

# AESOP'S FABLE: "Beot Beowulf"

Based on

## "The Leap at Rhodes"

A Dramatic Play Written by Connie Frank

**Narrator of the Story:** based on "The Leap at Rhodes"

### Deeds count, not boasting words.



**Narrator:** Everyone knows that boasting (or bragging) is speaking with excessive pride and self-satisfaction about one's achievements, possessions, and/or abilities. Beot in Old English for a ritualized boast, vow, threat, or promise, and the ritual was meant to build courage before battle and to give each man a chance to tell his stories so that, if he fell in battle the next day, his life's stories would be remembered. Anglo Saxon warriors, as those in Beowulf, were made on the eve of battle. The story Beowulf is set in pagan Scandinavia (which is now Denmark and Sweden) in the 6th century around the year 500 AD in the territories of two tribal groups, the Geats and the

Scyldings. The mead-hall, the center of Beowulf's world, is a place of warmth, laughter, friendship, storytelling, and celebration. Beyond the mead-hall, the world is cold and dark, getting darker the further you go from the hall. The king of the Danes. King Hrothgar has called for Beowulf and his men to come to his Great Hall to ask for Beowulf's help. King Hrothgar has enjoyed military success and prosperity for his people, but now there is something terrorizing his realm.

### Characters:

**Narrator:**

**Wiglaf:**

**Beowulf:**

**King Hrothgar:**

**Unferth:**

### Script:

**Narrator:** The Danish land was green and plush, with varying colors of on an artist's palette with gold splashed against a clear turquoise blue sky. A mix of Norwegian Spruce, Fir, and Pine trees grew in clusters, giving shade to the warriors as they traipsed through the woody areas. Every man, young and elder, was known for his strength and abilities, and respect was given to each man for his courageous fighting in the battles they had won. Yet, as darkness began to settle on the land, the men started to grow restless, as they were quietly obsessed with the borders between civilization and wilderness. Beowulf himself feared the possible monsters that lurked in the edges of the wilderness and stoically kept leading his men toward the lightened Hall of King Hrothgar of Denmark.

**Wiglaf:** (Walking up to Beowulf): How much further is it to the Danish King, Beowulf.

**Beowulf:** (Looking down at his friend, smiling): Getting nervous, Wiglaf?

**Wiglaf:** (Lowering his voice): I do not mind admitting to you that I am nervous, Beowulf. The woods are dark, and monsters lurk everywhere in these ancient woods.

<b>Beowulf:</b>	(Nodding): I agree, Wiglaf. I do not care to tarry too long. The lights of the Mead Hall are closer now. We will be there before the dark turns.
<b>Narrator:</b>	Minutes went by and strange noises came from the countryside. But they had just entered the small town around the Mead Hall, and all the men rejoiced as they walked in through the great door. King Hrothgar and Queen Wealhtheow stood waiting for him. Hrothgar had a huge smile on his face.
<b>King Hrothgar:</b>	(Embracing Beowulf): Welcome, Beowulf, my friend. It has been a long time since we have seen you.
<b>Beowulf:</b>	(Gripping the elbow of the King in friendship): It is always a joyous occasion to see you Hrothgar. We sailed many months to get here.
<b>King Hrothgar:</b>	(Nodding): And I am grateful! There is much to tell you.
<b>Beowulf:</b>	With your permission, my King, I would like to tell my men that they can enjoy the Great Hall while you and I talk. (The King nodded.) Men, enjoy the Hall but be on alert. If King Hrothgar has requested that we come here, this is a very serious matter.
<b>Narrator:</b>	The men nodded and walked to the tables to sit down. Beowulf turned to the King.
<b>King Hrothgar:</b>	(Nodding): We can talk in the back of the Hall.
<b>Narrator:</b>	In the privacy of the Hall, in a quiet area, the King sat down at a table and beckoned for Beowulf to sit with him. Beowulf sat down, sensing the mood of the King had become serious.
<b>King Hrothgar:</b>	As you know, I have enjoyed military success and prosperity for my people. All was well and good. Some time ago, that all changed.
<b>Beowulf:</b>	I have only known you to be a wise ruler, Hrothgar. You have always been a father figure to me and the kind of King that I wish to become. What has happened?
<b>Narrator:</b>	King Hrothgar nodded and then looked down with something akin to fear in his eyes.
<b>King Hrothgar:</b>	A monster has begun terrorizing my realm, and its name is Grendel.
<b>Beowulf:</b>	(Looking at the King with concern): Grendel? A descendent in outcast? How did it get here?
<b>King Hrothgar:</b>	(Turning his head away): No one knows. Grendel is an outcast, an ogre, doomed to wander the face of the earth. It is not human, and it feels no pity for its victims. It has caused my people to live in fear. I need your help.
<b>Beowulf:</b>	(Nodding): We will gladly give you our help, and we will destroy this monster. What do you know about it?
<b>King Hrothgar:</b>	(Folding his hands and setting them on the table in front of him): Grendel is envious, resentful, and angry toward mankind, possibly because he feels that mankind has been blessed, but that the ogre himself can never be blessed. He is doomed to be a monster and avoided by mankind.
<b>Beowulf:</b>	Does it have any weaknesses that we can use against it?
<b>King Hrothgar:</b>	(Nodding): Grendel especially resents the light, joy, and music that he observes in our beautiful mead-hall, Heorot. It must be stopped before it does more damage to myself and my kingdom.

