

Monday, December 9th

- Do now: In your notebooks, answer the following prompt.
- What is a hero? Explain your definition and give examples.
- What is courage? How would most people today define courage?

Alliteration

- Repeating the beginning sound in a phrase
- Ex. Match my might against the monster

Anglo-Saxons

- A member of one of the Germanic peoples, the Angles, the Saxons, and the Jutes, who settled in Britain in the fifth and sixth centuries.

Assonance

- Words with similar vowel sounds creating internal rhyming
- Ex: Round about

Athelings

- A prince or lord in Anglo-Saxon England

Battle of Hastings & Norman Conquest

- The battle in which William the Conqueror, also known as the Duke of Normandy, defeated the Saxons under Harold II leaving England vulnerable for the Norman Conquest, which was the 11th-century invasion and occupation of England by an army of Norman, Breton, and French soldiers led by Duke William II.
- It largely removed the native ruling class, replacing it with a foreign, French-speaking monarchy, aristocracy, and clerical hierarchy. This, in turn, brought about a transformation of the English language and the culture of England.
- Had a huge impact on the people and their culture, the country and the world, ultimately deciding the future of the English language.

Caesura

- A pause marking a rhythmic point of division in a melody
- Ex: “Oft to the wanderer
–Weary of exile”

Comitatus

- A bond between a king and a warrior based on the king's rewards and the warrior's loyalty

Epic Hero/Poem

- Epic hero is the brave, noble warrior in an epic poem
- Epic poem usually very, very loooooong
- Usually developed orally (word-of-mouth)
 - Scop – an Old English poet or bard
- Celebrates the deeds of a hero (usually a man)
- Captures the culture and the religious values of the people

Epic Poem

- Early epics were sung for many years before being written down
- The heroes were always energetic, healthy minded young men who were brave and did things for glory.. Not reward
- Often neglects historical fact (because it is based on myth and custom)
- Composed of events in everyday life, but exaggerates the mystery and romance

Two Important Factors in an Epic

- The hero battles forces that threaten his world (like unknown beasts or invaders)
- It is told in a serious way, with elevated (or poetic) language
 - Kenning – two words that renames a person, place or thing
 - Caesura – rhythmic breaks

Fen

- A boggy wetland or marsh

Gable

- A decorative triangular-shaped roofing structure

Gorge

- To gorge is to eat greedily

Haste

- To make haste is to move swiftly or quickly

Hoard

- A hoard is a collection of valuables, sometimes buried in the ground (hidden)

Hoary

- Gray or white with age

Kenning

- A phrase replacing the name of a person, place or thing
- Ex: Giver of Rings, Whale's Home,

Linden

- A soft, light wood

Mead

- An alcoholic drink of fermented honey and water

Metaphor

- A direct comparison
- Asserts that a subject is on some point of comparison the same as another otherwise unrelated object
- Ex:

Middle English

- English between the late 12th – 15th centuries

Moor

- A heath or tract of uncultivated land

Mooring

- Securing a ship

Motif

- A recurring thematic element in a literary work

Norman Conquest

- The Norman conquest of England was the 11th-century invasion and occupation of England by an army of Norman, Breton, and French soldiers led by Duke William I of Normandy, later William the Conqueror.
- It largely removed the native ruling class, replacing it with a foreign, French-speaking monarchy, aristocracy, and clerical hierarchy. This, in turn, brought about a transformation of the English language and the culture of England.

Old English

- English language from middle of the 5th century to the beginning of the 12th century

Onomatopoeia

- The formation or use of words such as *buzz* or *murmur* that imitate the sounds associated with the objects or actions they refer to.
- Ex: Crunch the bones

Personification

- A figure of speech in which inanimate objects or abstractions are endowed with human qualities or are represented as possessing human form
- Ex: The tree limbs danced in the wind.

Pyre

- A bonfire for burning a dead body

Runic

- Consisting or set down in an ancient alphabet used for writing Germanic script, especially in Germanic languages, most often of Scandinavia and Britain from about the 3rd to 13th centuries.

