

# Arthur versus beowulf: a heroic comparison

[Literature](#), [British Literature](#)



One of the main topics discussed in lesson one is the fact that heroes over time and overseas all heroes have something in common; which is true in the case of King Arthur and Beowulf. It is obvious that they are similar in the fact that they are both heroes, but what makes them an idol of their time and in their culture are poles apart. There are many things that are different about Beowulf and King Arthur, but the ones that stand out the most are what kind of hero they are and what actions they did to make them heroic. Both heroes possess qualities that others do not have, but it is what they do with those abilities that prompts someone to write a story about them and idolize them in time. King Arthur and Beowulf are both Heroes that stories originated in the England area. They were written at different times, by a different era of people, but some of the core ethics are present in both stories. Both heroes were admired because they saved a whole group of people. King Arthur and Beowulf were also leaders, Beowulf was king of the Geats, and Arthur was the king of England. This is interesting because this means that they were both well known even before they had stories written about them, and they both possess qualities that can be found in leaders. While Arthur is a romance hero and Beowulf is an epic hero, the use of a magical weapon is seen in both stories which is generally a characteristic in the romance stories. " Then he saw, hanging on the wall, a heavy sword, hammered by the giants, strong and blessed with their magic, ..." 242-244 Beowulf. Arthur's magical weapon is Excalibur, which is pretty much well known to anyone that has heard of his story. I also felt that fate had a role in both of the stories. In Arthur's dream he had a premonition about what was going to happen to his people, " Below him, many fathoms deep, was a dark

well, an in the water swam serpents, dragons, and wild beasts. Suddenly the scaffold tilted and Arthur was flung into the water, where all the creatures struggled towards and began tearing him from limb to limb." Malory 194. The beasts and dragons were the two armies and when someone drew their sword Arthur, who was connected to his people was thrown in. The Anglo-Saxons believed that one could avoid fate as long as they did brave acts, but eventually it would catch up. Beowulf held it off for a long time but eventually accepted his fate in a very honorable way. The similarities between the two heroes are very general and hard to express upon. The differences are much more specific and even though they are differences relationships can still be drawn between each other. The biggest difference between Arthur and Beowulf is what type of hero they are classified as in literature. Since The two stories were written at different times by people of a different culture the ideals of a hero were a little different, while they still had the same central ideas. During the time the story of Arthur was written chivalry was becoming a kind of lifestyle for an honorable person to live by, which brought about the era of the romance hero. The excerpt that was read of King Arthur was only a small part of his large and well known story, which did not show too much of the characteristics of a romance story but more the style of writing it was in. Though it did have one of the main characteristics that their disappearance is unknown and leaves room that they might one day return. " In Many parts of Britain it is believed that King Arthur did not die and that he will return to us and win fresh glory and the Holy cross of our lord Jesu Christ." Malory 200. Beowulf origins are unknown, all we know is that it was written in the time of the Anglo-Saxons, and that it

was probably passed down by word of mouth before it was actually written. Beowulf is classified as an epic hero, he possess superior human strength, the highest ethical standards, and in his quest he must defeat monsters with dark powers. The difference between these types of heroes is that King Arthur could possibly be a real person, while Beowulf seems unrealistic. Though both characters were both heroes what sets them apart was their actions. The stories themselves are what makes Beowulf and Arthur different. It was their actions that prompted someone write a story about them. Beowulf was not an ordinary human, he had super human strength and fought monsters. Even though he was extraordinary, a story about him might not have been written if he did not fight Grendel. Beowulf first helped out the Danes by fighting and Killing Grendel, a monster that had been at war with Hrothgar for 12 years. This was the start of Beowulf's legacy and the people began to glorify him. " Then old and young rejoiced, turned back From that happy pilgrimage, mounted their hard-hooved Horses, High-spirited stallions, and rode them slightly toward Herot again, retelling Beowulf's bravery as they jogged along." Beowulf 143-147. Killing Grendel lead to Beowulf killing Grendel's mother and the dragon. King Arthur was not an ordinary person but he had no special ability over anyone else. The reason his legacy was made into a story is because he was such a great leader, and how he came to be leader. Everyone knows the story of King Arthur and the knights of the round table, but there are so many versions, and the only part of Malory's story that is in the text book is the very end. It can be assumed that King Arthur was a great leader because he had so many loyal fighters with him at the last battle. Though King Arthur was a

romance hero and Beowulf was epic hero, their actions are worthy of being retold. That is what all heroes have in common. In conclusion Beowulf and King Arthur are similar in the fact that they have both accomplished a great deal and deserve to be remembered through stories, though what they did to deserve this the honor, was very different.