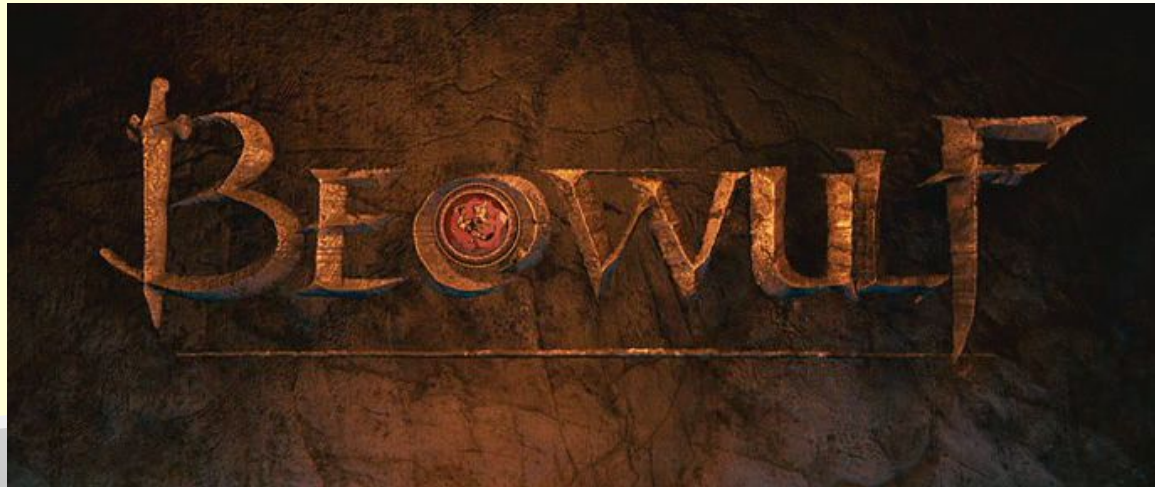


OLD ENGLISH LITERATURE



BEOWULF

Beowulf was written in Anglo-Saxon (Old English), the language which, through the centuries, has developed into the English language we know today. As Anglo-Saxon is like a foreign language even to a native speaker of English, the extracts you are going to read have been translated into modern English. The translation by Francis Gunmere (published in 1910) closely follows the original text and maintains some of its stylistic features.

BEOWULF



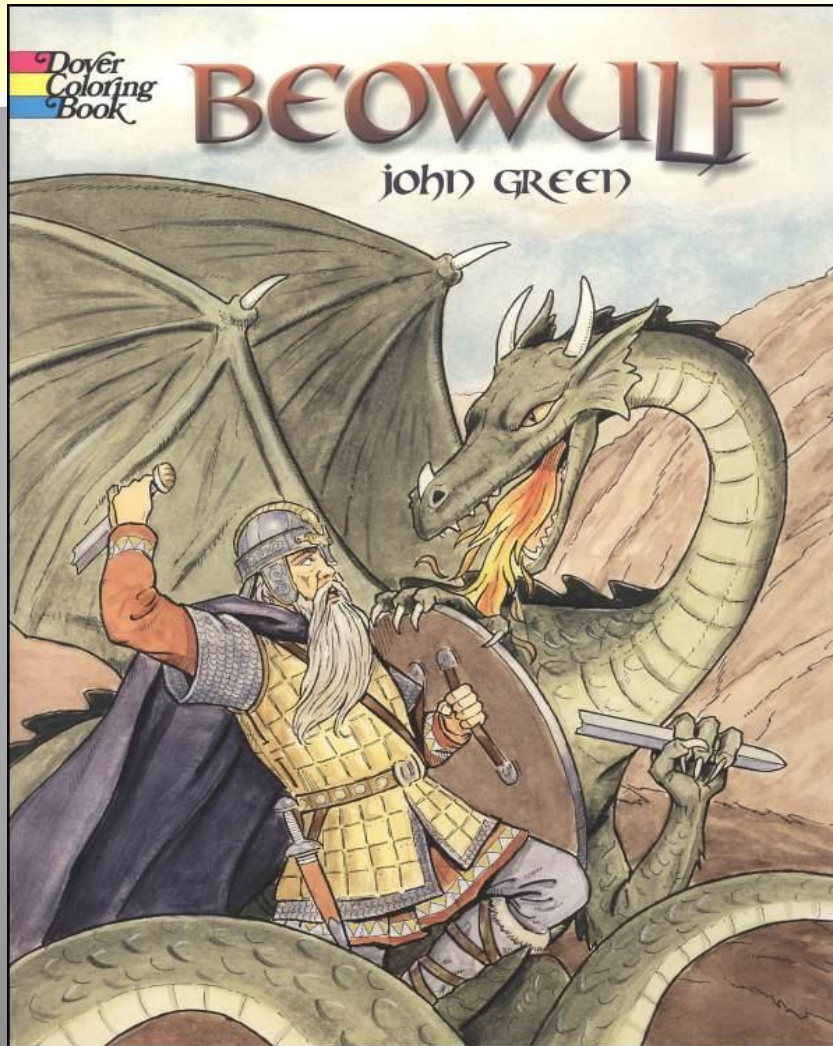
The story
Hrothgar, king of
Denmark, suffered
while his kingdom
was being attacked
by a devouring
monster, named
Grendel.

