

*Beowulf*, Part 1

Translated by A. S. Kline<sup>1</sup> (2012)

Prologue: The Spear-Danes (Lines 1-52)

- 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  
(5) 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,  
(10) 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  
(15) 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.  
(20) 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,  
(25) 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,  
(30) 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,  
(35) The ring-giver, there amidsthips,  
Might by the mast; many the riches  
From far-off lands, precious armour  
None I heard comelier, keel weighted  
With battle-weapons, war-gear,  
(40) Blade and breastplate; on him lay  
Many a treasure, forced with him  
On the tide's sway, to drift afar.

---

<sup>1</sup> Translated by A. S. Kline © (2012 All Rights Reserved. Copied from Poetry in Translation [http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/English/Beowulfhome.htm]. 30 July (2015).

- No less on him had they bestowed  
A nation's riches than those did  
(45) 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,  
(50) Mourning minds. No man knows  
Can tell for certain, wise counsellor  
Or earthly hero, what had that cargo.

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

- Then Beaw the Shielding held the forts,  
A long while, loved king of his nation,  
(55) 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,  
(60) 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,  
(65) 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  
(70) 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,  
(75) 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.  
(80) 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,  
(85) 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,

- (90) 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,  
 (95) 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  
 (100) 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  
 (105) 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,  
 (110) 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: The Monster's Depredations (Lines 115-188)

- (115) 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  
 (120) 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,  
 (125) 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,  
 (130) 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,  
 (135) 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,
- (140) 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,
- (145) One against all, till the finest of houses  
Stood deserted. Twelve winter-tides,  
Long time, the lord of the Shieldings  
Suffered in anguish, every woe,  
Seas of sorrow. So it was known
- (150) 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
- (155) 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
- (160) 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,
- (165) 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.
- (170) 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.
- (175) 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,
- (180) 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
- (185) 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: The Geats Take Ship (Lines 189-257)

- Over those troubles Halfdane's son  
(190) 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,  
(195) 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  
(200) 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.  
(205) 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.  
(210) 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,  
(215) 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,  
(220) 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,  
(225) 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,  
(230) 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,

- (235) 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,
- (240) 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,
- (245) 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,
- (250) 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
- (255) Strangers, out of the sea, know  
My one thought: it's best to say  
And quickly, where you hail from!'

#### IV: Their Arrival on The Shore (Lines 258-319)

- Their leader, the captain of the crew,  
Answered, unlocked his word-hoard:
- (260) '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
- (265) 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.
- (270) 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,
- (275) 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
- (280) 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,  
 (285) 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.
- (290) 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,
- (295) 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
- (300) 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,
- (305) 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
- (310) 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
- (315) 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: Hrothgar's Court (Lines 320-370)

- (320) 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.
- (325) 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,
- (330) 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,  
 (335) 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.’
- (340) 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  
 (345) 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  
 (350) 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  
 (355) 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.
- (360) 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,  
 (365) 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,  
 (370) Is a powerful prince among warriors.’

#### VI: Beowulf’s Offer (Lines 371-452)

- 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  
 (375) 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,  
 (380) 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,  
 (385) 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:  
 (390) '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,  
 (395) 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  
 (400) 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,  
 (405) 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,  
 (410) 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,  
 (415) 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,  
 (420) 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,  
 (425) 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;  
 (430) 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  
 (435) 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  
 (440) 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,  
 (445) 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,  
 (450) 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: Hrothgar Replies (Lines 453-494)

- Hrothgar, Helm of the Shieldings, replied:  
 'Beowulf, my friend, you sought us out,  
 (455) 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.  
 (460) 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,  
 (465) 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.  
 (470) 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  
 (475) 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.
- (480) 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.
- (485) 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,
- (490) 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: The Sea-Monsters (Lines 495-554)

- (495) 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
- (500) 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,
- (505) 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,
- (510) 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,
- (515) 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
- (520) 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.’
- (525) 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,
- (530) 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.
- (535) 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.
- (540) 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,
- (545) 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
- (550) 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: Beowulf’s Vow (Lines 555-656)

- (555) ‘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
- (560) 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
- (565) 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.

- (570) 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,
- (575) 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,
- (580) 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.
- (585) 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,
- (590) 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,
- (595) 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
- (600) 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,
- (605) 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,
- (610) 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.
- (615) 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.
- (620) 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,  
 (625) 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,  
 (630) 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,  
 (635) 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  
 (640) 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  
 (645) 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:  
 (650) '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,  
 (655) Ware of the watcher. You'll want naught  
 If you win through this brave deed alive.'

X: Beowulf Waits for Grendel (Lines 657-704)

- Then Hrothgar, Defence of the Shieldings,  
 Left the hall, with his crowd of warriors,  
 He went to seek Wealhtheow, to bed  
 (660) 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  
 (665) 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.  
(670) 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,  
(675) 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  
(680) 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  
(685) 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  
(690) 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;  
(695) 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 –  
(700) 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: The Fight (Lines 705-784)

- (705) 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  
(710) 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.

- (715) 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
- (720) 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,
- (725) 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
- (730) 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,
- (735) 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,
- (740) 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
- (745) 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
- (750) 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;
- (755) 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
- (760) 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.
- (765) 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  
(770) 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,  
(775) 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,  
(780) 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: Beowulf's Victory (Lines 785-830)

(785) 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,  
(790) 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,  
(795) 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  
(800) 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  
(805) 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  
(810) 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,  
(815) 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,  
(820) 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,  
(825) 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  
(830) Reach of his grasp – to the gaping roof.

