

# Beowulf

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



Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and Beowulf share several similar qualities. Each story suggests that honor, truth, and heroism are the most important values a person can exhibit, though in each tale these are manifested in different ways. Both characters, in attempts to keep these values, make mistakes that endanger their lives. Beowulf is an incredible, and at times unbelievable, hero who can and will attempt to defeat anyone to keep others safe. This will eventually lead to his death as he successfully defeats the Dragon. But as ruling king at the time his subsequent death leaves his people in a worse predicament than before. Now, without a just ruler, the kingdom will possibly undergo uncertainty and chaos as no heir to the throne is available. Beowulf should have taken the same path as King Hrothgar and “subcontracted” the dragon killing to someone with less to endanger. In “Sir Gawain and The Green Knight”, Sir Gawain also exhibits this type of selfless bravery, however, unlike Beowulf’s actions; Sir Gawain is forced into a situation to save Arthur. Tricked by the Green Knight and Morgan le Faye, Gawain, driven by his sense of duty and honor, must sacrifice his own life for those ideals. I believe that though Gawain is a bit foolish in his quest to lose his head, he did make the correct decision in protecting Arthur. Like King Beowulf, the loss of Arthur would have been very detrimental to the society at the time. Gawain sacrifices himself in order to preserve Order. The world of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is governed by well-defined codes of behavior, most importantly the code of chivalry. The ideals of chivalry derive from a Christian concept of morality. This sense of morality is somewhat shown in Beowulf as well. Beowulf seeks to kill Grendel, his mother, and the dragon because they pose a threat to the civilized people of the time. A

descendent of Cain, Grendel is inherently evil and must be destroyed. But while Beowulf is ever ready and willing to die in his quests, Gawain values his life far more. This also reflects on the influences of Christianity in the two stories. In Beowulf's world, a man was only immortalized by his actions and in the memories of others. Beowulf took risks so that his deeds would be far more exciting and thus more popular, easier for the story tellers to remember. Gawain, however, being a devoutly religious man, believed in an afterlife. In this regard, he appears to be the more human and believable of the two heroes. While assured of another place beyond the mortal realm, he still fears death like any other human.