

# Year 5 Autumn 1 English Knowledge Organiser: Beowulf



## Blurb

Hear and listen well, and I will tell you a tale that has been told for a thousand years and more. It may be an old story, yet it troubles and terrifies us as much now as it ever did, for we still fear the evil that stalks out there in the darkness beyond.

## Key information

**Plot:** In fifth-century Denmark, a murderous monster stalks the night, and only the prince of the Geats has the strength and courage to defeat him. Beowulf's terrifying quest to defeat Grendel, the foul fiend, a hideous sea-hag and a monstrous fire dragon is the oldest surviving epic in British literature.

**Themes:** legends, war, heroes, fulfilling a destiny, love, loyalty, and right from wrong.

## Key characters

Beowulf	The hero-prince of the Geats.
Grendel	The beast who wanders among the Great Thanes of Denmark.
Sea-hag	Grendel's mum.
King Hrothgar	King of the Danes.
The Death-Dragon	The third battle is against this dragon.

## Author voice

"I spend months, often years, doing what I call dreamtime, weaving it together inside my head. But when I feel that egg of the story is ready to hatch then I can write it in three months."

## Key vocabulary

adorned	Make more beautiful or attractive
ancestors	A person, typically one more remote than a grandparent, from whom one is descended
condemn	Sentence (someone) to particular punishment
enthralled	Capture the fascinated attention of
hideous	Extremely ugly or unpleasant
lamented	Conventional way of describing someone who has died or cease to exist
grapple	Engage in a close fight or struggle
prospered	Flourish physically; grow strong and healthy
teeming	Be full of or swarming with

## Key quotes

"Kind, to gaze in triumph at his gory head. So, remembering all this, let us all rejoice and feast together tonight. And in the morning I shall give you all your promised treasure."

## Discussion points

What motivated Beowulf?  
Should we call Beowulf a king or a hero?  
Why is this poem important to our heritage?