BEOWULF



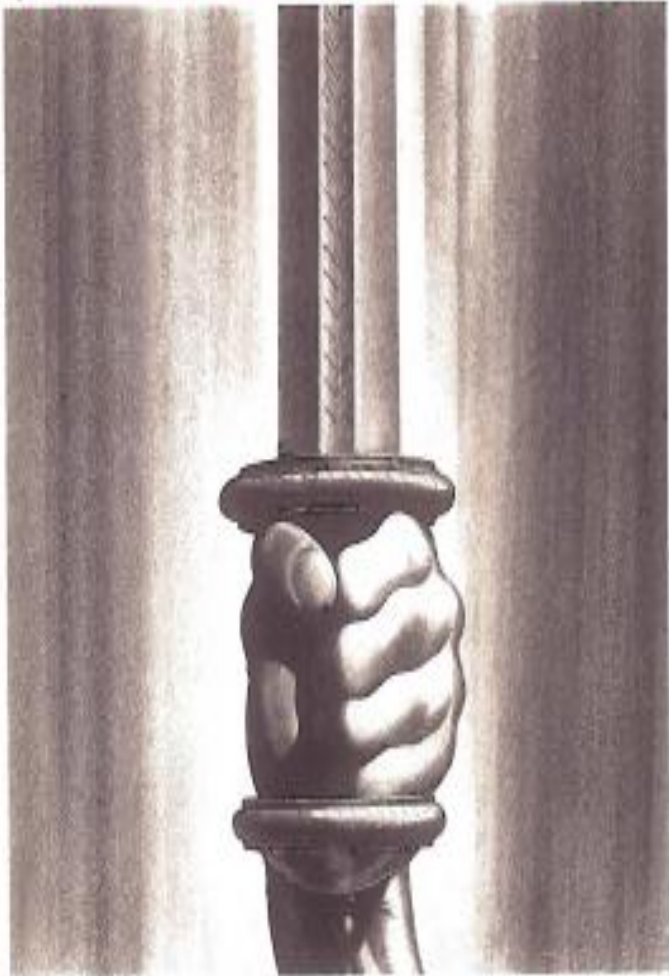
He lived in the wastelands, and every night he visited Hrothgar's hall carrying off and killing his guests.

BEOWULF



Beowulf lived in the nearby kingdom of Greatland. From a very early age he showed signs of great strength and extraordinary courage. He killed many sea monsters and defended his country from enemy attacks.

BEOWULF



When he heard from mariners of Grendel's murderous attacks, he decided to help Hrothgar. He and some of his bravest followers crossed the sea to Denmark where they were welcomed by the king.

BEOWULF



A big feast was held in their honour. That night everybody slept except Beowulf. Grendel entered Hrothgar's hall and killed one of Beowulf's sleeping men.

BEOWULF



Beowulf, unarmed, fought the monster and with his great strength tore out one of Grendel's arms at the shoulder. Mortally wounded, Grendel retreated to his home in the surrounding wastelands.

BEOWULF



Grendel's mother came to avenge her monster son's fatal injury and carried off a Danish nobleman and Grendel's torn off arm.

BEOWULF



Beowulf and his men followed the blood trail left by the arm and came to the lake where Grendel's mother had taken refuge. Beowulf plunged into the lake and swam into a chamber.

BEOWULF

He fought Grendel's mother, killing her with an old sword he found in an underwater cavern. Grendel's body was also lying in the cavern so Beowulf cut off his head and brought it back to King Hrothgar.



BEOWULF



There was a great feast in the hall to celebrate Beowulf's victory and an even greater celebration when he returned to his home country, where he was made king.