<b>Narrator:</b>	Beowulf shuddered and then hid his fear. He was obsessed with dark spaces and wilderness monsters. Grendel appeared to be a “Border Stepper” lurking in the edge of the wilderness, the epitome of Beowulf’s deepest fears of monsters.
<b>Beowulf:</b>	We will stop this monster for you. I give you my word.
<b>King Hrothgar:</b>	(Nodding and standing up to reach Beowulf in an arm shake.): Thank you, Beowulf. You have grown to be a fine man and a great warrior. I knew you would help me.
<b>Narrator:</b>	Both men walked into the front of the Great Hall to join the men in their celebration of life. Hearing Wiglaf’s voice, Beowulf turned his eyes to him. Beowulf had decided that young Wiglaf was developing into a fine leader and he hoped to pass his leadership to Wiglaf when the time was right.
<b>Wiglaf:</b>	And there we were, Beowulf and I! The country was dark and sinister. Everyone had run away from the giant dragon before it, its monstrous breath would knock you down! The green slime coming off the thing smelled so rank and foul that we were loath to go near it. The scales on this monster were hard and sharp, and we knew it would be difficult to kill the thing!
<b>Narrator:</b>	The men listened intently to the story, mentally recalling their own exploits with the monsters that Beowulf had confronted with them in the past. Many of the men nodded, taking a drink and agreeing with the story. They had heard the story before and hoped that one day they would be known as brave and as courageous as Beowulf and Wiglaf.
<b>Wiglaf:</b>	(Turning and nodding to acknowledge Beowulf and the King) The monster had reddened leaky eyes and a long spiked tongue. Its eyes rolled to the back of its head as it smelled us coming upon it. It knew that we intended to end its life. The great dragon raised its head and roared, making all who heard it cower and cry out.
<b>Unferth:</b>	(Crossing his arms in doubt): Oh really? And how did the great Beowulf and his young fledgling, Wiglaf, defeat this unbeatable, ferocious dragon of yours?
<b>Wiglaf:</b>	(Furrowing his brow): Do you question my story? Are you questioning my honor? My bravery? My skill? The honor, bravery, and skill of the mighty Beowulf?
<b>Narrator:</b>	Hearing these fighting words, Unferth laughed.
<b>Unferth:</b>	Pray, go on with your storytelling, boy. It will be fun to hear the ending.
<b>Narrator:</b>	Wiglaf sputtered, angrily spewing from every pore in his body. Recognizing the fighting words in what Unferth was saying, Beowulf stepped in.
<b>Beowulf:</b>	Wiglaf, would you allow me to tell the rest of the story?
<b>Wiglaf:</b>	(Turning to Beowulf): Yes, of course.
<b>Narrator:</b>	Beowulf walked toward Unferth, towering above the man. Beowulf recognized the fear in the man’s eyes at Beowulf’s approach. It was obvious to Beowulf that the man was an obvious coward, jealous of the exploits that Wiglaf was telling.

