

# Beowulf's battles

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Beowulf's Battles Beowulf, like Anglo-Saxon culture generally, strikes us readers as a peculiar blend of traditions, resulting in a Christianity that is dark, realistic, anxious, violent-in short, and oddly modern. Moreover, it results in a heroism that Beowulf portrays throughout the story. Beowulf's victories allow for the continued existence of the Danes, while also allowing him to correspond with his unending subsistence through heroic performances. Throughout the poem, Beowulf clashes with three different monsters. The first battle comes with a summoning for Beowulf because a beast named Grendel has recently attacked Heorot, and King Hroogar has no other alternative but to apply for his assistance. Beowulf arrives in Heorot with no weapon because he feels as if he would have an advantage over Grendel. The men fall asleep while waiting for the beast to return, and the devilish monster engulfs one of Beowulf's men. "... He grabbed and mauled a man on his bench, bit into his bone-lappings, bolted down his blood and gorged on him in lumps, leaving the body utterly lifeless..."(740-43). Beowulf then awakes from his sleep, and grabs Grendel by the hand. Their battle becomes so hostile, it seems as if the hall might cave in. Beowulf uses his immortal strength to eventually rip Grendel's arm from his torso. Subsequently, Grendel scampers back to his lair in the wetlands where he would eventually breathe his last breath... " Grendel was driven under the fen-banks, fatally hurt, to his desolate lair. His days were numbered, the end of his life was coming over him..."(818-21). The second battle in this Anglo-Saxon Heroic Epic comes when Beowulf tries his fate with the furious mother of Grendel. The fight begins with Grendel's angry mother attacking at hall of Heorot. Beowulf and his men go to the lake where he prepares to battle

Grendel's mother in her underwater lair. During this fight, Beowulf decides to use a sword as a weapon. The sword has been given to him from Unferth, a warrior who had previously doubted Beowulf's capabilities and wishes to make things well. Beowulf dives into the lake, but is spotted almost instantly and assaulted by Grendel's mother. Although she seems to make the first move in this cat and mouse type battle, she doesn't seem to harm him because of his armor and then lugs him to the bottom of the lake... " So she lunged and clinched and managed to catch him in her brutal grip; but his body, for all that, remained unscathed: the mesh of the chain-mail saved him on the outside..."(1501-04). When they reach the bottom Beowulf notices that the cavern is a keeping place for Grendel's body, along with the other two men the two have killed of late. The two begin to then engage in fierce combat, and it seems that Grendel's mother might just reign supreme. This observation couldn't be any more erroneous as Beowulf grabs a magical sword from the mother's hoard, and beheads her with it. After the victory, Beowulf goes further into the lair and finds Grendel's body. When the blade of the magical sword touches the blood of Grendel, it disintegrates leaving only the hilt with Beowulf as he brings it to shore. Fifty years after his victory over Grendel's mother, a golden cup is purloined from a dragon at Earnaness. The dragon then becomes furious and is destroying everything in sight. We all know too well that Beowulf would be the man to take on the almost impossible task of killing this giant killer. Many of Beowulf's men want to help him fight this enormous dragon, but Beowulf insists that he will take out the beast alone. Beowulf goes into battle with the dragon but he instantly finds himself to be overmatched. When his men see this, they seem

to retreat away from the fight. Wiglaf, however, comes to Beowulf's side and the two slay the dragon concurrently... " When he saw his lord tormented by the heat of his scalding helmet, he remembered the bountiful gifts bestowed on him...He could not hold back: one hand brandished the yellow-timbered shield, the other drew his sword..."(2604-10). Although the two slay the dragon, Beowulf is fatally wounded. He eventually dies and is buried next to the sea, along with the treasure he wishes to keep... " Then the Geat people began to construct a mound on a headland, high and imposing, a marker that sailors could see from far away...They let the ground keep that ancestral treasure, gold under gravel, gone to earth..."(3156-67). Beowulf begins by using his brute strength to pull off Grendel's arm, and his wits and surroundings to behead Grendel's mother. Even when he seems outmatched, his influence and safekeeping of others influence one brave soul to help him slay a dragon. By the battles Beowulf fought in and won, it is easy to say that he is one of the most heroic warriors in all of literature.