



Beowulf

Background and Introduction

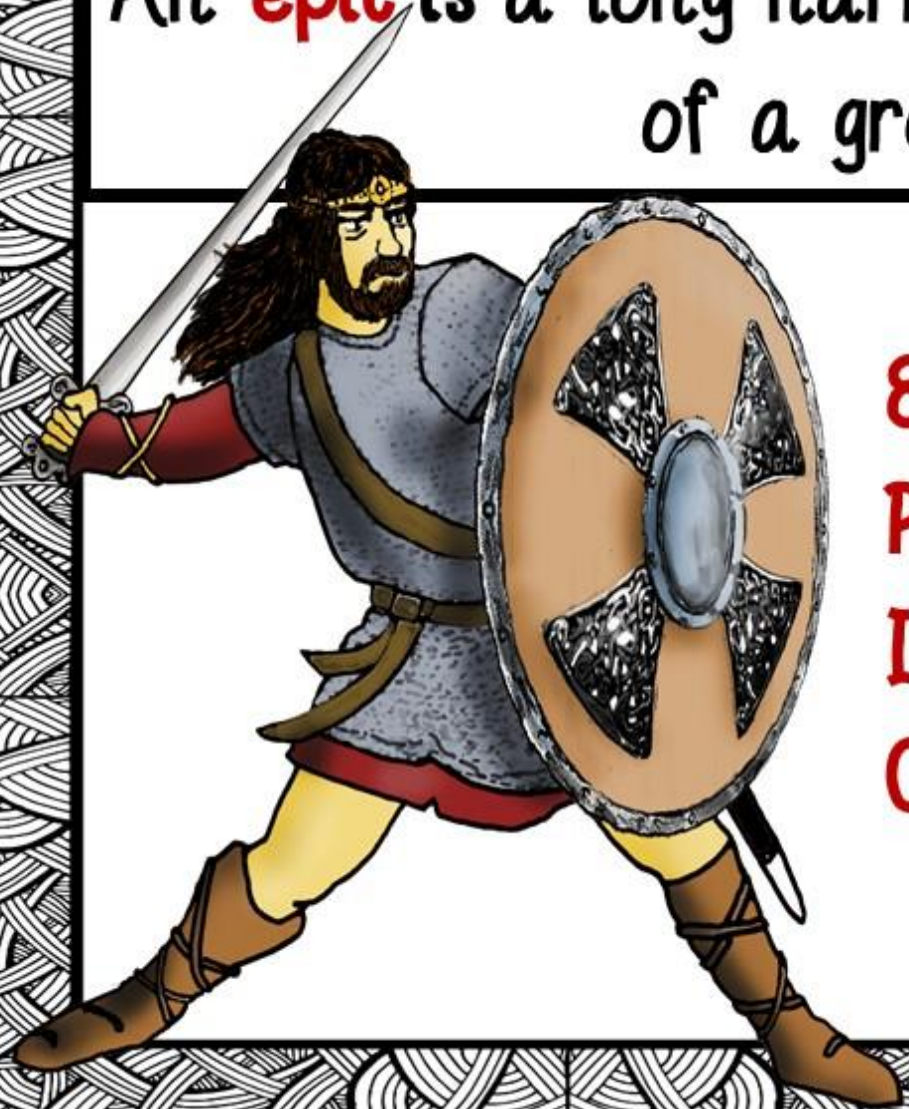
Movie Trailer



[Link to YouTube video if embedded video doesn't play](#)

Epic

An **epic** is a long narrative poem that traces the adventures of a great hero—an **EPIC** hero.



- E** Embodies and protects values of the time
- P** Possesses supernatural traits
- I** Identifies a need to go on a quest
- C** Carries himself with pride and pomposity

E- Embodies and protects values of the time

What are the values of **our** time and who protects and fights for those values?



Ε- Embodies and protects values of the time

Anglo Saxon history and values:

Because of their need to fight for land during the Anglo-Saxon invasions of Britain in the 5th century (around year 450 AD), Anglo-Saxons valued **STRENGTH** and **COURAGE**. Once they settled in their new land, they then valued those who were able to help them protect their settlement and **COMMUNITY**. As a result of their tightknit community, **KINSMANSHIP** was valued above all things other than the king. Their kingdom was only as strong as its war-leader **KING**.



