

A Home Learning Branch for Beowulf by Michael Morpurgo

Spelling investigations

We need to help arrange Beowulf's Homecoming Party. Our first task is to choose whether an s or c go in each of the blanked-out words. What is the difference between advice and advise?

This is a proclamation from the Royal Party Planning Committee. We have been li ensed with the glorious task of devi ing a homecoming party for our beloved Beowulf. As there will be a lavish awards ceremony attended by the royal family, we advi e guests to attend the practi ce ceremony taking place the day before. We ask that guests do not take any weapons or other fighting devi es as this is a peaceful party. Afterall, the great prophe y has foretold that one-day Beowulf will be king!

How many of the words above can you use in your writing?

Discussion questions

- How does the author create a sense of horror?
- Which words get used often? Why do you think this is?
- Which use alliteration? What effect does this have?
- If you were the king's royal advisors, what advice would you give?
- What did you think of the character of Beowulf? Did you feel it was a well-rounded portrait of a character?
- What do you feel about the role of women in the story?

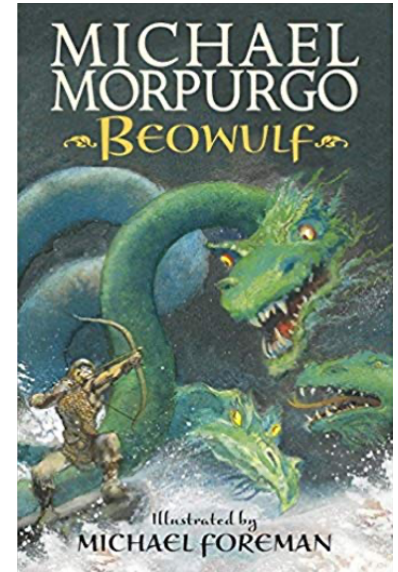
Writing opportunities

1. There are a delightful range of kennings in Beowulf. As you read can you find kennings and collect them on cards. Which use alliteration? Can you coin your own kennings? Create an Anglo-Saxon Dictionary.
2. **Read to page 17.** If you were the king's royal advisors, what advice would you give? How can we help Hrothgar defend his kingdom against the fiend Grendel?
3. **Read up to page 56.** This is when Grendel attack Beowulf. Can you write your own action scene and describe the monstrous Grendel?
4. **Read up to page 81,** '...was waiting for him.' Imagine that we are writing the events of this day from the viewpoint of King Hrothgar. Can you write a diary entry?
5. **Read to page 104,** '...miraculous return.' Can you describe Beowulf's homecoming party?
6. **Read to page 144** '...honourable of all warrior war-kings that ever lived.' Can you write a missing chapter for the story? Create your own monster that Beowulf has to fight! Read to the end.

Wider curriculum links

History: How many different retellings of the ancient story Beowulf can you find out about? Can you research information about the original? When was it written? Beowulf was written originally by an Anglo-

Saxon poet. What do you know about Anglo-Saxons? Can you write a report or make a poster about them? How did they live? What foods did they eat? What was their religion like?



Key vocabulary

How many of these words do you know? can you find the meaning of new words?

a legend
kennings
alliteration
invaders
hearth
bard
barrow
mead
mead hall
artefacts
primary/secondary source
Geats
Danes
Hronesness

Further reading

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight by Michael Morpurgo
Outlaw by Michael Morpurgo
Kaspar, Prince of Cats by Michael Morpurgo
Viking Voyages by Jack Tite
The Hobbit by JRR Tolkien
Anglo-Saxons and Vikings (Usborne History of Britain) by Hazel Maskell and Abigail Wheatly
Beowulf, the movie directed by Robert Zemeckis (12 rating)

Want to find out more? Why not download the full Planning Sequence on our website and access the Learning Log video sessions?



