COMMON CORE

RL3 Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story. RL 4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. L 4a Use context as a clue to the meaning of a word. L5a Interpret figures of speech in context and analyze their role in the text. L 5b Analyze nuances in the meaning of words with similar denotations.

DID YOU KNOW?

The original Beowulf manuscript ...

- exists in only one copy.
- · was damaged and nearly destroyed in a fire in the 18th century.
- · has now been preserved through digitization.



The Anglo-Saxon Epic

from Beowulf

Epic Poem by the Beowulf Poet Translated by Burton Raffel



VIDEO TRAILER THINK, KEYWORD: HML12-40A

Meet the Author

The Beowulf Poet about 750?



"Hear me!" So begins Beowulf, the oldest surviving epic poem in English. The command was intended to capture the listening audience's attention, for Beowulf was originally chanted or sung aloud. Centuries of poet-singers, called scops (shops), recited the adventures of Beowulf. It is our great fortune that eventually a gifted poet unified the heroic accounts and produced an enduring work of art.

By Anonymous Unfortunately, we don't know who that poet was or when Beowulf was composed. Scholars contend that the poet may have lived anytime between the middle of the seventh century A.D. and the end of the tenth century. However, we do know where the poem was written. In the fifth century, bloody warfare in northern Europe had driven many Germanicspeaking tribes, including groups of Angles, Saxons, and Jutes, to abandon their homes. Many of these groups settled in England, where they established what is now called Anglo-Saxon civilization.

The people of the Anglo-Saxon period spoke a language known as Old English, the language in which Beowulf was composed.

Old English bears little resemblance to Modern English and so must be translated for readers today. By the time Beowulf was written, the Anglo-Saxons had also converted to Christianity. This Christian influence is evident in the poem.

Long Ago and Far Away Although Beowulf was composed in England, the poem describes events that take place in Scandinavia around the 500s among two groups: the Danes of what is now Denmark and the Geats (gēts) of what is now Sweden. Beowulf is a Geat warrior who crosses the sea to defeat Grendel, a monster who is terrorizing the Danes. He later returns to his homeland to succeed his uncle as king of the Geats.

Beowulf celebrates warrior culture and deeds requiring great strength and courage. Scops recited the poem and other tales in mead halls, large wooden buildings that provided a safe haven for warriors returning from battle. During the performances, audiences feasted and drank mead, an alcoholic beverage.

Survivor The sole surviving copy of *Beowulf* dates from about the year 1000. It is the work of Christian monks who preserved the literature of the past by copying manuscripts. After suffering mistreatment and several near-disasters, the Beowulf manuscript is now safely housed in the British Library in London.

Author Online

THÌNK

Go to thinkcentral.com. KEYWORD: HML12-40B

■ TEXT ANALYSIS: CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EPIC

An **epic**, a long narrative poem that traces the adventures of a great hero, has the power to transport you to another time and place. *Beowulf* takes you to the Anglo-Saxon period and the land of the Danes and the Geats, where a mighty warrior battles fantastic monsters. As you read the poem, note some of the following characteristics of epic poetry:

- The **hero** is a legendary figure who performs deeds requiring incredible courage and strength.
- The hero embodies **character traits** that reflect lofty ideals.
- The poet uses formal diction and a serious tone.
- The poem reflects timeless values and universal themes.

■ READING STRATEGY: READING OLD ENGLISH POETRY

Old English poetry is marked by a strong rhythm that is easy to chant or sing. Here are some of the techniques used in an Old English poem:

- alliteration, or the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words, which helps unify the lines
 - So mankind's enemy continued his crimes
- caesura (sĭ-zhŏor'ə), or a pause dividing each line, with each part having two accented syllables to help maintain the rhythm of the lines
 - He took what he wanted, // all the treasures
- kenning, a metaphorical compound word or phrase substituted for a noun or name, which enhances meaning for example, "mankind's enemy" used in place of "Grendel"

As you read *Beowulf*, note examples of these techniques and consider their effect on rhythm and meaning in the poem.

▲ VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

The words shown here help convey the monstrous forces Beowulf faces in the epic. Choose a word from the list that has the same definition as each numbered item.

WORDafflictionlairpurgeLISTgorgelividtaloninfamousloathsome

1. claw 2. burden 3.

3. notorious

4. cram



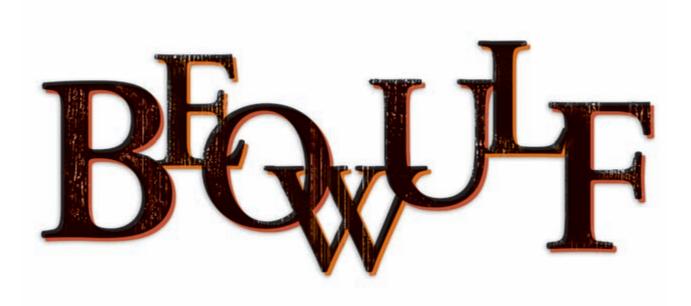
Complete the activities in your Reader/Writer Notebook.

Where do MONSTERS lurk?

Unlike the monsters in *Beowulf*, those in our world are not always easy to identify. Evil can hide in the most unexpected places: behind a smiling face, between the lines of a law, in otherwise noble-sounding words. Even when evil is clearly exposed, people may disagree on how to confront it.

QUICKWRITE What does *evil* mean to you? Write your own definition of the word, and provide some examples of real-life monsters.





Hrothgar (hrôth'gär'), king of the Danes, has built a wonderful mead hall called Herot (hĕr'ət), where his subjects congregate and make merry. As this selection opens, a fierce and powerful monster named Grendel invades the mead hall, bringing death and destruction.

GRENDEL

A powerful monster, living down
In the darkness, growled in pain, impatient
As day after day the music rang
Loud in that hall, the harp's rejoicing

- 5 Call and the poet's clear songs, sung
 Of the ancient beginnings of us all, recalling
 The Almighty making the earth, shaping
 These beautiful plains marked off by oceans,
 Then proudly setting the sun and moon
- 10 To glow across the land and light it;
 The corners of the earth were made lovely with trees
 And leaves, made quick with life, with each
 Of the nations who now move on its face. And then
 As now warriors sang of their pleasure:

A OLD ENGLISH POETRY

Reread lines 1–2 aloud. Notice the use of **alliteration** with the repetition of the letters p and d. What **mood**, **or feeling**, does the alliteration convey?

Analyze Visuals ▶

Examine the composition, or arrangement of shapes, in this photograph. How does the angle of the photo contribute to its impact?



15 So Hrothgar's men lived happy in his hall
Till the monster stirred, that demon, that fiend,
Grendel, who haunted the moors, the wild
Marshes, and made his home in a hell
Not hell but earth. He was spawned in that slime,

20 Conceived by a pair of those monsters born Of Cain, murderous creatures banished By God, punished forever for the crime Of Abel's death. The Almighty drove Those demons out, and their exile was bitter,

25 Shut away from men; they split
Into a thousand forms of evil—spirits
And fiends, goblins, monsters, giants,
A brood forever opposing the Lord's
Will, and again and again defeated.

Then, when darkness had dropped, Grendel
Went up to Herot, wondering what the warriors
Would do in that hall when their drinking was done.
He found them sprawled in sleep, suspecting
Nothing, their dreams undisturbed. The monster's

Thoughts were as quick as his greed or his claws:
He slipped through the door and there in the silence
Snatched up thirty men, smashed them
Unknowing in their beds and ran out with their bodies,
The blood dripping behind him, back

40 To his <u>lair</u>, delighted with his night's slaughter.

At daybreak, with the sun's first light, they saw How well he had worked, and in that gray morning Broke their long feast with tears and laments For the dead. Hrothgar, their lord, sat joyless

45 In Herot, a mighty prince mourning
The fate of his lost friends and companions,
Knowing by its tracks that some demon had torn
His followers apart. He wept, fearing
The beginning might not be the end. And that night

50 Grendel came again, so set
On murder that no crime could ever be enough,
No savage assault quench his lust
For evil. Then each warrior tried
To escape him, searched for rest in different

55 Beds, as far from Herot as they could find, Seeing how Grendel hunted when they slept. Distance was safety; the only survivors Were those who fled him. Hate had triumphed. **17 moors** (moorz): broad, open regions with patches of bog.

19 spawned: given birth to.