Scabbard

- A sheath for a sword

Scop

- Composers and storytellers of Anglo-Saxon poetry

Scruples

- Morals or ethical considerations that restrain one's behavior and inhibits certain actions

Sentinel

- A person or thing that stands watch

Simile

- A comparison using “like” or “as”
- Ex: She is as fast as a cheetah

Sinews

- Tendons

Skulk

- To move stealthily

Solace

- To console or cheer

Symbol

- Something that represents an abstract idea

Talons

- Claws

Thane

- An Anglo-Saxon lord, usually a high ranking warrior

Theme

- The central idea(s) of a literary work

Vexed

- To be irritated or annoyed

Wergild

- A fine paid to the relatives of a murdered person to free the offender from further obligations or punishment

Wyrd

- A concept in Anglo-Saxon culture roughly corresponding to fate or personal destiny.

“Beowulf” Author

- Very little is known about the author
 - Male
 - Educated
 - Upper Class
 - Anglo-Saxon / Christian

“Beowulf” Info

- Poem was composed (created) in the 8th century
 - Although it is English in language and origin, the poem does not deal with Englishmen, but their Germanic ancestors (Danes & Geats)
 - The Danes are from Denmark & the Geats are from modern day Sweden.
- Some of the original poem was destroyed in the Ashburnham House Fire, causing a number of lines to be lost forever (1731)
- The poem is circular in that it starts out with a young warrior, he grows old, another young warrior saves the day, etc. (comes full circle)

“Beowulf” Themes

- Good vs. Evil
- Identity
- Strength and Skill
- Wealth
- Religion
- Violence
- Courage
- Mortality
- The Supernatural
- Traditions and Customs

“Beowulf” Motifs & Symbols

Motifs

- Monsters
- The Oral Tradition
- The Mead Hall

Symbols

- The Golden Torque (Rewards)
- The Banquet (Celebration)

“Beowulf” Info

- Beowulf’s people are the Geats
- Hrothgar’s people are the Danes
- Beowulf reigned as king for 50 years
- According to legend, Beowulf died at the age of 90 years old
- “Beowulf” takes place in Scandinavia

Anglo-Saxon Life

- Life was one of relentless hardship
- Life consisted of hunting, fishing, sailing and feasting (when the work was done)
- The land was covered by dark forests, full of wild beasts and savage men
- Women were well-respected
- Land was divided into districts called shires
- Chief industries included trading, shipbuilding and agriculture
- Anglo-Saxons played chess, told stories, danced, sang, competed in games, partied and feasted for fun.

Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms



Map from C. Warren Hollister,
The Making of England, p. 64

Sutton Hoo

- Sheds light on a period of English history that is on the margin between myth, legend, and historical documentation
- Sutton Hoo, near Woodbridge, in the English county of Suffolk, is the site of two 6th- and early 7th-century cemeteries
- Ship was nearly 80 feet long, laden with treasures and everyday equipment (even if it is everyday equipment made of gold)
- Window into the early Anglo-Saxon world



Sutton Hoo

- Use of the site culminated at a time when Rædwald, the ruler of the East Angles, held senior power among the English people and played a dynamic if ambiguous part in the establishment of Christian rulership in England
 - Generally thought most likely that he is the person buried in the ship.
 - The site has been vital in understanding the Anglo-Saxon Kingdom of East Anglia and the whole early Anglo-Saxon period.



Sutton Hoo

- One finding contained an undisturbed ship burial including a wealth of Anglo-Saxon artifacts of outstanding art-historical and archaeological significance, now held in the British Museum in London



