

BEOWULF

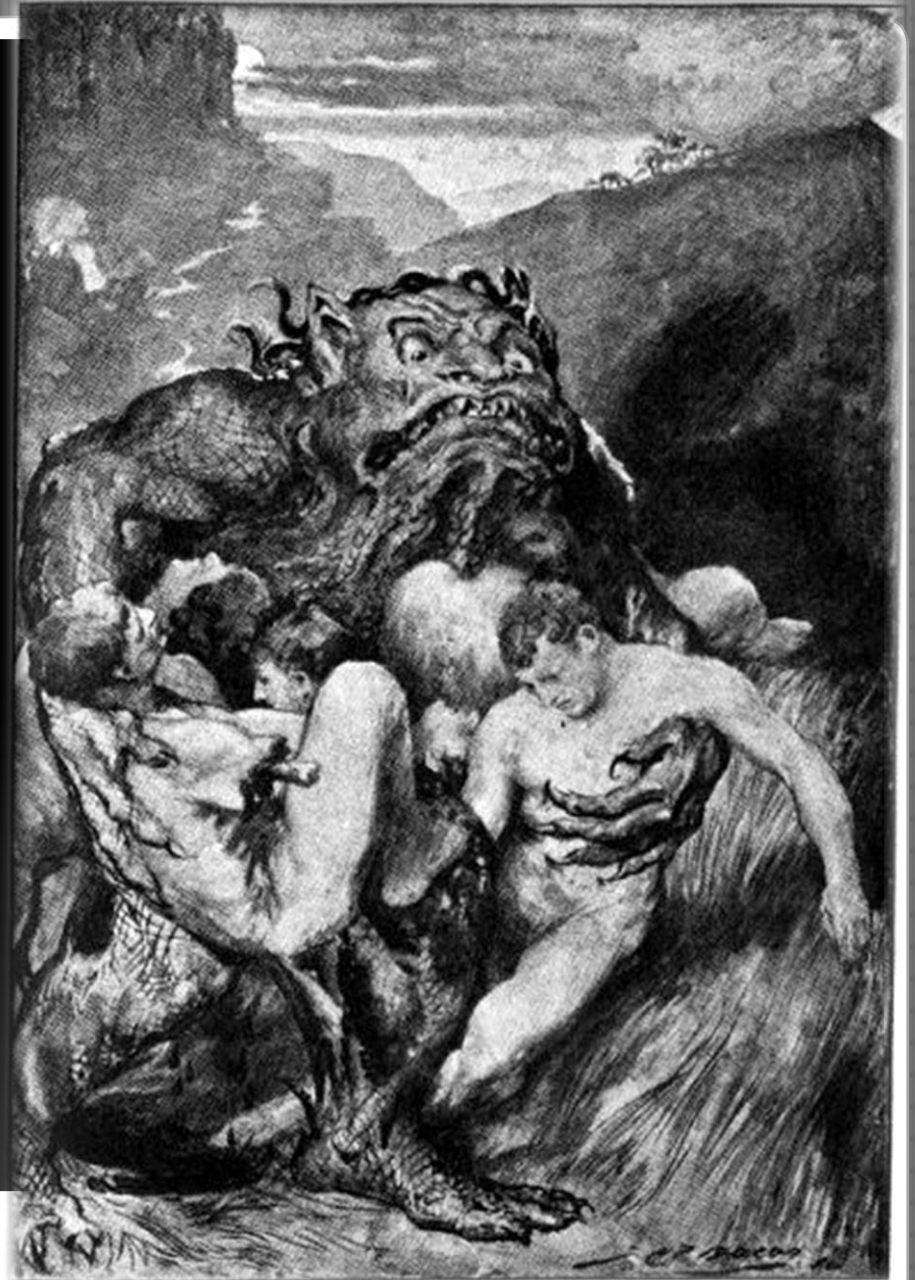


Beowulf

His Three Great Battles

- Hrothgar, the king of the Danes, builds a mead-hall named Heorot, which is invaded by the monster Grendel, a descendent of Cain. Grendel occupies it for fourteen years.

