

Beowulf

Author Unknown

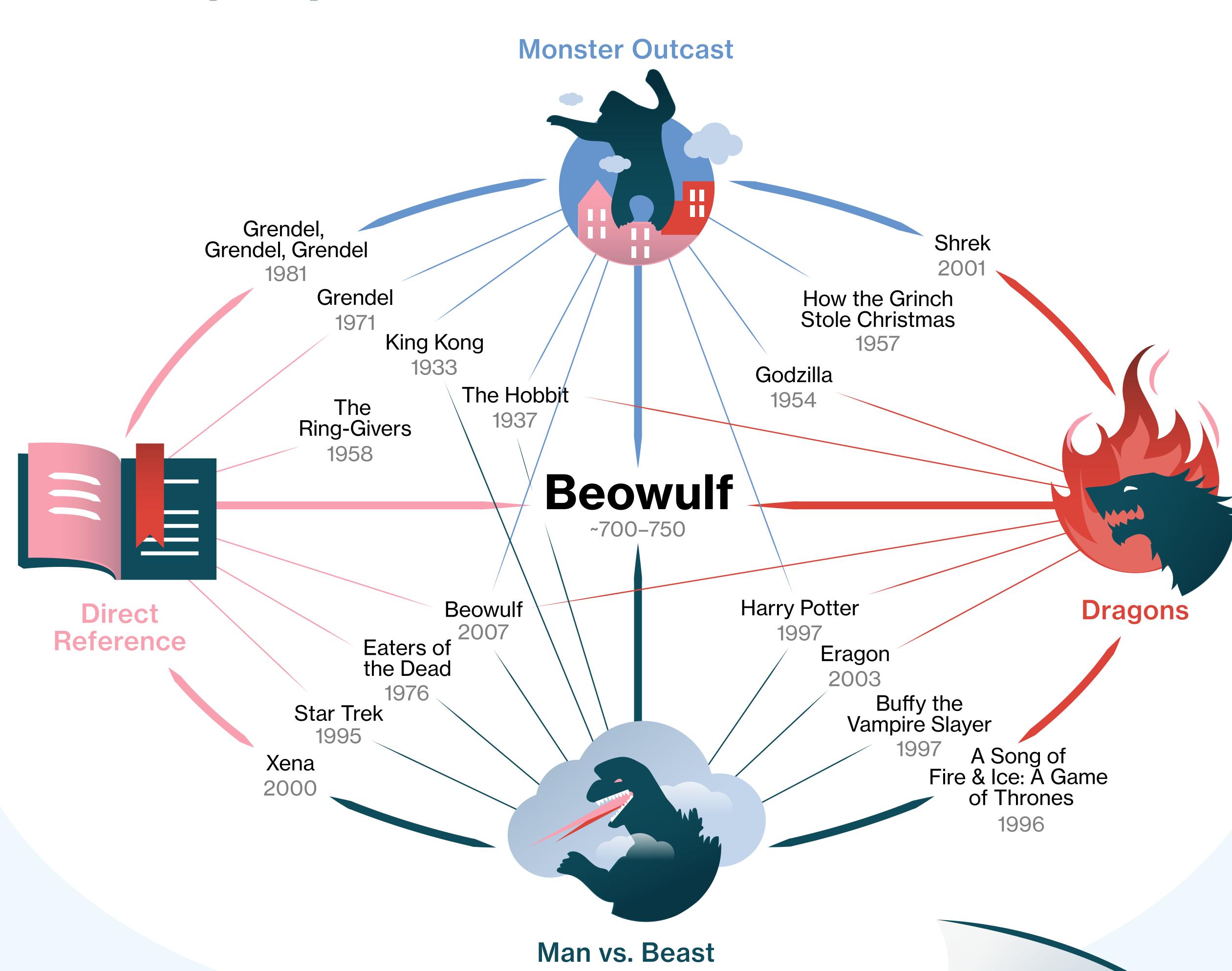
Years Composed c. 700-750

Original Language **Old English**

INFLUENCE

Beowulf and Fantasy Pop Culture

A pillar of today's fantasy genre, Beowulf has shaped many of the most popular books, movies, and TV shows of the last century.



Overview

A central work of Old English literature, the poem follows Beowulf's defeat of three monsters.

Grendel

Heorot, the great mead hall



Grendel attacks Beowulf and his men at night in Heorot Hall, grappling with the hero until Beowulf mortally wounds him by wrenching off a claw.