Purse Lid

Sutton Hoo



Photos from British Museum



Sutton Hoo

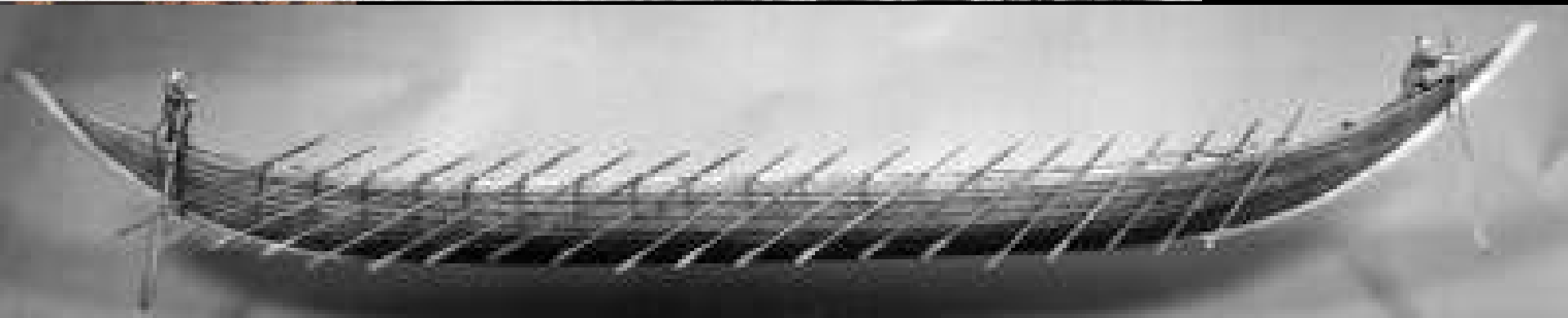
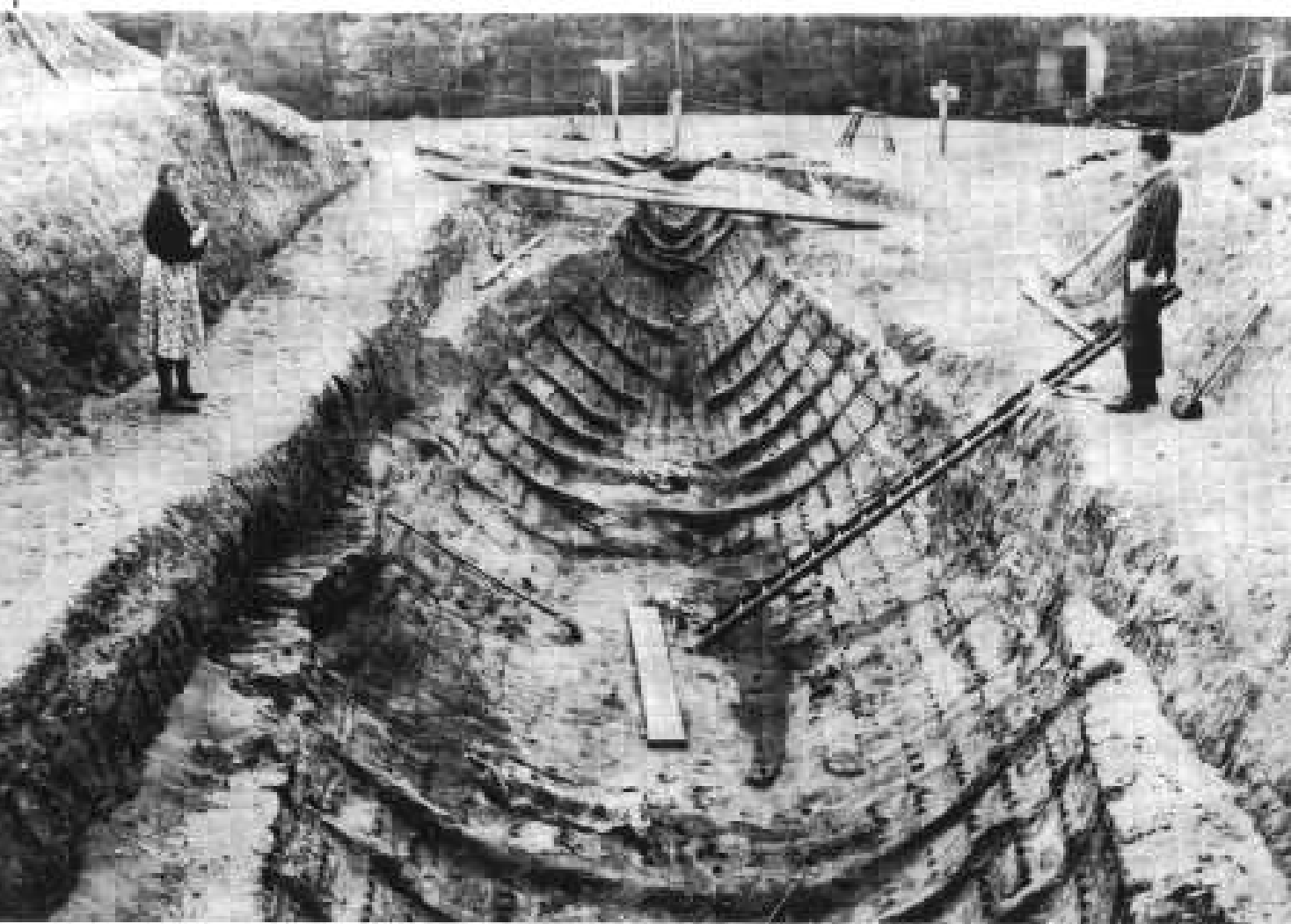




Sutton Hoo Royal Hart
Sceptre/Whetstone
(various views)

A whetstone
is a sharpening
stone used for
knives and
other cutting
tools

A scepter is a
symbolic
ornamental
staff
or wand held in
the hand by a
ruling monarch



Beowulf's Origin

**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 Origin

So what's happened to the manuscript since the 11th century?