21 Cain: the eldest son of Adam and Eve. According to the Bible (Genesis 4), he murdered his younger brother Abel.

B EPIC

Note the description in lines 23–29 of supernatural creatures that are "again and again defeated." What universal theme might these lines suggest?

lair (lâr) *n*. the den or resting place of a wild animal

G EPI

What is the **tone** of lines 44–49? What words and details convey this tone?

So Grendel ruled, fought with the righteous,

- 60 One against many, and won; so Herot Stood empty, and stayed deserted for years, Twelve winters of grief for Hrothgar, king Of the Danes, sorrow heaped at his door By hell-forged hands. His misery leaped
- 65 The seas, was told and sung in all Men's ears: how Grendel's hatred began, How the monster relished his savage war On the Danes, keeping the bloody feud Alive, seeking no peace, offering
- 70 No truce, accepting no settlement, no price In gold or land, and paying the living For one crime only with another. No one Waited for reparation from his plundering claws: That shadow of death hunted in the darkness,
- 75 Stalked Hrothgar's warriors, old And young, lying in waiting, hidden In mist, invisibly following them from the edge Of the marsh, always there, unseen.

So mankind's enemy continued his crimes,

- 80 Killing as often as he could, coming
 Alone, bloodthirsty and horrible. Though he lived
 In Herot, when the night hid him, he never
 Dared to touch king Hrothgar's glorious
 Throne, protected by God—God,
- 85 Whose love Grendel could not know. But Hrothgar's Heart was bent. The best and most noble Of his council debated remedies, sat In secret sessions, talking of terror And wondering what the bravest of warriors could do.
- 90 And sometimes they sacrificed to the old stone gods, Made heathen vows, hoping for Hell's Support, the Devil's guidance in driving Their <u>affliction</u> off. That was their way, And the heathen's only hope, Hell
- 95 Always in their hearts, knowing neither God
 Nor His passing as He walks through our world, the Lord
 Of Heaven and earth; their ears could not hear
 His praise nor know His glory. Let them
 Beware, those who are thrust into danger,
- In their hearts, cannot hope to be better! Hail To those who will rise to God, drop off Their dead bodies and seek our Father's peace!

D OLD ENGLISH POETRY

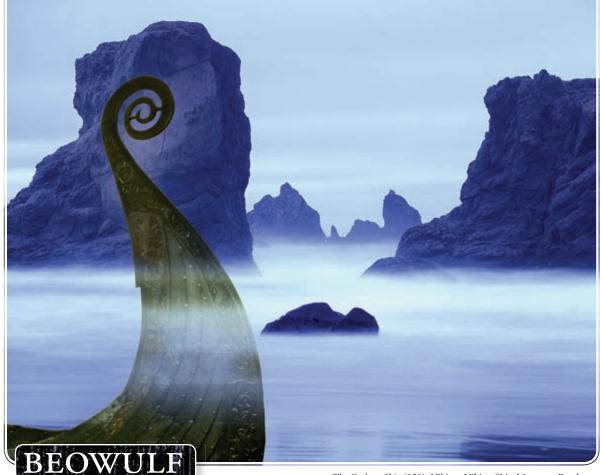
What does the **kenning** "hellforged hands" in line 64 suggest about Grendel?

73 reparation: something done to make amends for loss or suffering. In Germanic society, someone who killed another person was generally expected to make a payment to the victim's family as a way of restoring peace.

84 The reference to God shows the influence of Christianity on the Beowulf Poet.

91 heathen (hē'thən): pagan; non-Christian. Though the Beowulf Poet was a Christian, he recognized that the characters in the poem lived before the Germanic tribes were converted to Christianity, when they still worshiped "the old stone gods."

affliction (ə-flĭk'shən) *n*. a force that oppresses or causes suffering



The Oseberg Ship (850), Viking. Viking Ship Museum, Bygdoy, Norway. © Werner Forman/Art Resource, New York.

So the living sorrow of Healfdane's son

Simmered, bitter and fresh, and no wisdom
Or strength could break it: that agony hung
On king and people alike, harsh
And unending, violent and cruel, and evil.
In his far-off home Beowulf, Higlac's

Follower and the strongest of the Geats—greater
And stronger than anyone anywhere in this world—
Heard how Grendel filled nights with horror
And quickly commanded a boat fitted out,
Proclaiming that he'd go to that famous king,

Now when help was needed. None
Of the wise ones regretted his going, much
As he was loved by the Geats: the omens were good,
And they urged the adventure on. So Beowulf
120 Chose the mightiest men he could find,
The bravest and best of the Geats, fourteen

In all, and led them down to their boat;

115 Would sail across the sea to Hrothgar,

104 Healfdane's son: Hrothgar.

109–110 Higlac's follower: a warrior loyal to Higlac (hĭg'lăk'), king of the Geats (and Beowulf's uncle).

He knew the sea, would point the prow Straight to that distant Danish shore.

Beowulf and his men sail over the sea to the land of the Danes to offer help to Hrothgar. They are escorted by a Danish guard to Herot, where Wulfgar, one of Hrothgar's soldiers, tells the king of their arrival. Hrothgar knows of Beowulf and is ready to welcome the young prince and his men.

Then Wulfgar went to the door and addressed
The waiting seafarers with soldier's words:

"My lord, the great king of the Danes, commands me
To tell you that he knows of your noble birth
And that having come to him from over the open
130 Sea you have come bravely and are welcome.

Now go to him as you are, in your armor and helmets,
But leave your battle-shields here, and your spears,
Let them lie waiting for the promises your words
May make."

Beowulf arose, with his men
135 Around him, ordering a few to remain
With their weapons, leading the others quickly
Along under Herot's steep roof into Hrothgar's
Presence. Standing on that prince's own hearth,
Helmeted, the silvery metal of his mail shirt
140 Gleaming with a smith's high art, he greeted
The Danes' great lord:

"Hail, Hrothgar! Higlac is my cousin and my king; the days Of my youth have been filled with glory. Now Grendel's Name has echoed in our land: sailors

145 Have brought us stories of Herot, the best
Of all mead-halls, deserted and useless when the moon
Hangs in skies the sun had lit,
Light and life fleeing together.
My people have said, the wisest, most knowing

Great king. They have seen my strength for themselves, Have watched me rise from the darkness of war, Dripping with my enemies' blood. I drove Five great giants into chains, chased

In the blackness of night, hunting monsters
Out of the ocean, and killing them one

COMMON CORE RL3

EPIC

An epic is a long narrative poem that traces the adventures of a great hero. Almost all national cultures have their own epics, whose stories and heroes play a role in defining the national character. An epic may describe how a nation was established or highlight specific traits associated with its people. Read lines 109-124. At what point in the story is Beowulf introduced? What traits of an epic hero does he appear to possess? Which traits of Beowulf's might also be used to describe the British people and their origins?

139 mail shirt: flexible body armor made of metal links or overlapping metal scales.

140 smith's high art: the skilled craft of a blacksmith (a person who fashions objects from iron).

142 cousin: here, a general term for a relative. Beowulf is actually Higlac's nephew.

By one; death was my errand and the fate They had earned. Now Grendel and I are called [3]

Together, and I've come. Grant me, then,
Lord and protector of this noble place,
A single request! I have come so far,
Oh shelterer of warriors and your people's loved friend,
That this one favor you should not refuse me—

That I, alone and with the help of my men,
May **purge** all evil from this hall. I have heard,
Too, that the monster's scorn of men
Is so great that he needs no weapons and fears none.
Nor will I. My lord Higlac

170 Might think less of me if I let my sword Go where my feet were afraid to, if I hid Behind some broad linden shield: my hands Alone shall fight for me, struggle for life Against the monster. God must decide

175 Who will be given to death's cold grip.
Grendel's plan, I think, will be
What it has been before, to invade this hall
And **gorge** his belly with our bodies. If he can,
If he can. And I think, if my time will have come,

180 There'll be nothing to mourn over, no corpse to prepare For its grave: Grendel will carry our bloody Flesh to the moors, crunch on our bones And smear torn scraps of our skin on the walls Of his den. No, I expect no Danes

185 Will fret about sewing our shrouds, if he wins.

And if death does take me, send the hammered
Mail of my armor to Higlac, return

The inheritance I had from Hrethel, and he
From Wayland. Fate will unwind as it must!"

