

# Beowulf

Author  
Unknown

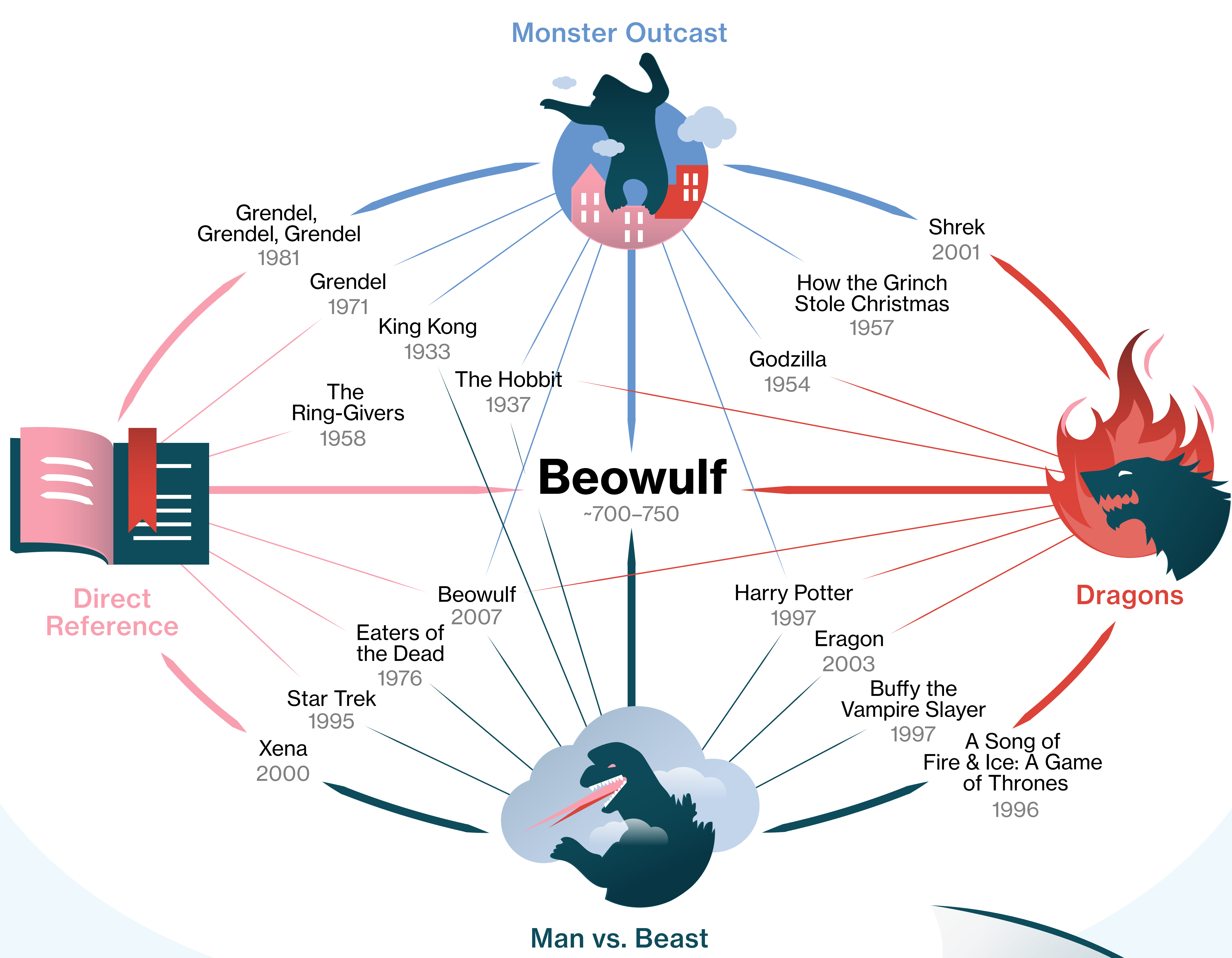
Years Composed  
c. 700-750

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.

### 1 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.

### 2 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.

### 3 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.

## Main Characters



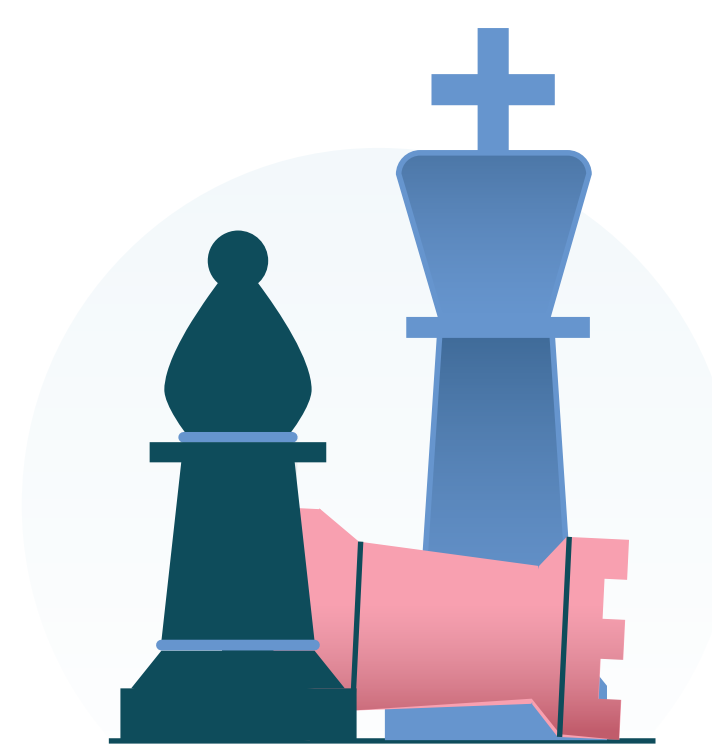
**F** or every one of us, living in this world / Means waiting for our end. Let whoever can Win glory before death.

Lines 1386-1388

## 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.