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

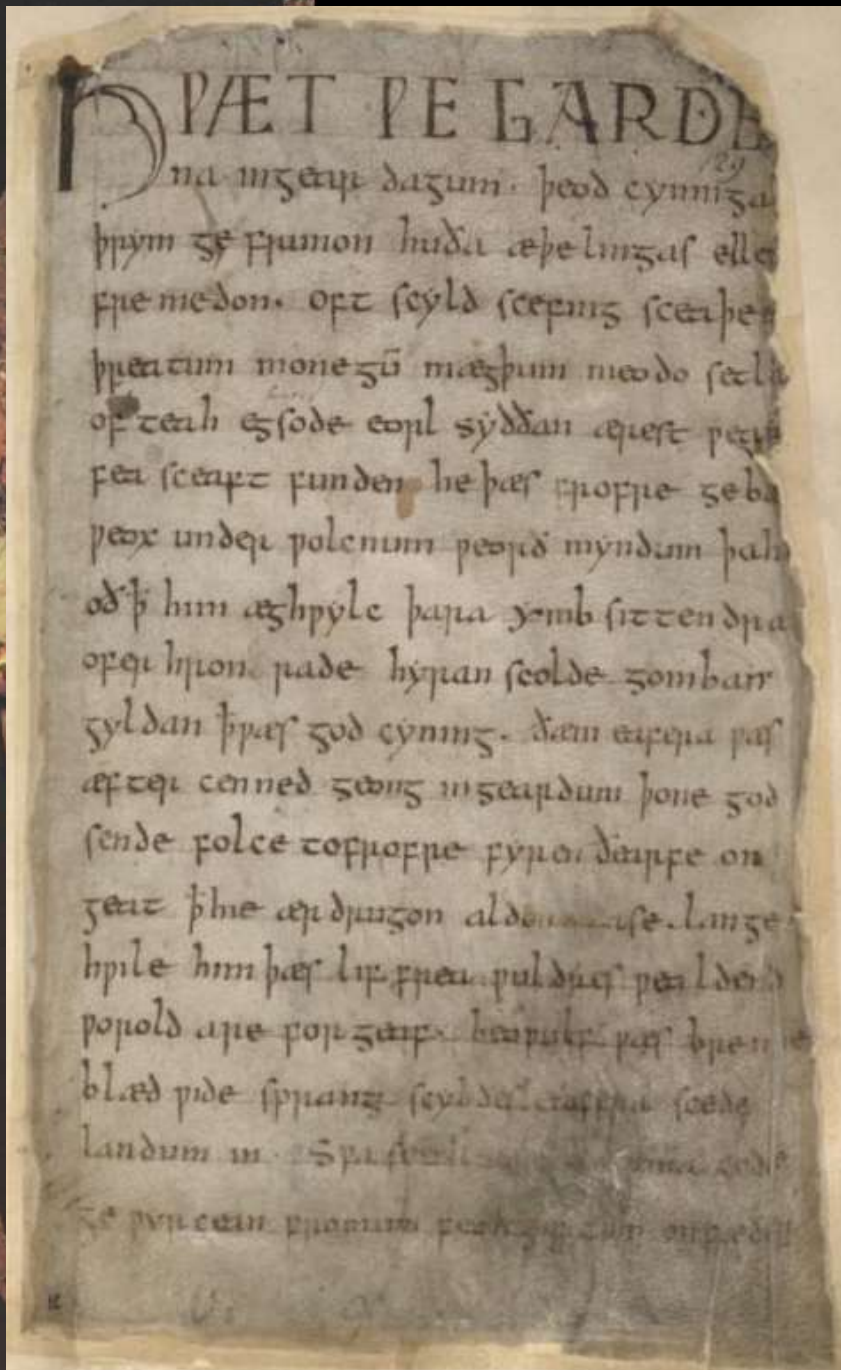


Robert Cotton (1571-1631)

Beowulf's Origin

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.