### XIII: The Bard's Praise (Lines 831-917)

- 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,  
(835) 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.  
(840) 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,  
(845) 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  
(850) 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.  
(855) 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,  
Galloping their red-haired horses,

- (860) 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
- (865) 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,
- (870) 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.
- (875) 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
- (880) 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,
- (885) 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
- (890) 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
- (895) 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;
- (900) 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,
- (905) 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
- (910) 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,  
(915) Stepped with his queen from her chamber,  
She with her handmaids, and a vast crowd,  
Walked, in splendour, to the mead-hall.

#### XIV: The King Speaks (Lines 918-981)

When he reached the hall, Hrothgar spoke  
From the steps, as he viewed the steep roof,  
(920) 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.  
(925) 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  
(930) 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  
(935) 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,  
(940) 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,  
(945) 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  
(950) 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,  
(955) 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  
 (960) 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;  
 (965) 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  
 (970) That mighty Fate in its wisdom decrees.  
 Less then of Unferth, the son of Ecglafr,  
 Less of his boastful speech, was heard,  
 When the Eorlingas gazed at that hand,  
 Its fiendish fingers, up by the high roof,  
 (975) 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,  
 (980) That could strike hard enough to wound  
 That demon's blood-stained battle-claw.

XV: The King's Gifts (Lines 982-1,037)

- Then the order was promptly given,  
 To set their hands to repairing Heorot;  
 A host of men and women set straight  
 (985) 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,  
 (990) 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 –  
 (995) 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  
 (1,000) 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,

- (1,005) 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.
- (1,010) 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
- (1,015) 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
- (1,020) 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
- (1,025) 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;
- (1,030) 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,
- (1,035) 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: The Bard Sings Again (Lines 1,038-1,104)

- Then to each man of the hero's company,  
 Who sat at the benches, each of those
- (1,040) 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,
- (1,045) 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,
- (1,050) 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
- (1,055) 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,
- (1,060) 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,
- (1,065) 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;
- (1,070) 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,
- (1,075) 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
- (1,080) 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;
- (1,085) 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,
- (1,090) 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 Hildeburgh ordered that her son's body
- (1,095) 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,
- (1,100) 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: Of Hengest and Finn (Lines 1,105-1,167)

- (1,105) 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;
- (1,110) 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
- (1,115) 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;
- (1,120) Of how to provoke some bitter encounter  
With those sons of the Jutes, he brooded on.  
So he did not balk at thoughts of vengeance,  
Once Hunlafing had set on his lap the finest  
Blade, a sword that shone, a light-in-battle,
- (1,125) 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,
- (1,130) 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,
- (1,135) 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;
- (1,140) 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,
- (1,145) 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,
- (1,150) 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  
 (1,155) 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,  
 (1,160) 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,  
 (1,165) Hrethric and Hrothmund, sat, with the rest  
 Of the young nobles; and the virtuous man,  
 Beowulf the Geat, sat by the two brothers.

#### XVIII: Gifts For Beowulf (Lines 1,168-1,224)

- The full cup was brought him; kind words  
 Of praise spoken; treasures of braided gold  
 (1,170) 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  
 (1,175) 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  
 (1,180) 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,  
 (1,185) 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  
 (1,190) 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.  
 (1,195) 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.
- (1,200) 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.
- (1,205) Let the thanes be as one, the nation alert,  
 Warriors who have pledged, do as I bid.<sup>7</sup>  
 She took her seat at the finest of feasts,  
 The men drank wine, ignorant of fate,  
 The gloom gathering, as it has fallen
- (1,210) 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
- (1,215) 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,
- (1,220) 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: A Second Attack (Lines 1,225-1,295)

- (1,225) 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,
- (1,230) 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,
- (1,235) 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,
- (1,240) 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,

- (1,245) 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,
- (1,250) 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
- (1,255) 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
- (1,260) 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
- (1,265) 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,
- (1,270) 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.
- (1,275) 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,
- (1,280) 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.
- (1,285) 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
- (1,290) 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
- (1,295) A pleasant night, in accord with his wishes.

XX: And Second Challenge (Lines 1,296-1,358)

- 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,  
(1,300) 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.  
(1,305) 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  
(1,310) 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,  
(1,315) 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.  
(1,320) 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  
(1,325) Clearly make out, one of the two was  
Like to 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  
(1,330) 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  
(1,335) 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,  
(1,340) 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  
 (1,345) 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,  
 (1,350) 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  
 (1,355) 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: The Mere (Lines 1,359-1,444)

- Then Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow replied:  
 (1,360) '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  
 (1,365) 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;  
 (1,370) 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.  
 (1,375) 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  
 (1,380) 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  
 (1,385) 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,

- (1,390) 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
- (1,395) 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,
- (1,400) 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,
- (1,405) 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.
- (1,410) 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
- (1,415) 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,
- (1,420) 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
- (1,425) 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,
- (1,430) 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,
- (1,435) 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
- (1,440) 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: Grendel's Dam (Lines 1,445-1,530)

- (1,445) 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  
(1,450) 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.  
(1,455) 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,  
(1,460) 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  
(1,465) 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  
(1,470) 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  
(1,475) 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,  
(1,480) 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  
(1,485) 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.
- (1,490) 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
- (1,495) 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,
- (1,500) 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,
- (1,505) 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.
- (1,510) 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
- (1,515) 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
- (1,520) 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,
- (1,525) 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
- (1,530) Things right; and Beowulf on his feet.

XXIII: Beowulf's Victory (Lines 1,531-1,571)

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



- (1,535) 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,
- (1,540) 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,
- (1,545) 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
- (1,550) 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,
- (1,555) 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,
- (1,560) 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,
- (1,565) 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,
- (1,570) In triumph. They agreed the she-wolf  
Of the deep must have destroyed him.