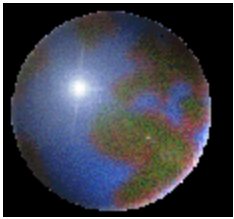


# *The Anglo-Saxons: 449–1066*

The Anglo-Saxon  
Period 449-1066

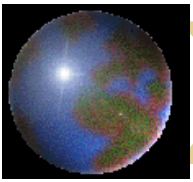




## *Anglo-Saxon Period*

“Anglo-Saxon England was born of warfare, remained forever a military society, and came to its end in battle.” - J. R. Lander

In a society dominated by aggression, what would you expect to be the Anglo-Saxon attitude toward family life, the role of women, art, literature, ethics and work?



# *The Anglo-Saxons: 449–1066*

**300s B.C.**

Celts in Britain

**55 B.C.–A.D. 409**

Roman Occupation

**A.D. 449**

Anglo-Saxon  
Invasion

**A.D. 878**

King Alfred  
against  
the Danes

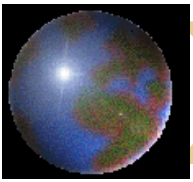
**A.D. 1066**

Norman  
Invasion



**A.D. 400–699**

Spread of Christianity



# *Celtic Invasions*

Around 500 BC two groups of Celts invaded British Isles

Brythons (Britons) settled island of Britain

Gaels settled on Ireland

Picts settled in Scotland

Organized into clans; loyal to chieftain

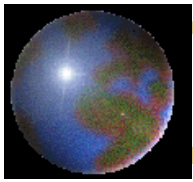
Religion – **animism** (from Latin for “spirit”)

Believed spirits controlled every aspect of life

Druids – priests who settled arguments, presided over religious rituals, and memorized and recited poems about past

Conquered by Romans in the first century A.D. and became part of the Roman Empire.

Druids thought that the soul was immortal, passing in death from death from one person to another. Considered mistletoe and oak trees sacred and generally held their rites in old oak forests.



# Roman Invasions



Roman  
Helmet

World Heritage Site



55 BC Julius Caesar invaded Britain

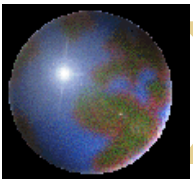
43 AD Emperor Claudius invaded; marks beginning of Roman Britain

Began to Christianize the Celts; Celtic religion vanished

Controlled world from Hadrian's Wall to Arabia





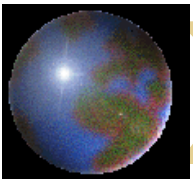


## *Roman Invasions: What legacy did the Romans leave?*

System of roads/highways – height of the empire, one could travel on post roads and use same currency from Northumbria to Middle East; not possible since

Provided an organized society which kept other invaders out for several centuries

410 Rome threatened and Romans pulled out of Britain



# *Germanic Invasions - 449*

Angles/Saxons from  
Germany

Angles, Saxons, and Jutes

Jutes from Denmark

Deep sea fishermen and farmers

Britons no match, but didn't go quietly

Pushed west to Wales

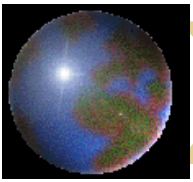
King Arthur was probably a Celtic chieftain  
named Arturius

