

There and back again a comparison of the hobbit and beowulf essay



There and Back Again A comparison of The Hobbit and Beowulf Interesting similarities can be found between The Hobbit and Beowulf. These books shockingly share a lot of the characters, symbols, and scenes. Who copied who though? The answer is simple, Tolkein. He didn't really copy the poem he just used a lot of the same ideas of Beowulf. J. R. R Tolkein was a professor at Oxford University. Where He read the epic poem Beowulf. He wrote some essays over the poem and really liked Beowulf. It shows in the book The Hobbit. Upon further examination the two tales are quite similar.

Let's start with comparing the main characters, Bilbo and Beowulf. Bilbo was a small hobbit, " About half our height, and smaller than bearded dwarves" (Tolkein, 2) and Beowulf was a great big man with enormous strength, " He was the strongest of men alive in that day" (Beowulf, 180). Obviously they are total opposites. One big one small. One thing that is the same size though, is their hearts they both have big hearts and are brave. Beowulf is probably a tad bit more brave but Bilbo is close behind. Both characters set out on a quest or adventure. Beowulf to kill the dreaded beast Grendel and Bilbo to slay the notorious dragon Smaug.

They are both very successful with the task that was presented ahead of them. Beowulf kills Grendel. Bilbo aids in the killing of Smaug and to regain the stolen treasure for his companion Thorin Oakenshield. The two heroes were not on their quests for the same reasons though. Beowulf had heroism for his reasoning on making the journey to Hrothgar's kingdom to slay Grendel. Bilbo was kind of tricked into going on his adventure and had nothing but greed on his little hobbit mind. They got a lot more than they anticipated on their journeys. They both had to battle unexpected foes.

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Bilbo probably had the worst of the two. He had to battle trolls, goblins, Gollum, wargs, spiders, wood elves, and then on top of all those nasty creatures throw in a fire breathing dragon, Snaug. These wouldn't be near as daunting to Beowulf as there are to Bilbo, but there are very challenging for such a small hobbit from the Shire. Beowulf fought Grendel and his mother, some not very well described sea monsters, and a dragon also. During his battle with the dragon he was fatally wounded and died later. Bilbo survived all his enemies without even a scratch.

The two were both great adventures. As well as similarities in the characters there is also quite a bit of similarities in the setting of the story. At one point in *The Hobbit* the gang is captured by some Goblins. Their home is similar to Grendel's mother's home: "It was deep, deep, dark, such as only goblins that have taken to living in the heart of the mountains can see through."

(Tolkein, 68) Grendel's mother's home was in an underwater cave. "That black she-wolf bore him away tugged through the water that warrior from above to her deep cavern-den" (Beowulf, 1940).

Gandalf rescues them, but Bilbo gets left behind. The goblins hated that the party had some swords, Glamdring and Orcrist which had been used in earlier wars and killed many goblins. These swords were sort of similar to the Grendel's mother's feelings about Beowulf's possession of Grendel's arm. "They hated it and hated worse any one who carried it." (Tolkein, 76) "Then his mother sorrowed grieved for her child greedy for man-blood went prowling for vengeance payment for her son." (Beowulf, 1520) The goblins are similar to Grendel's mother. Bilbo's reappearance was also similar to Beowulf's.

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After Bilbo escaped yet another creature and found the ring, he finds his party. Who was bickering about where their burglar was. This was because they thought, like Beowulf's warriors, that he might be dead. The ring could be seen as a parallel to the sword that Beowulf finds in Grendel's mother's cave. They don't know what it is, but it ends up saving their lives. The Hobbit is a wonderful book. It is just the prelude to a wonderful journey of a relative of Bilbo's named Frodo, whom could be compared to Wiglaf as the next main character of what adventures are to be had after the story.

Overall there are quite a few similarities. It is quite clear that Beowulf had a big influence on Tolkein's The Hobbit. The similarities are indistinguishable and obvious that Tolkein had read Beowulf and enjoyed it enough to incorporate it into his hit series The Lord of The Rings. His choice in the characters, symbols, and settings were influenced by an epic poem written hundreds of years earlier. His adaptations made The Hobbit the great book that it is. It is a wonderful book.