

Beowulf

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Prologue:Lines 1-52:The Spear-Danes

Now! We Spear-Danes, in ages gone,
Days of the clan-kings, knew glory.
How those princes did mighty deeds.
Shield Sheafson seized mead-benches
From many a man, among his enemies;
That terror of warriors flourished later,
After his first rescue as foundling,
Waxed under heaven, grew in honour,
Till near tribes, over the whale-road,
Had to yield to him, forced to submit,
Offer him tribute. That was a fine king!
After, a boy-child was born to him,
A lad in the yard, sent there by God
To comfort the people; He had seen
What they had suffered; leaderless
A long while; so the Lord of Life,
Wielder of Glory, granted him honour;
Beaw was known – his fame flew wide –
Heir to Shield, in the Northern lands.
So should a lad do, working good deeds,
Giving gifts freely in his father's house;
So, in old age, when battle comes
Willing companions stand by him,
His people rally; by noble effort,
Among men everywhere, man prospers.
Then Shield passed, at the appointed time,
Still in his prime, into the Lord's hands.
As he had asked, when he wielded words,
A friend to the Shieldings, beloved ruler,
Long king over them, his dear comrades
Shouldered down to the sea's brine.
There in the harbour rode a whorled prow,
Ice-shrouded, ready, fit for a hero;
They laid down their beloved prince,
The ring-giver, there amidships,

Might by the mast; many the riches
From far-off lands, precious armour
None I heard comelier, keel weighted
With battle-weapons, war-gear,
Blade and breastplate; on him lay
Many a treasure, forced with him
On the tide's sway, to drift afar.
No less on him had they bestowed
A nation's riches than those did
Who had once launched him,
Then a child, alone on the waves.
Now they raised a golden standard
High at his head; let him to ride
Gave him to ocean; troubled hearts,
Mourning minds. No man knows
Can tell for certain, wise counsellor
Or earthly hero, what had that cargo.

I:Lines:53-114:The Coming Of Grendel

Then Beow the Shielding held the forts,
A long while, loved king of his nation,
Famed among folk; elder on earth
His father departed. And then his heir
The great Halfdane, aged, battle-scarred
Ruled the bright Shieldings his lifetime.
To him were born, this leader of warriors,
Four in succession; woke to the world,
Heorogar, Hrothgar, the good Halga,
And Yrsa I heard, Onela's queen,
A bed-balm for a brave Shielding.
Then to Hrothgar was fortune given,
Honour in battle, so that his kinsmen
Followed him fast, a force that grew
To a mighty host. So his mind turned
To house-building, here he would have
A massive mead-hall, worked by men
That men's sons should hear of forever.
And within it would share out all,
To young and old, as God allowed him,
Bar common land or the lives of men.
Far and wide, heard I, the task was given,
To many craftsmen, in middle-earth;
For the folk: a hall. Soon it came to pass,
Out of men's hands, it stood complete
The finest of places; he called it Heorot,
Whose words held wide sway there.
No boast and no lie, rich rings he dealt
At his feasts. The hall towered up,
High, horn-gabled, waiting the flare
Of fierce fire, nor was it long till
Sharp-edged malice, between in-laws,
Born of their enmity, awakened.
It was then a bold monster, fretted
Its time away, dweller in darkness,

That every day heard din of revels
Loud in the hall. There the harp's note,
Sweet song of poets. Skilled men told
Of distant source, of man's beginning;
Of how the Almighty made the earth,
A plain of beauty, bounded by water;
Placed victorious the sun and moon,
Lights as lanterns for world-dwellers,
And filled all the folds of the earth
With tree-limbs and leaves; life gave
To everything that lived and moved.
So the people of the lord lived well
Happily then, until began to work
Monstrous evil, a fiend from hell.
This grim demon was named Grendel
A marsh-stalker, moors in his hold,
Fen and fastness, the wretch ruled
Over exiled monsters, for a while,
Those the creator had banished
With Cain's kin, the eternal Lord
Avenging so the killing of Abel;
Cain gained little from that feud,
He drove him from all mankind:
Then unspeakable things awoke,
Ogres and elves, imps of Orcus,
The giants too, who fought with God
Interminably, till He repaid them.

II:Lines 115-188:The Monster's Depredations

So Grendel, at nightfall, set out to see
How the Ring-Danes were placed in
The high house, after their beer-fest.
There he found a noble host
Sleeping from feasting, dead to woe
And human sorrow; the cursed beast
Grim and greedy, ruthless, and ripe
For savagery, had soon snatched
Thirty thanes from their slumber,
Then returned, sated with spoils,
With a feast of flesh, to seek his lair.
There, in half-light, before the dawn,
Grendel's craftiness was revealed;
After the feasting, rose the lament
In that morning-cry. The mighty king,
Their fine leader, sat there sorrowing.
The man suffered, mourning his thanes,
As they stared at the demon's foul trail
Its strong poison lasting and lingering;
Nor had they long to wait for more,
Later, one night, Grendel again
Dealt more murder, without remorse,
His fate and fury held too fast to him.
Easy to find him who'd be elsewhere,
Seeking his slumber further away,
A bed among branches, when clear,
Truly told, all the tokens apparent,
Of the hall-seeker's hatred; held himself
Further and safer in shunning the fiend.
So Grendel ruled, defying the right,
One against all, till the finest of houses
Stood deserted. Twelve winter's tide,
Long time, the lord of the Shieldings
Suffered in anguish, every woe,
Seas of sorrow. So it was known

To the sons of men, sung clearly
In bitter ballads, that Grendel wrought
Long against Hrothgar, in fierce enmity,
Fighting and feud, a host of seasons
In singular strife, refusing all truce
With any man of the massed Danes,
To forgo his fury, make reparation.
None of those counsellors expected
Recompense from the killer's hands.
There the dark death-shade battened
On young and old, as he lay in wait
And set snares; in the night holding
The misty moors. No man knows
Where hell's mysteries go roaming.
So the foe of mankind, lone walker,
Wrought many felonies, committed
Harsh hurts. He haunted Heorot,
The glittering hall, in the dark of night,
Prevented from nearing the gift-throne,
The Maker's treasure he held no love for.
They were harsh times, heart-breaking
For the Shielding's king. Many often sat,
Mighty in counsel, pondering a plan;
What bold-minded men might do best
To counteract the moments of terror.
Oftentimes they made sacred vows
At pagan shrines, offered up prayer
That some demon-slayer would grant
Aid to the people. Such were their ways,
Their heathen hopes. Hell they thought on,
In heart's depths. They knew not the Maker,
The Judge of deeds, blind to the Lord God,
Nor honoured the Helm of the Heavens,
Wielder of Glory. Woe to the man
Who in his terror must give his soul
To the fire's embrace, without hope
Of help or change. Blessed is the man

Who after death seeks for the Lord
Finding peace in his Father's arms.

III:Lines:189-257:The Geats Take Ship

Over those troubles Halfdane's son
Brooded endlessly, the wise hero
Mired in woe; too heavy the load,
Leaden, long, lay on the people,
Nerve-wracking, nauseous, night-evil.
Among the Geats, a thane to Hygelac,
Good Beowulf, heard of this Grendel.
He was one of the strongest of men,
In his day, in this life of ours,
Noble and powerful; he commanded
A boat be readied, saying he wished
To seek the king over the swan-road,
The great clan-leader who needed men.
His clear-headed followers endorsed
The venture, though he was dear to them.
Urging him on, and seeking omens.
As leader then he chose his comrades
From among the Geats, the bravest
Found. Fifteen in total boarded
The sea-vessel, hard by the shore,
He, their leader, skilled in ship-craft.
It took time, the ship in the waves,
Boat on the water under the cliffs,
Eager warriors climbed the prow,
Currents swirled, sea churned the sand,
Into the hold went bright weapons,
Gleaming battle-gear, then they sailed,
A willing crew, in a well-founded ship,
Over the waves, the wind behind them,
Foam before, and the vessel birdlike,
Till on the second day at the due time,
The curved prow ended its voyage,
And those seafarers sighted land,
Sunlit sea-cliffs, towering pillars,
Wide headlands, the crossing complete,

The journey done. They leapt ashore,
Those warriors, out of the Wedermark,
Moored the vessel, chain-mail clashed,
The fine war-gear; God be thanked
The path of the sea had proved calm.
From the wall the lookout saw them,
The Shielding who guarded the cliffs,
Saw shields glitter on the gang-plank,
Arms flourished, he determined
To know who these men were.
So he mounted and rode to the shore,
Throthgar's thane, flourished his spear,
His great shaft of wood, asked formally:
'Who are you, adorned with war-gear,
Clad in chain-mail, who sail the keel
Of your tall ship, cross the sea-lanes,
Here, over the water? Stationed here,
I am the watchman, ward of the coast
So that no enemy, come from the sea,
Might ravage these Danish lands.
Never so openly have men arrived,
Bearing lime-wood shields, lacking
The passwords our leaders granted;
Without their consent. Never have I
Seen a mightier lord of this earth,
Warrior in war-gear. You are no vassal,
Ennobled by battle, unless you alone
Belie all appearances! I must know
Your lineage now, lest you go on,
As men mistrusted, fare further
In the lands of the Danes. Now
Strangers, out of the sea, know
My one thought: it's best to say
And quickly, where you hail from!'

IV:Lines:258-319:Their Arrival On The Shore

Their leader, the captain of the crew,
Answered, unlocked his word-hoard:
‘We are, by birth, of the Geat nation,
And are hearth-brethren to Hygelac:
My father was known among men,
A warrior in chief, named Ecgtheow
Worn by many a winter, till in old age
He passed from our halls. Remembered,
He, by the wise, throughout the world.
We came, determined to seek your lord,
The son of Halfdane, shield of the nation,
The people’s guard: so, guide us well.
We came on a great errand, to him,
Lord of the Danes, there is no need
I think for secrecy. You know if it is
Wholly true, as we have heard tell,
An unknown enemy, a hidden despoiler,
At dark of night, wreaks unseen havoc,
Among the Shieldings, deals uncanny
Slaughter and suffering. I can offer,
Wholehearted counsel to Hrothgar,
How the wise and good may defeat
This fiend, if he would seek respite
From a weight of sorrows hereafter,
And be free of overwhelming care,
Or else endure, unending torment,
Terrible troubles, as long as Heorot,
The finest of houses, stands on high!’
The watchman, unhesitating, spoke,
From horseback: ‘Every shield-man
Of sense knows how to distinguish
Words and deeds, by judging rightly.
I witness here: this troop is loyal
To the lord of the Shieldings: go with
Arms and armour: I will guide you.
Moreover, I will order my comrades
To guard your ship against enemies,

Fresh-tarred, down on the sands,
Defend it with honour, until it bears
The beloved hero, over ocean stream,
Its curved prow turning to Wedermark.
To the doer of fine deeds it is given
To survive the fierce onslaught whole.’
So they fared on their way. The ship lay still,
Hanging over the sands, broad of beam,
Anchor-fast. Figures of boars flashed
Over cheek-guards, forged with gold,
Fair and fire-hardened, life-defending.
The warriors roused, marched in step,
Hurried, till they saw the timbered hall,
Shining with gold, rise before them.
That was the foremost house for mortals
Of all king’s halls under the heavens,
Its light shone out over many lands.
So then their fierce escort led them
Straight to that glorious court
Of noble men. The worthy warrior
Wheeled his steed, spoke these words:
‘Now I must leave you. May the Father
Of Grace, the Almighty, keep you safe
In your errand. I go to watch the sea
To keep guard against cruel foes.’

V:Lines:320-370:Hrothgar's Court

The street was of stone, that pathway
Pressed them together. Mail-shirts hard,
Hand-linked, gleaming. Bright armour
Rang with ring-iron, as they marched
In their grim gear straight to the hall.
Sea-weary, stacking their hard-rimmed
Broad shields, against the walls, there
They dropped to the benches, armour
Clashing, warrior's war-gear; spears stood,
Mariners' defence, clustered together,
A grey ash-grove; adorned were they
With iron-clad weapons. Then a proud
And noble warrior asked of the heroes:
'Whence do you bring those plated shields,
Shirts of steel-grey, and masked helmets,
That heap of lances? I am Hrothgar's
Officer and herald; never have I seen
Such a host of brave-looking strangers.
With courage, I judge, you seek Hrothgar,
Not as exiles but of heart-greatness.'
Then the man of renown; proud prince
Of the Geat people, harsh under his helm,
Replied to him, with these words:
'We are Hygelac's table companions,
My name is Beowulf. I would announce
My errand to the famed son of Halfdane,
To that sovereign king, your lord and master,
If in his great virtue he'll grant us audience.'
Wulfgar replied; he, the Vandal leader,
His courage known to many, famous
For warfare and for wisdom. 'I will request
Of the Lord of the Shieldings, the Dane-Friend,
Giver of Rings, what you desire of him.
I will ask the great king about your quest,
Give you swift reply, whatever answer

That virtuous one is pleased to deliver.’
Then he turned to where Hrothgar sat,
Old and grey, amongst a crowd of earls.
Striding proudly, as a veteran warrior,
He took his place at the Dane-lord’s side.
Then Wulfgar spoke to his friend and master:
‘Men of the Geats, have ventured here,
From a far place, on the wide waters.
The leader of this band of warriors,
Is named Beowulf; they request,
My lord, that they might exchange
Words with you. Gracious Hrothgar,
Do not refuse them, grant their asking,
Since by their war-gear they seem worthy
Of noble respect. He who led them here,
Is a powerful prince among warriors.’