Language

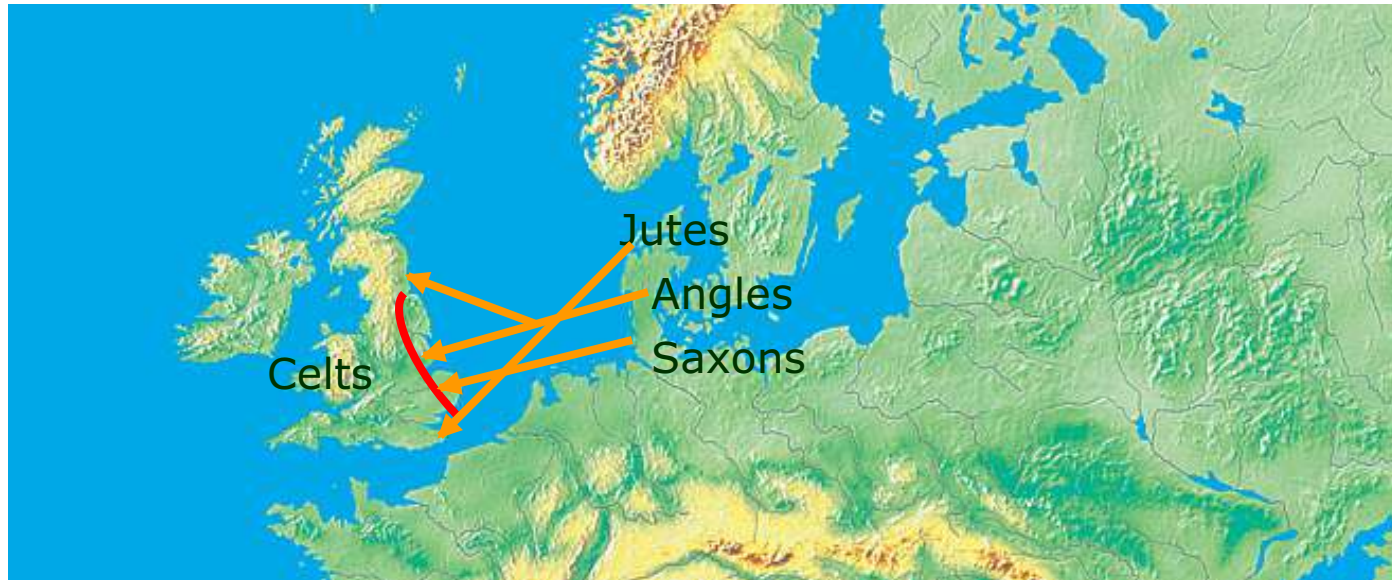
Common language now known as Old

English (similar to Dutch and German)

Religion – pagan – similar to Norse mythology

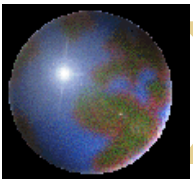


# *The Anglo-Saxon Invasion*



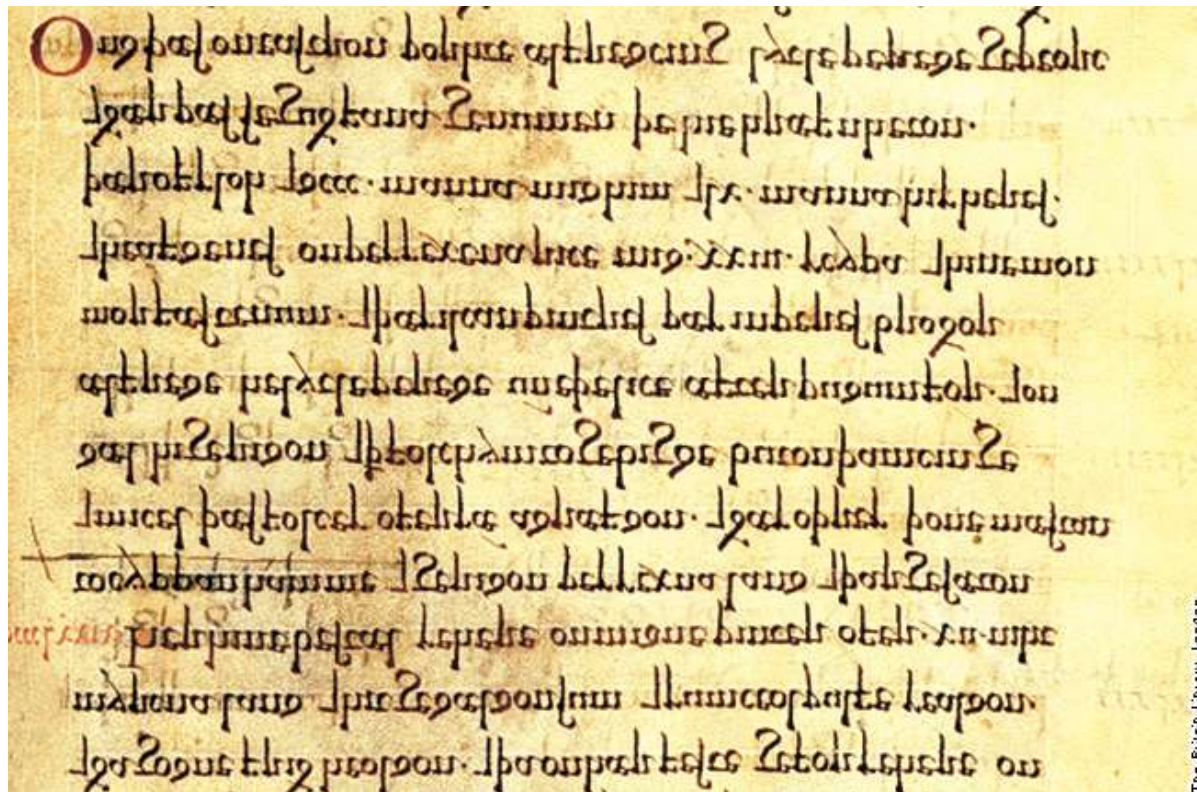
**A.D. 449** The Anglo-Saxons push the Celts into the far west of the country.