190 Hrothgar replied, protector of the Danes:
 "Beowulf, you've come to us in friendship, and because
Of the reception your father found at our court.
Edgetho had begun a bitter feud,
Killing Hathlaf, a Wulfing warrior:
195 Your father's countrymen were afraid of war,
If he returned to his home, and they turned him away.
Then he traveled across the curving waves
To the land of the Danes. I was new to the throne,
Then, a young man ruling this wide

EPIC

Notice that in lines 153–159, Beowulf boasts about past victories that required superhuman strength and courage. Why might the people of Beowulf's time have valued such traits?

purge (pûrj) v. to cleanse or rid of something undesirable

172 linden shield: a shield made from the wood of a linden tree.

172–174 Beowulf insists on fighting Grendel without weapons.

gorge (gôrj) v. to stuff with food; glut

185 shrouds: cloths in which dead bodies are wrapped.

188 Hrethel (hrĕth'əl): a former king of the Geats—Higlac's father and Beowulf's grandfather.

189 Wayland: a famous blacksmith and magician.

193 Edgetho (ĕj'thō): Beowulf's father.194 Wulfing: a member of another Germanic tribe.

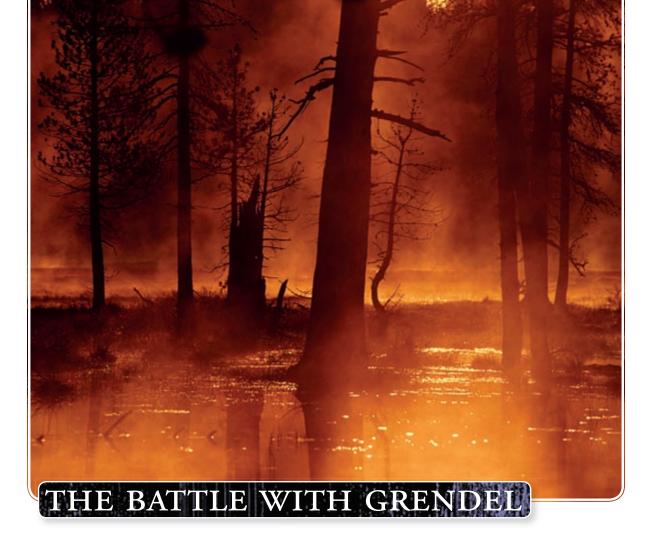
- 200 Kingdom and its golden city: Hergar, My older brother, a far better man Than I, had died and dying made me, Second among Healfdane's sons, first In this nation. I bought the end of Edgetho's
- 205 Quarrel, sent ancient treasures through the ocean's Furrows to the Wulfings; your father swore He'd keep that peace. My tongue grows heavy, And my heart, when I try to tell you what Grendel Has brought us, the damage he's done, here
- Our ranks have become, and can guess what we've lost To his terror. Surely the Lord Almighty
 Could stop his madness, smother his lust!
 How many times have my men, glowing
- 215 With courage drawn from too many cups
 Of ale, sworn to stay after dark
 And stem that horror with a sweep of their swords.
 And then, in the morning, this mead-hall glittering
 With new light would be drenched with blood, the benches
- 220 Stained red, the floors, all wet from that fiend's Savage assault—and my soldiers would be fewer Still, death taking more and more.
 But to table, Beowulf, a banquet in your honor:
 Let us toast your victories, and talk of the future." •
- Then Hrothgar's men gave places to the Geats, Yielded benches to the brave visitors
 And led them to the feast. The keeper of the mead Came carrying out the carved flasks,
 And poured that bright sweetness. A poet
- 230 Sang, from time to time, in a clearPure voice. Danes and visiting GeatsCelebrated as one, drank and rejoiced. . . .

G OLD ENGLISH POETRY

Observe that as Hrothgar begins to speak about Grendel in lines 207–210, his **tone**, or his attitude toward his subject, becomes bleak and despairing. What repeated sounds does the poet use to suggest this tone?

♠ EPIC

Note that Hrothgar delivers a long speech to Beowulf in lines 190–224. What values are reflected in the speech?



After the banquet, Hrothgar and his followers leave Herot, and Beowulf and his warriors remain to spend the night. Beowulf reiterates his intent to fight Grendel without a sword and, while his followers sleep, lies waiting, eager for Grendel to appear.

Out from the marsh, from the foot of misty Hills and bogs, bearing God's hatred,

235 Grendel came, hoping to kill
Anyone he could trap on this trip to high Herot.

He moved quickly through the cloudy night,

Up from his swampland, sliding silently

Toward that gold-shining hall. He had visited Hrothgar's

240 Home before, knew the way—
But never, before nor after that night,
Found Herot defended so firmly, his reception
So harsh. He journeyed, forever joyless,
Straight to the door, then snapped it open,
245 Tore its iron fasteners with a touch

OLD ENGLISH POETRY

Reread lines 233–235. Notice that the translator uses punctuation to convey the effect of the midline pauses, or caesuras, in the lines. In what way does the rhythm created by the pauses reinforce the action recounted here?

246 threshold: the strip of wood or stone at the bottom of a doorway.

And rushed angrily over the threshold. He strode quickly across the inlaid Floor, snarling and fierce: his eyes Gleamed in the darkness, burned with a gruesome

- Light. Then he stopped, seeing the hallCrowded with sleeping warriors, stuffedWith rows of young soldiers resting together.And his heart laughed, he relished the sight,Intended to tear the life from those bodies
- 255 By morning; the monster's mind was hot
 With the thought of food and the feasting his belly
 Would soon know. But fate, that night, intended
 Grendel to gnaw the broken bones
 Of his last human supper. Human
- 260 Eyes were watching his evil steps, Waiting to see his swift hard claws. Grendel snatched at the first Geat He came to, ripped him apart, cut His body to bits with powerful jaws,
- 265 Drank the blood from his veins and bolted Him down, hands and feet; death And Grendel's great teeth came together, Snapping life shut. Then he stepped to another Still body, clutched at Beowulf with his claws,
- 270 Grasped at a strong-hearted wakeful sleeper
 —And was instantly seized himself, claws
 Bent back as Beowulf leaned up on one arm.
 That shepherd of evil, guardian of crime,
 Knew at once that nowhere on earth

275 Had he met a man whose hands were harder; His mind was flooded with fear—but nothing Could take his <u>talons</u> and himself from that tight Hard grip. Grendel's one thought was to run From Beowulf, flee back to his marsh and hide there:

²⁸⁰ This was a different Herot than the hall he had emptied. But Higlac's follower remembered his final

Boast and, standing erect, stopped
The monster's flight, fastened those claws

In his first till they created, clutched Created

In his fists till they cracked, clutched Grendel

285 Closer. The <u>infamous</u> killer fought
For his freedom, wanting no flesh but retreat,
Desiring nothing but escape; his claws
Had been caught, he was trapped. That trip to Herot
Was a miserable journey for the writhing monster!

talon (tăl'ən) n. a claw

278–289 Up to this point Grendel has killed his human victims easily.

infamous (ĭn'fə-məs) adj. having a very bad reputation

The high hall rang, its roof boards swayed, 290 And Danes shook with terror. Down The aisles the battle swept, angry And wild. Herot trembled, wonderfully Built to withstand the blows, the struggling 295 Great bodies beating at its beautiful walls; Shaped and fastened with iron, inside And out, artfully worked, the building Stood firm. Its benches rattled, fell To the floor, gold-covered boards grating 300 As Grendel and Beowulf battled across them. Hrothgar's wise men had fashioned Herot To stand forever; only fire, They had planned, could shatter what such skill had put Together, swallow in hot flames such splendor 305 Of ivory and iron and wood. Suddenly The sounds changed, the Danes started In new terror, cowering in their beds as the terrible Screams of the Almighty's enemy sang In the darkness, the horrible shrieks of pain 310 And defeat, the tears torn out of Grendel's Taut throat, hell's captive caught in the arms Of him who of all the men on earth Was the strongest.

That mighty protector of men Meant to hold the monster till its life 315 Leaped out, knowing the fiend was no use To anyone in Denmark. All of Beowulf's Band had jumped from their beds, ancestral Swords raised and ready, determined To protect their prince if they could. Their courage 320 Was great but all wasted: they could hack at Grendel From every side, trying to open A path for his evil soul, but their points Could not hurt him, the sharpest and hardest iron Could not scratch at his skin, for that sin-stained demon 325 Had bewitched all men's weapons, laid spells That blunted every mortal man's blade. And yet his time had come, his days Were over, his death near; down To hell he would go, swept groaning and helpless 330 To the waiting hands of still worse fiends.

