

Alan Sullivan and Timothy Murphy  
*Beowulf*. Pearson Longman, New York, 2004

Beowulf Sails to Denmark (194-224)

A thane of Hygelac heard in his homeland  
of Grendel's deeds. Great among Geats,  
this man was more mighty than any then living.  
He summoned and stocked a swift wave-courser,  
and swore to sail over the swan-road  
as one warrior should for another in need.  
His elders could find no fault with his offer,  
and awed by the omens, they urged him on.  
He gathered the bravest of Geatish guardsmen.  
One of fifteen, the skilled sailor  
strode to his ship at the ocean's edge.

He was keen to embark: his keel was beached  
under the cliff where sea-currents curled  
surf against sand; his soldiers were ready.  
Over the bow they boarded in armor,  
bearing their burnished weapons below,  
their gilded war-gear to the boat's bosom.  
Other men shoved the ship from the shore,  
and off went the band, their wood-braced vessel  
bound for the venture with wind on the waves  
and foam under bow, like a fulmar in flight.

On the second day their upswept prow  
slid into sight of steep hillsides,  
bright cliffs, wide capes at the close of their crossing,  
the goal of their voyage gained in good time.

Beowulf Fights Grendel (790-818)

That shielder of men meant by no means  
to let the death-dealer leave with his life,  
a life worthless to anyone elsewhere.  
Then the young soldiers swung their old swords  
again and again to save their guardian,  
their kingly comrade, however they could.  
Engaging with Grendel and hoping to hew him  
from every side, they scarcely suspected  
that blades wielded by worthy warriors  
never would cut to the criminal's quick.  
The spell was spun so strongly about him  
that the finest iron of any on earth,  
the sharpest sword-edge left him unscathed.  
Still he was soon to be stripped of his life  
and sent on a sore sojourn to Hell.  
The strength of his sinews would serve him no more;  
no more would he menace mankind with his crimes,  
his grudge against God, for the high-hearted kinsman  
of King Hygelac had hold of his hand.  
Each found the other loathsome in life;  
but the murderous man-bane got a great wound  
as tendons were torn, shoulder shorn open,  
and bone-locks broken.

## Beowulf Fights Grendel's Mother (1537-69)

Grabbing the tresses of Grendel's mother,  
the Geats' battle-chief, bursting with wrath,  
wrestled her down: no deed to regret  
but a favor repaid as fast as she fell.  
With her grim grasp she grappled him still.  
Weary, the warrior stumbled and slipped;  
the strongest foot-soldier fell to the foe.  
Astraddle the hall-guest, she drew her dagger,  
broad and bright-bladed, bent on avenging  
her only offspring. His mail-shirt shielded  
shoulder and breast. Barring the entry  
of edge or point, the woven war-shirt  
saved him from harm. Ecgtheow's son,  
the leader of Geats, would have lost his life  
under Earth's arch but for his armor  
and heaven's favor furnishing help.  
The Ruler of All readily aided  
the righteous man when he rose once more.

He beheld in a hoard of ancient arms  
a battle-blessed sword with strong-edged blade,  
a marvelous weapon men might admire  
though over-heavy for any to heft  
when finely forged by giants of old.  
The Scyldings' shielder took hold of the hilt  
and swung up the sword, though despairing of life.  
He struck savagely, hit her hard neck  
and broke the bone-rings, cleaving clean through  
her fated flesh. She fell to the floor;  
the sword sweated; the soldier rejoiced.

## Beowulf and Wiglaf Kill the Dragon (2672-2708)

His dreadful fire-wind drove in a wave,  
charring young Wiglaf's shield to the boss,  
nor might a mail-shirt bar that breath  
from burning the brave spear-bearer's breast.  
Wiglaf took cover close to his kinsman,  
shielded by iron when linden was cinder.  
Then the war-king, recalling past conquests,  
struck with full strength straight at the head.  
His battle-sword, Naegling, stuck there and split,  
shattered in combat, so sharp was the shock  
to Beowulf's great gray-banded blade.  
He never was granted the gift of a sword  
as hard and strong as the hand that held it.  
I have heard that he broke blood-hardened brands,  
so the weapon-bearer was none the better.

The fearful fire-drake, scather of strongholds,  
flung himself forward a final time,  
wild with wounds yet wily and sly.  
In the heat of the fray, he hurtled headlong  
to fasten his fangs in the foe's throat.  
Beowulf's life-blood came bursting forth  
on those terrible tusks. Just then, I am told,  
the second warrior sprang from his side,  
a man born for battle proving his mettle,  
keen to strengthen his kinsman in combat.  
He took no heed of the hideous head  
scorching his hand as he hit lower down.  
The sword sank in, patterned and plated;  
the flames of the foe faltered, faded.  
Quick-witted still, the king unsheathed  
the keen killing-blade he kept in his corselet.  
Then the Geats' guardian gutted the dragon,  
felling that fiend with the help of his friend,  
two kinsmen together besting the terror.