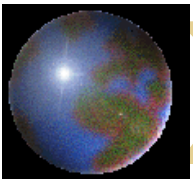
# The Anglo-Saxon Invasion

## Page from Anglo-Saxon Chronicle



The British Library, London.

Old English

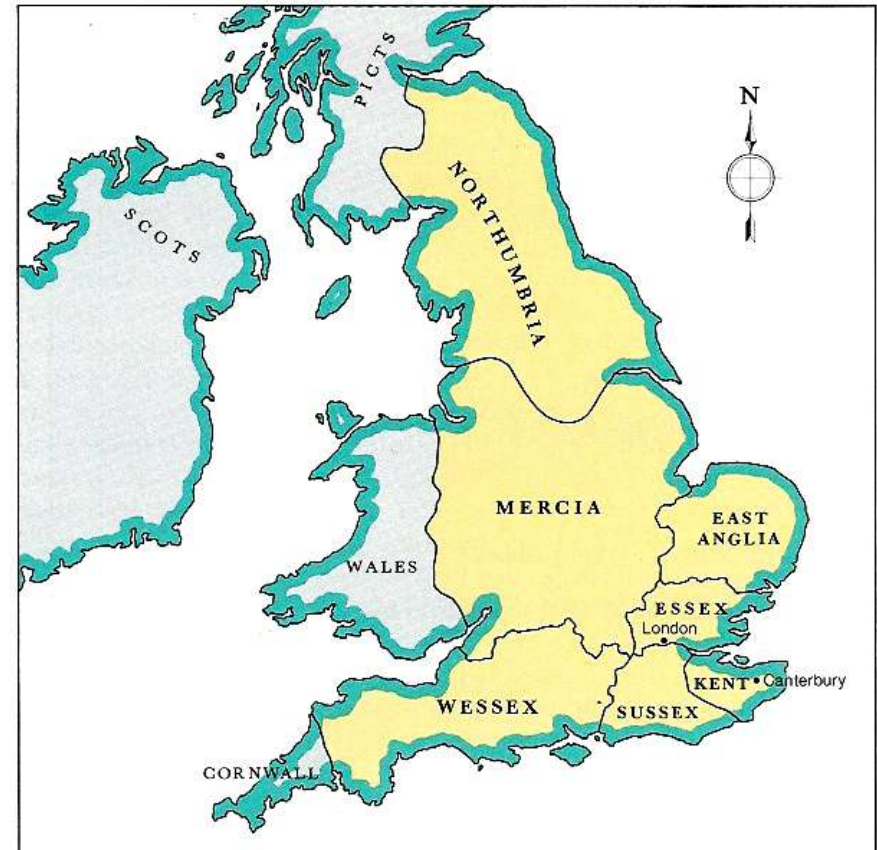


# *Germanic Invasions - 449*

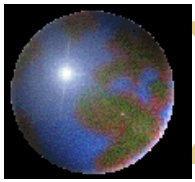
Created the Anglo-Saxon England ("Engla land") that lasted until 1066

Divided into separate kingdoms: Kent, Northumbria, Mercia and Wessex most important

United themselves in last two centuries to resist invasions from Vikings, or Norsemen (whom they called Danes).



