

Beowulf 1321-96

Translation policy:

With this verse translation I have tried to stay as close to the original tone as far as possible. I have attempted to preserve the structure of compounds and keep the original word order and grammar, if applicable to Modern English.

However I took **great** liberty in applying punctuation, omitting words, such as *ond* or *þa*, and changing occasionally singular nouns into their plural form.

Additionally I have tried to convey the rhythm and form of a poem, by creating stanzas and repeating particular sentences several times.

Above all I intended to represent the extract in a dual nature. As a result I have organised the poem in two columns, which means that one can **either** read the poem in the original order, by reading down first of all the left column on all three pages and then start on the first page again reading the right column, **or** in the light of a dialogue, by reading the stanzas of both columns alternately, as they appear on each page.

Translations consulted:

Alexander, Michael (ed.), *Beowulf* (London: Penguin Books, 1995).

Alexander, Michael, *Beowulf: A Verse Translation* (London: Penguin Books, 1973).

Crossley-Holland, Kevin, *Beowulf* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

Hall, Clark, J., R., *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary, fourth edition* (Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

Jack, George (ed.), *Beowulf: A Student Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

Hrothgar,
the Scyldings' protector,
spoke:

Do not ask about our wellbeing.
Sorrow has returned to the Danish people
Aeschere is dead!

Yrmenlaf's elder brother,
my closest counsellor,
my adviser,
my close comrade,
when we defended our heads in battle,
when bands clashed,
striking the boar-figure.
What a warrior should be,
what an ever excellent nobleman should be,
all that was Aeschere!
Aeschere is dead!

A wandering,
deadly spirit was his slayer by hand in Heorot.
I do not know whither the terrible thing
glorying in her prey,
glad for her feast,
undertook the return journey.
She avenged the hostile deed,
in which you killed Grendel last night,
in a violent manner with a hard grasp,
since he diminished and injured my people for far too long.
Aeschere is dead!

He fell at war,
forfeited his life
and now another mighty wicked ravager has come,
who intends to avenge her kinsman,
and has gone far
in taking vengeance for that hostile deed,

Beowulf,
Ecgetheow's son,
spoke:

Do not grieve wise man.

Do not grieve wise man,
it is better for each man
to avenge his friend
than to mourn him greatly.

Do not grieve wise man.
Everyone shall experience
the end of worldly lives.

(as it may seem to many thanes,
 who weep in their heart for their treasure giver),
 bitter grief of mind,
 which served you well in all your desires.
Aeschere is dead!

Do not grieve wise man.
 Let him, who may
 achieve glory before his death,
 that is the finest thing thereafter
 for a lifeless man.

I heard the country dwellers say,
 my people, the hall counsellors,
 that they saw two such beings,
 great border walkers,
 occupying the moors,
alien beings!

The one was a likeness of a woman,
 as they were able to make out most certainly.
 The other miserable creature,
 that trod the paths of exile,
 was in the shape of a man,
 except that he was greater in height
 than any other man
 and whom the land-dwellers called Grendel.
 They did not know of any father
 nor whether any such mysterious being
 had been born before him.
Alien beings!

Arise, guardian of the kingdom,
 and let us quickly go
 and look for the trail
 of Grendel's kinswoman.

They occupied a secret land,
 wolf-inhabited slopes,
 windy headlands,
 dangerous fen-path,
 where a mountain stream
 plunges under the misty cliffs,
 a flood under the earth.
This is not a pleasant place!

It is not far from here,
 measured in miles,
 where that lake stands,
 over which hang frost covered groves,
 the trees fixed with their roots
 overshadow the water.

This is not a pleasant place!

There every night a horrible wonder
 may be seen,
 fire on water.
 Among the children of men
 no one alive
 is as wise as to know the bottom of it.
This is not a pleasant place!

Although the heath-stalker,
 the stag with strong horns,
 will seek the forest,
 when he is pressed by hounds,
 pursued from afar,
 he would rather give up his life,
 his life on the brink,
 than hide his head in there.
This is not a pleasant place!

From there, when the wind stirs up,
 surging waves rise up dark to the clouds
 to a hostile storm,
 until the air becomes misty,
 the sky weeps.
This is not a pleasant place!

Now on you alone our help depends.
 Yet you do not know the region,
 the dangerous place,
 where you might find the sinful warrior.
Seek if you dare!

Then, if you come back,
 I will reward the feud with wealth,
 ancient treasure,
 twisted gold,
 as I did before.
Seek if you dare!

I promise you that she will not
 escape by hiding,
 neither in the bosom of the earth
 nor in mountain woods,
 nor on the bottom of the sea,
 go where she will.

This day have patience
 with all your woes,
 as I expect of you.