

***Beowulf* Character List**

Scyld Shefing: He is known as one of the first great kings of the Danes. Upon his death he is given a remarkable burial at sea. Eventually he becomes the great-grandfather of Hrothgar, king during Grendel's attacks upon the Danes.

Beow (Beowulf): He is the son of Scyld Shefing, and a strong king in his own right. He is often confused with the hero of the poem.

Hrothgar: He is the King of the Danes at the time of Grendel's assaults. He builds the hall Heorot as a tribute to his people and his reign.

Heorot: This is the hall that Hrothgar builds in celebration of his reign. It is the site both of many happy festivals and many sorrowful funerals.

Grendel: This man-monster is a descendant of Cain. He attacks Heorot after hearing the sounds of revelry there. Beowulf eventually kills him, with his severed arm hung as a trophy in Heorot. His mother attempts to avenge his death.

Beowulf: He is a thane of the Geat king Hygelac and eventually becomes King of the Geats. The poem relates his heroic exploits over 50 years, including the fights with Grendel and his mother and with the treasure-guarding dragon.

Wulfgar: He is one of Hrothgar's faithful thanes. As the watchman for the Danes, he is the first to greet Beowulf and his thanes to the land of the Danes. He also deems the Geat visitors as people worthy enough to meet with Hrothgar.

Ecgtheow: He is Beowulf's father. He is a Waegmunding by birth and a Geat by marriage. When he was younger, Hrothgar helped him settle a feud with the Wylfingas.

Unferth: A thane of Hrothgar's, he taunts Beowulf in the hall about his swimming contest with Breca. However, Beowulf shames him in the boasting match. His name means "discord."

Wealhtheow: She is Hrothgar's queen and the mother of his two sons. Her name comes from the Anglo-Saxon words for "treasure bearer." She actually has the duty of presenting necklaces and mead-cups at court.

Sigemund: He is an ancient Germanic hero whose story is recounted after the fight with Grendel. He was known as the famous dragon slayer.

Heremod: He was an ancient Danish king who went from being a good king to a ruthlessly evil king. Hrothgar uses him as an example of bad kingship for Beowulf.

Hildeburh: Her story is recounted during the second feast for Beowulf at Heorot. She is an ancient Danish princess who was married into the Frisian royalty. Her brother and her son were both killed in a war with the Frisians at Finnesburh.

Hrothulf: He is Hrothgar's younger brother. Wealhtheow calls upon him to protect her young sons if it should ever be necessary to do so.

Grendel's Mother: She is, of course, the mother of the man-monster Grendel. She comes to Heorot seeking vengeance for the death of her son. Beowulf kills her.

Aeschere: Apparently he is one of Hrothgar's important officials and faithful thanes. Grendel's mother kills him, and Hrothgar is inconsolable.

Hrunting: Unferth gives this sword to Beowulf to use in killing Grendel's mother. It is unable to cut her, however, so Beowulf discards it. Later he returns it to Unferth with his thanks

Hygelac: This King of the Geats is also Beowulf's uncle. Upon hearing Beowulf's courageous exploits, he gives Beowulf nearly half his kingdom.

Freawaru: She is the daughter of Hrothgar who is unmentioned until Beowulf tells Hygelac about her. Beowulf believes that her marriage to a Heathobard prince will do more harm than good for the Danes.

The Dragon: This is the third and last monster that Beowulf must defeat. After a Geat slave steals from his treasure, he goes on a rampage. Beowulf defeats him, but not before striking a mortal blow to him.

Naegling: Beowulf won this sword in a fight between the Geats and the Frisians. He uses it in the battle with the dragon.

Wiglaf: This is Beowulf's kinsman through Ecgtheow's family, the Waegmundings. He is the only thane of Beowulf's that stays with him during the battle with the dragon.