Seven kingdoms of Anglo-Saxon Period:  
Northumbria, Mercia, Wessex, East Anglia, Essex,  
Sussex, and Kent

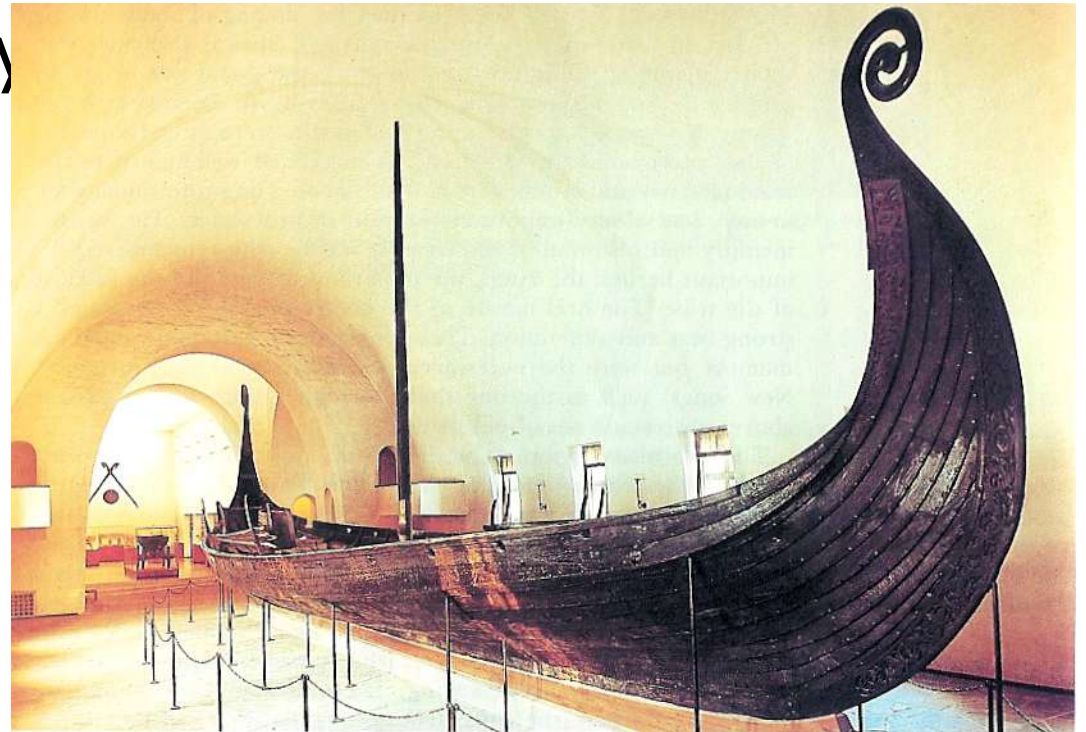


# *Viking Invasions 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Centuries*

Invaders from Norway  
and Denmark

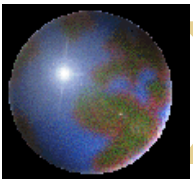
Anglo-Saxons  
unprepared for  
ferocity of Vikings

Common prayer:  
“From the furor of  
the Norsemen, Oh  
Lord protect us.”



Viking Ship, known as the Oseberg  
Ship, dates 825 AD.





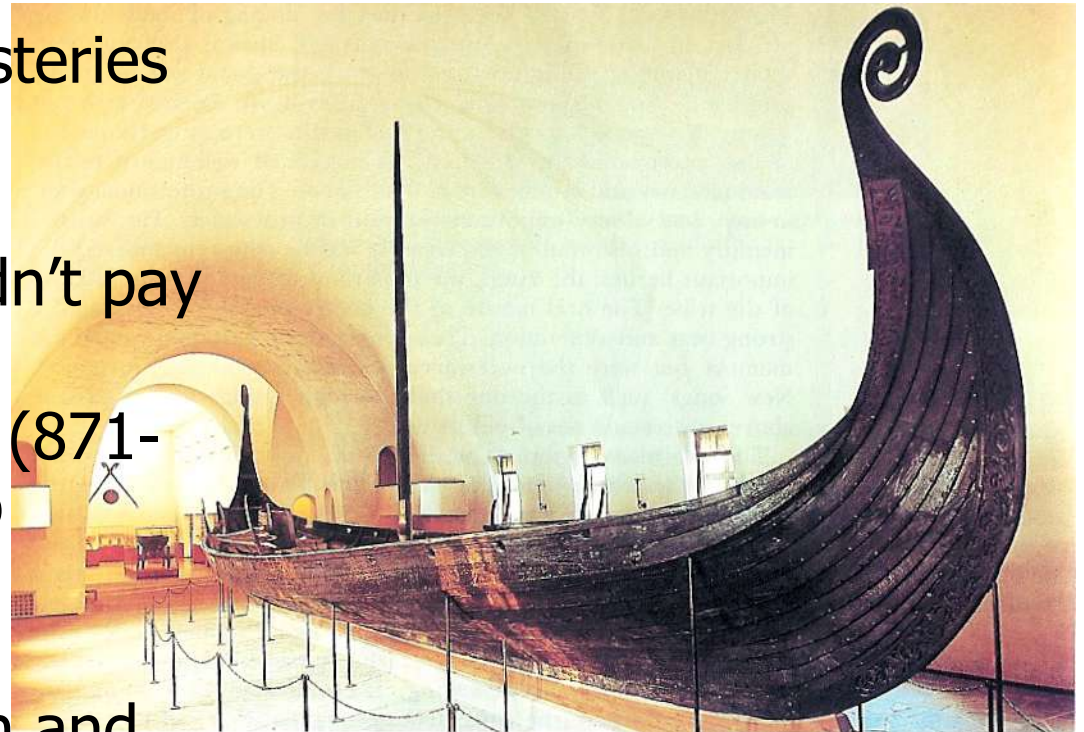
# *Viking Invasions 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Centuries*

