

said Hrothgar to Beowulf, "your strength is in bloom,  
but blossoms only a short while. Grendel was king  
of this country for eleven years, even though  
I wore the crown, because I didn't bring my pride to battle  
against him. I knew better. I laid low instead, and prayed  
for someone with courage to fight him. The day you arrived  
on my shores I knew my prayers were answered.  
I say this because you are fit to be King, and will be, someday."  
Beowulf thanked him for the fatherly advice, and told him  
it was time to sail the seas again, to go back home.



He gathered his men, prepared his ship, and said goodbye  
to Hrothgar and Heorot. When Beowulf and his ship arrived  
at shore, he was welcomed at once by his Uncle Hygelac.  
Hygelac was king of this country, ruler of the Geats.  
He ruled the Geats well, and years later when Hygelac  
died of old age, Beowulf himself became king.  
For fifty years Beowulf ruled his kingdom well,  
but in his old age, Beowulf was faced with another terror  
of the night.



A dragon, which lived in a cave on a nearby cliff,  
awoke angry, because someone came into his cave  
while he soundly slept, and stole some treasure  
off his treasure pile. It happened not once, but twice.  
The dragon found footprints the second time,  
and he flew over the kingdom like a living torch,  
burning buildings down to their bones.  
Beowulf believed the dragon performed these deeds  
because of something he had done. So the king  
decided to fight the dragon himself. He gathered  
an army of men and made for the cave, the dragon's den.

With his men waiting outside, Beowulf entered  
the cave and called for the dragon, who responded  
with a breath of fire. Beowulf, the old king,  
raised his shield and sword and the two battled.  
The heat inside the cave made it hard for the old king  
to focus. He stabbed the dragon's scales with his sword,  
and the dragon cried in pain. But the puncture  
wasn't deep enough, and it upset the dragon even more.  
Outside the army heard its cry, and all but one ran  
for safety. Only Wiglaf ran inside the cave to help  
Beowulf, who was fighting without his sword.  
The dragon turned and sunk its teeth into Beowulf's neck.



The dragon focused on Beowulf so the battle was easier for young and strong Wiglaf, who gave the dragon a deadly blow. The dragon cried in pain once again, blew his last fiery breath, and fell hard on the floor.

Wiglaf ran to Beowulf's aid, and attempted to treat his wound. "Wiglaf," said Beowulf, "bring me some treasure, so I can see what I've been fighting for." Wiglaf ran around the fallen dragon, and fetched a piece of treasure, something simple he could carry. Beowulf's eyes fell on it. "Ah," he said, "Wiglaf, I name you the new king of the Geats, you have shown your courage. I will die of my wound." And soon, the old king closed his eyes, breathed his last breath, and peacefully passed away.