VI: Lines 371-455: Beowulf's Offer

Hrothgar spoke, that Helm of the Shieldings:
‘I knew him when he was a lad.
His old father was called Ecgtheow,
To whom Hethel the Geat wed
His only daughter; now his heir
Comes here bravely, seeking a firm friend.
I have heard said, by seafarers,
Who ferried a gift-cargo to Geatland
With our thanks, that, famous for battle,
He has the strength of thirty men
There in his hand's grip. I have hopes
That Holy God, in his goodness,
Sends him to us, to the West-Danes,
To fight Grendel's terror. For his daring,
I will offer him precious treasure.
Swiftly, bid him and his noble kin,
Come stand before me, every man.
Speak the word that they are welcome
To the Danelands.’ Came the word:
‘My victorious lord, leader of East-Danes
Asks me to say, he knows your noble line,
And that he welcomes you here,
Bold crosser of the sea-waves;
Now may you enter, in your war-gear,
Masked by helmets, to see Hrothgar:
But let battle-shields and ashen spears
Here await the outcome of words.’
Then the hero rose, ringed by his warriors,
That proud band of thanes; a few remained
To guard their gear, as the steadfast man bade;
The rest hastened on, and their prince, harsh
Under his helm, led his warriors as one,
Under Heorot's roof, to stand in that hall.
Beowulf spoke – on him the mail shone,
A web of armour woven by smith's skill:

‘Health to you, Hrothgar. I am Hygelac’s
Kinsman and follower: despite my youth
I have worked great deeds. Grendel’s acts
Are clearly known on my native shore,
Seafarers say this finest of buildings
Stands idle, is useless to any man,
Once the evening star hides under heaven.
So, King Hrothgar, those best and wisest
Of my people advised me to come here,
And seek you, knowing all my vast strength.
They have seen me return from the battle,
Foul with the foes’ blood, where I bound five,
Destroying monstrous kin, killing sea-demons
In the water by night. I have weathered storms,
To avenge the Geats – they sought sorrow,
The foes I crushed. Now I seek Grendel,
The dread creature, to settle the matter
Alone with that troll. Now I ask of you,
Prince of the Bright-Danes, one boon,
One request, Defender of Shieldings;
Do not refuse me, Bulwark of Warriors,
Friend of the Folk, having come so far,
Let me cleanse Heriot, with only my nobles,
My hoard of warriors, I alone at the head;
I have heard too that this evil monster,
Reckless indeed, scorns use of weapons;
So, I too – that Hygelac my liege-lord
May have joy in his heart – will forego
The bearing of sword or of broad shield
Rimmed with lime-wood; by hand-grip
Alone fight with this fiend, life for life,
Foe against foe. Whichever death takes
Must deem it the judgement of God.
Grendel will wish, I suspect, if he can
To devour all us Geats in the war-hall,
Without fear, I think, as he has before,
All the warrior force. You’ll not need

To shroud my face: he will have my
Blood-stained body, if Death takes me,
My gory corpse; he would feed on flesh.
The lone prowler eats all mercilessly,
Marking his lair in the moor. So make
No funeral provision for my remains.
Send to Hygelac, should I fall in the fight,
This best of battle-gear over my breast,
This fair mail that belonged to Hrethel,
Wayland's work. Fate ever does as it must.'

VII:Lines:456-498:Hrothgar Replies

Hrothgar, Helm of the Shieldings, replied:
'Beowulf, my friend, you sought us out,
For the sake of the fight, and for honour.
Your father's blow started a mighty feud:
He it was killed Heatholaf the Wulfing,
With his own hand; and in fear of reprisal
His own spear-kin dared not shelter him.
So he sought the South-Dane folk here,
We Honour-Shieldings, over the waves.
I had but begun then my rule of the Danes,
Though a youth, I held the precious kingdom,
Treasure-chest of heroes. Heoragar was dead,
My elder brother, lifeless then that son
Of the Half-Dane. He was the better man.
I settled the feud, paying a blood-fee;
Over the wave-crests, ancient treasure,
I sent the Wulfings. Your father took oaths.
It saddens my heart to tell any man
What shame Grendel brings to Heriot,
Swift attacks in hatred; my guards wane,
My war-band: fate sweeps them away
Amid Grendel's violence. God may well
Put an end to that bold ravager's deeds.
Time and again, swilling their beer,
Over the ale-flagons, warriors have vowed
To wait in the beer-hall, with sharp blades,
To defend Heorot from Grendel's attack.
But the mead-hall, this noble house,
In morning-tide, was stained with blood.
At daylight, the benches were dripping,
Drenched by battle. My friends were less,
Dear companions, those had death taken.
Sit now to table, and tell your tales
Of glorious heroes, as your heart urges.'
Then a bench was placed for the Geats

Gathered together, in the beer-hall:
There the strong-hearted were seated,
The proud and skilful, a thane beside them,
Who bore in his hands a rich ale-cup,
Poured bright mead. At times a bard
Sang clear in Heorot, brought noble joy
To that great host of Danes and Geats.

VIII:Lines:499-558:The Sea-Monsters

Unferth, the son of Ecglaf, spoke,
Who sat at the Lord of Shieldings' feet,
Loosing battle-runes – Beowulf's venture,
This brave sea-crossing, riled him greatly,
Since he'd not have it that any other man
Boasted of greater deeds in middle-earth,
Under the wide heavens, than he himself –
'Are you that Beowulf who battled with Breca
On the open sea, paddling the ocean?
Out of bravado there, risking the waves,
For a foolish boast, in the deep water,
You risked your lives, and no man,
Not friend or foe, could dissuade you
From that sad contest, rowing the sound.
There your arms grasped ocean-currents,
Crossing the sea-roads, hands weaving,
Gliding over the sea, the breakers falling
In winter's tide; seven nights toiling
In the water's clutches. He beat you at sea,
The mightier man. Then he, at morning-tide,
Was cast up by the wave, on Raumar's shore.
From there he sought out his own country,
One dear to his people, that of the Brondings.
A fine stronghold, where he had folk,
Burghs and rings. That son of Beanstan
Rightly fulfilled his boast over you.
So I expect a worse outcome still,
And a grim struggle, though you've won
Many a battle, should you dare wait
For Grendel, the night long, nearby.'
Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow, answered:
'Now, Unferth, my friend, drunk on beer,
You've talked a lot about Breca,
And told of his efforts. The truth is
I had the greater sea-strength,

Power in the waves, than any man,
We had agreed when we were lads,
And vowed – both being still as yet
In our youth – that we would risk
Our lives on the sea. And that we did.
Rowing the sound, we had naked swords
Close to hand; we planned to protect
Ourselves from whales: he was not a whit
Swifter at sea, nor able to float from me
On the far waters, nor did I wish to let him.
We were there together, on that sea,
For five nights, till the waves parted us,
The swell high, weather of the coldest,
Night blackening, and the north wind
Fierce against us, the waves run wild,
And the sea-creatures were angered.
My chain-mail, strong, hand-linked,
Helped me then, against those foes.
A battle-proof web, at my breast,
Chased with gold. A fierce prey-seeker
Dragged me deep, held me fast
In cruel grip. However it was given me
To reach the monster, with the point
Of my sword. In the swirl I killed
The mighty sea-beast, with my own hand.’

IX:Lines:559-661:Beowulf's Vow

'Time and again, hateful creatures
Pressed me close. Them I served
With my dear sword, as was right.
They'd not have me for their prey,
Enjoy their crime, not dine on me
At their banquet, on the sea-floor,
But at dawn, slain by my blade,
They lay there, on the wet sand,
Settled by my sword, so that now
On the high seas, no mariner
Is hindered. Light came from the east,
Bright beacon of God. The sea calm,
Now my sight found the headlands,
Windswept cliffs. Fate often spares
A lucky man, if his courage holds out.
However it chanced, my sword slew
Nine of the creatures. I have heard
Of no fiercer fight, at night, under heaven,
Of no man more pounded by the waves.
Yet I escaped alive from the foe's grasp,
Weary with battle. The sea took me,
With the tide at the flood, to Finland,
In a tossing boat. Not a word of you,
Have I heard, Unferth, in such a fight,
Or your dread blade. Breca nor you,
At the onset, ever did such a deed
With bright sword – that's no boast –
Moreover you killed your brother,
Slew your close kin. Despite your wit,
You in Hell shall suffer torment.
I tell you, in truth, son of Ecglaf,
Grendel, that foul demon, would never
Have wreaked such havoc on your king,
Brought shame to Heorot, if your mind
And heart were as fierce as you claim,

But he has found he need little fear
Your race in battle, its dread tempest
Of blades, you Victory-Shieldings.
He takes his toll, spares not one
Of the Danes, but slakes his lust,
Slaying and slitting. He expects no fight
From the Spear-Danes. But I'll show him
The Geats' strength and stomach for war,
Before long. A man will be able to go
Drink mead again bravely, when dawn
Of another day brings the sun southwards
To shine, radiant, on the sons of men.'
The grey-haired, great-hearted warrior,
Treasure-giving lord of the Bright-Danes,
Trusted what he heard from Beowulf,
The folk's defender, of his firm intent.
Heroes' laughter rose, sounds of harmony,
Words were joyful. Wealhtheow entered,
Hrothgar's queen, mindful of courtesies,
Gold-adorned, to greet those in the hall,
And the noble lady handed a full cup
First to the guardian of the East-Danes,
Beloved of his people, bade him be blithe,
As he drank the ale. The honoured king
Partook with delight of feast and of cup.
Then did the rounds, the Helmings' lady,
Gave the full hall-cup, to young and old,
A draught to each, the be-ringed queen,
Generous in spirit, until she came
Carrying the mead-cup, to Beowulf.
With wise words she greeted the Geat,
Thanked God that her wish was granted,
That here was a noble man to help them
Fend off evil. The war-hardened warrior,
He took the rich cup from Wealhtheow,
Then eager for battle, he spoke to her gravely,
Did Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow, saying:

‘I determined when I put out to sea,
Seated there with my warlike crew,
That I’d fulfil your people’s wishes,
Forthwith, or I’d die in the conflict,
Fast in that fiend’s grip. I must do
The deed bravely, or meet my end,
As fate wills, here in this mead-hall.’
Gold-decked, that queen of the folk,
Well pleased with the Geat’s vow,
Went then, to sit by her lord.
Then all was as before in the hall,
Brave words uttered, men full of joy,
Loud talk of victory, until at last
The son of Halfdane, wished to seek
Evening rest. He knew that the ogre
Had been planning a raid on the hall,
From the instant they saw sunlight,
Till night, darkening, with shadowy
Helm-shapes, came stealing over all,
Black under heaven. The warriors rose;
Then the one took leave of the other,
Hrothgar of Beowulf, and bid him well,
The wine-hall’s ruler, spoke these words:
‘Since I could raise arm and shield,
I’ve never trusted this stronghold
Of Danes to any man, save you:
Have now and hold this best of houses.
Think on glory, show mighty courage,
Ware of the watcher. You’ll want naught
If you win through this brave deed alive.’

X:Lines:662-709: Beowulf Waits For Grendel

Then Hrothgar, Defence of the Shieldings,
Left the hall, with his crowd of warriors,
He went to seek Wealhtheow, to bed
His queen. But the Lord in his Glory,
As men learned, left in place that guard
Against Grendel; he now awaited the ogre,
Kept special watch for the Danish leader.
And the Geat himself trusted utterly
In his Maker's favour, the Almighty's power.
So he removed his iron breast-plate,
Took the helm from his head, and gave
His chased blade of true iron, to his man,
And told him to guard his battle-gear.
Beowulf of the Geats, that virtuous man,
Before resting, spoke these proud words:
'I count myself no weaker in stature,
When it comes to a fight, than Grendel,
So I'll not take his life, not destroy him,
With my sword, though I surely can.
Even if he's known for working evil,
He is not skilful enough to strike me,
Or hew my shield-rim. Let there be
No swords this night if he dares seek
Battle unarmed. Then the Holy God,
The Wise Lord, will grant the glory
To whichever seems fitting to Him.'
So the brave warrior lay down, bolster
Under his head, and all around him
His brave crew sank down to rest.
Not one thought he would ever see
His place of birth, or his burgh,
His dear home, or folk ever again,
They knew dire Death had already
Taken far too many of the Danes
In that wine-hall. But the Lord wove

A fortunate fate, gave solace, support,
To the men of the Wedermark, through
The strength of one; by his own might;
Overcoming the foe. So truth is known,
That Almighty God, rules over mankind
Forever. Thus, in the darkest night, came
The wanderer-in-shadow. The warriors,
Guarding the horned hall, all slept –
Men knew they could not be drawn,
By that ill-doer, down into shadow,
If the Maker willed it not – all but one.
He, who watched, riled and indignant,
Awaited, anger rising, the battle's outcome.

XI:Lines:710-790: The Fight

Then from the moor, beneath misty crags,
Bearing God's wrath, Grendel came loping.
The foul creature meant to try a sample
Of mankind; of those in the high hall.
He crept under cloud, till he could see
The wine-hall, that gilded hall of men,
Shining bright. It wasn't the first time
He'd sought out Hrothgar's homestead.
And never in his day, nor before or since,
Have hall-thanes found worse fortune.
Barren of joy, that assailant travelled,
Towards the dwelling. The door, braced
With iron bands, sprang free at his touch,
Enraged now, planning evil, he tore out
The mouth of the building, then swiftly
That fiend trod over the patterned floor,
Advancing wrathfully; strange lights
Most akin to flames shot from his eyes.
In the house, he saw many a spearman,
A crowd of kinsmen, sleeping, as one,
A wondrous heap. Then his heart leapt,
That cruel creature, determined to tear
The life from each body, before the dawn:
He'd chanced on a feast. But such is fate,
He would nevermore feed on human flesh
After that night. For that man of might,
Hygelac's kinsman, saw how the vicious
Killer would try for a sudden onslaught.
The monster had no thoughts of delay,
But swiftly seized the chance given,
Grabbed a sleeper, and tore him apart,
Bit to the bone, drank the heart's blood,
Swallowing swathes; soon he'd eaten
That dead man, consumed him utterly,
Head to foot. Pressing in closer, then,

He thought to drag the steadfast hero,
His enemy, from sleep; reaching out
His talon towards him, but *he* quickly
Saw the dark intent, gripped the arm.
Now that herdsman of horrors found
He had never met, in all middle-earth,
In the whole wide world, a tighter grip
From another creature. In his heart
He feared for his life, couldn't wait
For a chance to run, ready to flee
To his devil's nest. This was nothing
He'd ever met with in this life before.
Then the virtuous man, Hygelac's kin,
Recalling his evening vow, rose up
And held on tight, fingers bursting;
The troll retreating, the man advancing.
The evil one meant to escape if he could,
And flee from there, any way he might,
To his fen-haunt. He felt fingers fail
In his foe's grasp. A bitter journey
That worker of harm had made to Heorot.
Great din in the hall, all of the Danes,
That citadel's host, every brave earl
Was sobered. The fierce foes in conflict,
Were full of ire. The walls resounded.
It was a wonder the wine-hall withstood
Those opponents; that the fair fold
Fell not to the ground, but held fast,
Inward and outward bound with iron
Skilfully forged. Many a bench
Decked with gold broke loose,
I hear, where the pair wrestled.
No sage of the Shieldings ever thought
That any creature by any means
Could shatter that high horned hall,
Destroy it, unless a net of fire might
Swallow it swiftly. Then a strange

Sound rose, and the North-Danes
Stood, dread horror in every man,
Who heard that wail from the walls,
The ghastly scream of God's enemy,
Hell's prisoner, howling out defeat,
Lamenting his wound. He who was
The mightiest of men, in those days,
In this life of ours, gripped him fast.