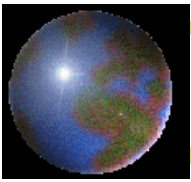
Vikings destroyed monasteries  
and sacred objects

Slaughtered everyone in  
settlements that couldn't pay  
enough to them

King Alfred of Wessex (871-  
899) forced Vikings to  
northern England

Danelaw – dividing line  
between Viking Britain and  
Anglo-Saxon Britain





# *Anglo-Saxon Literature*

Oral tradition – poems and song committed to memory  
and performed by scop, bards, gleemen, or minstrels  
With coming of Christian Church, written literature began  
to evolve

Two important traditions in literature

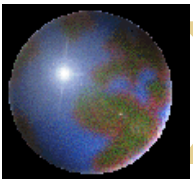
heroic tradition – celebrates heroes

elegiac tradition – passing of earlier, better  
times

\*\*\*Why were scop so important?

- The Anglo-Saxons didn't believe in afterlife
- Warriors gained immortality through songs





# *Anglo-Saxon Civilization*

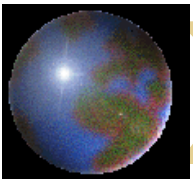
Common language

Shared a heroic ideal; set of traditional heroes

Admired men of outstanding courage

Loyalty to leader and tribe

Fierce personal valor



## *Anglo-Saxon Civilization*

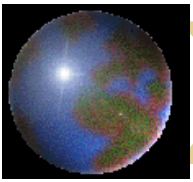
Persons of rank received with grave courtesy

Ruler generous to those who remain loyal

Everyone aware of shortness of life & passing of all things in the world

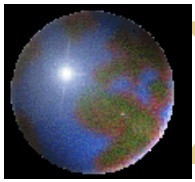
Impersonal, irresistible fate determined most of life (Wyrd or Fate)

Heroic human will & courage allowed individuals to control their own response to fate



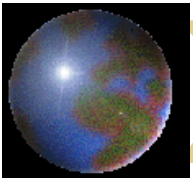
## *Anglo-Saxon Literature*

***Beowulf*** – one of few pieces that survived. Priests and monks were the only ones who could write; stories survival depended upon them. The church was not too eager to preserve literature that was pagan in nature, so historians believe they either ignored it or changed it. This may account for the mixture of Christian and pagan elements in *Beowulf*.



# Why Study *Beowulf*?

1. *Beowulf* is the oldest poem in the English language, so everything written since *Beowulf* stems from it in some way
2. The story of *Beowulf* encompasses common themes that we still see in English literature today
3. *Beowulf* is simply good writing...



