

# BEOWULF

## Chapter Three      Grendel the Murderer

When the sun was sunken, he set out to visit  
The lofty hall-building, how the Ring-Danes had used it  
For beds and benches when the banquet was over  
Then he found there reposing many a noble  
**5.**Asleep after supper; sorrow the heroes,  
Misery knew not. The monster of evil  
Greedy and cruel tarried but little,  
He drags off thirty of them, and devours them  
Fell and frantic, and forced from their slumbers  
Thirty of thanemen; thence he departed  
**10.**Leaping and laughing, his lair to return to,  
With surfeit of slaughter sallying homeward.  
In the dusk of the dawning, as the day was just breaking,  
Was Grendel's prowess revealed to the warriors:  
A cry of agony goes up, when Grendel's horrible deed is fully realized.  
Then, his meal-taking finished, a moan was uplifted,  
**15.**Morning-cry mighty. The man-ruler famous,  
The long-worthy atheling, sat very woful,  
Suffered great sorrow, sighed for his liegemen,  
When they had seen the track of the hateful pursuer,  
The spirit accursed: too crushing that sorrow,  
The monster returns the next night.  
**20.** Too loathsome and lasting. Not longer he tarried,  
But one night after continued his slaughter  
Shameless and shocking, shrinking but little  
From malice and murder; they mastered him fully.  
He was easy to find then who otherwhere looked for

**-Biography of the poet:** the poet of Beowulf is unknown

**-The structure of the poem:** the epic is an alliterative verse and it is composed of 3182 lines. It is not divided into stanzas; it is rather divided into 43/41 chapters (according to various versions). However, it is divided thematically into three parts or battles: Beowulf's battles with the three antagonists.

**-Content and themes:** check the previous part (Beowulf: part one)

**-The poetic voice:** The story of the poem is being narrated from the omniscient point of view.

**-Language of the poem:** The epic (Poem type) is a narrative poem (Poem genre) about the hero Beowulf and his adventures. It is written in Old English literature having no regular rhyme scheme like most of the poems produced at the same era. Poets used a considerable number of figures of speech in their works. In the present poem, some figures of speech include the following:

### **1-Assonance:**

"As day after day the music rang": Here the long "a" sound is repeated three times.

"slept as though already dead": Here the soft "e" sound is repeated three times.

### **2-Alliteration:**

"Herot towers high on your hills" (repetition of "h" sound)

"had solemnly spoken" (repetition of "s" sound)

"God gives guidance" (repetition of "g" sound)

"weird and wonderful sight" (repetition of the "w" sound)

### **3-Personification:**

"Their armor rang/Their ash-wood spears stood in a line": Spears can be lined up, but because they are not human, they cannot stand in a line.

"His misery leaped/ The seas": Misery is a feeling, not a person. It is, therefore, not able to leap over seas.

### **4-Kennings:**

"whale-road": The sea

"battle-sweat": Blood

"ring-giver": Hrothgar, the king

### **5-Hyperbole:**

Greedy and grim, he grabbed thirty men

From their resting places and rushed to his lair

### **6-Allusion:**

Cain's clan, whom the Creator had outlawed

And condemned as outcasts. For the killing of Abel.

### **7-Foreshadowing:**

That doom abided

But in time it would come: the killer instinct

Unleashed among in-laws, the blood-lust rampant

### **8-Simile:**

\*And foam at her neck, she flew like a bird

\*As hard as bright steel.

### **9-Imagery:**

The bloodshot water wallows and surged  
There were loathsome up-throws and overturnings  
Of waves and gore and wound slurry.

### **10-Litotes:**

Cain got no good from committing the murder

### **11-Rhetorical Questioning:**

\*How could they know fate?

\*Rest? What is rest? Sorrow has returned

Alas for the Danes!

## **Symbolism in Beowulf:**

**A literary symbol** is an object that stands for a significant concept or idea. In Beowulf, some of the most important symbols are:

**-Heorot:** Hrothgar's great mead-hall, Heorot ("Hall of the Hart"), functions as both **setting** and **symbol** in the epic. It is much more than a place to drink. Symbolically, Heorot represents the achievements of the Scyldings and the king, and their level of civilization. The hall is a home for the warriors who sleep there and functions as a seat of government. It is a place of light, warmth, and joy. Additionally, in Heorot, Hrothgar celebrates his victories and rewards his thanes (warriors) with various treasures.

**-The Cave:** The cave where Grendel and his mother hide from the world is symbolic of their lives as outcasts. Hidden in the middle of a dark, forbidding swamp, the cave allows them a degree of safety and privacy in a world that they view as hostile. They certainly are not welcome at Heorot, and they know it.

**-Grendel's head and arm:** Beowulf had hoped to have an entire Grendel body to present to King Hrothgar after his battle with the ogre in Heorot. The claw is hung high beneath Heorot's roof as a symbol of Beowulf's victory. Grendel's mother also sees that as a symbol representing her personal loss. Filled with grief and rage, she retrieves the arm from Heorot and kills another Scylding in the process. Beowulf tracks her and ends up in her underwater cave, Grendel's head which he finds is much more impressive. He ignores the vast treasure in the cave, instead choosing to carry the magnificent, huge head as symbolic of his victory over both ogres.

**-The Dragon's Treasure-Trove:** The dragon's treasure represents the vanity of human wishes as well as the mutability of time. The dragon's barrow holds wealth in abundance, yet the wealth is of no use to anyone. Just as the dead warriors cannot use the treasure, neither can the dragon. He devotes his life to guarding a treasure that he frankly has no use for. Beowulf gives his life defeating the dragon and gaining this impressive treasure for his people, but they won't benefit from it either.