Beowulf





Cain and Abel





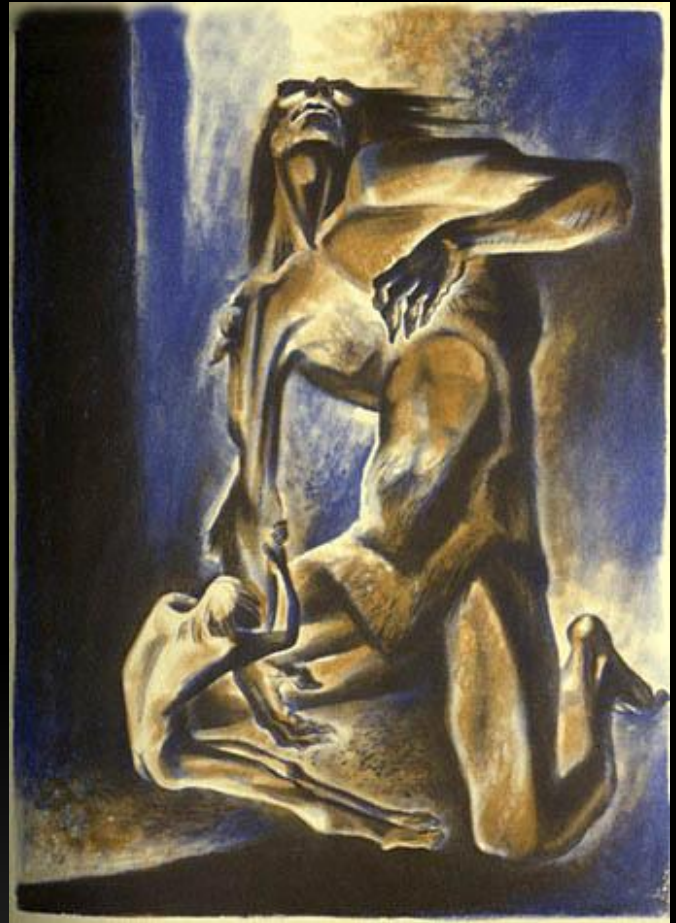
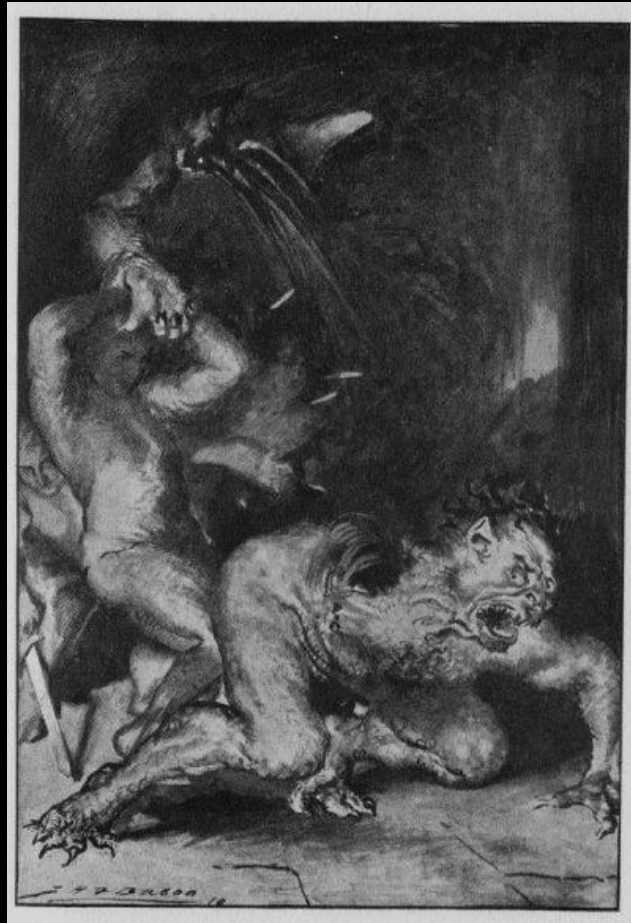
Rekonstruierte nordische Halle. Nach Valtyr Gudmundsson. Den islandske Bolig i Fristatstiden.
(Aus Olrik, Nordisches Geistesleben. Verlag von Carl Winter, Heidelberg.)