XII:Lines:791-836: Beowulf's Victory

The earls' defender had no desire
To leave that murderous guest alive,
Nor counted that life worth aught
To any. And Beowulf's warriors,
Brandished their ancestral swords,
Seeking to protect, as they wished,
Their renowned prince and lord.
Though, when they joined the fight
Those brave warriors could not know,
As they struck out, from every side,
Seeking his life, that bringer of hurt,
That not even the finest blade on earth,
No weapon of any kind could harm him,
For he was proof against every sword,
Every knife-edge. Yet the severance
From this life would be anguish to him,
On that day of pain, and his alien spirit
Would journey far into fiends' keeping.
Now he, who had many times before
With joy in his heart, inflicted misery
On mankind, who had fought with God,
Found his body would not obey him,
That Hygelac's courageous kinsman,
Had him in his grip. Each loathed
The other alive. The foul ogre felt
Bodily pain, a great rent appeared
In his shoulder, the sinews split,
And the muscles tore. To Beowulf
Was glory given. Grendel, dying,
Was forced to flee, under the fen-side,
Finding his joyless lair. He knew,
For sure, his life's end was on him,
His day-count done. All that the Danes
Had wished that deadly clash achieved.
The hero from afar, strong and shrewd,

Had cleansed Hrothgar's great hall,
Saved it from ruin. He joyed in his
Night's work, his brave deed. His oath
To the East-Danes the Geat had fulfilled,
And he had relieved their anguish, too,
All the deep sorrows they had suffered,
The harsh distress they had endured,
No small matter. And as a clear token,
The brave warrior nailed Grendel's arm,
With its hand and shoulder – the whole
Reach of his grasp – to the gaping roof.

XIII:Lines:837-924 The Bard's Praise

Then, in the morning, as I heard tell,
A host of clansmen, with their leaders,
Gathered to the gift-hall, from near and far,
Crossing wide lands, to see the wonder,
The enemy's spoor. To those who traced
That path without glory, how in defeat
Weary, he had fled to the demons' mere,
Beaten and doomed, leaving blood-trails,
His passing from life brought no sadness.
There the water seethed with his gore,
A swirl of waves, all intermingled
With his dark flux, wound-fluids.
Death-marked, he died. Joylessly,
In his fen-lair, he gave up his life,
His heathen ghost; Hell claimed him.
Then on horseback they returned,
Warriors on fair steeds, young men
In high spirits, and aged retainers,
Back from the hunt in the mere: loud
They proclaimed Beowulf's glory.
Never, they said, to north or south,
Between the two seas, under the sky,
Or on the wide earth, was there ever
A better shield-man of finer kingdom.
Yet they laid no blame on Hrothgar,
Friend and lord. He was a good king.
At times, when the track-way suited,
And was sound, the warriors raced,
Gallopng their red-haired horses,
In contest. At times, the king's thane
Full of eloquence, a bearer of song,
Who knew many tales out of ancient
Tradition, composed fresh words,
In a true metre. And the man began
To recite with skill, Beowulf's deeds;

With art, to utter a well-made song,
Weaving words. He spoke all he knew
Of Sigemund, that son of Wael,
All things redounding to his glory,
Uncanny events and far journeys,
Feuds and feats, things unknown
To the sons of men, except to Fitela,
To whom he'd talk, uncle to nephew,
Dear friends in need in every conflict.
Their swords laid many a giant low,
After his death Sigemund achieved
No small fame, for the fierce warrior
Had put an end to the great dragon,
The guard of the hoard: the king's son
Had gone down under the grey stone,
Attempting that dangerous deed, alone,
For no Fitela was with him that day.
However it chanced that his sword
Pierced and killed the wondrous worm,
So his iron blade stuck fast in the wall.
By his act of courage he had ensured
He might do with that treasure-hoard
As he wished. So Wael's son weighted
His boat, filled her hold with gleaming
Metal, all the dragon's heat had melted.
He was the most famed for valour,
Of all the heroes among the nations,
A shield for warriors, so he prospered,
When Heremod's campaigning waned
In strength and courage; he, betrayed
Into enemy hands, amongst the Jutes,
Was promptly killed. A tide of sadness
Had long drowned him; he had become
A source of deep sorrow to his nobles;
They often bemoaned, did wiser men,
The loss of their former king, for they
Had trusted him to redress all wrong,

Believing a king's son should take
His father's place, and rule the people,
The hoard and hold, the heroes' land,
The Shieldings' home. Hygelac's kin,
Beowulf, was more valued by all alike.
While violence had undone Heremod.
So the Danes meanwhile kept racing
Along sandy lanes. The morning light,
Grew and brightened. Hosts of retainers
Were set on going down to the high hall
To view the fresh wonder. The king too,
Guard of the ring-hoard, famed for virtue,
Stepped with his queen from her chamber,
She with her handmaids, and a vast crowd,
Walked, in splendour, to the mead-hall.

XIV:Lines:925-990; The King Speaks

When he reached the hall, Hrothgar spoke
From the steps, as he viewed the steep roof,
All gilded, adorned with Grendel's arm:
'For this sight let all readily give thanks
To the Almighty! I suffered many a hurt,
And grief from Grendel. God may work,
Our Shepherd of Glory, wonder on wonder.
Not long since had I despaired of finding
Any relief, in my lifetime, from these woes;
The splendid house was stained with blood.
Worry was widespread among the wise,
Who lost all hope of defending the citadel
Of our nation, in their day from its enemies,
Wights and wraiths. Yet, by God's might,
A great warrior, has performed the deed
That we could not achieve before, despite
All our schemes. Now: whoever she was
Among women, who produced this man,
If she still lives, she can say, that in labour
Fate's measure graced her. For, Beowulf,
Noblest of men, I will love you all my life,
Like a son. Hold hard to this new kinship,
In future. You shall not lack for worldly
Possessions, while I still hold the power.
I've often dowered lesser men with riches,
I've showered my gifts on worse fighters,
For far humbler things. You have ensured,
By your own deeds, that your fame will live
For ever and ever. And may the Almighty
Do good too you, as he has done but now!'
Beowulf, the son of Ecgtheow, replied:
'It was our pleasure to dare in the fight
A brave task, and risk, with courage,
The power of an unknown foe. Yet I
Could wish you had seen him there,

That fiend of the fight full wearied.
I thought to hold him clasped hard,
To pin him down on his death-bed,
In fear of his life, lest it slip away,
Caught in that hand-grip of mine.
But Fate's measure stopped me
Hindering his going, and not easily
Could I grasp the foe, so fierce was
The fiend to flee. But he forfeited
His arm to save his life, his shoulder
And hand he left behind, although
The vile creature gained little by it;
Small length of days has that spoiler,
Punished for sin; his wound holds him
In its harsh grip, he's narrowly caught
In its baleful bond, there the creature,
Black with crime, bides the judgement
That mighty Fate in its wisdom decrees.⁷
Less then of Unferth, the son of Ecglaf,
Less of his boastful speech, was heard,
When the Eorlingas gazed at that hand,
Its fiendish fingers, up by the high roof,
The hero's doing, no fingernails there
At their tips, but heathenish hand-spurs,
More like steel, were that fierce creature's
Harsh talons. All said there was nothing,
No hardened blade, no well-forged iron,
That could strike hard enough to wound
That demon's blood-stained battle-claw.

XV:Lines:991-1049 The King's Gifts

Then the order was promptly given,
To set their hands to repairing Heorot;
A host of men and women set straight
The wine-hall, for guests. Weft shone
Gold on the walls, a wondrous woven
Sight for whoever gazed there by night.
Though bound fast with iron, that bright
Building was badly battered and broken,
Door-hinges shattered. The roof alone
Was left wholly sound, when that ogre,
The weight of wickedness, turned to flee
In despair of his life. But death is not easy
To escape – attempt that though we may –
And we who bear souls, the sons of men,
Earth-dwellers, driven hard by necessity,
Must gain with effort the place prepared,
Where the body, set fast on its deathbed,
Rests from the feast. Then came the time
When the son of Halfdane, went to the hall;
The king himself wished to join the throng.
I do not know when a greater or finer force
Gathered round their tribe's treasure-giver.
Then the fame-bearers sank to the benches,
To savour the banquet, accepting graciously
Cups full of mead, with their high-hearted
Kin, Hrothgar and Hrothulf, in the great hall.
Heorot was friendly, for the Folk-Shieldings
As yet made no baleful or treacherous runes.
Then Beowulf was handed Halfdane's sword:
A finely-wrought standard, a golden banner
In token of victory, a helmet and breastplate,
Were brought to the hero. Beowulf took up
The full flagon; unashamed to acknowledge
The gifts as payment, as reward for his deed.
I have not heard of four gold-decked treasures,

Given more graciously by so noble a race,
To strangers seated together on the ale-bench.
On the roof of the helmet, a strengthened ridge
Wound with wire, made additional head-guard,
So no well-ground blade wielded with savagery
Could damage the tempered helm, when shield
Was raised up against the onslaught of enemies.
Then the king, defender of warriors, ordered
Eight horses brought from rampart to hall,
With brave head-gear; the saddle of one made
Skilfully, adorned, decked out with jewels.
When the son of Halfdane wished to fight
That saddle was the high king's battle-seat;
In war, his famed skill never failed at the fore.
That protector of the Children of Ing, gave to
Beowulf all those treasures; granted possession
Of arms and horses, urging good use of them.
So, the high leader, guard of the heroes' hoard,
Paid for Beowulf's victory, in robust manner,
In weapons and treasure; so that he who wishes
To tell the truth can find fault with neither man.

XVI:Lines:1050-1124: The Bard Sings Again

Then to each man of the hero's company,
Who sat at the benches, each of those
Who'd sailed the sea-roads with Beowulf,
Hrothgar gave treasure, ancient heirlooms,
And decreed requital in gold for the Geat
Whom Grendel had first cruelly destroyed,
As he would have more, if God's foresight,
And a man's courage had not thwarted him.
Since a measure of fate rules all mankind,
Therefore in all things knowledge is best,
And mind's forethought; he who would joy
In this life for long, in these days of strife,
Must suffer much hatred, with the love.
Then were music and words, all together,
Performed for Halfdane's battle-leader;
The lyre plucked, the oft-told tale recited,
As Hrothgar's bard was asked to chant
A saga, for the men on the mead-benches,
About Finn's heirs, with whom was fated
To fall, on the disastrous Frisian field,
Hnaef, the Shielding, the Half-Danes' hero.
Small reason had Hildeburgh, his sister,
Finn's wife, to trust the Jutes, blameless
She was bereft of her dear son and brother,
Wounded in battle, foredoomed by fate;
That was a mournful woman, Hoc's daughter,
With reason to grieve fate's decree, at dawn,
When, beneath the sky where she had beheld
All delight on earth, she saw dread slaughter;
War took all of Finn's thanes but a few alone,
So how could he end that clash with Hengest,
And conclude the thing, in that trysting place;
Or the sad remnant dislodge the prince's thane
From his ground? So they offered a settlement:
That they'd grant the Danes different quarters,

Hall and throne to be shared with the Frisians,
And every day, at the giving of treasure, Finn,
The son of Focwalden, would honour the Danes,
Grant rings, with even hand, to Hengest's men,
As much wealth in wrought gold as he himself
Would wish to give his Frisians in the beer hall,
To fire their courage. Then both sides pledged
To keep the peace. Finn first swore a solemn,
Binding oath to Hengest, that he would hold
The sad remnant in honour, and so be judged,
If none of them, by word or deed, broke treaty,
Nor ever laid claim in malice, though leaderless;
Forced by fate to follow their ring-giver's bane.
And if any Frisian recalled that murderous feud,
Hereafter, sword's blade to decide the outcome.
A funeral pyre was built, and Ing's gold brought
From the hoard. The War-Shieldings' great hero,
Hnaef, was laid on the bier. There was a sight:
The prince had slaughtered many a fine man;
Everywhere blood-stained mail and helms,
Adorned with forged-iron boars, all gilded.
Then Hildeburh ordered that her son's body
Should be burnt on the one pyre with Hnaef.
That the corpse be set on the bier beside him.
At his shoulder the woman keened, lamenting
And grieving in song. The warrior lay there.
That vast fire of the dead rose to the clouds,
Roared by the mound, as their heads melted,
Wound-blisters burst, and the blood sprang
Out of gashed flesh. Flame swallowed all,
That greedy guest; all the dead of both sides
Fallen in battle; their powers were scattered.

XVII:Lines:1125-1191:Of Hengest and Finn

The living, bereft of their friends, returned
To their home in Friesland, to their houses
And high forts, but Hengest, he was with Finn,
All that death-soiled winter, no companions,
Homesick for his country, unable to leave;
In such seas, no ship with whorled prow
Could endure; the swollen waves fought
With the storms; winds locked the shore
In bonds of ice, until another year came
To the yards, as it always does, endlessly
Bringing the seasons, in a glory of weather,
Brightening the air. The winter was gone,
Earth in her beauty. The exile, the guest
Was pining to go. But thought more often
Of vengeance than voyaging on sea-roads;
Of how to provoke some bitter encounter
With those sons of the Jutes, he brooded on.
So he did not baulk at thoughts of vengeance,
Once Hunlafing had set on his lap the finest
Blade, a sword that shone, a light-in-battle,
Whose edges the Jutes knew only too well.
And Finn was attacked in turn, in his house,
By his mortal enemies, in a fatal onslaught,
After Guthlaf and Oslaf, re-crossing the sea,
Bemoaned their suffering, a vicious ambush,
Blaming their woes on Finn. He could not
Restrain his fierce spirit. So the hall saw
His enemy's blood; Finn, the king, killed,
With his men; Hildeburh, the queen, seized.
The Shieldings took everything they found,
Of that king of a nation's household wealth;
Jewels and gemstones. Over the sea-paths
The warriors bore the noble lady; took her
To the Danes. So the bard sang, so the poet
Recited the tale. All there were delighted;

Praise rose from the benches, the stewards
Poured wine from rare pitchers. Wealhtheow
Then; gold her crown; came to sit by Hrothulf
And Hrothgar, nephew and uncle, still as kin
True to each other. Unferth, the outspoken,
Also sat at the king's feet, known for spirit
And courage, although he had slain his kin
When the swords clashed. The queen spoke:
'Take this full cup from me, my noble lord;
Granter of riches to men, be joyful; gold-giver,
Speak kind words to the Geats, as one should;
Be gracious to them, and remember the gifts
You yourself were given from near and far.
We hear you'd have this leader of armies,
As your son. Yet Heorot the bright ring-hall's
Now cleansed. Then enjoy your many delights
While you can, but leave both folk and kingdom
To your own kin, when you must depart at last
As is fated. I am sure, Friend of the Shieldings,
My gracious Hrothulf will honour the young,
If you chance to leave this world before him.
I believe he will treat our two boys kindly,
When he recalls all we have done, in his youth,
For his sake, and for his name in the world.
She turned, then, to the bench where her sons,
Hrethric and Hrothmund, sat, with the rest
Of the young nobles; and the virtuous man,
Beowulf the Geat, sat by the two brothers.

