

Excerpt 2: Beowulf—From Lesson 1

Beowulf **spake** is (his **burnie** did glisten,
His armor seamed over by the art of the craftsman):
“Hail thou, Hrothgar! I am Higelac’s kinsman
And vassal **forsooth**; many a wonder
I dared as a **stripling**. The doings of Grendel,
In far-off fatherland I fully did know of:
Sea-farers tell us, this hall-building standeth,
Excellent **edifice**, empty and useless
To all the earlmen after evenlight’s glimmer
'Neath heaven’s bright hues hath hidden its glory.
This my earls then urged me, the most excellent of them,
Carles very clever, to come and assist thee,
Folk-leader Hrothgar; fully they knew of
The strength of my body. Themselves they beheld me
When I came from the contest, when covered with gore
Foes I escaped from, where five I had bound,
The giant-race wasted, in the waters destroying
The **nickers** by night, bore numberless sorrows,
The **Wedger avenged**
Enemies ravaged; alone now with Grendel
I shall manage the matter, with the monster of evil,
The giant, decide it. Thee I would therefore
Beg of thy **bounty**, Bright-Danish chieftain,
Lord of the Scyldings, this single petition:
Not to refuse me, defender of warriors,
Friend-lord of folks, so far have I sought thee,
That I may unaided, my earlmen assisting me,
This brave-mooded war-band, **purify Heorot**.
I have heard on inquiry, the **horrible creature**
From **veriest rashness recks not for weapons**;
I this do **scorn**, so be Higelac gracious,
My liegelord beloved, **lenient** of spirit,
To bear a blade or a broad-fashioned target,
A shield to the onset; only with hand-grip
I, too, shall disdain to use any.
The foe I must **grapple**, fight for my life then,
Foeman with foeman; he fain must rely on
The doom of the Lord whom death layeth hold of.
I ween he will wish, **If he win in the struggle,**
To eat in the war-hall earls of the Geat-folk,
Boldly to swallow them, as of yore he did often
The best of the Hrethmen!