

Year 7 – OLD ENGLISH (Term 2)

600 – 1100 AD

Back then, human stories were passed from mouth to mouth—hopefully without spreading the Black Death, womp womp—before being written down in manuscript. That's how we got epics like Beowulf (& from that, The Hobbit!) The story of Beowulf existed for hundreds of years as a tale told by scops, who were like minstrels, only much beardier.

Why are myths, legends, monsters and heroes important in Literature?

<p>What is the difference between a myth & a legend?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> A legend is a semi-true story, which has been passed on from person-to-person & has important meaning or symbolism for the culture in which it originates. <input type="checkbox"/> A legend usually includes an element of truth, or is based on historic facts, but with 'mythical qualities'. <input type="checkbox"/> Legends usually involve heroic characters or fantasy. <input type="checkbox"/> A myth is a story based on tradition or legend, which has a deep symbolic meaning. <input type="checkbox"/> A myth 'conveys a truth' to those who tell it & hear it, rather than necessarily recording a true event & involve supernatural beings.
<p>What is a hero?</p>	<p>The Hero: The hero is always the protagonist (though the protagonist is not always a hero). Traditionally, the hero has been male, although this is changing. The hero is after an objective & must overcome obstacles along the way. He/she is usually morally good, though that goodness will likely be challenged.</p>
<p>What is the 'oral tradition' & why is it so important?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> It is transmitted by word of mouth & consists of both prose & verse narratives, poems & songs, myths, dramas, rituals, proverbs, riddles etc. Nearly all known peoples, now and in the past, have produced it. <input type="checkbox"/> Until about 4000 BC all literature was oral, but, beginning in the years between 4000 & 3000 BC, writing. From that time on there are records not only of practical matters such as law & business but increasingly of written literature.
<p>What is a bildungsroman?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> A story about a journey or process in which the protagonist develops and grows up.

Hobbit Key Themes

- The danger of excessive greed
- Heroism (parable for WWI?)
- Bravery
- Good vs Evil
- Quest
- Hospitality
- Luck

The Hobbit Context

Contrasting Worldviews

- Tolkien** was a scholar of ancient languages at Oxford. A major source of inspiration for **The Hobbit's plot was the body of ancient epic literature that Tolkien studied, particularly Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon epics** like Beowulf. Elements of the story originate from literature, including the form of the heroic quest, the dragon's treasure hoard, the importance of named swords, the elves' mysterious magic, and the grim focus on birthright and family lineage.
- Bilbo** himself, with his common sense, love of peace, and warmhearted self-doubt, is in many ways a **rural Englishman of the 1930s transplanted into a medieval adventure.**

Named Swords

- Throughout epic literature, swords with names and lineages are the marks of great heroes.** One of the most famous examples is King Arthur's sword, Excalibur. The swords named Orcrist and Glamdring that Thorin and Gandalf win from the trolls symbolise their heroic deeds. **Bilbo's decision to name his short sword Sting after killing the spider is a major turning point in his quest—it symbolises his bravery and initiative, and signals his transformation into a hero.**

Hobbit Characters

Bilbo Baggins	Reluctant protagonist of the story. Starts the book as a home-loving, respectable hobbit, fond of food and tea. At the end of the novel, he returns home a wiser and more confident hobbit after his adventures.
Gandalf	A wise (if sometimes mischievous) old wizard who helps the dwarves. His name comes from the Old Norse for 'magic elf.'
Thorin Oakenshield	Mighty warrior and proud and pompous leader of the group of dwarves. Heir to the destroyed dwarvish kingdom under the Lonely Mountain.
Gollum	A 'small, slimy creature' who lives in a lake under the Misty Mountains. Possibly inspired by the monster Grendel from Beowulf.
Smaug	A powerful and intelligent dragon, inspired by the dragon in Beowulf. Stole the dwarves' mountain and treasure 150 years ago.

Top Tips for Creative Writing

At least 5 zoom-ins
Keep it simple: maximum 3 characters; tell a 'small' story – make the ordinary extraordinary
Describe all 5 senses
Maximum 1 exclamation mark
Write in 3 rd person
Show, don't tell
Maximum 3 sentences of direct speech
Don't 'chat' to the reader
50% description with zooms
<p>Writing to advise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Use gentle modal verbs <input type="checkbox"/> Soft rhetorical questions <input type="checkbox"/> Write in 2nd person <input type="checkbox"/> Direct address

Letter layout

The use of addresses & date
A formal mode of address e.g. Dear Sir/Madam or a named recipient
Effectively/fluently sequenced paragraphs
An appropriate mode of signing off: Yours sincerely/faithfully.

Grammar

<p>Simple past tense</p>	The most common past tense. Usually takes an 'ed' ending, but some are irregular. e.g. I walked; she spoke; we played
<p>Simple present tense</p>	The most common present tense. e.g. I walk; she speaks; we play
<p>Simple future tense</p>	The most common future tense. Uses 'will'. e.g. I will walk; she will speak; we will play
<p>Punctuating speech</p>	Use a comma to introduce the speech, speech marks before and after, and punctuation inside the speech marks at the end. e.g. The teacher shouted, "Everybody stop!"

Keystone vocab	Academic vocab
Legend	Evokes
Mythology	Emphasises
	Reinforces
	Illustrates
Bildungsroman	Demonstrates
Heroic	Indicates
	Cements
	Reveals
	Infers
	Conveys
	Portrays

Features of fantasy genre

Outside ordinary laws of the universe
Magic is central
Journeys & quests
Setting – fantasy worlds
Portals (doors)

Beowulf Context

- Beowulf** - The oldest existing poem written in English. It's written in Old English, the language spoken in Britain before the [Norman Conquest](#) in 1066.
- Wyrd**, or fate - The idea is that your destiny is predetermined and you can't really change it. It's such a powerful force that sometimes in this poetry, it seems to be a stand-in for God.
- The death price** - *Beowulf* is set during a time when warring tribes populated England and Scandinavia. Violence was a part of life, but it wasn't a free-for-all. If you killed somebody, their relatives might demand reparation (i.e., payback) in the form of wealth—or your life.
- Christian and Pagan values, all mixed up** - The Anglo-Saxon poetry we have today was originally composed orally (spoken) during a time when the Anglo-Saxons were still pagan. But it was *written down* after they became Christian. So you'll see things like magical runic inscriptions sitting side-by-side with prayers to the Christian God.