XVIII:Lines:1192-1250: Gifts For Beowulf

The full cup was brought him; kind words
Of praise spoken; treasures of braided gold
Graciously given; a pair of arm-bracelets,
Robes and rings, and the finest of torques
I have heard of, on earth or under the sky,
Out of heroes' hoard, since Hama ran off
With the Brosings' neck-ring; took its gems
And setting to his battle-bright stronghold.
He fled from Eormenric's wiles and enmity,
And achieved in the end an eternal reward.
Hygelac the Geat, grandson of Swerting,
Wore the ring given to Beowulf, when he
On his last raid, under his banner, defended
His spoils, his wealth in war. Fate took him,
When he, out of pride, provoked sorrow,
Feuding with Frisians: beneath his shield
He fell. He had brought that same treasure,
With its gemstone, on crossing the waves:
And the king's body passed to the Franks,
The torque, and the armour, all together:
The Geats clothed the field with their dead,
And lesser warriors plundered the corpses
After the killing. There was loud applause.
Then, before them all, Wealhtheow spoke:
'Fortune be with you in wearing this ring,
Dear Beowulf; make good use of this mail,
From our hoard; and long may you prosper.
Prove yourself strong, be gentle in guiding
These lads; and I shall ever remember you.
This is your doing, that you will be known,
Your fame as wide as the waters around
The sea-cliffs, the winds' home, forever.
Be happy in life, prince: I wish you well,
And rich in treasure; a possessor of joy,
Always kind in respect of my two sons.

Here every man who defends their lord
Is true to the others, is generous of mind.
Let the thanes be as one, the nation alert,
Warriors who have pledged, do as I bid.’
She took her seat at the finest of feasts,
The men drank wine, ignorant of fate,
The gloom gathering, as it has fallen
On many a hero. When evening came
And Hrothgar went off to his quarters,
The ruler to rest, the crowd of earls
Guarded the hall as they had before,
Clearing the benches. They spread
Bedding and bolsters. One man, now
Marked out for death, settled to rest.
At their heads they set bossed shields
Of bright lime-wood. Over each man,
There on the bench, catching the eye,
Was a tall battle-helm, shirt of mail,
And a shapely spear. Their habit was
To be ready for war, on all occasions,
At home or not; to fight for their lord,
When needed. They were right loyal.

XIX:Lines:1251-1320: A Second Attack

They sank into sleep. But one paid dearly
For taking his rest, as others before him,
When Grendel had invaded the gold-hall,
Inflicting pain, until, at the end, finding
Death for his crimes. Then it was seen,
Clearly by all, once the fight was over,
An avenger existed, despite the conflict,
One that, still living on after the battle,
Had bided her time. Grendel's dam, his
Monstrous mother, brooded in misery,
Forced to live there in the dreadful depths,
In the chill water, once Cain brought strife,
Murdering his sole brother, his father's son
With his blade, and then, branded an exile,
Marked by that killing, fled to the wilds,
Far from human joy. Then many a doomed
Spirit arose. And Grendel was one of them,
Banished in hatred, to find there at Heorot
A watchful man, biding his time for battle.
The monster came to close grips with him,
But Beowulf relied on his mighty strength,
God's generous gift, and he trusted then
On the Almighty's favour, on His comfort,
And care. And by these, overcame the fiend,
Grounded that hell-ghost, mankind's enemy,
Who fled in suffering and devoid of all joy
To seek his death-bed. But now the mother,
Dark with greed, decided to pursue the trail,
In a wretched attempt to avenge his death.
She came to Heorot, found the Ring-Danes
Asleep in the hall. Then was a great reverse
For those earls, when Grendel's dam found
Her way inside. The onslaught was lighter
By only as much as the power of the female,
Her violence in war, is less than the male's

When the wrought blade, the forged iron,
The blood-stained sword with honed edge,
Shears the boar's crest from an enemy helm.
Now were the sharp swords over the benches
Unsheathed, and many a wide-bossed shield
Gripped in the hand: then was no thought
Of mail-coat or helm, on seeing the horror.
She was in panic, when she was first seen,
Desperate to flee, now, in haste for her life.
She had swiftly seized on one of the nobles,
Gripping him fast. Then she fled for the fen.
The great warrior she had torn from his rest
Was, to Hrothgar, the best-loved companion
Among all his friends, between the two seas,
A mighty shield-man – Beowulf was missing.
He lay in another place, one assigned to him,
To that leader of Geats, after the gift-giving.
Loud cries rang round Heorot. She'd snatched
Grendel's gory limb. Fresh sorrow had come
To the house. That transaction proves hard,
For which either side is then forced to pay
With the life of a friend. There the wise king,
The grey-haired warrior, was deeply troubled,
When he knew the noble thane was no more,
That the dearest of all his friends was dead.
At dawn, Beowulf, that winner of battles,
Was quickly brought to the king's chamber:
That noble champion, the earl among earls,
Went with his company to find Hrothgar,
Who waited, and wondered if the Almighty
Would ever stem that tide of sad news.
The warrior advanced with his companions –
The floorboards echoing under their feet –
And addressed the Prince of the Ingwins;
With humble words asked if he had spent
A pleasant night, in accord with his wishes.

XX:Lines:1321-1382: And Second Challenge

Then spoke Hrothgar, Helm of the Shieldings,
'Ask not after pleasure. Sorrow is renewed,
For the Danish people. Aeschere is dead,
He who was Yrmenlaf's elder brother,
My close friend, my cautious counsellor:
He stood at my shoulder, when, in a fight,
The boar-crests guarding our helms clashed
With the foe. Such as a man should be,
Wise and noble, such was Aeschere.
She snatched him, slew him in Heorot,
That errant evil. Who knows what lair
She ran for, glorying in his carcase,
Glutted by gorging, all in vengeance
For last night's fight, for Grendel torn
By your heavy hand in a harsh clasp.
He winnowed and wasted my people
For far too long, so he fell in conflict,
Forfeited life, but now this other comes,
A mighty man-slayer, avenging her kin,
Carrying the feud to its furthest end,
Or so it seems to these grieving thanes,
Sad at heart for the ring-giver gone,
Taking it hard, now that hand is still,
That had granted every man his wish.
I have heard it said by the upland men
Of my people, counsellors in this hall,
That they have seen two such as them,
Mighty hill-marchers, moor-roamers,
Alien spirits, and as far as they could
Clearly make out, one of the two was
Like a female, the other, wretched,
Went like an outcast, in man's form,
Except he was larger than any man.
The countrymen called him Grendel
In days gone by; his father unknown,

Or whether either one was conceived
Of darkling spirits. They lived hidden,
Below wolf-slopes, by a windswept ness,
Over trails in the fen, where hill-streams
Dark under that ness, flow on down,
To flood under fields: only a few miles
Further from there, stands the mere;
Overhanging, a frost-gripped grove,
Deep-rooted trees shadowing the water,
Where, every night, weirdness is seen;
Fire on the flood. Not even the wisest
Of men knows the depths of its bed.
Though the hart with strong antlers,
The stepper-on-heath, is driven hard
By the pack, in its flight from afar,
It will seek the woods, before giving
Its life on that shore, before it will dip
Its head in the wave. The place is foul.
From it dark waterspouts rise upwards,
Wild to the welkin, when winds stir;
Fierce storms, till the air's darkened,
The skies weep. Once more help rests
On you alone. You cannot yet know
The dread place where you may find
That sinful creature. Seek if you dare.
Settle the feud and take your reward;
I'll give old treasures, wealth as before,
Braided gold, if you win your way home.'

XXI:Lines:1383-1472: The Mere

Then Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow replied:
‘Wise one, do not grieve. It’s always better
To avenge a friend, than mourn too deeply.
Each one of us, in this world, must await
Our end. Let every man who can, win glory
Before he dies. That is best for the warrior
In after times, when he is no longer living.
Arise, Ward of the Kingdom, let us swiftly
Follow the trail of this mother of Grendel.
I swear to you that go where she will, she
Shall not be lost in some fold of ground;
Nor in mountain holt, nor the ocean bed.
You must endure this day, with patience
For every suffering, as I’d expect of you.’
The old man leapt to his feet, thanking
God Almighty for Beowulf’s promise.
Then a horse was bridled, for Hrothgar,
One with a braided mane. The wise king
Was well-set, the foot soldiers marched
Bearing lime-wood shields. Her tracks
Down the forest-trail were clear to see.
Gone over the ground, running straight
Over the murky moor, she had borne
The king’s thane, the body not soul,
Finest of Hrothgar’s royal guards.
Now Beowulf, the noble, crossed
Steep stony slopes, narrow ways
Choked paths, uncertain gullies,
Cliff-ledges over haunted lakes.
He took the lead with a few good
Men, to sound the unknown way,
Until he reached a mountain grove,
Above grey stone, a hanging wood,
Dour and dismal. The water below,
Seethed with blood. For the Danes,

The Shieldings' Friends, there was
Heart's pain to endure; grief woke
In those noble thanes, on finding
Aeschere's head by the cliff-edge.
The lake welled blood – folk stared –
A fiery gore. The war-horn sounded
A death-dirge. They sat down to watch,
Clear in the water, a host of serpents,
Strange sea-dragons conning the deep,
Water-demons on sloping headlands,
Such as deal grievous sea-raids at dawn,
Worms, wild-things, slithering down,
In bitter rage, when they heard the call
Of the war-horn. A Geat shot one
With an arrow deep through the heart.
It ended its writhing there in the water.
Its struggles grew less, a slow death.
Held in the shallows, it was spiked
By boar-spears, hooked hard there,
Struck savagely, and dragged ashore,
Wondrous wave-spawn; men stared
At the gruesome guest. Now, Beowulf
Fearless of death, armed himself nobly.
He needed his braided, strong meshed
Mail, there in the depths of the lake,
To protect his frame, its cage of bone,
So that no grip could crush his heart,
No grasping in malice choke his life.
A shining helmet guarded his head,
Ready to cleave the mere-depths,
Stir the waters; the helm was adorned,
Nobly banded and bound, as long ago
It was wrought by its weapon-smith,
Set with boar-shapes, made so no blade,
No battle-sword might bite through.
And no small thing then did Unferth
Lend him, not the least of his needs,

That long-handled sword, Hrunting.
It was the finest of ancient treasures,
Iron-edged, alight with snake-forms,
Tempered in blood. It had never failed
Any man who had waved it in battle,
Who had dared to go a dread journey
Into enemy realms. Not for the first time
Was it to be wielded in some brave effort.
When he lent that sword to the better man,
Ecglaf's great son neglected to mention
The words he had uttered when in drink;
Not daring to risk his life, down there,
Under the swirling wave; glory foregone,
A brave man's fame: not so Beowulf,
Ready now, and rigged out for the fight.

XXII:Lines:1473-1556: Grendel's Dam

So, Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow, spoke:
'Great son of Halfdane, wisest of leaders,
Gold-Giver, now I am ready for every
Venture, think of what we have said:
That if I should depart life in serving
You, then after my death you would act
Like a father, protector of my company,
My young warriors; and if I fall that you
Dear Hrothgar, would send to Hygelac
All of the treasure you have given me.
Seeing that gold, those riches, Hrethel's
Son, the Lord of the Geats, will know
I have found me a noble ring-giver,
A great king, and enjoyed his favour.
And let Unferth have the ancient blade,
Wondrous and wave-wrought, so grant
That far-famed man the honed edge:
I will gain glory with Hrunting, or die.'
With this the lord of the Weder-Geats,
Not waiting any reply, plunged bravely
Into the depths of the seething lake.
It took him the best part of the day,
Before he could reach its solid bed,
She knew it at once, the ravenous one
Greedy and wrathful, whom the wide
Expanse of water had held for half
A hundred years, knew that a human
Entered her strange realm from above.
Groping upwards, she seized the man
In her dire grasp. Yet in no way could
She get at his body; the ring-mail held;
Her loathsome fingers failed to pierce
The war-gear; the linked limb-guard.
Touching the lake-bed, the she-wolf
Of the waters bore him off to her lair,

Preventing him, for all his courage,
From wielding a sword, while a horde
Of strange things tracked his scent,
Tusked creatures struck at his armour,
A foul onslaught. Then the earl saw
He was fast in some house of malice,
Out of the force of the flood, whose
Roof stopped the water reaching him,
Free of its onrush. Firelight he saw,
A pallid flame, glimmering, alive.
He saw, too, that accursed dweller
In the deep, that mighty mere-wife;
Thrust hard with his sword; swung
So the ring-marked blade rang out
Its wild war-song. Yet he found
The steel would not hew and bite,
That its edge failed the hero in his
Hour of need. Though it had served
In many a hand to hand fight, split
Armour and helms of the doomed,
For the first time its glory faded,
The precious gift's powers failed.
But Hygelac's kinsman held firm,
Strong in courage, mindful of fame.
Then in fury he hurled the solid steel,
The patterned sword, to the ground,
And trusted instead to a hand-grasp,
His mighty grip. So must a man do
Who would win long-lasting glory
In battle. He must be careless of life.
Then, without qualm, the Geat prince
Gripped Grendel's dam by the shoulder,
Heaved hard in his anger, throwing
His deadly foe to the floor, but she
Hit back swiftly, caught him in turn
In a fierce grasp, gripping him tight.
The strongest of sure-footed heroes

Daunted, stumbled, and took a fall.
Then she straddled him, and drew
Her broad bright blade, wanting
Vengeance then for her only child,
For Grendel her son; the twined
Mail-mesh, saved Beowulf's life,
Withstood the entry of edge or tip.
The son of Ecgtheow, prince of Geats,
Would surely have died down there,
If his firm armour, that net of chain,
Had not helped him, and Holy God
Given victory. The All-Wise, Ruler
Of the Heavens, found it easy to set
Things right; and Beowulf on his feet.

XXIII:Lines:1557-1599: Beowulf's Victory

Then he saw on a weapon-pile, a sword,
Firm-edged from the days of giants,
A warrior's winning blade of choice,
Though greater than any other man
Could trust himself to wield in a fight,
Fine and noble, a work of the mighty.
So the Shielding's hero seized the hilt,
Drew the sword in his furious frenzy,
Striking, without thought for his life,
So the edge sliced deep into her neck,
Shattering the bone, severing it wholly
That doomed house of flesh, so she fell.
The blade blood-wet, he hailed his work.
Light gleamed, a pure brightness within,
Even as the sun's candle shines clear
In the heavens. He searched the hall,
Hygelac's thane, angered, intent,
Skirted the wall, his sword held high,
The hilt guarded, and found good use
For that blade, taking payment now
For all of Grendel's savage attacks,
All the evil he worked on the Danes;
More than that once when he slew
Hrothgar's hearth-comrades in sleep,
Devoured fifteen of the West-Danes,
Where they lay, carrying off as many,
A hideous haul. Beowulf the fierce
Warrior, now repaid him for that,
Finding Grendel's scarred body,
Lying there lifeless, its flesh torn
By him in Heorot, he gave it a harsh
Sword-blow; the corpse split at this
Stroke after death. He cut off the head.
The wise men watching with Hrothgar,
Saw the lake boil in a sudden turmoil

Of blood-red water. Their grey-heads
Bowed, by the good king they spoke
Of no longer expecting the prince
To return to their glorious leader,
In triumph. They agreed the she-wolf
Of the deep must have destroyed him.

