

## Beowulf (short model, 500 words)

Long, long ago, in the land of Danes, there lived a creature that was terrible to look upon. Grendel. Even his name was enough to turn stomachs. The beast lived in a swamp, which he shared with a forest of misshapen alder trees and little else.

Then along came King Hrothgar, and he built his great banqueting hall on the edge of the swamp. Every night, the Danes feasted till late. Grendel heard their celebrations from his lair in the swamp. He heard their laughter. He heard their joy. He heard their drinking songs. He smelt the roasted ox, and he felt hunger gnaw at his belly like a rat in a trap. In the depths of the night, while the king and his men slept, Grendel came stalking across the marshes, and up to the great oak door.

He came three times in all and left nothing behind him but the taste of blood and fear. Reluctantly, the king abandoned the hall and left it deserted - except for the sparrows and gathering dust.

One day, the great hero Beowulf arrived. His wooden ship carved through the whale roads, and when he landed, Beowulf leapt from the bow into the waves. "I will slay this monster of yours," he boasted to the King, throwing a handful of sand into the eyes of an imaginary foe.

After Beowulf's promise, the Danes returned to their hall. Once again the sound of singing and laughter ran through the oaken beams. They roasted an ox, they drank fine mead and great stories were told.

Eventually, the Danes fell asleep. Wide awake, Beowulf waited in the great hall - he waited with clenched teeth. Gradually, shadows filled

each corner. The sparrows settled in the rafters, quietly chattering for a moment. The hall held its breath.

Slipping silently through the marshes, Grendel came. Like a dark plague staining the fields, he dragged his terrible soul up to the hall and walked through the door as if it were not there. The sparrows sang a warning. Too late! Grendel tore one sleeping soldier in half and crunched on his bones. Then he reached out for Beowulf, who was ready, crouching in the shadows.

Beowulf seized the creature's arm like a metal vice and clung on, digging deep into Grendel's flesh. Howling, Grendel swung this way and that, but it was no good. Beowulf's grip was stronger than steel. The soldiers woke and tried to fight the monster but could only see the vaguest of shapes. Their swords slipped through the shape and had no effect. Grendel could not escape Beowulf's grasp, and he was starting to weaken. As the hideous creature finally wrenched himself free, he left his arm behind.

Howling with pain, Grendel slouched back towards the swamps to bathe the bleeding stump. Within a day, the twisted creature was dead. Meanwhile, Beowulf nailed his grisly trophy to a beam where it stayed for many months, rotting away till in the end there was nothing left.

Grendel's death was not the end of the story: deep in the marsh, Grendel's mother had watched him die. Now she wanted revenge... But that is another story for another time.