OLD ENGLISH POETRY

Reread lines 293–300. What impression of the battle does the alliteration help convey?

COMMON CORE L 4a

Language Coach

Homophones Many word pairs sound alike but have different spellings and meanings. For example, *taught* is the past tense of *teach*. Which word in line 311 is a homophone for *taught*? Guess the word's meaning using the surrounding text.

Now he discovered—once the afflictor
Of men, tormentor of their days—what it meant
To feud with Almighty God: Grendel
Saw that his strength was deserting him, his claws
335 Bound fast, Higlac's brave follower tearing at
His hands. The monster's hatred rose higher,
But his power had gone. He twisted in pain,
And the bleeding sinews deep in his shoulder
Snapped, muscle and bone split
340 And broke. The battle was over, Beowulf

340 And broke. The battle was over, Beowulf
Had been granted new glory: Grendel escaped,
But wounded as he was could flee to his den,
His miserable hole at the bottom of the marsh,
Only to die, to wait for the end

Of all his days. And after that bloody
Combat the Danes laughed with delight.
He who had come to them from across the sea,
Bold and strong-minded, had driven affliction
Off, purged Herot clean. He was happy,

350 Now, with that night's fierce work; the Danes
Had been served as he'd boasted he'd serve them; Beowulf,
A prince of the Geats, had killed Grendel,
Ended the grief, the sorrow, the suffering
Forced on Hrothgar's helpless people

355 By a bloodthirsty fiend. No Dane doubted
The victory, for the proof, hanging high
From the rafters where Beowulf had hung it, was the monster's
Arm, claw and shoulder and all.

And then, in the morning, crowds surrounded
360 Herot, warriors coming to that hall
From faraway lands, princes and leaders
Of men hurrying to behold the monster's
Great staggering tracks. They gaped with no sense
Of sorrow, felt no regret for his suffering,
365 Went tracing his bloody footprints, his beaten
And lonely flight, to the edge of the lake
Where he'd dragged his corpselike way, doomed
And already weary of his vanishing life.
The water was bloody, steaming and boiling
370 In horrible pounding waves, heat
Sucked from his magic veins; but the swirling

Surf had covered his death, hidden

338 sinews (sĭn'yooz): the tendons that connect muscles to bones.

Deep in murky darkness his miserable End, as hell opened to receive him. ��

Then old and young rejoiced, turned back
From that happy pilgrimage, mounted their hard-hooved
Horses, high-spirited stallions, and rode them
Slowly toward Herot again, retelling
Beowulf's bravery as they jogged along.

380 And over and over they swore that nowhere
On earth or under the spreading sky
Or between the seas, neither south nor north,
Was there a warrior worthier to rule over men.
(But no one meant Beowulf's praise to belittle

385 Hrothgar, their kind and gracious king!)
And sometimes, when the path ran straight and clear,
They would let their horses race, red

And brown and pale yellow backs streaming
Down the road. And sometimes a proud old soldier
390 Who had heard songs of the ancient heroes
And could sing them all through, story after story,
Would weave a net of words for Beowulf's
Victory, tying the knot of his verses
Smoothly, swiftly, into place with a poet's
395 Quick skill, singing his new song aloud

While he shaped it, and the old songs as well.

© GRAMMAR AND STYLE

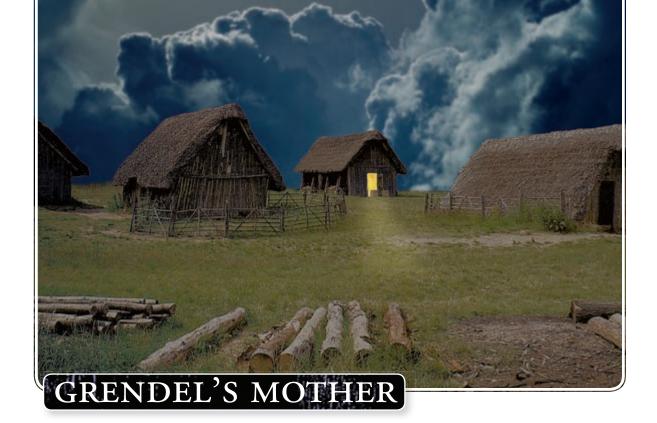
To capture a scene, the poet often uses vivid **imagery.** Notice the use in lines 369–374, for example, of **adjectives** such as *bloody, steaming, pounding,* and *swirling* to help readers see and feel the violent, churning water.

OLD ENGLISH POETRY

Reread lines 389–396. In what ways does this description reflect the techniques used by Anglo-Saxon poets? Cite details.

Text Analysis

- **1. Clarify** Why does Beowulf journey across the sea to the land of the Danes?
- 2. Summarize How does Beowulf trap and kill Grendel?
- **3. Analyze Motivation** What drives Grendel to attack so many men at Herot, the mead hall?
- **4. Make Inferences** Why does Beowulf hang Grendel's arm from the rafters of Herot?



Although one monster has died, another still lives. From her lair in a cold and murky lake, where she has been brooding over her loss, Grendel's mother emerges, bent on revenge.

So she reached Herot,

Where the Danes slept as though already dead;

Her visit ended their good fortune, reversed

400 The bright vane of their luck. No female, no matter How fierce, could have come with a man's strength, Fought with the power and courage men fight with, Smashing their shining swords, their bloody, Hammer-forged blades onto boar-headed helmets,

Slashing and stabbing with the sharpest of points.

The soldiers raised their shields and drew
Those gleaming swords, swung them above
The piled-up benches, leaving their mail shirts
And their helmets where they'd lain when the terror took hold of them.

To save her life she moved still faster,
Took a single victim and fled from the hall,
Running to the moors, discovered, but her supper
Assured, sheltered in her dripping claws.
She'd taken Hrothgar's closest friend,

415 The man he most loved of all men on earth; She'd killed a glorious soldier, cut A noble life short. No Geat could have stopped her: Beowulf and his band had been given better What mood is conveyed by this photograph? Which elements help create that mood?

400 vane: a device that turns to show the direction the wind is blowing—here associated metaphorically with luck, which is as changeable as the wind.

404 boar-headed helmets:
Germanic warriors often wore
helmets bearing the images of wild
pigs or other fierce creatures in the
hope that the images would increase
their ferocity and protect them
against their enemies.

Beds; sleep had come to them in a different
420 Hall. Then all Herot burst into shouts:
She had carried off Grendel's claw. Sorrow
Had returned to Denmark. They'd traded deaths,
Danes and monsters, and no one had won,
Both had lost! . . .

Devastated by the loss of his friend, Hrothgar sends for Beowulf and recounts what Grendel's mother has done. Then Hrothgar describes the dark lake where Grendel's mother has dwelt with her son.

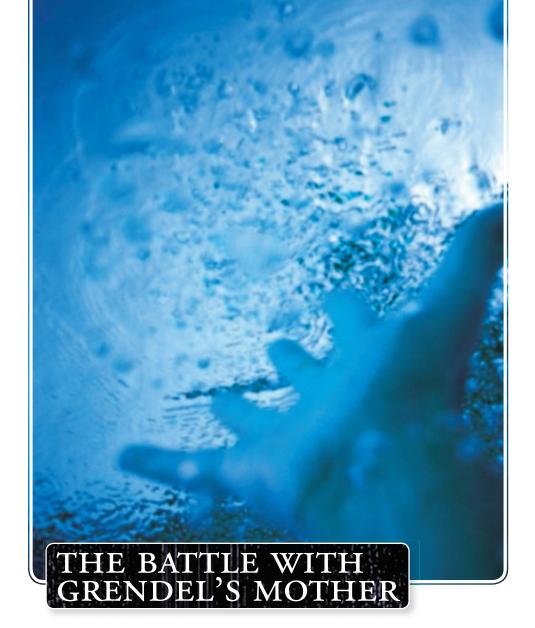
- 425 "They live in secret places, windy
 Cliffs, wolf-dens where water pours
 From the rocks, then runs underground, where mist
 Steams like black clouds, and the groves of trees
 Growing out over their lake are all covered
- With frozen spray, and wind down snakelike Roots that reach as far as the water And help keep it dark. At night that lake Burns like a torch. No one knows its bottom, No wisdom reaches such depths. A deer,
- 435 Hunted through the woods by packs of hounds,
 A stag with great horns, though driven through the forest
 From faraway places, prefers to die
 On those shores, refuses to save its life
 In that water. It isn't far, nor is it
- 440 A pleasant spot! When the wind stirs And storms, waves splash toward the sky, As dark as the air, as black as the rain That the heavens weep. Our only help, Again, lies with you. Grendel's mother
- You've not seen. Seek it, if you dare! Save us, Once more, and again twisted gold, Heaped-up ancient treasure, will reward you For the battle you win!"...