XXIV:Lines:1600-1650: His Return

When the ninth hour arrived, the Shieldings
Left the cliff with their Gold-Giving king.
But Beowulf's men, sick at heart, stayed
To gaze at the mere, hope without belief
That they might see their lord and friend
Again. Meanwhile, beneath the water,
The sword began to break into gory icicles,
It was a wonder the way it melted, as ice
Will when the Father frees the frost fetters,
Unwinds the braids of water, he who
Rules time and tide. Such the true maker.
Though Beowulf saw vast treasure there,
He brought back no more than the head,
And his inlaid sword-hilt; the blade
Had scorched and melted; it scalded,
The blood of that poisonous alien spirit.
Then having survived the fight, where
His foe fell, he swam out and upwards.
The wide expanse was calm once more,
The turmoil over, now the alien spirit
Was loosed from life in this frail world.
Swimming strongly, the seafarer's leader
Came to land, pleased with his spoils,
And the great burden he bore with him.
His band of men, ran towards him,
Thanking God, overjoyed at seeing
Their prince returned, safe and sound.
Swiftly the hero's helmet and mail
Were loosened; the lake grew still,
Blood-stained water under welkin.
Overjoyed at heart, they fared forth,
Over footpaths, the beaten tracks,
The road they knew; full of spirit,
Those princely men bore the head
With some difficulty, between them –

It took four to carry Grendel's head,
Hoist on a spear, to the gold-hall –
And they soon reached the place,
Fourteen of them, Geat warriors,
Making their way with their prince,
In a proud throng to the mead-hall.
There he entered, lord of the thanes,
A man brave in deed, raised to glory,
Proven in battle, to greet Hrothgar.
Grendel's head, gripped by the hair,
Was hurled to the floor, where all
Were drinking, and earls and ladies
Gazed in wonder at the fearful sight.

XXV:Lines: 1651-1739:The Deed Re-Told

Then Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow, spoke:
‘Now, Lord of Shieldings, son of Halfdane,
With joy we bring you these lake-spoils,
The tokens of triumph you see here.
I barely escaped with my life from this
Fight under the flood, a task fraught
With danger, and nothing easy. If God
Had not shielded me, all were ended.
I could not work the deed with Hrunting,
Fine weapon though it chance to be.
But the Ruler of Men, who often helps
The defenceless, showed me a sword,
An ancient weapon hung on the wall;
While I could, I drew it, and so killed
The lair-dweller. The patterned blade
Melted there, in battle-hot blood-surge.
The foul deeds avenged, as was fitting,
The deadly Dane-slaughter, I grasped
The hilt, brought from the demons’ den.
I pledge that you and your warrior host
May all sleep sound now in Heorot, free
From sorrow, no longer need you fear
For your thanes, young and old, or dread
As you did before, Lord of the Shieldings,
That taking of life that wasted your men.’
Then the gold hilt, a relic of giant’s work,
Was placed in the hands of the aged king.
When death removed that wrathful creature,
God’s murderous enemy, and his mother,
That hilt, the work of wondrous smiths,
Passed into the Lord of the Dane’s hoard.
It came into the power of a king on earth,
The best of those, between the two seas,
Who dealt out rich gifts, in Scedeland.
Hrothgar gazed at the hilt, that relic

Of ancient times, where was engraved
The source of war, when the waves
Rose, and destroyed the race of giants.
That tribe, alien to the eternal Lord,
Suffered terribly. The Almighty dealt
Their reward, in that seethe of waters.
There were runes too, in shining gold,
Inlaid on the blade, rightly marked,
Set down to state for whom the sword
That finest of blades, with braided hilt,
And serpent pattern, had first been made.
Then the wise son of Halfdane spoke,
And all those who were there fell silent:
'An aged guardian of his homeland,
Who recalls tradition, and acts rightly
Towards his people, may indeed say
That this man was born to greatness.
Beowulf, my friend, your fame runs
Everywhere, throughout the nations.
You have strength, wisdom at heart,
Joined to patience. I will stand firm
To the friendship we spoke of before.
You will be an enduring comfort now
To your people, a bulwark for heroes.
Heremod proved not so to Ecgwala's
Children, to the Honour-Shieldings,
His rise brought no joy to the Danes,
Only destruction, only their slaughter.
He felled his table-companions in fury,
His right hand men; despite his fame,
He was exiled from human pleasures,
Though Almighty God had given him
Power, and exalted him over others,
But his heart grew thirsty for blood,
He gave no more rings to the Danes.
Lived without joy, and suffered pain
The people's bane. Learn from this:

Know true virtue. So, I say to you,
Being old, winter-wise. Almighty God
In wondrous ways, from deep knowledge,
Grants human beings the gifts of wisdom,
Land and lordship: He governs them all.
At times, for His pleasure, He allows
The mind of some noble man its sway,
Grants him earthly joy in his homeland,
Command of the warriors' stronghold.
He grants him power, in this world,
Over a vast kingdom, so that the man,
In his unknowing, sees no end to it all.
He lives well; neither illness nor age
Trouble him; no sharp sorrow darkens
His thought, no conflict, nor the bite
Of malice, but rather the whole world
Bends to his will: he knows life's best.'

XXVI:Lines: 1740-1816:Hrothgar's Speech

'Until overweening pride enters him,
Waxes and swells, and the warden sleeps,
The soul's guardian, the soundest slumber;
Bound in distraction: the slayer is near,
Loosing a deadly shaft from the bow.
Then under the helm, into the heart,
It strikes – he lacks all defence –from those
Strange, perverse, demands of the evil one.
What he has long ruled seems too little;
Cruelly he covets, ceases ring-giving,
Forgets the future, forgoes the past,
When God, the Ruler of Glory, gave
A portion of honour into his hands.
In the end it must come to pass
That the body, flesh lent to him, fails,
Fated it falls. Another heir shares
The treasure, without fear or regret,
All of the earl's wealth he hoarded.
Dear Beowulf, finest of warriors,
Guard yourself against such error,
Choose the better path for yourself,
Eternal worth. Great champion, give
No heed to pride. You'll glory in strength,
For a while; soon sickness or sword
Will weaken your powers, a flare
From the fire, or the flood's surge,
Or blade's leap, or spear's flight,
Or foul old age. The brightest eye
Darkens and dims. Warrior, soon
Comes Death over-sweeping you.
I've ruled the Ring-Danes fifty years,
Under these skies, saved them in war
From many a race in middle-earth,
Ash-spear and sword-edge, until
No enemy was left under heaven.

Now, there came reverses here,
Pain after pleasure, for Grendel
Invaded my home, time and again,
And I endured continual sorrows,
From his raids. Thanks be to fate,
The power eternal, that I survive,
To set eyes on his blade-bloodied
Head, after all the tale of horror.
Go, find a bench, and honoured
By that conflict, join in the feast.
We will share treasure at dawn.’
The Geat, went, joy in his heart,
To seek a settle, as the king said.
Then the brave warriors, seated
There in the hall, drank as before,
Feasted again. Night’s helm fell,
Dark over warriors. The men rose,
The aged grey-haired Shielding,
Wished for bed, and the Geat,
The brave shield-man, for sleep.
At once a hall-thane, assigned
To serve the hero’s needs, such
As a sea-borne guest was given
Of courtesy, in those days, led
The weary traveller from afar,
The great-hearted man, to rest.
The hall towered above, gabled,
Gold-glinting; the guest slept
Until the black raven cawed,
Gleefully, at the sun in the sky,
Heaven’s joy. Then the bright
Warriors came, those noblemen,
Eager to return to their people,
Fit to fare, and the brave guest
Longing for his far-off ship.
He told Unferth, Ecglaf’s son,
The hardy warrior, to take back

And wear the sword, his dear blade,
Hrunting, with thanks for the loan,
Saying he found it a friend in battle,
A warlike blade, with never a word
Of blame. He was a man of pride.
Then with his warriors all armed
And ready to go, their honoured lord
Approached the high seat of the king,
And the brave hero greeted Hrothgar.

XXVII:Lines:1817-1887:Beowulf Departs

Then Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow spoke:
‘Now, we seafarers from afar must say
That we are keen to return to Hygelac.
Here we have been treated courteously,
And achieved our desire. Lord of men,
If there is aught I might do to merit
More of your favour, than I have done
With weapon-work, I shall be ready.
If I should hear, from over the flood,
That some tribe has risen against you,
As your enemies have done before,
I’ll bring a thousand heroic thanes
To your aid. I know that Hygelac,
Lord of the Geats, Ward of the People,
Is young, yet I know he would help,
In word and deed, if I honoured you,
And came in strength, with a forest
Of spears, when you needed men.
And if Hrethric, as the king’s son,
Travels to the court of the Geats,
He will find friends. Far-off lands
Are best sought by the powerful.’
Hrothgar then spoke to him in reply:
‘The Wise Lord placed these words
In your mind. I have heard no better
A speech from a man of your years.
You are strong, and sound at heart,
A wise word-speaker. If it chances
That Hrethel’s heir, Ward of the Folk,
Your great king, is taken from you,
By the spear, in some dreadful battle,
By sword or sickness, and you live,
I think the Sea-Geats could choose
No better a king, bulwark of heroes,
Than you, if you should wish to rule,

Your kinsman's kingdom. Your spirit
Pleases me more the longer I know it,
My dear Beowulf. You have ensured
That the Geats and the Spear-Danes,
Shall live as folk at peace, and end
The mutual strife and those hostilities
Which both nations suffered before.
While I shall rule this broad kingdom,
Exchange of gifts, many a good thing,
Shall travel over the gannet's pool;
The scrolled prows shall cross the sea,
Bringing tokens of love and friendship.
I know, towards friend and foe, both
Will stand fast, beyond fault, as ever.'
The Earls' Defender, Halfdane's son,
Then gave the hero twelve treasures,
Told him to seek his dear homeland,
To journey in safety, and soon return.
Then that noble and virtuous king,
Silver-haired Lord of the Shieldings
Kissed Beowulf, and clasped his neck:
The tears ran. Old, wise, those hopes
Were in him, the second one deeper:
That they might meet again, bravely,
In conference. Such the love he held
For the hero, that his heart welled up,
And a deep longing for that dear man
Now tied so tightly to him in thought,
Burned in his blood. Thence, Beowulf
The proud warrior, glorious with gold,
Trod the green turf. Riding at anchor,
The ship awaited its lord and master.
Hrothgar's gifts were often praised
On the long passage. There was a king,
Peerless in all, until age sapped him
Of strength's joy, as it does the many.

XXVIII:Lines:1888-1962:He Sails Home

Down to the flood, then, full of spirit,
Went the young men, wearing ring-mail,
Linked armour on limbs. The sea-guard,
Ever-watchful, spied the heroes returning.
He now no longer challenged the guests,
From the cliff-top as he had once before,
But rode towards them, with a welcome
For the warriors of the Wederas, as they,
Helms shining went down to their boat.
The curved sea-going ship, by the shore,
Was then loaded with war-gear, horses
And treasure. The mast towered high
Over Hrothgar's hoard of rich gifts.
Beowulf gave the watchman a sword,
Its hilt bound with gold, an heirloom
That marked him the worthier there
On the mead-bench. Then he set out,
On deep water, leaving the Danes' land.
Then a mighty sail was raised to the mast,
Ropes hauled tight. The timbers thrummed.
No adverse wind threatened that sea-bird,
Over the waves, the voyagers sailed on.
The foam-necked fared forth on the ocean,
The banded prow over the brimming tide,
Till the Geats sighted their own headlands,
Their own cliffs. The weather-beaten keel
Sprang up, and rested once more on shore.
The harbour-guard, alert to their coming,
Who had long watched for his dear friends,
Gazed far on the waves, was soon by them.
The solid ship was moored to the sands,
Anchored fast, lest the force of the waves
Might carry away the wind-lashed timbers.
Then he had them carry the prince's riches,
Freight and fine gold, it was no far distance,

To where Hygelac, the Giver of Treasure,
Hrethel's son, had his house by the sea-wall,
Lived surrounded there by his companions,
A brave building, the king bold in valour,
In his high hall. Hygd, his queen, full young
But wise, well-mannered, had lived there,
At court for no more than a few winters.
Haereth's daughter, she was generous,
Grudged no gift to the men of the Geats,
No rich treasure, while Thryth, the queen
Of Offa's people, wrought violence, evil.
Not even the boldest of his dear friends,
None but her lord dared risk a look at *her*,
In the light of day, without knowing his end,
The woven death-ropes bound about him,
As ordained. As soon as the man was seized,
The shadow-marked blade was appointed,
To make death known. However peerless,
A queen should not behave in such manner,
No weaver of peace should deprive a man
Of life, for no more than imagined injury.
But Hemming's kinsman put a stop to that:
Ale-drinkers at table told another tale of her,
That she showed less enmity and malice
To the people, after she was given, decked
In gold, to this young hero of fine ancestry,
Sent by her wise father, over the dark flood,
To journey to Offa's hall, where afterwards,
Famed for goodness she graced the throne,
Using her life well, in the days left to her,
Holding high love for that king of heroes,
The finest lord, I have heard, of that race,
That mighty nation, between the two seas.
Offa, sharp as a spear, was widely honoured,
For gift-giving, fighting, and ruling his land
With wisdom. From thence sprang Eomer,
A bulwark for heroes, kinsman of Hemming,

And grandson of Garmund, powerful in war.