Grendel's Mother

Grendel's "mere" (pool or lake)



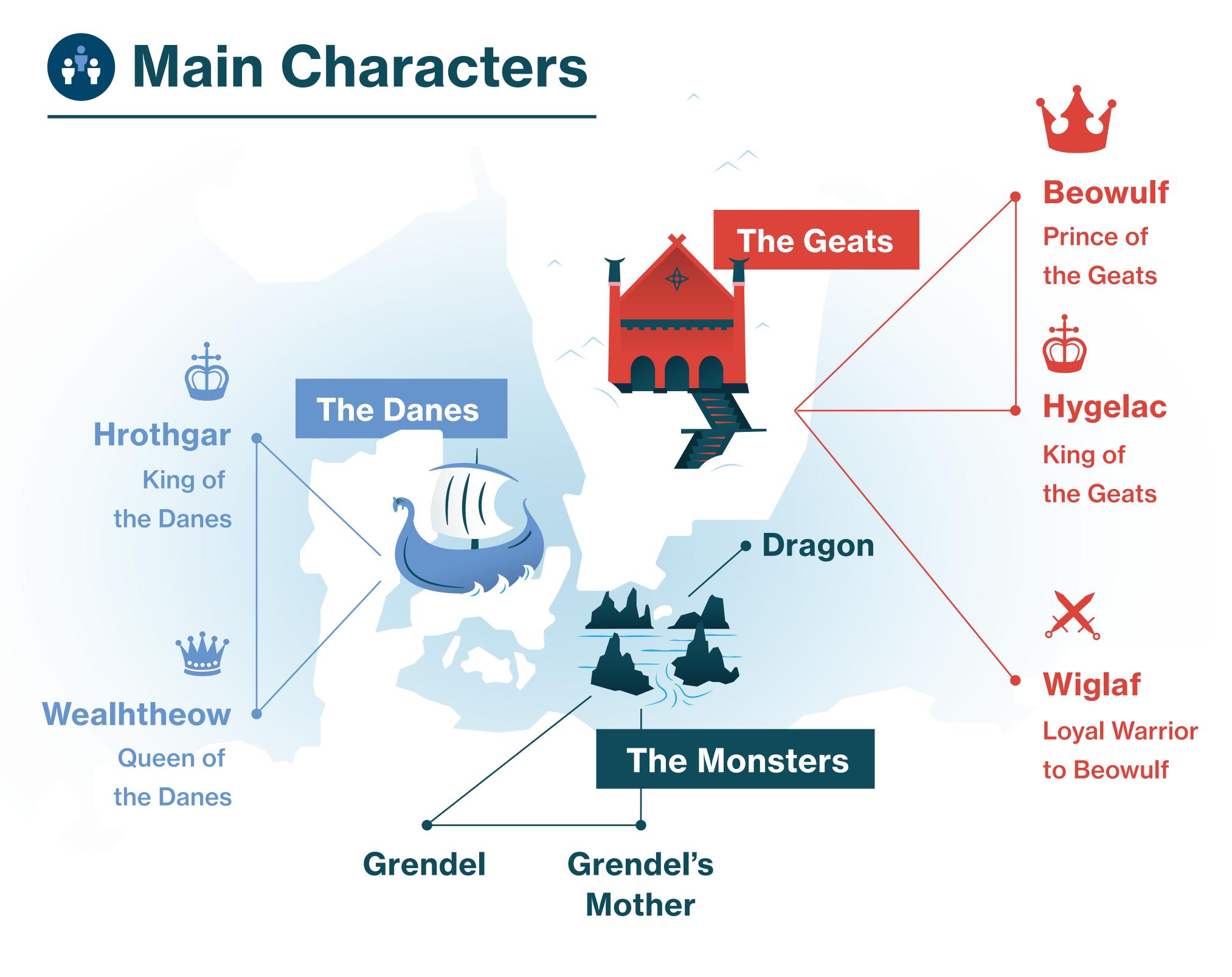
After Grendel's enraged mother murders a Dane, Beowulf tracks her to their pool and dives in. A magic sword appears to help him pierce her thick hide.

Dragon

Geatland, the dragon's barrow



50 years later, a dragon attacks Geatland. Beowulf tracks it to its barrow, and though a loyal warrior helps him triumph, he is mortally wounded.



Popular **Translations** of Beowulf

1837

John Mitchell Kemble First complete English

1910

translation

Francis Barton Gummere Retains alliteration of the original

1973

Michael Alexander Modern verse translation published by

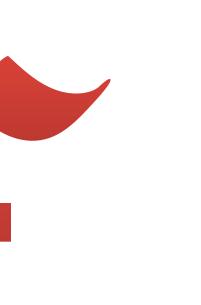
Penguin Classics

Seamus Heaney Most popular modern

2014

translation

J.R.R. Tolkien Translation and commentary (completed in 1926)



every one of us, living in this world / Means waiting for our end. Let whoever

can Win glory

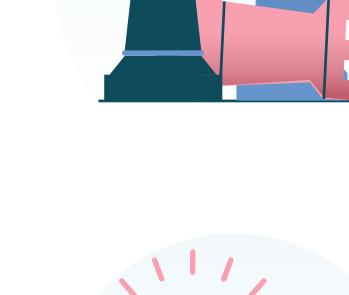
Lines 1386-1388

before death.

Themes

Death and Defeat Though the poem celebrates

victory, no hero can fend off death and defeat forever.



Loyalty

Allegiance to tribe and leader shape characters' actions, driving plot and relationships.



Hospitality The great mead hall Heorot

symbolizes the importance

of hospitality in Beowulf's

culture and era.