Language Coach

Homographs Words with the same spelling but different meanings, pronunciations, or both are homographs. The word wind, for example, can rhyme with sinned or kind. What is the pronunciation and meaning of wind in line 430? How can you tell?

447–449 Germanic warriors placed great importance on amassing treasure as a way of acquiring fame and temporarily defeating fate.



Beowulf accepts Hrothgar's challenge, and the king and his men accompany the hero to the dreadful lair of Grendel's mother. Fearlessly, Beowulf prepares to battle the terrible creature.

He leaped into the lake, would not wait for anyone's
Answer; the heaving water covered him
Over. For hours he sank through the waves;
At last he saw the mud of the bottom.
And all at once the greedy she-wolf
Who'd ruled those waters for half a hundred
Years discovered him, saw that a creature
From above had come to explore the bottom
Of her wet world. She welcomed him in her claws,
Clutched at him savagely but could not harm him,
Tried to work her fingers through the tight

Ring-woven mail on his breast, but tore

And scratched in vain. Then she carried him, armor And sword and all, to her home; he struggled To free his weapon, and failed. The fight

- Her catch, a host of sea beasts who beat at His mail shirt, stabbing with tusks and teeth As they followed along. Then he realized, suddenly, That she'd brought him into someone's battle-hall,
- 470 And there the water's heat could not hurt him, Nor anything in the lake attack him through The building's high-arching roof. A brilliant Light burned all around him, the lake Itself like a fiery flame.

Then he saw

- The mighty water witch, and swung his sword, His ring-marked blade, straight at her head; The iron sang its fierce song, Sang Beowulf's strength. But her guest Discovered that no sword could slice her evil
- 480 Skin, that Hrunting could not hurt her, was useless Now when he needed it. They wrestled, she ripped And tore and clawed at him, bit holes in his helmet, And that too failed him; for the first time in years Of being worn to war it would earn no glory;
- It was the last time anyone would wear it. But Beowulf Longed only for fame, leaped back Into battle. He tossed his sword aside, Angry; the steel-edged blade lay where He'd dropped it. If weapons were useless he'd use
- 490 His hands, the strength in his fingers. So fame
 Comes to the men who mean to win it
 And care about nothing else! He raised
 His arms and seized her by the shoulder; anger
 Doubled his strength, he threw her to the floor.
- Proud prince was ready to leap on her. But she rose At once and repaid him with her clutching claws, Wildly tearing at him. He was weary, that best And strongest of soldiers; his feet stumbled
- 500 And in an instant she had him down, held helpless. Squatting with her weight on his stomach, she drew A dagger, brown with dried blood, and prepared To avenge her only son. But he was stretched

M EPIC

Reread lines 464–474. What details of the battle and its setting are characteristic of an epic?

476 his ring-marked blade: For the battle with Grendel's mother, Beowulf has been given an heirloom sword with an intricately etched blade.

480 Hrunting (hrŭn'tĭng): the name of Beowulf's sword. (Germanic warriors' swords were possessions of such value that they were often given names.)

On his back, and her stabbing blade was blunted

By the woven mail shirt he wore on his chest.

The hammered links held; the point

Could not touch him. He'd have traveled to the bottom of the earth,

Edgetho's son, and died there, if that shining

Woven metal had not helped—and Holy

God, who sent him victory, gave judgment

For truth and right, Ruler of the Heavens,

Once Beowulf was back on his feet and fighting.

Then he saw, hanging on the wall, a heavy Sword, hammered by giants, strong 515 And blessed with their magic, the best of all weapons But so massive that no ordinary man could lift Its carved and decorated length. He drew it From its scabbard, broke the chain on its hilt, And then, savage, now, angry 520 And desperate, lifted it high over his head And struck with all the strength he had left, Caught her in the neck and cut it through, Broke bones and all. Her body fell To the floor, lifeless, the sword was wet 525 With her blood, and Beowulf rejoiced at the sight. The brilliant light shone, suddenly, As though burning in that hall, and as bright as Heaven's Own candle, lit in the sky. He looked N At her home, then following along the wall 530 Went walking, his hands tight on the sword, His heart still angry. He was hunting another Dead monster, and took his weapon with him For final revenge against Grendel's vicious Attacks, his nighttime raids, over 535 And over, coming to Herot when Hrothgar's Men slept, killing them in their beds, Eating some on the spot, fifteen Or more, and running to his **loathsome** moor With another such sickening meal waiting 540 In his pouch. But Beowulf repaid him for those visits, Found him lying dead in his corner, Armless, exactly as that fierce fighter Had sent him out from Herot, then struck off

His head with a single swift blow. The body

545 Jerked for the last time, then lay still.

EPIC

What does the light described in lines 526–528 suggest about Beowulf's victory?

loathsome (lō*th'* səm) *adj*. disgusting

The wise old warriors who surrounded Hrothgar, Like him staring into the monsters' lake,
Saw the waves surging and blood
Spurting through. They spoke about Beowulf,
550 All the graybeards, whispered together
And said that hope was gone, that the hero
Had lost fame and his life at once, and would never
Return to the living, come back as triumphant
As he had left; almost all agreed that Grendel's
555 Mighty mother, the she-wolf, had killed him.
The sun slid over past noon, went further
Down. The Danes gave up, left
The lake and went home, Hrothgar with them.
The Geats stayed, sat sadly, watching,

560 Imagining they saw their lord but not believing They would ever see him again.

—Then the sword Melted, blood-soaked, dripping down Like water, disappearing like ice when the world's Eternal Lord loosens invisible

As only He can, He who rules
Time and seasons, He who is truly
God. The monsters' hall was full of
Rich treasures, but all that Beowulf took

570 Was Grendel's head and the hilt of the giants' Jeweled sword; the rest of that ring-marked Blade had dissolved in Grendel's steaming Blood, boiling even after his death. And then the battle's only survivor

575 Swam up and away from those silent corpses;
The water was calm and clean, the whole
Huge lake peaceful once the demons who'd lived in it
Were dead.

Then that noble protector of all seamen
Swam to land, rejoicing in the heavy
580 Burdens he was bringing with him. He
And all his glorious band of Geats
Thanked God that their leader had come back unharmed;
They left the lake together. The Geats
Carried Beowulf's helmet, and his mail shirt.
585 Behind them the water slowly thickened
As the monsters' blood came seeping up.

550 graybeards: old men.

EPIC

What do lines 549–555 suggest about attitudes toward fame in the Anglo-Saxon period?

578 that noble protector of all seamen: Beowulf, who will be buried in a tower that will serve as a navigational aid to sailors.

They walked quickly, happily, across Roads all of them remembered, left The lake and the cliffs alongside it, brave men 590 Staggering under the weight of Grendel's skull, Too heavy for fewer than four of them to handle— Two on each side of the spear jammed through it— Yet proud of their ugly load and determined That the Danes, seated in Herot, should see it. P 595 Soon, fourteen Geats arrived At the hall, bold and warlike, and with Beowulf, Their lord and leader, they walked on the mead-hall Green. Then the Geats' brave prince entered Herot, covered with glory for the daring 600 Battles he had fought; he sought Hrothgar To salute him and show Grendel's head. He carried that terrible trophy by the hair,

Brought it straight to where the Danes sat,

Drinking, the queen among them. It was a weird

605 And wonderful sight, and the warriors stared. . . .

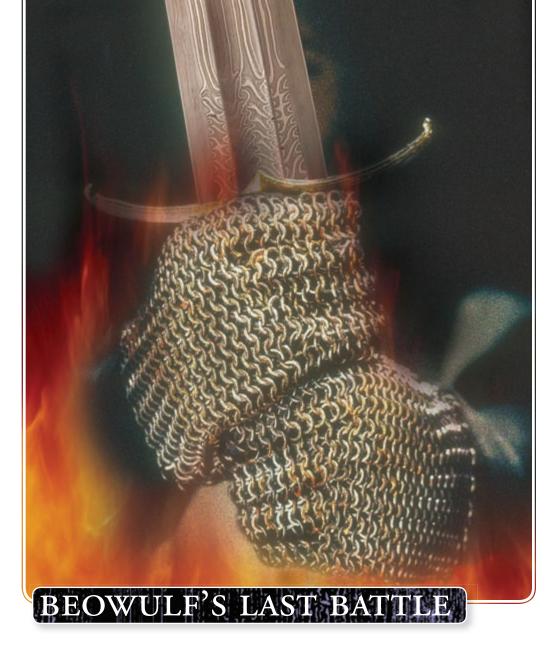
EPIC

Reread lines 587–594. Why do you think the Geats want the Danes to see Grendel's skull?