XXIX:Lines:1963-2038:The Tale

Then the hard man, and his hand-picked crew,
Himself trod the shore, over the sea-barrens,
The wide sand-ways; the sun, the world-candle,
Shone sharp from the south. After the journey,
They strode swiftly, to where, they had heard,
Their virtuous young king, Ongentheow's bane,
The shield for heroes, within his stronghold,
Was handing out rings. Beowulf's return
Was soon proclaimed to Hygelac, news
That the warriors' defence, shield-companion,
Was back alive from his distant adventures,
Unharm'd, and on his way to the homestead.
The floor in the hall was quickly cleared,
At the king's command, for the men on foot.
After his liege-lord, with gracious speech,
Had greeted the survivor, in clear words,
Beowulf sat down, kinsman with kinsman,
And Haereth's daughter, dear to the people,
Sent draughts of mead through the wide room,
To noble hands. Then Hygelac began to ask
Courteous questions, in that high hall, of his
Companion, eager to hear the Sea-Geat's tale.
'How did you fare on the way, dear Beowulf,
After you chose to seek far-off adventure,
Sailed to fight that feud, over the salt-water
Help in Heorot? Did you lessen the woes,
Which were widely known, of that great king,
Hrothgar? My heart filled with anxious care,
Seething wells of sadness, not trusting to fate,
Dear friend. How I pleaded with you, then,
Not to challenge him, that spirit of slaughter,
And let the South Danes settle their feud,
With Grendel themselves. God be thanked
That I see you here again, safe and sound.'
Then Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow replied:

‘That fierce conflict is no great secret,
Lord Hygelac, to be kept from people,
That long struggle I had with Grendel,
In that land where he brought sorrow
And endless misery to the great mass
Of Victory-Shieldings. I took vengeance
For it all. Grendel’s kin, evil on earth,
Will never boast of our clash at dawn,
However long that vile race might last,
Shrouded in malice. Once I arrived,
I went to the ring-hall, to greet Hrothgar.
When that son of the Halfdane knew
My purpose, he found me a place at once
On the bench where his own sons sat.
The throng were joyful. In my whole life
I never saw such mead-revelry amongst
Hall-guests. At times the great queen,
She the peace-pledge between nations,
Walked round encouraging the young,
Gave out torques then took her place.
Sometimes Hrothgar’s daughter bore
The ale-flagons to the ranks of nobles,
I heard the benches name her as Freawaru,
As she brought us the gem-studded cup,
Young and gold-adorned she is promised
To Ingeld the Gracious, son of Froda.
The Friend of the Shieldings, Shepherd
Of the People, has brought this about,
With hopes marriage with her will settle
Old conflicts. Though however lovely
The bride may be, the savage spear
Is seldom still, after a leader falls.
It may well displease Ingeld the king,
And every thane of his Heathobards,
When he and the woman join the feast,
To see the noble Danes seated there,
The veterans, ancient armour gleaming,

Steel and ring-mail, Heathobard treasure,
When they could still wield their weapons.?’

XXX:Lines:2039-2143:Of His Deeds

‘But they, along with their dear companions,
Went down to disaster in that clash of shields.
Then, while they drink, some old spearman
Some grim-hearted man, who remembers it all,
Seeing some precious ring, all the spear-deaths,
Sad in spirit, and musing deep in his mind,
Will start to provoke some young champion,
Waken war-thoughts, with words like these:
“Surely you know that weapon, my friend,
That precious blade your father once bore,
When he took the field in his masked-helm,
On the last campaign, when Danes slew him,
When Wethergeld died, and the heroes fell,
And the Shieldings commanded the ground?
Now here’s the son of one or other of them,
Proud in his gear, treading the boards there,
Boasting of killing, and wearing a weapon
That you, by every right, should possess.”
So he will go on, inciting and prompting,
With lethal words, until one of the thanes
The lady’s servant, lies stained in blood
From the blade’s bite, for his father’s sake,
Forfeiting life. While knowing the terrain
His killer can escape, and goes scot-free.
Then oaths sworn by nobles, are broken
On both sides. Then Ingeld will feel hatred
Welling, and the surge of grief, so his love
For the woman will cool, and grow less.
So is suspect all the Heathobards’ loyalty,
Their dealing in treaties, claims of enduring
Friendship towards the Danes. But I must say
More of Grendel, so that you might know,
Giver of Treasure, what happened there
In the hand-to-hand fight. When the sun,
Heaven’s gem, had glided to earth, the guest,

Full of ire, dark horror of twilight, appeared,
Where we, unharmed, yet guarded the hall.
There for Handscio came the losing struggle,
Fouly foredoomed, he fell first, the armed
Champion. That famed, magnificent warrior
Grendel took in his maw, and swallowed
Our dear friend's body, devouring it whole.
Baleful-minded, the bloody-toothed killer
Was not yet ready to leave the gold-hall,
Loathe he was to depart empty-handed,
But, famed for his might, he tested me,
Gripping eagerly. His pouch hung down,
Strange and roomy, held fast by clasps
All cunningly-wrought, cleverly devised,
Devilishly crafted out of dragon's skin.
That dread demon wanted to cram me,
And many another innocent, inside,
But was bound to fail when I rose up,
Sudden with anger, and faced him there.
It would take too long to recount how he
Paid with his hand for his every evil,
How I honoured your people, my lord,
By my deeds. He fled for a little while,
He escaped with his life for the moment,
Leaving his right hand behind in Heorot,
And the wretch, with gloom in his heart,
Vanishing from there, sank into the mere.
The Friend of the Shieldings gifted me
With beaten gold for that bloody fight,
Many a treasure, when morning came,
And we sat down to the banquet table,
Gladness and glee. The aged Hrothgar,
That daring warrior, a generous king,
One knowing the tales of long-ago,
Now strummed on his ancient harp,
Made its wood quiver, for our pleasure;
Now sang out a lay, both true and tragic;

Now rightly related some strange story,
At times he began to mourn his youth,
That veteran soldier, bound by the years,
And his battle-strength, his heart grieved,
A winter-wise man, remembering much.
So there within we took our pleasure,
The whole day long, till another night
Came to mankind. Then Grendel's dam,
Mourning her dead son, Wederas' bane,
Eager for revenge, swiftly appeared,
And retaliating for her son's death,
Savagely slew a warrior, thus life left
Aeschere, old lore-wise counsellor.
Nor could the Danes, weary of death,
Lay the dear man on the funeral pyre,
And burn his body, when morning came.
The fiend had clasped his corpse and fled;
Taken him under the mountain stream.
That was the bitterest grief that Hrothgar,
The leader of the folk, had ever known.
Then that chieftain, his mind troubled,
Asked, in your name, for a noble deed,
That I risk my life in the water's surge,
And gain glory there. He promised gifts.
In that whelm of water, as is known,
I met the grim ireful guard of the lake.
There we fought a while, hand to hand,
The pool seethed with gore, I beheaded
Grendel's mother, in those deep halls,
With a mighty blade. I barely chanced
To come out alive. It was not yet fated;
And Halfdane's son, bulwark of heroes,
Gave me once more a wealth of treasure.

XXXI:Lines:2144-2220:He Becomes King

‘Thus that nation’s king, did what was due,
I forwent none of the gifts he had promised,
No reward for my might: Halfdane’s son
Granted me riches, to my greater glory.
These, warrior-king, I bring to you, offer
Them graciously, for all depends on your
Favour. Hygelac, I’ve no near kin but you.’
They brought in the boar-head standard,
The battle-steep helm, the hoar-silver mail,
The beauteous blade. His tale continued:
Hrothgar, wise ruler, gave me this war-gear,
With words instructing me first to tell you
Of its provenance. He said that Heorogar,
King of the Shieldings, his elder brother,
Long owned it, but though Heorowearð,
His brave son was loyal, he did not choose
To grant him the armour. Now, use it well.’
Four russet mares, like in speed, I hear,
Followed the treasure. Beowulf offered,
As gifts to the king, both the bay horses
And the hoard of riches. So kin should do.
Not weave nets of malice for others,
Bringing friends to death by secret arts,
Beowulf was loyal to his uncle, Hygelac
In battle: each minded the other’s cause.
He gave Hygd a necklace, a wondrous
Jewelled work Wealhtheow gave him,
That king’s daughter; and three horses,
Supple with shining saddles: her breast
Was adorned with the treasure so given.
Bold he was, Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow,
A man known for great deeds in battle.
He lived for glory. Slew no companions,
In drink. Bore him a heart untroubled.
And held to man’s God-given strength,

That generous gift, courage in conflict.
The sons of the Geats had long held him
In little regard, thought him worthless,
Nor had the commander of their troop
Showed him honour on the mead benches.
They said he was, above all, a weakling,
Lacking in daring. But blessed with glory,
He saw a recompense for such troubles.
Then Hygelac, brave in battle, a bulwark
For heroes, had Hrethel's heirloom brought;
Garnished with gold, no finer a treasure,
By way of a blade, came from the hoard,
Than that sword he laid in Beowulf's lap.
And he granted him seven thousand hides,
Half a country; with a hall; and joint rule.
Both owned ancestral land in that nation,
Part of the earth that was theirs by right,
Though more of that land was to the elder.
Afterwards, in later days, it so happened
When Hygelac was dead, that Heardred
His son fell to the swords, in fierce battle,
That sought him, baneful, under his shield,
When the Battle-Shieldings, eager for war,
Fought Hereric's nephew, and conquered.
Thereupon that wide kingdom passed
Into Beowulf's hands; and he ruled well
For fifty winters, grown old and wise,
Warden of the nation, till one dark night
A dragon began to prowl that guarded
A hoard in its high house, a stone barrow,
Set stark, the path below unknown to men.
Someone, I know not whom, had entered,
And groped around in the heathen hoard.
His hands had wrapped themselves about
Some fine goblet, he had later removed,
Though by outwitting the sleeping dragon
With a thief's guile. It angered the creature,

As the neighbouring folk soon discovered.

XXXII:Lines:2221-2311:The Dragon Wakes

He who had sorely injured the dragon,
Had no intent to steal from the hoard.
In dire distress that thief, of unknown
Parents, that guest who'd gained entry,
Haunted by a crime, swiftly detected,
Fled hostile blows, in need of shelter.
There, a dread terror gripped the guest,
There, the sinner stood in deadly peril.
He'd sought gold. In the earthen vault,
There was many an ancient treasure,
For some great man in former times,
Had chosen to hide that vast hoard,
The dear heirlooms of a noble race.
Death took them all, in days gone by,
Till the only warrior left of that people,
The last of his line, mourning his friends,
Hoped to delay and cherish the treasure
A little while longer. Already the barrow
Overlooked the shore, on the headland
Above the waves, made certain by craft.
There, of the earls' treasure, he placed
A hoard of rings, a hand-wrought heap
Of plated gold, then spoke these words:
'Now, Earth, hold these lordly treasures
That men could not. Good men once
Tore all this from you. War has taken
My dear people. One by one, they fell,
To its fearful frenzy, and left me this.
They saw joy in the halls: now is none
To wield the sword, polish the flagon,
The precious cup: the heroes are gone.
The hard helm, with its hasps of gold,
Its finery must fade; the armourers sleep,
With the war-masks they would burnish,
And the battle-shirt that endured the bite

Of the iron blade, when shields shattered,
Decays with the dead. Nor will ring-mail
Wander widely on warriors' shoulders,
Among the heroes. No joy from the harp,
Its quivering frame; no fierce-flying hawk
To soar in the hall; no fleet-footed horses
To trample the yard. Baleful death sent forth
Out of this life, a vast host of my kinsmen.'
Thus saddened in mind, sighing with grief,
The last of all, he wandered sorrowing
Day and night, till the tide of death
Reached his heart. Then a naked dragon,
A twilight-scourer, the burning malice
Who seeks out barrows, flying by night,
Wreathed in fire, found hoard-joy, stone
Standing open. Men on this earth fear
Him greatly. He seeks evil underground,
There winter-wise he guards heathen gold,
To no end. For three centuries this scourge
Kept vigil in earth over the strongly-built
Hoard-hall, until the thief, in his pride,
Roused him. He had run to his liege lord,
With that golden cup, begged for truce,
Sought peace. So the wretch's boon
Was granted: the hoard was robbed,
The ring-hoard taken: his lord gazed
For the first time on its ancient artistry.
When the worm woke, conflict followed.
The hard-hearted one slunk over the stone,
Found the prints where his foe had stepped,
In stealth, far too near the dragon's head:
So a man, not yet doomed by fate, graced
By the Lord, may well escape ill and woe.
The guard of the hoard had sought for him,
Scouring the ground, desiring that man
Who had harmed him sorely while he slept.
Hot and wrathful, he went circling all round

The mound outside – there was no man there,
But he took delight in thoughts of conflict,
And battle-work – then in again he'd creep
To seek the cup, only to find once more
Signs that someone had found his treasure,
Stolen his gold. The guard of the hoard
Fumed with impatience, till evening came.
Then the barrow-keeper vented his rage,
He desired to avenge the loss of his dear
Treasure with fire. The day was done,
To the worm's delight. Unable to wait
Behind that wall, he set out with bale-fire,
Infused with flame. The terror began
With the folk of that land, but soon
With their Ring-Giver it sorely ended.

XXXIII:Lines:2312-2390:Beowulf's Kingship

Then the creature began to spew flame,
And burn bright houses, to men's horror;
Fires glowed. Nor did those evil flights
Through the heavens, leave any alive.
The worm's power was widely seen,
Near and far, how that night-malice,
How that scourge of the dark, hated
And humbled the Geats. Then back
To his hoard he shot, before sunrise,
To his hidden hall. The land blazed,
The folk suffered, in fire and flame.
He trusted the walls of his barrow,
His war-craft, but he was deceived.
Swiftly, Beowulf heard of the threat,
That his home, that finest of houses,
The Geats' throne-hall had perished.
Such was grief to him, mind-sorrow.
He felt he must have deeply angered
The Lord, the Eternal Ruler, broken
The law of old. Gloomy thoughts
Welled within him, unlike himself.
The fire-drake had burnt the fortress
To the ground, the folk's stronghold,
By the shore. For that the war-king,
Lord of the Wederas, sought revenge.
That first of earls ordered a defence,
A warrior's shield made, all of iron,
Wondrously wrought, knowing that
Lime-wood was no help, no timber
Proof against flame. Great and good,
The noble hero had reached the end
Of life in this world, and the dragon
Too, for all his long hold on the hoard.
Yet the Ring-Lord scorned to attack
The wide-flying worm with an army.

For himself he had no fear of the fight,
Scant regard for the dragon's fire, nor
Its courage or power, for he'd endured
Many a near-run battle, many another
Hostile clash, since, ever the victor,
He had cleansed Hrothgar's great hall
And overwhelmed Grendel's tribe,
That hateful race. Not least was that
Hand-to-hand struggle, when Hygelac,
The King of the Geats, Hrethel's heir,
Friend of the Folk, fell in Friesland,
In the heat of battle, beaten down
By blood-soaked blades. Beowulf
Returned on his own, from the sea,
Bearing thirty men's battle-gear
In his arms, as he crossed the ocean.
The Hetware had no reason to cheer
The fight on that field, who carried
Their lime-wood shields against him.
Few returned to their homes again.
Ecgtheow's son crossed the waters,
Sad and alone, to reach his people.
Hygd offered him hoard and kingdom,
Rings and ring-throne, not trusting
In her son's power to hold the land,
Against all others, and Hygelac dead.
Yet in their misery, they could not
Persuade the noble Beowulf to act
In any way as lord over Heardred,
Nor did he wish to hold kingship.
Yet graciously and with honour,
He gave the prince friendly counsel,
Until he was ready to rule the folk,
As king of the Weder-Geats. Exiles
Arrived then, from over the sea,
The sons of Ohthere; they'd rebelled
Against Onela, the finest of sea-kings,

Helm of the Scylfings, famous leader,
He who dispensed treasure in Sweden.
That spelt doom for Hygelac's son,
For helping them he had mortal wound,
A swing of the sword for hospitality,
While Onela, son of Ongentheow,
After Heardred's death, went home,
Leaving Beowulf to hold the throne,
Rule the Geats. He was a good king.