10:46

1

kennings were phrases (often hyphenated) that took the place of a noun. They are very poetic. What do you think the kenning 'whale-road' might have referred to? The sea! The sea is not really a road so kennings act like metaphors. What do you think these kennings mean?

bone-house, battle-light, war-band, battle-play, hearth-companions, death-song, treasure-hoard, war-dress, father-protector, terror-tyrant, sea-surge

Which Kennings use alliteration (both words start with the same letter)? What effect does this have? Use post-its or have a notebook and record all the kennings you find in the book. Can you create your own kennings? The most straightforward way would be to combine some of the most frequent words used e.g. war-stick, battle- hungry, death-dance, sea-arrow. There were many words to replace the nouns 'boat' and 'sea'. Why do you think this was?

2

You may wish to play a video of a fire burning in Mead Hall, which can be found on video streaming sites, to create a sense of atmosphere when completing this task.

Create describing words (adjectives) using the word endings -ful and -less. What adjectives can you make using these root words? Dread, fear, mind, sense, need, hope, help, bounty, harm, boast, right – can you use some root words more than once?

If you were the king's royal advisors, what advice would you give? Use imperative (bossy) verbs to give commands to Hrothgar and record advice on sentence strips

e.g. *Dig a deep moat around the kingdom. Make more weapons for your warriors.*

The following sentence openers might help:

I suggest you... I recommend you... It is essential you... It is crucial you... I strongly urge you...

3

The author often uses noun phrases, joining two nouns with the word 'of' e.g. 'the fiend of terror', 'the giver of death and destruction.' Can you use these words to create your own?

Noun Phrases of Horror

panic	→	fear
giver	→	terror
claws	→	death
creature	→	destruction
tyrant	→	agony
fiend	→	fury
teeth	→	suffering
beast	→	blood

Join the nouns together and add the word 'of' in the middle. What noun phrases can you create? Can you use alliteration? Write your own fight scene between Beowulf and Grendel using these noun phrases.

With a mighty and murderous roar, the rampaging creature of death smashed through the mead-hall door. The thick wood snapped suddenly like twigs in the path of this giver of destruction and death. The Danes froze in fear...

4

'As dusk came down over that dreary place, Hrothgar and his thanes turned sadly for home and hearth, all hope now abandoned.' Look at this sentence, which tell us how the characters turned from home?

Here are some prefixes: **dis-, de-, mis-, over- and re-**

Stick a prefix on to the root words to create new words: mount, member, formed, moralised, guided, trust, burdened, confident, think, energised. What meaning do these prefixes attach to the root word?

Imagine that we are writing the events of this day from the viewpoint of King Hrothgar.

As dark clouds descended, heavy-hearted and anxious, my thanes and I turned slowly for home. We rode all night and dismounted with groans. My demoralised thanes remained silent and grim-faced. Had we been overconfident?

5

Beowulf's Heroic Homecoming! Party time! It would be fun to act this scene out turning the tables into a horseshoe shape with family. Have the video of the Mead Hall fire from earlier. One person can play more than one part! Why not try filming this?

Can you insert dialogue and heroic speeches in your writing?

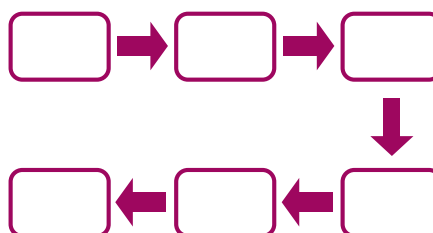
In writing, describe the party and the feasting referring to these activities (music, song, stories, mead and merry feasting) as well as referring to five senses.

Beowulf sat proudly in the middle of the hall surrounded by his Geatish war-band. On every table there was the most exquisite and delicious food and drink. Everyone praised them and talked excitedly.

6

We are going to be bards and either write a missing chapter for Beowulf (a new monster he had to fight) or create a new legend. Decide on your hero's name and invent a monster that he/she has to fight (in Anglo-Saxon/Viking culture woman-warriors were often referred to as Shield Maidens).

Before you write, you need to plan out your chapter? Try mapping everything out using a story map.



Why not watch Michael Morpurgo discussing legends for 'Michael Morpurgo Month' on video streaming websites.

