

# Essay on beowulf movie vs poem

[Literature](#), [Poem](#)



After reading the Old English heroic epic poem “ Beowulf”, which considered to be one of the most significant masterpieces of Anglo-Saxon literature, and watching the 2007 American screen version of the same name directed by Robert Zemeckis I have identified the similarities and differences of interpretation. The film director has chosen this particular literature work as it holds important information regarding relationships and controversies of the society and kingship in Old England. In addition, the poem is extremely exciting and contains numerous astonishing descriptions and vivid characters.

Altogether the movie accurately resembles the heroic poem; there are several dissimilarities that the film director did not take into consideration. First of all, in the poem the main hero Beowulf returns to Geatland in order to become the king of his uncle’s kingdom. Whereas, in the motion picture he remains in the land of the Danes and turns to be the king of the Hrothgar’s kingdom. Secondly, in the poem Beowulf takes the life of Grendel’s mother, while in the film they have sexual intercourse and soon Grendel’s mother gives birth to a dragon-like child. According to the poem Beowulf has never had any sexual relations with Grendel’s mother, and therefore for the culmination of movie the dragon Beowulf withstands is not his son, but a random flying beast that he fights when returning home to Geatland to attend the coronation and become a fair ruler. Moreover, the author Neil Gaiman and screenwriter Roger Avary presented their vision and motivation standing behind Grendel’s behavior. They disagree with the concept that Beowulf appears to be an unreliable narrator, especially in the part where he reveals the details of his battle with Grendel’s mother. These changes made

it easier to link the third and the second acts of the screenplay that are divided in the poem by a fifty years.

In addition, according to the researches conducted by the scholars there were some other changes made in the movie. Firstly, the film depicts Beowulf as a man of flaws and imperfection. Secondly, the portrayal of Hrothgar and Unferth does not correspond with their representation in the poem. In the movie Hrothgar is depicted as a debauch alcohol addict, whereas Unferth carries feature of a pietistic Christian. In the movie the portrayal of Grendel's mother is rather inaccurate as she is presented as a beautiful seductive woman, mother of Grendel's (Hrothgar's offspring) and the dragon (Beowulf's child). For this reason I believe that the film director should not have given the role to Angelina Jolie, who is recognized by numerous publications as " the most beautiful" woman in the world. Finally, Beowulf becomes the king of the land of Danes instead of becoming the ruler of his native Geatland.

In the movie the characters Hrothgar and then Beowulf are both depicted as men who have love affairs on the side, whereas the literature work gives the readers the concept that in the Medieval times kings were moral, respectable, honest, ingenuous and loyal men who put safety and security of their kingdoms first of all. Meanwhile, in the movie Grendel is portrayed as an immature human-like beast undergoing severe pain every time he hears loud sound from Herot, whereas the book presents him as a horrifying and furious monster. At the same time the movie arouses feelings of sympathy and sadness towards Grendel's, who is hurting in contrast to the impression

that the reader gets from the poem where his character is a devil's progeny who is not worthy of compassion and empathy. His mother also possessed different traits of character - in the film she personifies beauty, wisdom and ambition. Although the poem does not contain any precise description of Grendel's mother, the reader pictures her as a hideous and furious creature capable of avenging her son and taking life of anybody in her way.

Many scholars expressed their opinions regarding the semantic changes conducted to the adaptation of the epic poem. Bonnie Wheeler, the Director of the Medieval Studies at the Southern Methodist University, is convinced that "... it's a great cop-out on a great poem. It seems to me you could do so much better now. And the story of Beowulf is so much more powerful." Another philosophy professor Stephen T. Asma disagrees that " Zemeckis's more tender-minded film version suggests that the people who cast out Grendel are the real monsters. The monster, according to this charity paradigm, is just misunderstood rather than evil (similar to the version presented in John Gardner's novel Grendel). The blame for Grendel's violence is shifted to the humans, who sinned against him earlier and brought the vengeance upon themselves. [...] In the film, Grendel is even visually altered after his injury to look like an innocent, albeit scaly, little child. In the original Beowulf, the monsters are outcasts because they're bad (just as Cain, their progenitor, was outcast because he killed his brother), but in the film Beowulf the monsters are bad because they're outcasts [...] Contrary to the original Beowulf, the new film wants us to understand and humanize our monsters."