

personal english



Character #21 **BEOWULF**

Beowulf is an Old English **epic poem** of 3182 lines which we have been passed down through the **Nowell Codex**, currently housed at the British Library. It is the oldest surviving long poem in **Old English**, a language that was closer to Germanic dialects than contemporary English is. The author was an **anonymous Anglo-Saxon poet**, who lived some time between **925** and **1025 CE**. The poem is set in **Scandinavia**, where Beowulf, a warrior from Geatland (Götaland in modern Sweden), comes to the aid of **Hrothgar**, the king of the Danes, whose mead hall in Heorot has been under attack by a monster known as **Grendel**. After Beowulf kills him, **Grendel's mother** attacks the hall, but to no avail, as she is also defeated. Beowulf then returns home and later becomes king of the Geats. His kingdom is threatened by a **dragon**, and Beowulf manages to slay it, but dies shortly after the fight. Even though the setting, language and ethos characterizing this poem pertain medieval Scandinavia, the narrative strategy employed complies with **classical epic poetry** – just like the *Iliad*, *Odyssey* and *Aeneid*, the story begins **in medias res**, that is, by dropping the reader in the midst of action.



Click on the Pictures for two **VIDEOS** on Beowulf