Beowulf *Manuscript*

(Note the burn marks on the top and sides—the manuscript was severely damaged in a fire)

Poetics



Hwaet! Wē Gār-Dena
þēodcyninga
hū ðā æpelingas

Oft Scyld Scēfing
monegum mægþum
egsode eorlas
fēasceaft funden.
wēox under wolcnum,
oð þæt him æghwylc
ofer hronrāde
gomban gyldan.

in geārdagum
þrym gefrūnon,
ellen fremedon.



sceaþena þrēatum
meodosetla oftēah,
syððan ærest wearð
Hē þæs frōfre gebād,
weorðmundum þāh
þāra ymb sittendra
hyran scolde,
þæt wæs gōd cyning!

Kennings

- A metaphorical expression used in place of a noun
- Sea = “whale-road” or “swan’s way”
- Joints, ligaments = “bone-locks”
- Sun = “sky-candle”
- Icicles = “water-ropes”



The Poetry in *Beowulf*

A few things to watch out for

2. Kennings

a. Compound metaphor (usually two words)

b. Most were probably used over and over



For instance: *hronade*
literally means “whale-
road,” but can be
translated as “sea”

The Poetry in *Beowulf*

A few things to watch out for

Other kennings from *Beowulf*:

banhus = “bone-house” = body

goldwine gumena = “gold-friend of men” =
generous prince

beaga brytta = “ring-giver” = lord

beadoleoma = “flashing light” = sword

Anglo-Saxon Society

- Tribal society with kinship bonds and a heroic code of behavior
 - bravery
 - loyalty to one's lord, one's warband (*comitatus*), and one's kin
 - willingness to avenge one's warband or lord at all costs – death preferable to exile.
 - generosity of lord to thanes and of hero to warband and lord--gift-giving
 - heroism (i.e., great deeds) brings honor, eternal fame, and political power



Anglo-Saxon Values

- Loyalty
 - Fighting for one's king
 - Avenging one's kinsmen
 - Keeping one's word
- Generosity -- gifts symbolize bonds
- Brotherly love -- not romantic, but familial love
- Heroism
 - Physical strength
 - Skill and resourcefulness in battle
 - Courage
- Public reputation, not private conscience



What about the women?

- Women make peace, bearing children who create blood ties
- Women pass the cup at the mead-hall, cementing social bonds
- Women lament loss, don't avenge



Religion in Anglo Saxon Times

- Mix of pagan and Christian values-- often in conflict.
 - Pagan (secular or non-religious) lineage vs. Christian lineage
 - Eternal earthly fame through deeds vs afterlife in hell or heaven
 - honor & gift-giving vs. sin of pride (*hubris*)
 - revenge vs pacifist view (forgiveness)
 - Wyrd (Anglo-Saxon "Fate") vs God's will etc



Epic Hero Traits

- 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
- Is a strong and responsible leader
- Performs brave deeds
- Reflects ideals of a particular society



Setting: *Beowulf's* Time and Place

Although *Beowulf* was written in English, it is set in what is now Sweden, where a tribe called the Geats lived.

The story may take place as early as 400 or 500 A.D.

Setting: *Beowulf's* time and place



Europe today



Time of *Beowulf*

How We Date *Beowulf*

Some Important Dates:

521 A.D. – death of Hygelac, who is mentioned in the poem

680 A.D. – appearance of alliterative verse

835 A.D. – the Danish started raiding other areas; after this, few poets would consider them heroes

SO: This version was likely composed between 680 and 835, though it may be set earlier

The Poetry in *Beowulf*

~~A few things to watch out for~~

1. Alliterative verse

- a. Repetition of initial sounds of words
(occurs in every line)**
- b. Generally, four feet/beats per line**
- c. A caesura, or pause, between
beats two and four**
- d. No rhyme**

The Poetry in *Beowulf*

A few things to watch out for

Alliterative verse – an example from Beowulf:

Oft Scyld Scefing sceapena praetum,

Monegum maegpum meodo-setla ofteah;

Egsode Eorle, syddan aereft weard.

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



comitatus

**Literally, this means
“escort” or “comrade”**

**This term identifies the
concept of warriors and
lords mutually pledging
their loyalty to one another**

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*.

homily

A homily is a written sermon or section of the poem that gives direct advice.