XXXIV:Lines:2391-2459:The Lament

In after days, he achieved revenge
For his prince's death; to Eadgils
Son of Ohthere, he stood friend,
Sending help over the wide sea,
Warriors and weapons; fought
A cold campaign; killed Onela.
Thus this son of Ecgtheow survived
Every battle, each deadly conflict,
Doing brave deeds, until that day,
When he was forced to face the dragon.
Filled with anger, as one of twelve,
The Lord of the Geats sought the worm.
By now he knew the source of the feud,
This hatred for man; for to his hand
From the thief, came the precious cup;
He was the thirteenth in that company,
The one who had caused this strife,
Their sad captive, whom they forced
To show the way, lead them to the place,
Against his will, to the earth-hall he knew,
The underground barrow by the sea-surge,
The wave-wash; that was filled inside
With gems and gold-work, its vile guard
Eager for battle, keeper of gold, of old
Under the earth. It would not be easy
For any man to strike a bargain there.
The battle-hardened king, Gold-Friend
To the Geats, sat down, on the cliff-top,
And wished his companions good luck.
His heart was sad. The fate loomed, all
Too near, an old king, restless yet ready,
About to depart, life from limb, must meet,
To go seeking his soul's reward; not long,
Would his spirit be twined with the flesh.
Thus Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow, spoke:

‘I survived many a battle when young,
In times of war, I remember them all.
I was seven winters old when Hrethel,
Lord of the Hoard, Friend of the Folk,
Took me from father, to have and hold.
Was kinsman to me, feast and wealth.
I was no less in standing, no less a man
To him in that house, than his own sons,
Herebeald, Haethcyn, and my Hygelac.
An unfitting death-bed the eldest found,
When Haethcyn, his brother and friend,
Loosed an arrow from horn-tipped bow,
Missed the mark, and shot his kinsman;
Brother killed brother, with bloody bolt.
The deed irreparable; a grievous wrong,
Wearying the heart; and yet never a way
To find requital for that parting from life.
Such is the tragedy when some old man
Sees his young son swing on the gallows,
Food for the ravens; his age and wisdom
Provide him nothing, nor bring comfort.
Ever reminded, on waking each morning,
His son is elsewhere, he lacks all interest
In living on, or awaiting some other, born
Heir to his all, when the son he once had,
Driven by his deeds, has found out death.
He gazes, grieving, at where his son lived,
Ruined hallways, wind-blown wastelands,
Bereft of joy. The horsemen are sleeping,
The heroes are hidden, under the ground,
No harps sound, no joy in the courtyards,
As once there was. He sings the lament.

XXXV:Lines:2460-2601:The Fight

Then takes to his bed, the last of his line.
The fields and the homestead seem all too
Empty. And thus, with Herebeald's death,
The King, Helm of the Wederas, suffered;
Heart's sorrow welling. And no payment,
Not a whit, could he exact from the slayer,
Nor show, though he held him in hatred,
His lack of love, by hostility against him.
Filled with sorrow, that fell on him sorely,
He turned from joy, choosing God's light,
A man of great wealth, he left to his heirs,
Land and stronghold, and departed this life.
Then, over the wide water, Swede and Geat
Wrought their quarrel, suffering and strife;
Hard-fighting then, after Hrethel was slain,
When Ongentheow's heirs waged warfare,
In fury. They had no wish for friendship,
Over the sea, but around Hreasnabeorn,
The Ruined Hill, they carried out raids,
With dread malice, campaigned savagely,
Fire and feud, avenged by my own kin;
There, one of the kings paid with his life,
A harsh exchange; it was Haethcyn, then,
Lords of the Geats, who fell in that battle.
Yet Hygelac's swordsmen took vengeance
At dawn, with bright blades against slayer.
There Ongentheow was attacked by Eofor,
His war-helm cloven, the aged Scylfing,
Fell, battle-pale; though his hand recalled
Many a feud, it foiled not the death-blow.
I repaid Hygelac the treasures he gave me;
In war, with the sword, I earned what was
Granted me: he gave me land, gave me joy
Of this earth, a country. He had no need
For some lesser warrior, eager for warfare,

From among the Gifthas, or Spear-Danes,
Or some Swede that his wealth might buy.
First in the ranks, I would always demand
To march before him, and so shall I always
Seek to in battle, while this sword endures
Which has ever served me, early and late,
Since I slew Daeghrefn, before the army,
The Hugas' champion, in mortal combat.
Noble and brave was that standard-bearer,
But he brought no precious adornments
To his Frisian king, no breastplate of mine;
He fell with his company; not by the blade,
By my battle-grip; I broke the bone-house
Of his heart-beat. Now shall blade's edge,
Hand and hard-sword fight for the hoard.'
Then Beowulf spoke the words of a vow,
For the final time. 'I risked many a conflict
When I was young. Now old, as folk-ward,
I yet wish to seek vengeance, earn renown,
If that evil-doer leaves his vault to seek me.'
Then saluted each man, dear companions,
Those bold helm-bearers, for one last time.
Saying to them: 'I would bear no sword,
If I could, no weapon against the worm,
That foul creature, if I knew how else to
Grapple for glory, as I did with Grendel.
But here is the heat of the furious flame,
Harsh and venomous, so I bear with me,
Mail-shirt and shield. From barrow-ward
I'll fall back not a foot. What at the wall
Must come to pass, is as Fate determines,
And the Maker wishes. I'm man enough
To waste words no more on this war-fly.
Bide here on the barrow, men in armour,
Warriors in war-gear, and see which of us
Better endures his wounds in the warfare,
Which of the two. This is not your fight,

Nor in any man's power, but mine alone.'
He knew he must measure his strength
With the creature, so prove his worth.
'I shall gain the gold by my bravery,
Or the battle will carry off your lord,
Some deadly wound dealt by this terror.'
The brave warrior rose with his shield,
Harsh under helm, wearing his mail-shirt,
Went under the walls of stone, trusting
In his strength alone; no coward's way.
Then he who had lived through many
Great conflicts, many a clash of giants,
Many a combat, saw, by the wall there,
Fast by the stone-arch, a stream surge,
Burst from the barrow, a brook's flow,
But hot with dread fire. No way to near
The hoard unburned, or endure the deep
For any while, with the dragon's flames.
Then the lord of the Weder-Geats gave
A cry from the heart, in his frustration.
The staunch man roared. His voice rang,
High and battle-clear, under hoar stone.
Hatred roused. The hoard-guard heard
That human voice. No time remained
To sue for peace. First the creature's
Flame breathed from beneath the stone,
Hot battle-fumes, and the earth rumbled.
Beneath the barrow, he swung his shield,
The lord of the Geats, at the grim guest.
Then that ring-coiled one's heart began
To seek out strife; as the good war-king,
Drew his sword, that ancient heirloom,
Its edges flawed. Each of the combatants
Stood in awe of the other. Strong in spirit
The Friend of His People, with tall shield,
While the serpent coiled, moving swiftly.
He waited in his war-gear; while burning,

Slithering, the dragon looped and writhed,
Hastening its end. The great leader's shield
Defended life and limb far less time than he
Hoped, wielding it when, for the first time,
Fate denied glory in battle. The Geats' lord
Raised his hand and struck the ghastly skin,
With his ancient blade, so the bright edge bit,
But weakly, on bone, biting less fiercely
Than the king of the nation, had need of,
In his distress. After that swing of the sword,
The barrow-ward writhed in its great wrath,
Spewing wild-fire, widespread battle-flame.
The Gold-Friend of the Geats claimed not
The victory; his war-blade, that fine steel,
Naked in conflict, failed as it should not.
For the famed son of Ecgtheow, it was no
Easy thing to give up this world, hard now,
Unwillingly, to inhabit a home elsewhere.
As must every man let go his lease on life.
Before long the fierce foes met once again,
The hoard-ward took heart. Breath swelled
Its breast once more. He, who once ruled,
Suffering intensely, was furling in flame.
No band of hand-picked men, nobles all,
The valiant in battle, gathered round him.
To save their lives they slunk to the forest.
Yet sorrow welled in the heart of one there,
For kinship is all, in a man of right thought.

XXXVI:Lines:2602-2693:Beowulf Wounded

There was one Wiglaf, son of Weohstan,
A noble shield-man of the Scylfings.
A kinsman of Aelfhere. Seeing his lord
Scorched by heat under his war-mask,
He recalled honour done him before,
The fine holdings of the Waegmundings,
Each his by right, his father had owned.
He could not hold back, his hand seized
The lime-wood shield. He drew sword,
An ancient blade, Eanmund's legacy,
Son of Ohthere. Weohstan, the exile,
Slew him, with sword-edge, in battle,
Brought, to the man's kin, bright helm,
Ring-mail, giants' blade; while Onela
Returned him his kinsman's weapons,
Eanmund's war-gear, desired no feud,
Though Eanmund was his brother's son.
Weohstan held them for many a season,
Blade and ring-mail, till it was his son's
Time to do noble deeds like his father's.
Then he gave him war-gear, amongst
The Geats, a vast heap, and left this life,
Wise on his way. Then for the first time
Came onset of war, the young champion
There with his lord, to meet the challenge.
His courage stood firm, nor did the blade
Fail in the fight. This the worm found,
Now that they came together in conflict.
This Wiglaf – his heart being saddened –
Spoke many a fitting word to his friends:
'I remember a time when we drank mead,
Making a promise there in the mead-hall,
To our lord, to the Ring-Giver, that we
Would repay him his gift of war-gear,
If ever the time of need came upon him,

With sword and helm. He singled us out
From the army himself, for this venture,
Thought us worthy, and gave these gifts,
Because he thought us spearmen of note,
Brave helm-bearers, though our leader,
The Ward of the Folk, wished to perform
This act alone for us, being the warrior
Who has most won glory, carried through
The bravest of deeds. Now the day comes
When our leader has need of the strength
Of fine fighting-men. Let us go to the aid
Of our battle-king, through the hot flame,
And the fire-dread. As God is my witness
I'd rather my body was shrouded in fire
Along with my Gold-Giver's: it cannot
Be right for us to bear shields back home,
And not fell the foe, or defend the life,
Of the King of the Wederas. And I know,
Given his deeds of old, that of all us Geats
He alone does not deserve to suffer pain,
Or fall in combat. He and I shall share
Sword and helm, ring-mail and war-coat.'
Then, wading through the battle-fumes,
He went to his lord's aid; saying simply:
'Dear Beowulf, go on, carry this through,
As, when young, you claimed you would,
While you lived, saying you would never
Let glory fade. Defend yourself bravely,
Strong in mind, and with all your might,
Act boldly now, and I shall stand by you.'
After these words, the wrathful worm came,
The cruel dread guest, for a second time,
With a flood of fire, to seek his enemies,
The humans it hated. A wave of flames
Charred his shield to the boss, chain-mail
Scarcely protected the young spearman,
Yet he charged bravely, behind the shield

Of his kinsman, after his own was burnt.
Then the war-king gathered his strength,
And struck a mighty blow with his blade,
Drove it with all his power, to lodge there
In the serpent's skull. Beowulf's sword,
Naegling, ancient and steel-grey, shattered.
Its edge had failed. Nor was it given him,
To be aided in battle, by a blade of iron.
So strong was his arm, or so I have heard:
However hardened and blooded the sword,
He wielded in battle, his blow destroyed it.
Then the fire-drake, the scourge of the folk,
Full of enmity, hot and battle-mad, attacked
For a third time, as the hero gave ground,
Gripping Beowulf's neck in its sharp fangs.
He was drenched in blood, a wave of gore.

XXXVII:Lines:2694-2751:The Request

Then I hear that, seeing the king's need,
Wiglaf, at his side, proved bold, strong,
And skilful, and showed his true quality.
He avoided the fangs, though his hand
Was burned, and using his strength well,
The warrior in war-gear, struck lower,
So that his rich sword, inlaid with gold,
Sank into the dragon, and the flames
Grew weaker. Then Beowulf the king
Gathered his wits, and drew the dagger,
Bitter, battle-sharp, he wore at his side;
The Helm of the Wederas cut the worm
Deeply. For each of them was, as a man
Should be, a thane in need; together they
Felled the foe, courage quenched its life,
But that was the king's last glorious deed,
In this world. The wound the earth-drake
Had dealt him, now sweltered and swelled,
Beowulf soon knew that baleful venom,
That poison within, welled in his breast.
Full of sober thoughts, that noble man
Sat himself down in a place by the wall,
Saw the giants' work, the barrow-mound,
Held fast by stone arches, on pillars, inside.
Then the best of thanes laved the wound,
With his own hands, cleansed the blood
From his lord and friend, his great leader,
Wearied by conflict, unloosing his helm.
Beowulf spoke then, scorning his injury,
The battle-black wound – knowing now
That he had done with his length of days,
Joy on this earth was gone, all was over,
His span of time, and that death was near –
'Now I would wish to have given my son
My war-gear, had I been granted an heir,

To live after me. I have ruled the people
For fifty winters. No neighbouring king,
Not one, dared to face me with an army,
Threatening terror. I awaited my destiny
On earth, ruled my own kingdom well,
Sought out no quarrels, swore no oaths
In unjust causes. Though doomed now
By mortal injury, I can rejoice at it all,
Since the Ruler of Mankind has no need
To reproach me with the murder of kin,
When life leaves me. Now go swiftly,
Dear Wiglaf, now the worm lies there,
Dormant, sorely wounded, deprived
Of its treasure; be in haste, so that I
Glimpse the gold hoard, ancient riches,
Gleaming cut gems, so I more readily
With wealth around me, might leave
This life and the land I've long ruled.'

XXXVIII:Lines:2752-2820:Last Words

Then, so I heard, the son of Weohstan,
After listening to the battle-torn one,
His wounded lord, at that command,
Swiftly went down, in his battle-gear,
His ring-mail, under the barrow's roof.
Once he had passed the seat, victorious,
The brave warrior saw a heap of gems,
In the worm's den, that flier by twilight's,
He saw gold glittering over the ground,
Wonders on walls, stands of goblets,
Made by men of old, bereft of ornament,
Dull with neglect, with piles of helmets,
Old and rusted, with a host of arm-rings,
Cunningly clasped – how readily treasure,
Gold in the ground, may escape from
Any man's hold, however well hidden –
Also a standard, all of gold, hanging there,
High over the hoard, a most marvellous
Hand-wrought masterwork, shedding light,
So he could see that wealth on the ground,
Examine the treasures. There was no sign
Of the worm. The blade had finished him.
Then the warrior, alone, as I have heard,
Plundered the hoard, all the giants'-work,
Filled his arms with the flagons and plate,
As he wished, and took the standard too,
The bright banner, for the old king's blade
– With its edge of iron – had already ended
The one-time guardian of the treasure-vault,
The dragon that waged terror by fire; welled
Forth, of a midnight; till in violence he died.
Wiglaf was in haste, now, keen to return,
Spurred on by riches, anxiety weighed on
The brave warrior: would he find him alive,
The King of the Wederas, all strength lost,

In the place where he had left him earlier?
Bearing the treasure to his great chieftain,
He found his lord bleeding, his life ending.
He began to lave him with water once more,
Until a word's blade-tip broke through the
Breast-hoard, as the old man saw gold.
'To the Master of All, to the King of Glory,
To the Eternal Lord, I give words of thanks,
For all the treasures that I see before me,
And that I was able to gain such wealth
For the folk, before death could take me.
I have paid with my life for this hoard,
Now you must look to the nation's needs;
I can hold on no longer. Tell those men
Famous in war, to build me a bright mound
On a cape by the sea's edge, after the fire.
It will tower high, on the whales' headland,
And serve there to remind my people of me,
So that those on the sea will call it by name,
Beowulf's Barrow, as they steer their ships
Through ocean mist, when they voyage afar.'
Then the valiant warrior took from his neck
The golden torque, and gave it to the thane,
Telling the young spearman, to use it well,
And the shirt of mail, and his gilded helm.
'You are the last of us, last of all our race,
The Waegmundings. Fate has swept away
All my kin, sent the earls in their strength,
To their destined end; I must follow them.'
That was the old king's final word, of all
Those in his breast, before the funeral fire,
The pyre's hot seething. Though his soul,
Yet went seeking the true, steadfast power.