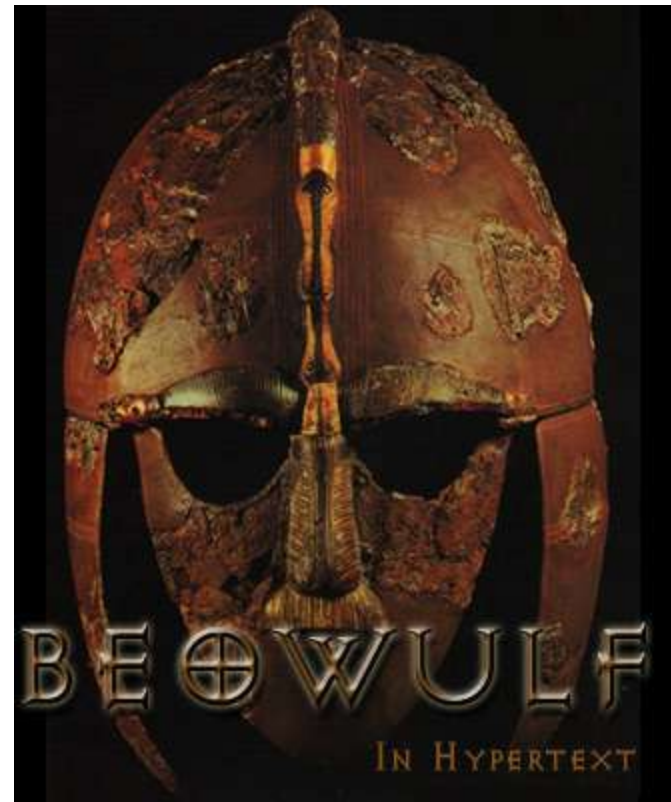
# Anglo-Saxon Literature

*Beowulf*: England:: *Iliad* and  
*Odyssey* : Greece

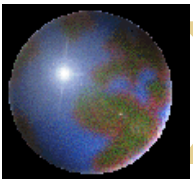
Oral art – handed down with  
changes and  
embellishments

Composed in Old English  
probably in Northumbria in  
northeast England  
sometime between 700-750

Depicts a world from the early  
6<sup>th</sup> century





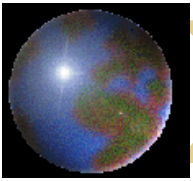


# *Anglo-Saxon Literature*

Poem based on early Celtic and Scandinavian folk legends

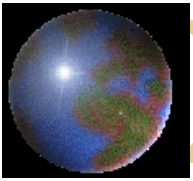
Scenery described is from Northumbria; assumed that poet was Northumbrian monk

Only manuscript available dates from the year 1000; discovered in the 18<sup>th</sup> century



## *More about Beowulf*

- Epic poem, written between 700 and 750
- Beowulf is the epic hero
- Is believed to be written by monks because of the religious references



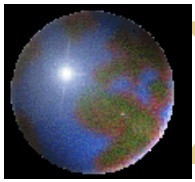
# *Beowulf's* Provenance

What we **don't** know:

➤ who wrote it

➤ when exactly it was written

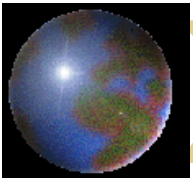
➤ how much, exactly, is  
based on historical truth



# ***Beowulf's* Provenance**

What we **do** know:

- **Beowulf is the oldest surviving English poem. It's written in Old English (or Anglo-Saxon), which is the basis for the language we speak today.**
- **Some of the characters in the poem actually existed.**
- **The only copy of the manuscript was written sometime around the 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D. (1000's)...**



# ***Beowulf's* Provenance**

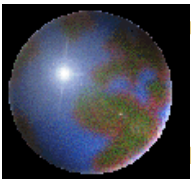
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**So why wasn't it written  
down in the first place?**

**This story was probably passed down orally for centuries before it was first written down.**

**It wasn't until after the Norman Invasion (1066) that writing stories down became common in this part of the world.**



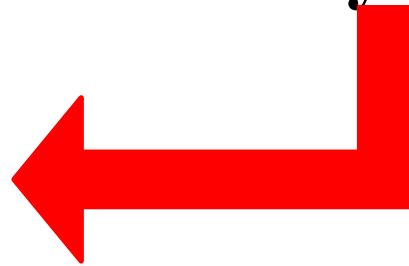


# Beowulf's Provenance

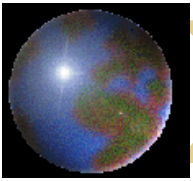
So what's happened to the manuscript since the 11<sup>th</sup> century?



Eventually, it ended up in the library of this guy.