Common Anglo-Saxon Poetic Devices

Before written documentation, stories were passed down through memorization and oral tradition. This is true for the epic *Beowulf*. The Anglo-Saxons loved using poetic devices to give their stories rhythm and interesting sound quality.

Alliteration- The repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words:
Then proudly **s**etting the **s**un and the moon...

Caesura- a pause dividing words in a line of poetry giving a hard ,chant-like rhythm

Read these lines:

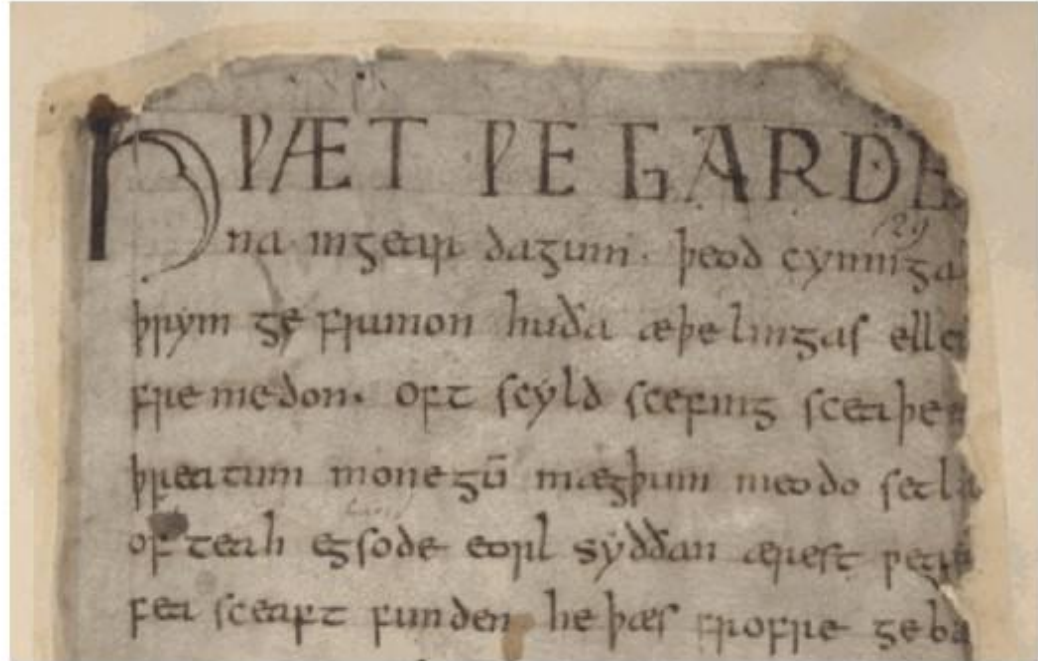
By one death was my errand and fate
and I've come grant me then

Now, read it again with caesuras

By one, death was my errand-- and fate.
And I've come. Grant me then...

Kenning- A metaphorical compound word or phrase substituted for a thing or name.
Grendel is called: "**Mankind's Enemy**" Hrothgar is called= "**Shelterer of Warriors**"

The Original Epic Poem



This is the oldest written work of the English language. Though when you hear it read, it might not sound like English at all. That's because it was originally told in **Old English**, but no fear, we will be reading the translated version.

The original poem was told in an oral tradition format for many years but was finally written down by an unknown source. Only one manuscript survives today which is pictured to the left.

Duru sōna onarn,
fyrbendum fæst, syððan hē hire folmum æthrān;
onbræd þā bealohȳdig, ðā hē gebolgen wæs,
recedes mūþan. Raþe æfter þon
on fagne flōr fēond treddode,
eode yrremōd; him of ēagum stōd,
ligge gelicost, lēoht unfæger.

Play the first minute or so

[Link to YouTube video if embedded video doesn't play](#)

The Problem with Translations

The act of translating (from an **oral tradition** to an Old English written epic to a modern-day translation) has greatly changed the original content of the poem. Anglo-Saxons were known as Heathens and worshiped gods and goddesses for thousands of years before the coming of Christianity. Norse mythology depicts types of gods and goddesses that Pagans worshiped.

However, around the year 597, a Roman missionary of the name Saint Augustine began converting the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity. This is an interesting concept because you will find lots of Christian references in Beowulf as if the story has been translated into a form of propaganda to help spread Christianity. Note the mixture of the religious allusions as well as pagan elements as you read.