604 queen: Welthow, wife of Hrothgar.

Text Analysis

- **1. Clarify** Why does Hrothgar ask Beowulf to battle Grendel's mother?
- **2. Summarize** What does Beowulf do after he kills Grendel's mother?
- **3. Compare and Contrast** Compare the two monsters. Does the behavior of Grendel's mother seem as wicked or unreasonable as Grendel's behavior? Support your opinion with evidence from the text.



With Grendel's mother destroyed, peace is restored to the land of the Danes, and Beowulf, laden with Hrothgar's gifts, returns to the land of his own people, the Geats. After his uncle and cousin die, Beowulf becomes king of the Geats and rules in peace and prosperity for 50 years. One day, however, a fire-breathing dragon that has been guarding a treasure for hundreds of years is disturbed by a thief, who enters the treasure tower and steals a cup. The dragon begins terrorizing the Geats, and Beowulf, now an old man, takes on the challenge of fighting it.

And Beowulf uttered his final boast:

"I've never known fear, as a youth I fought
In endless battles. I am old, now,
But I will fight again, seek fame still,
610 If the dragon hiding in his tower dares
To face me."

Then he said farewell to his followers, o

Each in his turn, for the last time:

"I'd use no sword, no weapon, if this beast

Could be killed without it, crushed to death

615 Like Grendel, gripped in my hands and torn

Limb from limb. But his breath will be burning

Hot, poison will pour from his tongue.

I feel no shame, with shield and sword

And armor, against this monster: when he comes to me

620 I mean to stand, not run from his shooting

Flames, stand till fate decides

Which of us wins. My heart is firm,

My hands calm: I need no hot

Words. Wait for me close by, my friends.

625 We shall see, soon, who will survive

This bloody battle, stand when the fighting

Is done. No one else could do

What I mean to, here, no man but me

Could hope to defeat this monster. No one

630 Could try. And this dragon's treasure, his gold

And everything hidden in that tower, will be mine

Or war will sweep me to a bitter death!"

Then Beowulf rose, still brave, still strong,

And with his shield at his side, and a mail shirt on his breast,

635 Strode calmly, confidently, toward the tower, under

The rocky cliffs: no coward could have walked there!

And then he who'd endured dozens of desperate

Battles, who'd stood boldly while swords and shields

Clashed, the best of kings, saw

640 Huge stone arches and felt the heat

Of the dragon's breath, flooding down

Through the hidden entrance, too hot for anyone

To stand, a streaming current of fire

And smoke that blocked all passage. And the Geats'

645 Lord and leader, angry, lowered

His sword and roared out a battle cry,

A call so loud and clear that it reached through

The hoary rock, hung in the dragon's

Ear. The beast rose, angry,

650 Knowing a man had come—and then nothing

But war could have followed. Its breath came first,

A steaming cloud pouring from the stone,

Then the earth itself shook. Beowulf

OLD ENGLISH POETRY

Notice the repeated use of the letter f in lines 606–611. What **tone** does the **alliteration** help convey?

648 hoary (hôr'ē): gray with age.

Swung his shield into place, held it
655 In front of him, facing the entrance. The dragon
Coiled and uncoiled, its heart urging it
Into battle. Beowulf's ancient sword
Was waiting, unsheathed, his sharp and gleaming
Blade. The beast came closer; both of them

Great prince stood firm, unmoving, prepared Behind his high shield, waiting in his shining Armor. The monster came quickly toward him, Pouring out fire and smoke, hurrying

665 To its fate. Flames beat at the iron
Shield, and for a time it held, protected
Beowulf as he'd planned; then it began to melt,
And for the first time in his life that famous prince
Fought with fate against him, with glory

And struck at the dragon's scaly hide.
The ancient blade broke, bit into
The monster's skin, drew blood, but cracked
And failed him before it went deep enough, helped him

With pain, thrashed and beat at him, spouting
Murderous flames, spreading them everywhere.
And the Geats' ring-giver did not boast of glorious
Victories in other wars: his weapon

680 Had failed him, deserted him, now when he needed it Most, that excellent sword. Edgetho's Famous son stared at death,
Unwilling to leave this world, to exchange it
For a dwelling in some distant place—a journey
685 Into darkness that all men must make, as death

85 Into darkness that all men must make, as death Ends their few brief hours on earth.

Quickly, the dragon came at him, encouraged As Beowulf fell back; its breath flared, And he suffered, wrapped around in swirling 690 Flames—a king, before, but now A beaten warrior. None of his comrades Came to him, helped him, his brave and noble

Came to him, helped him, his brave and noble Followers; they ran for their lives, fled Deep in a wood. And only one of them

695 Remained, stood there, miserable, remembering, As a good man must, what kinship should mean. §

R EPIC

Reread lines 668–671. What do these lines reveal about the qualities of an **epic hero?**

678 ring-giver: king; lord. When a man swore allegiance to a Germanic lord in return for his protection, the lord typically bestowed a ring on his follower to symbolize the bond.

S EPIC

What values are implied in lines 691–696? What message about these values do the lines convey?

His name was Wiglaf, he was Wexstan's son
And a good soldier; his family had been Swedish,
Once. Watching Beowulf, he could see
700 How his king was suffering, burning. Remembering
Everything his lord and cousin had given him,
Armor and gold and the great estates
Wexstan's family enjoyed, Wiglaf's
Mind was made up; he raised his yellow
705 Shield and drew his sword. . . .

And Wiglaf, his heart heavy, uttered The kind of words his comrades deserved:

"I remember how we sat in the mead-hall, drinking

And boasting of how brave we'd be when Beowulf

710 Needed us, he who gave us these swords

And armor: all of us swore to repay him,

When the time came, kindness for kindness

—With our lives, if he needed them. He allowed us to join him,

Chose us from all his great army, thinking

Our boasting words had some weight, believing Our promises, trusting our swords. He took us For soldiers, for men. He meant to kill This monster himself, our mighty king, Fight this battle alone and unaided,

720 As in the days when his strength and daring dazzled Men's eyes. But those days are over and gone And now our lord must lean on younger Arms. And we must go to him, while angry Flames burn at his flesh, help

725 Our glorious king! By almighty God,
I'd rather burn myself than see
Flames swirling around my lord.
And who are we to carry home
Our shields before we've slain his enemy

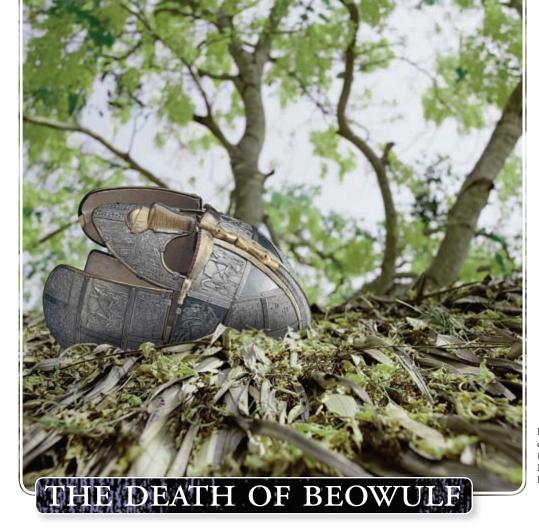
730 And ours, to run back to our homes with Beowulf So hard-pressed here? I swear that nothing He ever did deserved an end Like this, dying miserably and alone, Butchered by this savage beast: we swore

735 That these swords and armor were each for us all!" . . .



Language Coach

Connotation The images or feelings connected to a word are its connotations. Killed has many synonyms with different connotations. Slain (line 729) means "killed violently or in large numbers." Butchered (line 734) means "killed viciously." Why are these connotations important in lines 728–735?



