

Beowulf

Author unknown

Heroic epic poem (Folk Epic) However, Iliad and Odyssey are Literary Epics.

Beowulf took hold of the dreaded monster, wrenching off his right arm; and the dying Grendel fled back to his home. . . .

The next morning Hrothgar and Wealhtheow wait for messengers bearing news from Heorot. Upon hearing of the battle and the victory that has occurred, Hrothgar thanks God and praises Beowulf's mother for being "blessed in childbirth." He declares Beowulf to be the child of his hopes, and promises him riches galore. Beowulf tells Hrothgar how his victory came, regretting that he was unable to bring Grendel's dead body to Hrothgar. As a sign of victory, Beowulf hung his bloody trophy (the arm and claw) on the wall above the door inside the hall. Unferth stands transfixed by the sight of Grendel's arm. In fact, everyone gazes upon the arm and agrees that no sword could have done such a thing.

The wise and brave warrior from afar/ had cleansed Hrothgar's hall, reclaiming it from woe.". The brave hero was honored once more with a sumptuous feast and magnificent priceless gifts.

The gifts include the following:

a standard of gold

a banner embroidered

a byrny (mail shirt) and helm

a costly sword

helmet with

a crowning wreath of "woven of wire-work" (750)

"Eight horses with plated headstalls . . . On one a saddle fashioned and set with jewels, the battle seat of the king himself, when the son of Healfdene" (Kennedy 754-58).

In addition, Hrothgar gives the thirteen thanes (Earls)

"ancient heirlooms . . . gift of treasure . . . gold" (Kennedy 764-65)

The Geats receive gifts as well, and *wergild* is paid for the man the Geats lost. God and Beowulf's courage were enough to withstand wyrd (fate).

Wealhtheow comes forth. She presents herself to Hrothgar, and begs that he bequeath his lands to his family. She says she is sure Hrothulf will care for their two young sons when they inherit the kingdom. Wealhtheow (wife of Hrothgar) gives Beowulf a beautiful gold collar to help her sons if they ever have the need (foreshadowing the evil of their uncles). Beowulf's king Hygelac will eventually wear this necklace when he falls.

Then everyone drank deeply of mead and celebrated the great victory. **Soon the party ends, leaving warriors in various states of inebriation as they sleep. Beowulf is given separate quarters to sleep in as he is the hero.**

That night, Grendel's mother, the sea hag, begins a journey to avenge her son.

AP English Notes
September 24, 2004

Hrothgar celebrates Grendel's defeat, but Grendel's mother attacks the hall the next night to avenge the death of her son. She enters the hall at night and seizes Aeschere, one of Hrothgar's most valued warriors, fleeing with him. Grendel's mother also steals the severed arm of her son. Beowulf is not sleeping in the hall that night and does not find out about the attack until the next morning. In the morning, Hrothgar leads Beowulf and the other warriors to the marsh. Near the marsh, the men discover Aeschere's severed head.

Women in the poem Beowulf

We receive two different visions of women in this portion of Beowulf. Beowulf's mother can be seen as an allegory for the Virgin Mary, who was also "blessed in childbirth." Both women have borne great heroes who will save mankind (by bearing Beowulf and Jesus). Yet Beowulf's mother does not seem to have any other virtues other than being a childbearer.

Compare this to Wealhtheow's role at court. Wealhtheow has already been shown as the model of a good queen. She bears the cup of the mead-hall to serve her husband and guests. She also conforms to her name, which means "treasure-bearer," by assisting in the giving of gifts to Beowulf. She acts as a peace-weaver between her husband and brother-in-law, offering Hrothulf the right to care for her sons in their father's absence. Yet she refrains from saying that Hrothulf will inherit the kingdom, and shows enough courage to ask Hrothgar to protect the kingdom for her own sons. Thus we see her as a free-thinking woman who wants to protect her sons and her kingdom<<more than just a mother (Classic Notes).