

## Beowulf and the "Hero" Archetype

Courage, strength, wits, and endurance are all qualities one would use to describe a hero. Beowulf is no different. In the epic Beowulf, he is the hero of ancient England, and must overcome seemingly impossible tasks to protect his people. Not only does he display strength and cunning when he defeats monsters, he does it in a proud, dignified manner, perfect for a hero of that time. Although the story was written hundreds of years ago, the qualities that Beowulf portrays still fit the mold of the classic hero that we see in movies and television today.

First of all, Beowulf possesses awe-inspiring strength. When called upon to defeat the monster Grendel, Beowulf boldly responds, "My hands alone shall fight for me, struggle for life against the monster" (Beowulf 172-177). Unbelievably, Beowulf is able to rip Grendel's arm off and cause him to bleed to death. His method of disposing the monster is more important than the act itself. Because the people are grateful to be rid of the monster, they praise Beowulf for his courage and ability, saying, "that nowhere on earth or under the spreading sky, or between the seas, neither south nor north, was there a warrior worthier to rule over men" (Beowulf 539-542).

More significant is Beowulf's courage. He is idolized not only because of his abilities, but also because he is ready for any challenge that is thrown his way. His fight with the dragon exemplifies this. Even at an old age, he commands his army to stay back, explaining, "I mean to stand, not run from his shooting flames" (Beowulf 675-676). Although the fight with the dragon would be his last, Beowulf struggled to end and defeated the monster with the help of Wiglac.

While the circumstances are different, many of today's heroes are no different than Beowulf. Neo, Batman, Superman, and countless others have to face the same kind of overwhelming obstacles. The formula that made Beowulf a success is still making other heroes of our time legendary. Only time will tell, but the chances are this blueprint of a hero will never grow old.