Heorot





Beowulf comes to Heorot



Beowulf fights Grendel



Grendel

Grendel attacks Herot again, killing a Geat before Beowulf engages him in battle. Since no weapons can harm Grendel, Beowulf must fight Grendel bare-handed, and the other warriors are unable to come to Beowulf's aid. Beowulf tears Grendel's arm off at the shoulder and hangs it from the rafters. Grendel escapes, though he is mortally wounded. The next morning, there is a celebration in Herot. Warriors come from far-off lands. Some of them trace Grendel's retreat to the lake, boiling with Grendel's blood. On the way back to Herot, a scop recounts the story of Beowulf's victory and also tells the stories of Siegmund and Hermod. The scop's purpose is to show that Beowulf is comparable to Siegmund, an ancient hero. Hermod, however, was a bad king who "spread sorrow" and "heaped troubles on his unhappy people's heads." The next morning, there is a celebration in Herot. Hrothgar praises Beowulf. Beowulf wishes he had been able to kill Grendel in the hall and keep the monster from escaping. Herot is cleaned, and Beowulf and his men are rewarded with treasure. The scop tells the story of the Battle of Finnsburgh. Welthow and her two sons, Hrethic and Hrothmund, pay homage to Beowulf. Once again, the hall settles to sleep.



Grendel's Arm



Grendel's Mother



Grendel's Head

Grendel's Mother

Grendel's mother comes to Herot to avenge Grendel. She escapes, taking Esher, Hrothgar's trusted lieutenant. Hrothgar laments the loss of Esher, along with the other sorrows Grendel and his mother have inflicted on Herot. He asks again for Beowulf's help. Beowulf agrees to avenge Esher. Hrothgar leads Beowulf and his own men to the bloody lake, the abode of Grendel and his mother. The men discover Esher's head on a cliff above the lake. Unferth gives Beowulf his sword, Hrunting, and Beowulf dives into the lake to attack Grendel's mother. After swimming for hours, he finds her. Like Grendel, she is impervious to weapons—Hrunting is useless. In the heat of battle, he finds a magic sword hanging on the wall and kills Grendel's mother with it. He then finds Grendel's body and severs the monster's head. When the men onshore see blood rise to the surface of the lake, they assume Beowulf has been killed, and the Danes return to Herot. The Geats wait sadly, believing the worst. Beowulf's magic sword melts, but he returns to shore with the hilt and Grendel's head, leaving behind massive amounts of treasure. Beowulf and the Geats take their "terrible trophy" to Herot. Beowulf offers the magic sword's hilt to Hrothgar, who warns Beowulf against pride and selfishness. Beowulf and his men prepare to return home.



Beowulf and the Dragon



Beowulf's Death

The Dragon and Beowulf's Death

Beowulf gains the crown of Geatland after the deaths of Higlac and Herdred. He has been a good and generous king for 50 years when a thief rouses a sleeping dragon by taking a gem-studded cup. Unable to find the thief, the dragon vows revenge and destroys Geatland. Beowulf blames himself for the tragedy, thinking he must have somehow broken God's law. He prepares to go to battle against the dragon, recalling his past successes for motivation. He sets out to fight the dragon alone and is followed by a group of his men. During the battle, Beowulf's shield is melted and his sword is broken. The rest of his men flee, but Wiglaf comes to Beowulf's aid and slays the dragon. Beowulf dies in battle, and Wiglaf admonishes the Geats for their desertion of Beowulf. In honor of their king, the Geats build a pyre for Beowulf.

Summary comes from *Beowulf: A Teacher's Guide*, by Dana Huff.