Iron helmet covered with decorative panels of tinned bronze (early 600s). Anglo-Saxon. From Mound 1, Sutton Hoo, Suffolk, England. © The British Museum.

Wiglaf joins Beowulf, who again attacks the dragon single-handed; but the remnant of his sword shatters, and the monster wounds him in the neck. Wiglaf then strikes the dragon, and he and Beowulf together finally succeed in killing the beast. Their triumph is short-lived, however, because Beowulf's wound proves to be mortal.

Beowulf spoke, in spite of the swollen,

Livid wound, knowing he'd unwound

His string of days on earth, seen

As much as God would grant him; all worldly

740 Pleasure was gone, as life would go,

Soon:

"I'd leave my armor to my son,
Now, if God had given me an heir,
A child born of my body, his life
Created from mine. I've worn this crown
745 For fifty winters: no neighboring people
Have tried to threaten the Geats, sent soldiers

livid (lĭv'ĭd) *adj*. discolored from being bruised

Against us or talked of terror. My days
Have gone by as fate willed, waiting
For its word to be spoken, ruling as well
750 As I knew how, swearing no unholy oaths,
Seeking no lying wars. I can leave
This life happy; I can die, here,
Knowing the Lord of all life has never
Watched me wash my sword in blood
755 Born of my own family. Belovèd 1

Wiglaf, go, quickly, find
The dragon's treasure: we've taken its life,
But its gold is ours, too. Hurry,
Bring me ancient silver, precious

760 Jewels, shining armor and gems, Before I die. Death will be softer, Leaving life and this people I've ruled So long, if I look at this last of all prizes."

Then Wexstan's son went in, as quickly
765 As he could, did as the dying Beowulf
Asked, entered the inner darkness
Of the tower, went with his mail shirt and his sword.
Flushed with victory he groped his way,
A brave young warrior, and suddenly saw
770 Piles of gleaming gold, precious
Gems, scattered on the floor, cups
And bracelets, rusty old helmets, beautifully
Made but rotting with no hands to rub
And polish them. They lay where the dragon left them;

It had flown in the darkness, once, before fighting Its final battle. (So gold can easily Triumph, defeat the strongest of men, No matter how deep it is hidden!) And he saw, U Hanging high above, a golden

780 Banner, woven by the best of weavers
And beautiful. And over everything he saw
A strange light, shining everywhere,
On walls and floor and treasure. Nothing
Moved, no other monsters appeared;

785 He took what he wanted, all the treasures That pleased his eye, heavy plates And golden cups and the glorious banner, Loaded his arms with all they could hold.

⋒ EPIC

Note that Beowulf summarizes his 50-year reign in lines 744–755. What ideals are reflected in Beowulf's speech?

EPIC

Reread lines 768–778. What theme do the lines suggest?

Beowulf's dagger, his iron blade,
790 Had finished the fire-spitting terror
That once protected tower and treasures
Alike; the gray-bearded lord of the Geats
Had ended those flying, burning raids
Forever. V

Then Wiglaf went back, anxious

795 To return while Beowulf was alive, to bring him
Treasure they'd won together. He ran,
Hoping his wounded king, weak
And dying, had not left the world too soon.
Then he brought their treasure to Beowulf, and found

800 His famous king bloody, gasping

For breath. But Wiglaf sprinkled water
Over his lord, until the words
Deep in his breast broke through and were heard.
Beholding the treasure he spoke, haltingly:

"For this, this gold, these jewels, I thank
Our Father in Heaven, Ruler of the Earth—
For all of this, that His grace has given me,
Allowed me to bring to my people while breath
Still came to my lips. I sold my life
For this treasure, and I sold it well. Take

What I leave, Wiglaf, lead my people,
Help them; my time is gone. Have
The brave Geats build me a tomb,
When the funeral flames have burned me, and build it

On this spit of land, so sailors can see
This tower, and remember my name, and call it
Beowulf's tower, and boats in the darkness
And mist, crossing the sea, will know it."

Then that brave king gave the golden
Necklace from around his throat to Wiglaf,
Gave him his gold-covered helmet, and his rings,
And his mail shirt, and ordered him to use them well:
"You're the last of all our far-flung family.

To the death that was waiting. And now I follow them."

The old man's mouth was silent, spoke

No more, had said as much as it could;

830 He would sleep in the fire, soon. His soul

OLD ENGLISH POETRY

Identify the **kennings** used in lines 789–794 to refer to the dragon and to Beowulf. What does the phrase used to describe Beowulf emphasize about the warrior?

816 spit: a narrow point of land extending into a body of water.

W EPIC

Reread lines 812–819. Why is it important to Beowulf that he leave a legacy behind?

Left his flesh, flew to glory. . . .

And when the battle was over Beowulf's followers

Came out of the wood, cowards and traitors,

Knowing the dragon was dead. Afraid,

835 While it spit its fires, to fight in their lord's

Defense, to throw their javelins and spears,

They came like shamefaced jackals, their shields

In their hands, to the place where the prince lay dead,

And waited for Wiglaf to speak. He was sitting

840 Near Beowulf's body, wearily sprinkling

Water in the dead man's face, trying

To stir him. He could not. No one could have kept

Life in their lord's body, or turned

Aside the Lord's will: world

845 And men and all move as He orders,

And always have, and always will.

Then Wiglaf turned and angrily told them

What men without courage must hear.

Wexstan's brave son stared at the traitors,

850 His heart sorrowful, and said what he had to:

"I say what anyone who speaks the truth

Must say. . . .

Too few of his warriors remembered

To come, when our lord faced death, alone.

855 And now the giving of swords, of golden

Rings and rich estates, is over,

Ended for you and everyone who shares

Your blood: when the brave Geats hear

How you bolted and ran none of your race

860 Will have anything left but their lives. And death

Would be better for them all, and for you, than the kind

Of life you can lead, branded with disgrace!"...

Then the warriors rose,

Walked slowly down from the cliff, stared

865 At those wonderful sights, stood weeping as they saw

Beowulf dead on the sand, their bold

Ring-giver resting in his last bed;

He'd reached the end of his days, their mighty

War-king, the great lord of the Geats,

870 Gone to a glorious death. . . .

836 javelins (jăv'lĭnz): light spears used as weapons.

837 jackals (jăk'əlz): doglike animals that sometimes feed on the flesh of dead beasts.

859 bolted: ran away; fled.

What does Wiglaf's speech in lines 851–862 tell you about the importance of honor and the consequences of dishonorable behavior in Beowulf's time?



Then the Geats built the tower, as Beowulf Had asked, strong and tall, so sailors Could find it from far and wide; working For ten long days they made his monument, 875 Sealed his ashes in walls as straight

- And high as wise and willing hands

 Could raise them. And the riches he and Wiglaf

 Had won from the dragon, rings, necklaces,

 Ancient, hammered armor—all
- 880 The treasures they'd taken were left there, too, Silver and jewels buried in the sandy Ground, back in the earth, again And forever hidden and useless to men. And then twelve of the bravest Geats
- Rode their horses around the tower,
 Telling their sorrow, telling stories
 Of their dead king and his greatness, his glory,
 Praising him for heroic deeds, for a life
 As noble as his name. So should all men
- 890 Raise up words for their lords, warm
 With love, when their shield and protector leaves
 His body behind, sends his soul
 On high. And so Beowulf's followers
 Rode, mourning their belovèd leader,
- 895 Crying that no better king had ever Lived, no prince so mild, no man So open to his people, so deserving of praise.

▲ Analyze Visuals

What details in this photograph suggest the mourning for Beowulf? Explain.

OLD ENGLISH POETRY

Reread lines 889–893 aloud. Notice the **alliteration** in the phrases "words for their lords" and "warm with love." How would you describe the **tone** of these lines?

896 mild: gentle or kindly.

Comprehension

- 1. Recall In what way does Beowulf's sword fail him?
- 2. Summarize How do the Geats honor Beowulf after he dies?