XXXIX:Lines:2821-2891: The Rebuke

Then it went hard with the young man,
Seeing the one he loved most dearly
Lying there, at life's end, in suffering.
The dreaded earth-drake, the dragon,
His killer, also lay there bereft of life,
Baleful, beaten-down. The worm coiled
In wickedness, no longer had mastery
Of the ring-hoard. The hard, hammered,
Battle-notched, iron blade finished him.
That wide-flying one, stilled by wounds,
Fell to earth, beside the treasure-hoard.
No longer would he weave through the air,
In the depth of night, displaying himself,
Proud of his riches; he had fallen to earth,
Through that battle-warrior's handiwork.
Indeed there were few men in this world,
So I have heard, with the strength to win,
However daring they were in their deeds,
Against that scourge's venomous breath,
Or had the courage to touch the hoard,
If they found its guardian alive, on watch
In its barrow. Beowulf's share of treasure
Was bought with death. Each had reached
The end of his lease of life. Before long,
Those who had shirked the fight, cowards
And oath-breakers, left the wood; ten men
Who had failed to make use of their spears
In the hour of their lord's greatest need,
Now, ashamed, bearing armour and shield,
Made their way to where the old man lay.
They gazed at Wiglaf, sitting there, weary,
The warrior there at his master's shoulder,
Trying to rouse him with water, to no avail.
There was no way on earth, he could save
His leader's life, though that was his wish,

Or deflect the Almighty's will in the least.
The judgement of God must rule the deeds
Of every man living, as it does to this day.
Then every man who had lacked courage,
Had a ready rebuke from that young thane.
Thus Wiglaf, the son of Weohstan, spoke,
Sore-hearted, viewing them without love:
'He who speaks the truth, must say indeed,
That your liege-lord, who gave you treasure,
And that very war-gear you stand in there –
When to those in the hall, on the ale-benches
He would give helmets, and shirts of mail,
The best he could find, whether far or near,
A prince to his thanes – must confess indeed
He has, sadly, thrown those weapons away.
When fighting befell the king, his comrades
Were nothing to boast of. Yet God who gives
Victory, allowed his own blade to avenge him,
When courage was needed, in this last battle.
I could do little to protect my kinsman, yet I
Found a measure of strength for the fight.
As I struck with my sword at that deadly
Creature, it grew ever weaker, fire surged
Less strongly out of its jaws. Yet too few
Rallied around our king, in his distress.
Now the delights of receiving treasure,
All the gifts of fine blades, are ended
For you and your kin. And every man
Of your clan must lose his land-rights,
Once princes afar learn of your flight,
You, dead to all glory. Death is better,
For every man, than a life full of shame.'

XL:Lines:2892-2946:War Anticipated

Then he ordered the outcome of the fight
To be reported, up on the cliff-edge, there
Where the shield-bearers, the warrior band,
Had sat all morning long, sad in spirits,
Wondering which of the two would happen,
The return of the man they loved, or the end
Of his days. He who rode to the headland
Held back little, as he told them his news:
'Now the Wish-Granter of the Wederas,
The Lord of the Geats, lies on his deathbed,
Brought to his rest, by the dragon's deed,
Beside him that bane of his life, slashed
With knife wounds. Beowulf could not
Wound that dreadful creature in any way
With his sword. Wiglaf, Weohstan's son,
Sits by his side, the living watching over
The dead, weary in mind, keeping a vigil
Over the loved and loathed. Now expect
War, when the fall of the king is widely,
Freely, known to the Franks and Frisians,
A hard battle was fought with the Hugas,
When Hygelac fared with a fleet towards
Frisian land, where the Hetware attacked,
And despite his courage, the mailed king
Had to bow down to their greater strength.
He fell with his followers; that lord brought
His companions no spoils. And his favour
The Merovingian king ever after withheld.
Nor look for peace or pact with the Swede,
Not a whit: at Ravenswood, Ongentheow,
Took the life of Haethcyn, Hrethel's son,
When in their arrogance the Geatish people,
Sought out the War-Scylfings, and in a trice,
Ohthere's wise old father, old but fearsome,
Took a hand, returned the onslaught in kind;

Killed the wise sea-king and saved his wife,
A wizened old woman, bereft of her gold,
The mother of Onela, and Ohthere himself.
Then he drove them, leaderless, his foes,
Till they barely escaped into Ravenswood;
Then surrounded that wound-weary rump,
Threatening woe to them, all the night long.
Said he would show them the sword-edge,
At dawn, dangle them on the gallows-tree,
As food for the birds. But, at daybreak, help
Came to raise their sad spirits, they heard
Hygelac's horn and trumpet, his battle-call,
As the good man arrived, forging his way
Through, with a host of veteran warriors.'

XLI:Lines:2947-3057:The Warning

‘The swathes of blood, the rush to slaughter
Of Swede and Geat were everywhere seen;
How those folk woke a feud between them.
Then the wise old king, with his kinsmen,
Ongentheow, retreated to seek a stronghold,
On higher ground. He had heard of Hygelac,
His battle-skills, of a proud man’s war-craft.
He dared not trust his own powers of defence,
To save the hoard from the men from the sea,
The women and children from those warriors.
An old man he fell back behind an earth-wall.
Hygelac pursued the Swedish folk, his banners
Poured through them, overrunning their refuge,
As Hrethelings pushed forward into the camp.
Then the grey-haired Ongentheow was circled
By sword-blades, and the king was compelled
To submit to Eofor’s justice alone; in anger,
Eofor’s brother, Wulf, son of Wonred, struck
With his weapon, and blood ran in streams
From the old man’s hair, though the Scylfing,
Old as he was, showed no fear, and repaid
That war-stroke with a more deadly reply;
An aged king of his nation, turning at bay.
Then Wulf, that brave son of Wonred,
Failed to lay a hand on the old fellow;
Rather Ongentheow sheared the helm
From his head; blood-wet he bowed;
And fell on the field. Yet his fate held;
Though badly wounded, he yet recovered.
Then Eofor, Hygelac’s steadfast thane,
When his brother was downed, flung
His broad-sword, an ancient ogre’s blade,
At the king’s solid helm, over his shield.
The people’s shepherd bowed his head,
The king of his nation dropped to the earth.

Then many a man ran to bind Wulf's wound,
And raise him, now they had room to move,
And had mastery of that place of slaughter.
Then the one warrior plundered the other,
Stripping Ongentheow of his iron mail-coat,
His hard-edged hilted sword, and his helm,
Carrying the old man's armour to Hygelac,
Who accepted the spoils, and pledged fairly,
To share the rewards, and promptly did so:
The Lord of the Geats, Hrethel's heir, paid
Eofor and Wulf for that war, granting both
Wealth and treasure, a hundred thousand
In land and linked rings – no one, no man
In middle-earth, scorns the spoils of action –
And then he gave Eofor his only daughter,
To honour his house, pledging friendship.
That is the source of the hostility, hatred,
Feuding, slaughter, for which, to our woe,
The Swedes are bound to seek vengeance,
When they learn that our Beowulf is dead,
Who, when heroes fell, brave shield-men,
Defended the land and hoard from its foes.
He cared for the folk, and furthermore did
Noble deeds. Haste seems best to me, now;
We should look on the king of our people,
And bear the giver of rings to the final fire.
No little amount of gold must melt, along
With that great heart, for there is countless
Wealth in the hoard, and bitterly purchased,
And this heap of rings paid for with his life:
This the flames shall take, the fire enfold.
No man will wear one of these, in memory,
No fine woman fasten one round her neck,
But sad of heart, and stripped of gold, tread
Oft and again in alien land, now the leader
Of men has laid aside laughter, life and joy.
Many a dawn-cold spear must be grasped,

Hefted on high; it will not be the harp that
Wakens the warriors, but the black raven
To feast on the fallen, full of his tidings,
Crying to the eagle, how well he has fed,
When he, with the wolf, worries the dead.’
Such was the harsh news that brave man
Brought to them: little was astray in those
Words of ill-omen. The whole troop arose,
And went down under the eagle’s headland,
Their tears welling, to gaze at its wonders.
He who gave rings to them in former days,
They found on the sand, his soul departed,
A ruler at rest. There a good man had made
An ending; there Beowulf, their battle-king,
Lord of the Wederas, lay wondrous in death.
But first they gazed at the stranger creature,
Lying opposite, that loathsome worm dead
There on the ground, a grim gruesome guest,
Was the fire-drake, burnt by its own flames.
He was fifty feet long; how joyously, he ruled
The air in the dark of night, then dived down
To seek his den. Now, fast in death, he enjoyed
The end of all his deep windings underground.
Beside him stood the goblets and beakers,
The plate, and precious swords, rust-eaten,
As if from a thousand winters underground.
That legacy hidden there by the men of old,
Lay under the most powerful of curses –
That no man at all might enter the ring-hall,
Unless God himself – mankind’s Keeper –
True King of Victories, wished to unlock
That hoard to him, and saw fit to do so.

XLII:Lines:3058-3136:The Golden Bier

Thus it was seen that no gain was bought
By the one who had wrongly hidden riches
Under the wall. Its guardian killed a man
Among men, who in fury took vengeance,
To settle a conflict. But none can know
Where a brave man is fated to end his life,
And no longer make one among his kin,
Or dwell in the mead-hall. And so it was
With Beowulf, when that barrow-guard
Sought a treacherous quarrel; nor did he
Guess that would bring about his death.
The great princes who buried the hoard,
Forcefully declared that a man would be
Guilty of wrong who removed a portion,
Shamed for his sin, exiled from all sacred
Places, held fast there in the bonds of hell.
Yet Beowulf, that gracious lord, had never
At any time shown himself greedy for gold.
Then Wiglaf, the son of Weohstan, spoke:
Often many men must endure suffering,
Through the will of one, as we must do.
No counsel of ours could convince him,
Our beloved prince, Ward of the Kingdom,
Not to go seeking out the gold's guardian,
But to let him lie, where he long had been,
Deep in his den, till the world's ending.
He held to high destiny. The hoard, bared,
Was grimly gained. Too harsh the doom
That drove him on. I have looked inside,
I have seen all the treasures of that hall,
Once the way was clear, for no sweet
Welcome awaited me when I went down
Under the earth-wall. I swiftly seized
A heap of the hoard-wealth in my hands,
A weighty burden, and brought it here

For my king to see. He was still alive then,
Awake and aware, and stern in his grief.
He spoke of many things, told me to greet
You all; bid you build, to recall his deeds,
A tall barrow, in the place of his burning,
Grand and glorious, for he was a warrior,
Honoured of men, throughout wide earth,
While he still enjoyed this rich kingdom.
Let us go quickly, to see and seek again,
That wonder of treasure under the wall;
I'll be your guide; close enough to reveal,
Rings and gold bars. Let a bier be readied,
For when we emerge, prepare it swiftly,
To bear our lord, this man we have loved,
To where he'll lie long in the Ruler's care.'
Then Weohstan's son, bravest of warriors,
Commanded the army, and many another
Lord of the folk, to fetch wood from afar,
For a good man's pyre. 'Now must the fire,
Dark flame rising, devour our prince of war,
He who often withstood the shower of iron,
When a hail of arrows, shot from the bow,
Over the shield-wall, shafts holding true,
Fledged with feathers, followed the barb.'
And moreover, that wise son of Weohstan,
Called seven of the king's thanes together,
Choosing the best of them, and descended,
First among eight, under that cursed roof.
The warrior bearing a brand from the fire,
Went leading the way. No casting of lots
Was needed to share out the hoard, for all
Lay undefended, scattered about the hall,
Open to the eye; there was little complaint
About hurrying to lift the precious things,
And carry them out. The dragon went too,
The worm, over the cliff-wall into the wave,
The enfolding flood sank the ring-keeper.

The richly-wound gold, in countless forms,
Loaded the wagon that carried their prince,
Grey-haired leader, to the whale's headland.

XLIII:Lines:3137-3182:The Funeral

Then the Geat people prepared a pyre,
Piled high on the ground, unstintingly;
Hung it with helmets, and battle-shields,
And shining mail, as he had commanded.
The sorrowful warriors laid the great king,
The lord they had loved, there in the midst.
Then they kindled the tallest of bale-fires,
There on the height. Clouds of smoke rose,
Dark over burning; the roar of the flames
Merged with their weeping – wind died –
Hot at heart, the bone-house was broken,
In deep despair they moaned with grief,
For the death of their lord. Then one woman,
With close-bound hair, wove the death-dirge,
Sang, in her sorrow, the fate she envisioned,
Her mortal dread of the pain that waited,
A reign of terror and unending slaughter,
Rape and slavery. Heaven swallowed
The smoke. Then the Wederas built,
High on the headland, a massive barrow,
To be seen, from far off, by sea-voyagers,
They took ten days to heap up that beacon,
Encircling what the fire left with a wall,
In the worthiest way the wise can devise.
They buried rings and gems in the barrow,
All of those trappings that enemy warriors
Had been wont to pillage from the hoard.
They gave to earth the heroes' treasure,
Gold under gravel, where it lies still,
And as useless, now, to mankind as ever.
Then round the barrow rode the brave men,
The sons of chieftains, twelve warriors in all,
Bemoaning their sorrows, mourning their king,
Chanting the dirge, and praising the man.
They extolled his exploits, a hero's efforts,

Gloried in his greatness. Such things are good,
That men honour in words a lord and friend,
Cherish him in spirit, when the time comes
That he must be let from the house of his flesh.
So the Geats mourned, his hearth companions,
The death of their lord who fell in the fight.
They said he was, among kings of this world,
The most gracious of men, the most generous,
The kindest to kin, the most keen to win honour.

The End of 'Beowulf'