<b>Beowulf:</b>	Now let's see. I believe you were at the point where the great dragon had roared its defiance, making all cowards present to cry out. (He turned and looked directly at Unferth, whose face turned red with anger.
<b>Narrator:</b>	All eyes in the Great Hall were turned to Beowulf, who sat down. The others also sat down in respect, waiting for the next words to be spoken.
<b>Beowulf:</b>	The great dragon chose to charge at me. I confronted the dragon with mighty great blows with my fists, turning the monster away in confusion. Wiglaf sidestepped the attack and, waving his great sword, struck off the right clawed foot of the monster.
<b>Narrator:</b>	All eyes in the room grew large. The monster had struck out, and Wiglaf had damaged it. Wiglaf could feel the respect in the room that he had hoped to gain, and he was satisfied. He turned back to Beowulf and focused on the rest of Beowulf's story.
<b>Beowulf:</b>	(Standing and raising his great fists): The monster howled so loudly that the great houses in in the entire territory heard its roar and covered in their beds. Wiglaf gave me the advantage I needed to see a weakness in the dragon. The dragon had few scales under its long neck. I called out to Odin and then raised my sword. Odin guided my sword and I brought the great sword down on the dragon. Wiglaf moved in quickly and stabbed the giant beast behind its ear, which was a weakness I had not seen. It was a satisfying deed. I feel that Wiglaf saved my life in his quick thinking.
<b>Narrator:</b>	The Great Hall grew very quiet as Beowulf's thunderous voice stopped. Suddenly, the men began loudly pounding the wooden tables, banging their joy at hearing this exciting exploit. The men all exclaimed "Hail, Beowulf! Hail Wiglaf!" to celebrate the strength given to the great heroes of Odin. Unferth moved to the back of the Great Hall and grew quiet and sullen.
<b>Beowulf:</b>	Wiglaf, come and have a drink with me before we retire. We must face that monster Grendel tomorrow. We will need our strength.
<b>Wiglaf:</b>	Gladly! By the way, you tell a fine story, Beowulf.
<b>Beowulf:</b>	(Raising his mug): You as well, my young friend.
<b>Wiglaf:</b>	(Stopping with the mug in his hand): Wait! Do you hear that?
<b>Narrator:</b>	While the warriors sat and told of their own heroic deeds, Grendel sneaked up to the outside area of Herot, listening and watching. He listened to the human laughter and constant, joking conversation. Envy and anger filled his fast-beating heart. Listening to the heavy breathing outside the door, Wiglaf had sharp ears and could hear the tiniest of noises.
<b>Beowulf:</b>	What do you hear?
<b>Narrator:</b>	As the hour grew close to midnight, the giant ogre grew impatient. It raised its mighty arms and hammered the door down so quickly that the warriors inside were slow to comprehend what was happening. As it dawned on them that Grendel had grown so bold as to destroy the door to the Great Hall, the warriors reached for their arms and began charging the great ogre.
<b>Wiglaf:</b>	(Tossing Beowulf his sword from the side door in the Great Hall): Beowulf!
<b>Beowulf:</b>	(Turning to the great beast and the yelling by men fighting the monster close to the door): Got it!

<b>Narrator:</b>	Many warriors were beaten down by the strength of the monster. When Grendel finally faced the great Beowulf, it had met its match. It ran from the Great Hall, but only after it had lost its arm.
<b>King Hrothgar:</b>	(Sadly): Some of the greatest warriors in the world have passed away this day. We must mourn our losses.
<b>Beowulf:</b>	(Nodding) Yes, we will mourn our losses while we take revenge on this monster. It will be defeated.
<b>Narrator:</b>	The grief for the great warriors lost that day was intense, but that same evening Beowulf and his men set out a plan to overtake Grendel and destroy the monster. King Hrothgar gave Beowulf his blessing to take as many men as he needed to follow the tracks of the ogre. The story continues until Grendel meets its end. The warriors realize that this story of Beowulf and Grendel would become one of the greatest hero stories of the Ancient World. It is known that Beowulf enjoyed these adventures as he intended to be a celebrated warrior in Valhalla, the Great Hall where all heroes are celebrated.
<b>Narrator:</b>	In the story of The Leap of Rhodes, the Leaper exaggerates his personal exploits to showcase himself as more than he truly is for personal gain. In the story of Beowulf, Beowulf and Wiglaf exaggerate their story to impress all but also to give the warriors the courage they need to face a dreaded monster the next day. The purpose behind each exaggerated story is different. Beowulf knows that as a leader, his job is to get his men pumped up to face the monster with courage the next day.
<b>The moral of the story:</b>	
<i>"Deeds count, not boasting words."</i>	