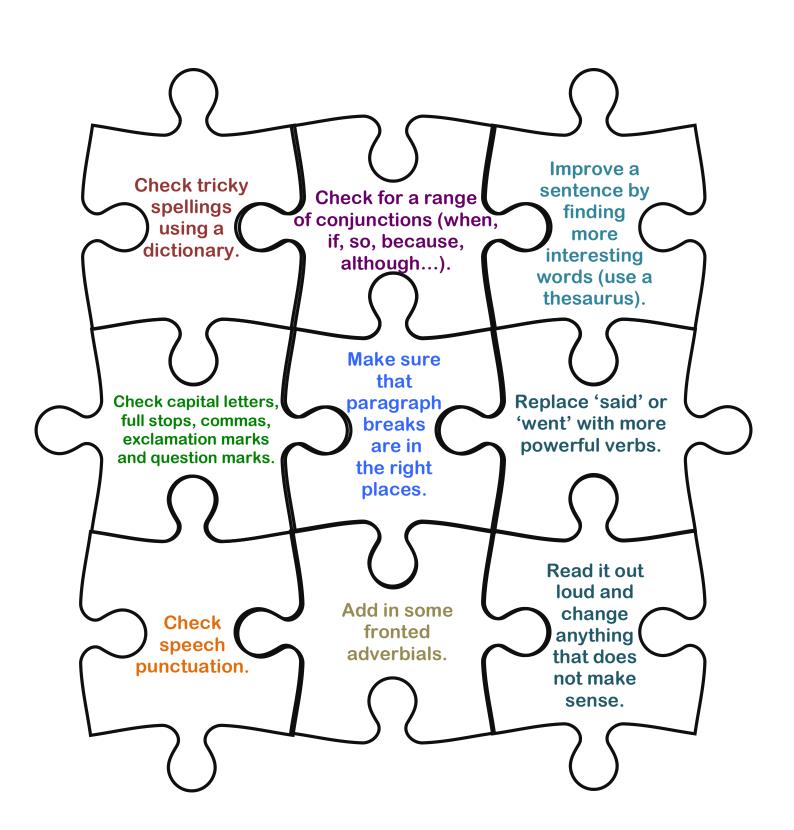
#### Resource H Hero Myth Success Criteria

Version A Did I remember to?	Pupil √	Teacher √
Describe the hero in an exaggerated way		
Include 2 contrasting settings (inside/outside)		
Use power-of-3 phrases		
Use powerful verbs		
Use some show-not-tell phrases		
Build tension on the hero's journey		

Version B	Pupil	Teacher
Did I remember to?	√	√
Describe the hero in an exaggerated way and use superlatives		
Include 2 contrasting settings (inside/outside)		
Use power-of-3 phrases		
Use powerful verbs		
Use some show-not-tell phrases		
Build tension on the hero's journey and use a mixture of sentence lengths for effect.		
Use storytelling language		
Include some alliteration		

## Resource I My Editing Toolkit

Colour in each piece of the puzzle that you complete as you edit your writing.



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