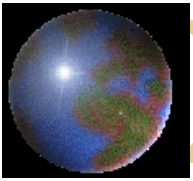
Robert Cotton (1571-1631)



# **Beowulf's Provenance**

**Unfortunately, Cotton's library burned in 1731. Many manuscripts were entirely destroyed. *Beowulf* was partially damaged.**

**The manuscript is now preserved and carefully cared for in the British Museum.**



# *Characteristics of Epic Hero*

Is significant and glorified

Is on a quest

Has superior or superhuman strength, intelligence,  
and/or courage

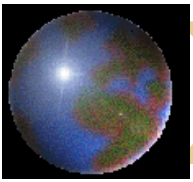
Is ethical

Risks death for glory or for the greater good of society

Performs brave deeds

Is a strong, great and responsible leader

Reflects the ideals of a particular society



# *Beowulf*

*Literary Focus: The Epic Hero*

Beowulf is one of ancient England's heroes.

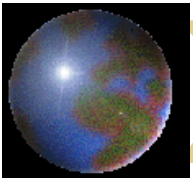
Other times and other cultures have had other heroes....



King Arthur



Joan of Arc

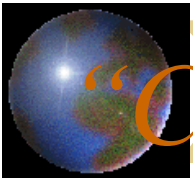


# *Beowulf*

*Literary Hero: The Epic Hero*  
In modern America, the hero may be a real person or a fictional character....

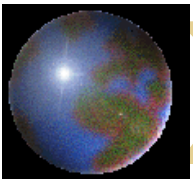






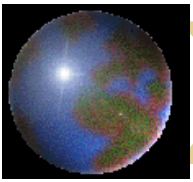
# *“Craig’s List” Top Picks ...*





## *Characteristics of an Epic Poem*

- Hero is a great leader
- The setting is broad and includes supernatural realms
- The hero does great deeds in battle or undertakes an extraordinary journey or quest...



# *Old English Poetics*

Alliteration – repetition of consonant and vowel sounds at the beginning of words

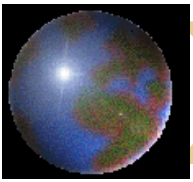
Caesura – a natural pause or break in the middle of the line of poetry and joined by the use of a repeated vowel or consonant sound

*Out of the marsh // from the foot of misty*

*Hills and bogs // bearing God's hatred*

*Grendel came // hoping to kill*

*Anyone he could trap // on this trip to  
high Herot*



# *Old English Poetics*

Kennings – a metaphorical phrase used to replace a concrete noun. Ready made descriptive compound words that evoke vivid images

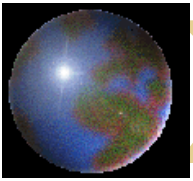
Kennings are formed by  
prepositional phrases  
possessive phrases  
compound words

Preposition phrase – Giver of knowledge

Possessive phrase – mankind's enemy

Compound word – sea path





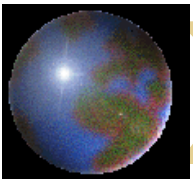
# Some terms you'll want to know



*scop*

**A bard or story-teller.**

**The scop was responsible for praising deeds of past heroes, for recording history, and for providing entertainment**



# Some terms you'll want to know



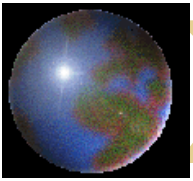
*thane*

**A warrior**

*mead-hall*

**The large hall where the lord and his warriors slept, ate, held ceremonies, etc.**



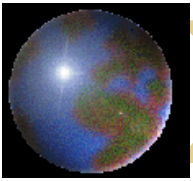


# Some terms you'll want to know



*wyrd*

**Fate. This idea crops up a lot in the poem, while at the same time there are Christian references to God's will.**



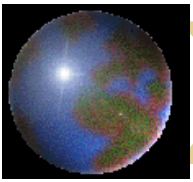
# Some terms you'll want to know

*epic*



*Beowulf* is an epic poem.

This means it has a larger-than life hero and the conflict is of universal importance. There's a certain seriousness that accompanies most epics.

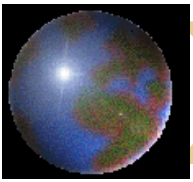


# Some terms you'll want to know



## *elegy*

**An elegy is a poem that is sad or mournful. The adjective is *elegiac*.**



# Themes and Important Aspects

⑩ **Good vs. Evil**

⑩ **Religion: Christian and Pagan influences**

⑩ **The importance of wealth and treasure**

⑩ **The importance of the sea and sailing**

⑩ **The sanctity of the home**

⑩ **Fate**

⑩ **Loyalty and allegiance**

⑩ **Heroism and heroic deeds**