Text Analysis

- 3. Examine Epic Characteristics Review the discussion of the characteristics of an epic in the Text Analysis Workshop on pages 38–39. Then use a chart like the one shown to list Beowulf's traits as an **epic hero** and the deeds that Traits reveal these traits. Is he a typical epic hero?
- **4. Analyze Old English Poetry** Review the list you created as you read. In what ways might the **alliteration, caesuras,** and **kennings** in *Beowulf* have helped Anglo-Saxon poets chant or sing the poem and convey its meaning?
 - 5. Analyze Theme Beowulf is able to defeat Grendel and Grendel's mother, yet he loses his life when he battles the dragon. What themes does this suggest about the struggle between good and evil?
 - **6. Compare and Contrast** Compare and contrast the portrayals of Beowulf as a young and old man. Also compare Hrothgar's recollections of his early deeds with his limitations as an aged king. What view of youth and age do these comparisons convey? Support your conclusions with specific evidence.
 - 7. Draw Conclusions Describe Beowulf's attitude toward death or mortality in each of the following passages: lines 179–189, lines 481–492, and lines 665-691. How does his attitude change over time?
 - 8. Evaluate Author's Purpose Reread lines 81–85, which reveal the influence of Christianity on the Beowulf Poet. Why might the poet have chosen to describe Hrothgar and Grendel in terms of their relationship to God?

Text Criticism

9. Different Perspectives In his 20th-century novel Grendel, writer John Gardner tells the story of Grendel's attacks against the Danes from the monster's point of view. Consider the selection you have read from the perspectives of Grendel, Grendel's mother, and the dragon. What reasons might each of them have to hate Beowulf and other men?

Where do MONSTERS lurk?

Monsters like Grendel often combine human and animal features. Think of other monsters from literature, television, or film that combine these features. Why are such monsters particularly disturbing?



Deeds

RL 2 Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text. **RL3** Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story. RL 4 Analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone. L5a Interpret figures of speech in context and analyze their role in the text.



Vocabulary in Context

▲ VOCABULARY PRACTICE

Decide whether the words in each pair are synonyms or antonyms.

- 1. affliction/blessing
- 2. gorge/starve
- 3. infamous/respected
- 4. lair/hideout

- 5. livid/bruised
- 6. loathsome/delightful
- 7. purge/remove
- 8. talon/claw

WORD LIST

affliction

gorge

infamous

lair

livid

loathsome

purge

talon

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY IN WRITING

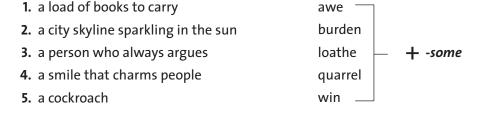
• concept • culture • parallel • section • structure

How has the **concept** of a hero changed since Beowulf's time? Write a paragraph about how the hero is represented in movies or TV in today's culture. Refer to at least one **section** of *Beowulf* for comparison. Use at least one additional Academic Vocabulary word in your response.

VOCABULARY STRATEGY: THE ANGLO-SAXON SUFFIX -SOME

Many English words with Anglo-Saxon word parts were born whole into Old English, changing slightly over time. Others developed from the combination of Old English word parts during the time when people spoke Middle English. The adjective-forming suffix -some, which means "like" or "tending to cause," appears in both types of words. In Old English, -sum occurred in the word wynsum (today's winsome). Later, the Middle English word loth ("to feel disgust") combined with the Old English -sum to make lothsum: "tending to cause disgust." Though the spelling has changed over time, loathsome has the same meaning today.

PRACTICE Use an adjective ending in the suffix -some to describe each person, place, or thing listed. Form the adjective by adding -some to a word shown in the equation.





L1a Apply the understanding that usage is a matter of convention and can change over time.
L4b Identify and correctly use patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech.



Language

GRAMMAR AND STYLE: Create Imagery

Review the Grammar and Style note on page 54. To describe a scene or convey a mood, the Beowulf Poet uses imagery—words and phrases that create vivid sensory experiences for the audience. The poet frequently creates this imagery through an effective use of adjectives and verbs. Here is an example from the epic:

The dragon leaped

With pain, thrashed and beat at him, spouting Murderous flames, spreading them everywhere. (lines 675–677)

Notice that the verbs leaped, thrashed, and beat suggest a sense of movement and that the adjective *murderous* conveys the feeling of the flames' heat. The imagery in the sentence helps you envision the scene and experience its intensity.

PRACTICE Write down each of the following lines from *Beowulf*. Identify the adjectives and verbs in each sentence that create imagery and then write your own sentence with similar elements.

EXAMPLE

He moved quickly through the cloudy night, / Up from his swampland, sliding silently / Toward that gold-shining hall.

She drifted slowly down the leaf-strewn street, away from the city lights, winding sadly toward the deserted house.

- 1. ... Grendel will carry our bloody / Flesh to the moors, crunch on our bones / And smear torn scraps of our skin on the walls / Of his den.
- 2. He strode quickly across the inlaid / Floor, snarling and fierce: his eyes / Gleamed in the darkness, burned with a gruesome / Light.

READING-WRITING CONNECTION



Expand your understanding of *Beowulf* by responding to this prompt. Then use the **revising tips** to improve your analysis.

WRITING PROMPT

WRITE AN ANALYSIS The review on page 74 describes the experience of listening to an oral performance of Beowulf. Write a three-to-five-paragraph analysis of Beowulf in which you describe what features of the poem bring it to life for you. You might focus on its characters, its vivid descriptions, or its use of elements of Old English poetry.

REVISING TIPS

- · Clearly identify the features of the poem that make Beowulf a distinctive and powerful work of literature.
- Include details from the poem to show how each of these features makes the poem come to life for you.

COMMON CORE

L3 Apply knowledge of language to make effective choices for meaning or style. W 2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content. W 9a (RL 4) Analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone.



Reading for Information

REVIEW Listening to the story of *Beowulf* sung by a scop playing a harp is not an experience confined to the past. American musician and medieval scholar Benjamin Bagby performs Beowulf in the original Anglo-Saxon to enthusiastic audiences. The following review captures the excitement of Bagby's Beowulf.

A Collaboration Across 1,200 Years

uropean noblemen of a thousand years ago had much more exciting and intelligent entertainment than anything to be found now. Anyone who doubts that need only look in on Benjamin

D. J. R. BRUCKNER

Bagby's astonishing Review By performance of the first quarter of the epic poem Beowulf in Anglo-Saxon,

no less—tonight at the Stanley H. Kaplan Penthouse at Lincoln Center. It will be the last of his three appearances in the Lincoln Center Festival.

From the moment he strode on stage on Sunday for the opening night, silencing the audience with that famous first word, "Hwaet!" ("Pay attention!"), until hell swallowed the "pagan soul" of the monster Grendel 80 minutes later.

Mr. Bagby came as close to holding hundreds of people in a spell as ever a man has. As the epic's warriors argued, boasted, fought or fell into the monster's maw, there were bursts of laughter, mutters and sighs, and when Mr. Bagby's voice stopped at the end, as abruptly as it had begun, there was an audible rippling gasp before a thunderclap of applause from cheering people who called him back again and again, unwilling to let him go.

Mr. Bagby—a Midwesterner who fell in love with *Beowulf* at 12 and who now is co-director of a medieval music ensemble, Sequentia, in Cologne, Germany—accompanies himself on a six-string lyre modeled on one found in a seventhcentury tomb near Stuttgart. This surprisingly facile instrument underscores the meter of the epic





verses and is counterpoint to Mr. Bagby's voice as he recites, chants and occasionally sings the lines.

On the whole, this is a restrained presentation. The performer captures listeners at once simply by letting us feel his conviction that he has a tale to tell that is more captivating than any other story in the world. He avoids histrionic gestures, letting the majestic rhythms of the epic seize our emotions and guide them through the action. Gradually the many voices that fill the great poem emerge and

the listener always knows who is speaking: a warrior, a watchman, a king, a sarcastic drunk. A translation is handed out to the audience, but after a while one notices people are following it less and just letting the sound of this strange and beautiful language wash over them. Perhaps not so strange, after all—enough phrases begin to penetrate the understanding that one finally knows deep down that, yes, this is where English came from.

How authentic is all this? Well, we know from many historical sources that in the first millennium at royal or noble houses a performer called a scop would present epics. Mr. Bagby has lived with this epic for many years, as well as with ancient music, and his performance is his argument that *Beowulf* was meant to be heard, not read, and that this is the way we ought to hear it. It is a powerful argument, indeed. The test of it is that when he has finished, you leave with the overwhelming impression that you know the anonymous poet who created *Beowulf* more than a dozen centuries ago, that you have felt the man's personality touch you. That is a much too rare experience in theater.