

# Example of women in beowulf compared to other heroic narratives essay

[Family](#), [Parents](#)



The women in Beowulf and other heroic narratives of other cultures were forced to take the background roles in the society because they were considered as weak and passive. The women in these epic stories were considered inferior to men and they were owned by their husbands once they got married. In the story of Beowulf and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight by Geoffrey Chaucer, the women took active roles than what was expected of them by the society.

Beowulf is an epic poem that primarily focuses on the men heroic deeds, however, women play an integral part in the poem. In Beowulf, as the poem starts, the women in the story appear inconspicuous, however, as it progresses, the author does not overlook them entirely (Overing 102). For instance, in Beowulf, Grendel's mother is depicted as a monstrous woman who is ready to die while avenging her son's death. Grendel's mother as she is known in the entire story played a significant role in Beowulf just to demonstrate the strength of women. On the other hand, in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Morgan le Faye and Lady Bertilak go beyond what the society wants them to do and diminished the roles of their male counterparts in the society by proving them as cowards who do not live up to the societal standards set for them as powerful men. The women in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and Beowulf were an exception and never acted in the way the society had restricted them. In fact, they proved to be exceptions to the ideal medieval women who are considered inferior to men.

All through medieval, women were only allowed to play the mother, wife, caregiver, and peace maker roles in the society. They were not allowed to take the roles of defending the society since they were reduced to the roles

of women in the society. However, the women in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and Beowulf were extraordinary. Grendel's mother played a mother's role of protecting his son and even revenging his death because, she was simply a woman who was not ready to be subjected by the society and he did things that women were not allowed to do in the society during her time. However, there are women who allowed themselves to be subjected to the societal rules by playing the roles of a peace maker and a care giver, for instance Hildeburh and Wealhtheow (Overing 123).

In Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Lady Bertilak known by her husband's name has power and strength in the story. She manages to trick Sir Gawain and manages to break his deal with Bertilak. In addition, Morgan le Faye also manages to make a fool out of her brother and Sir Gawain. Morgan le Faye and Lady Bertilak play with the men as puppets yet they are supposed to be the superior sexes in the setting of the story (Brewer 32). The men believed to be to have absolute control of their knighthood, but they were outdone by women showing the strengths of women in the story. In addition, in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, the men were chauvinist but they were outdone by women in order to get a position in a society with men's superiority.

As we compare the roles of women in Beowulf and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, the women have power in the poems, but not like their male counterparts. Even though the story of Beowulf presents a society that restricts women, the women in the story exercise their strengths and contribute to the society. The women in the three stories defined the roles of women in the medieval society by opposing the roles the society had defined

for them. Lady Bertilak, Morgan le Faye, and Grendel's mother, used men in the stories to gain power and strength that could never be granted to them especially in medieval times.

In conclusion, the women in heroic narratives were considered to be inferior to men; however, in Beowulf and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, the women displayed outstanding characters by outdoing men in their roles.

Grendel's mother uses her strength as a woman to fight men and kill them in order to avenge her son's death. On the other hand, Lady Berilak and Morgan le Faye were able to successfully compromise the status of worthy men Sir Gawain, and King Arthur using their strength as women. The women in the three narratives exemplify power and strength in a male dominated society.

## **Works Cited**

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