



English 313—In Search of *Beowulf*: Fact, Fiction, & Fantasy



Beowulf Language Exercise 2

Old English Text¹

þær æt hyðe stod hringedstefna,
isig ond utfus, æþelinges fær.
Aledon þa leofne þeoden,
beaga bryttan, on bearm scipes,
mærne be mæste. þær wæs madma fela
of feorwegum, frætwa, gelæded;
ne hyrde ic cymlicor ceol gegyrwan
hildewæpnum ond heaðowædum,
billum ond byrnum; him on bearme læg
madma mænigo, þa him mid scoldon
on flodes æht feor gewitan.

(*Beowulf*, ll. 32-42)

Modern English Transliteration²

There at harbor stood the ring-prowed ship,
Ice-covered and prepared to set out, prince's vessel.
Laid down they then the beloved leader,
Of rings bestower, in the bosom of the ship,
Renowned one by the mast. There was of treasures much
From far-distant-ways, precious goods, brought;
Not have I heard (concerning) a more beautifully ship adorned
With war-weapons and with battle-gear,
With swords and with byrnies; on him on breast lay
Of treasures many, which him with should
In flood's power far travel.

1. Note how the transliteration highlights the structural and grammatical differences between Old English and Modern English. Take special notice of how word order in Modern English is often used to show grammatical relationships among words which might be otherwise indicated in Old English.

¹ All Old English text for *Beowulf* language exercises is drawn from the Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records (ASPR) series: Dobbie, Elliott Van Kirk. *Beowulf and Judith*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1953.

² All Modern English translations and transliterations are by Christopher R. Fee

2. Underline the subject of each sentence in the Modern English text; find and underline the Old English equivalents.
3. Circle the verb of each sentence in the Modern English text; find and circle the Old English equivalents.
4. Highlight elements of noun phrases (articles, adjectives, etc.) associated with the subject of each sentence in the Modern English text; find and highlight the Old English equivalents.
5. What might this passage help to corroborate or call into question aspects of Anglo-Saxon material culture? How does the specific language—cite precise words and phrases—involved mesh with your knowledge of, for example, the finds at Sutton Hoo? Why might we be cautious about making such connections?